

**LEVER
CHARLES
JAMES**

TOM BURKE OF "OURS",
VOLUME I

Charles Lever
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Tom Burke Of «Ours», Volume I:

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Charles James Lever

Tom Burke Of

«Ours», Volume I

TO MISS EDGEWORTH.

Madam, – This weak attempt to depict the military life of France, during the brief but glorious period of the Empire, I beg to dedicate to you. Had the scene of this, like that of my former books, been laid chiefly in Ireland, I should have felt too sensibly my own inferiority to venture on the presumption of such a step. As it is, I never was more conscious of the demerits of my volume than when inscribing it to you; but I cannot resist the temptation of being, even thus, associated with a name, – the first in my country's literature.

Another motive I will not conceal, – the ardent desire I have to assure you, that, amid the thousands you have made better, and wiser, and happier, by your writings, you cannot count one who feels more proudly the common tie of country with you, nor more sincerely admires your goodness and your genius, than

Your devoted and obedient servant,

CHARLES J. LEVER.

Temple-O, Nov. 25, 1848.

PREFATORY EPISTLE FROM MR. BURKE.

My dear O'Flaherty, – It seems that I am to be the “next

devoured.” Well, be it so; my story, such as it is, you shall have. Only one condition would I bargain for, – that you seriously disabuse your readers of the notion that the life before them was one either of much pleasure or profit. I might moralize a little here about neglected opportunities and mistaken opinions; but, as I am about to present you with my narrative, the moral – if there be one – need not be anticipated.

I believe I have nothing else to premise, save that if my tale have little wit, it has some warning; and as Bob Lambert observed to the hangman who soaped the rope for his execution, “even that same ‘s a comfort.” If our friend Lorrequer, then, will as kindly facilitate my debut, I give him free liberty to “cut me down” when he likes, and am,

Yours, as ever,

TOM BURKE.

To T. O’Flaherty, Esq.

PREFACE

I WAS led to write this story by two impulses: first, the fascination which the name and exploits of the great Emperor had ever exercised on my mind as a boy; and secondly, by the favorable notice which the Press had bestowed upon my scenes of soldier life in “Charles O’Malley.”

If I had not in the wars of the Empire the patriotic spirit of a great national struggle to sustain me, I had a field far wider and

grander than any afforded by our Peninsular campaigns; while in the character of the French army, composed as it was of elements derived from every rank and condition, there were picturesque effects one might have sought for in vain throughout the rest of Europe.

It was my fortune to have known personally some of those who filled great parts in this glorious drama. I had listened over and over to their descriptions of scenes, to which their look, and voice, and manner imparted a thrilling intensity of interest. I had opportunities of questioning them for explanations, of asking for solutions of this and that difficulty which had puzzled me, till I grew so familiar with the great names of the time, the events, and even the localities, that when I addressed myself to my tale, it was with a mind filled by my topics to the utter exclusion of all other subjects.

Neither before nor since have I ever enjoyed to the same extent the sense of being so entirely engrossed by a single theme. A great tableau of the Empire, from its gorgeous celebrations in Paris to its numerous achievements on the field of battle, was ever outspread before me, and I sat down rather to record than to invent the scenes of my story. A feeling that, as I treated of real events I was bound to maintain a degree of accuracy in relation to them, even in fiction, made me endeavor to possess myself of a correct knowledge of localities, and, so far as I was able, with a due estimate of those whose characters I discussed.

Some of the battlefields I have gone over; of others, I have

learned the particulars from witnesses of the great struggles that have made them famous. To the claim of this exactness I have, therefore, the pretension of at least the desire to be faithful. For my story, it has all the faults and shortcomings which beset everything I have ever written; for these I can but offer regrets, only the more poignant that I feel how justly they are due.

The same accuracy which I claim for scenes and situations, I should like, if I dared, to claim for the individuals who figure in this tale; but I cannot, in any fairness, pretend to more than an attempt to paint resemblances of those whom I have myself admired in the description of others. Pioche and Minette are of this number. So is, but of a very different school, the character of Duchesne; for which, however, I had what almost amounted to an original. As to the episodes of this story, one or two were communicated as facts; the others are mere invention.

I do not remember any particulars to which I should further advert; while I feel, that the longer I dwell upon the theme, the more occasion is there to entreat indulgence, – an indulgence which, if you are not weary of according, will be most gratefully accepted by

Your faithful servant,

CHARLES LEVER

Casa Capponi, Florence, May, 1867.

CHAPTER I. MYSELF

It was at the close of a cold, raw day in January – no matter for the year – that the Gal way mail was seen to wind its slow course through that long and dull plain that skirts the Shannon, as you approach the “sweet town of Athlone.” The reeking box-coats and dripping umbrellas that hung down on every side bespoke a day of heavy rain, while the splashed and mud-stained panels of the coach bore token of cut-up roads, which the jaded and toil-worn horses amply confirmed. If the outsiders – with hats pressed firmly down, and heads bent against the cutting wind – presented an aspect far from comfortable, those within, who peeped with difficulty through the dim glass, had little to charm the eye; their flannel nightcaps and red comforters were only to be seen at rare intervals, as they gazed on the dreary prospect, and then sank back into the coach to con over their moody thoughts, or, if fortunate, perhaps to doze.

In the rumble, with the guard, sat one whose burly figure and rosy cheeks seemed to feel no touch of the inclement wind that made his companions crouch. An oiled-silk foraging-cap fastened beneath the chin, and a large mantle of blue cloth, bespoke him a soldier, if even the assured tone of his voice and a certain easy carriage of his head had not conveyed to the acute observer the same information. Unsubdued in spirit, undepressed in mind, either by the long day of pouring rain or the melancholy

outline of country on every side, his dark eye flashed as brightly from beneath the brim of his cap, and his ruddy face beamed as cheerily, as though Nature had put forth her every charm of weather and scenery to greet and delight him. Now inquiring of the guard of the various persons whose property lay on either side, the name of some poor hamlet or some humble village; now humming to himself some stray verse of an old campaigning song, – he passed his time, diversifying these amusements by a courteous salute to a gaping country girl, as, with unmeaning look, she stared at the passing coach. But his principal occupation seemed to consist in retaining one wing of his wide cloak around the figure of a little boy, who lay asleep beside him, and whose head jogged heavily against his arm with every motion of the coach.

“And so that’s Athlone, yonder, you tell me,” said the captain, for such he was, – “the sweet town of Athlone, ochone!” Well, it might be worse. I’ve passed ten years in Africa, – on the burning coast, as they call it: you never light a fire to cook your victuals, but only lay them before the sun for ten minutes, game something less, and the joint’s done; all true, by Jove! Lie still, my young friend, or you’ll heave us both over! And whereabouts does he live, guard?”

“Something like a mile and a half from here,” replied the gruff guard.

“Poor little fellow! he’s sleeping it out well. They certainly don’t take overmuch care of him, or they’d never have sent him

on the top of a coach in weather like this, without even a greatcoat to cover him. I say, Tom, my lad, wake up; you're not far from home now. Are you dreaming of the plum-pudding and the pony and the big spaniel, eh?"

"Whisht!" said the guard, in a low whisper. "The chap's father is dying, and they've sent for him from school to see him."

A loud blast of the horn now awoke me thoroughly from the half-dreamy slumber in which I had listened to the previous dialogue, and I sat up and looked about me. Yes, reader, my unworthy self it was who was then indulging in as pleasant a dream of home and holidays as ever blessed even a schoolboy's vigils. Though my eyes were open, it was some minutes before I could rally myself to understand where I was, and with what object. My senses were blunted by cold, and my drenched limbs were cramped and stiffened; for the worthy captain, to whose humanity I owed the share of his cloak, had only joined the coach late in the day, and during the whole morning I had been exposed to the most pitiless downpour of rain and sleet.

"Here you are!" said the rough guard, as the coach drew up to let me down. "No need of blowing the horn here, I suppose?"

This was said in allusion to the miserable appearance of the ruined cabin that figured as my father's gate lodge, where some naked children were seen standing before the door, looking with astonishment at the coach and passengers.

"Well, good-by, my little man. I hope you 'll find the governor better. Give him my respects; and, hark ye, if ever you come

over to Athlone, don't forget to come and see me: Captain Bubbleton, – George Frederick Augustus Bubbleton, Forty-fifth Regiment; or, when at home, Little Bubbleton, Herts, and Bungalow Hut, in the Carnatic^ that's the mark. So good-by! good-by!”

I waved my hand to him in adieu, and then turned to enter the gate.

“Well, Freney,” said I, to a half-dressed, wild-looking figure that rushed out to lift the gate open, – for the hinges had been long broken, and it was attached to the pier by some yards of strong rope, – “how is my father?”

A gloomy nod and a discouraging sign with his open hand were the only reply.

“Is there any hope?” said I, faintly.

“Sorrow one of me knows; I dare n't go near the house. I was sarved with notice to quit a month ago, and they tell him I 'm gone. Oh vo, vo! what 's to become of us all!”

I threw the bag which contained my humble wardrobe on my shoulder, and without waiting for further questioning, walked forward. Night was falling fast, and nothing short of my intimacy with the place from infancy could have enabled me to find my way. The avenue, from long neglect and disuse, was completely obliterated; the fences were broken up to burn; the young trees had mostly shared the same fate; the cattle strayed at will through the plantations; and all bespoke utter ruin and destruction.

If the scene around me was sad, it only the better suited my

own heart. I was returning to a home where I had never heard the voice of kindness or affection; where one fond word, one look of welcome, had never met me. I was returning, not to receive the last blessing of a loving parent, but merely sent for as a necessary ceremony on the occasion. And perhaps there was a mock propriety in inviting me once more to the house which I was never to revisit. My father, a widower for many years, had bestowed all his affection on my elder brother, to whom so much of his property as had escaped the general wreck was to descend. He had been sent to Eton under the guidance of a private tutor, while an obscure Dublin school was deemed good enough for me. For him every nerve was strained to supply all his boyish extravagance, and enable him to compete with the sons of men of high rank and fortune, whose names, mentioned in his letters home, were an ample recompense for all the lavish expenditure their intimacy entailed. My letters were few and brief; their unvaried theme the delay in the last quarter's payment, or the unfurnished condition of my little trunk, which more than once exposed me to the taunts of my schoolfellows.

He was a fair and delicate boy, timid in manner and retiring in disposition; I, a browned-faced varlet, who knew every one from the herd to the high-sheriff. To him the servants were directed to look up as the head of the house; while I was consigned either to total neglect, or the attentions of those who only figured as supernumeraries in our Army List. Yet, with all these sources of jealousy between us, we loved each other tenderly. George

pity "poor Tommy," as he called me; and for that very pity my heart clung to him. He would often undertake to plead my cause for those bolder infractions his gentle nature never ventured on; and it was only from long association with boys of superior rank, whose habits and opinions he believed to be standards for his imitation, that at length a feeling of estrangement grew up between us, and we learned to look somewhat coldly on each other.

From these brief details it will not be wondered at if I turned homeward with a heavy heart. From the hour I received the letter of my recall – which was written by my father's attorney in most concise and legal phrase – I had scarcely ceased to shed tears; for so it is, there is something in the very thought of being left an orphan, friendless and unprotected, quite distinct from the loss of affection and kindness which overwhelms the young heart with a very flood of wretchedness. Besides, a stray word or two of kindness had now and then escaped my father towards me, and I treasured these up as my richest possession. I thought of them over and over. Many a lonely night, when my heart has been low and sinkings I repeated them to myself, like talismans against grief; and when I slept, my dreams would dwell on them and make my waking happy.

As I issued from a dark copse of beech-trees, the indistinct outline of the old house met my eye. I could trace the high-pitched roof, the tall and pointed gables against the sky; and with a strange sense of undefinable fear, beheld a solitary light

that twinkled from the window of an upper room, where my father lay. The remainder of the building was in deep shadow. I mounted the long flight of stone steps that led to what once had been a terrace; but the balustrades were broken many a year ago; and even the heavy granite stone had been smashed in several places. The hall door lay wide open, and the hall itself had no other light save such as the flickering of a wood fire afforded, as its uncertain flashes fell upon the dark wainscot and the floor.

I had just recognized the grim, old-fashioned portraits that covered the walls, when my eye was attracted by a figure near the fire. I approached, and beheld an old man doubled with age. His bleared eyes were bent upon the wood embers, which he was trying to rake together with a stick; his clothes bespoke the most miserable poverty, and afforded no protection against the cold and cutting blast. He was croning some old song to himself as I drew near, and paid no attention to me. I moved round so as to let the light fall on his face, and then perceived it was old Lanty, as he was called. Poor fellow! Age and neglect had changed him sadly since I had seen him last. He had been the huntsman of the family for two generations; but having somehow displeased my father one day at the cover, he rode at him and struck him on the head with his loaded whip. The man fell senseless from his horse, and was carried home. A few days, however, enabled him to rally and be about again; but his senses had left him forever. All recollection of the unlucky circumstance had faded from his mind, and his rambling thoughts dwelt on his old pursuits; so that

he passed his days about the stables, looking after the horses and giving directions about them. Latterly he had become too infirm for this, and never left his own cabin; but now, from some strange cause, he had come up to “the house,” and was sitting by the fire as I found him.

They who know Ireland will acknowledge the strange impulse which, at the approach of death, seems to excite the people to congregate about the house of mourning. The passion for deep and powerful excitement – the most remarkable feature in their complex nature – seems to revel in the details of sorrow and suffering. Not content even with the tragedy before them, they call in the aid of superstition to heighten the awfulness of the scene; and every story of ghost and banshee’ is conned over in tones that need not the occasion to make them thrill upon the heart. At such a time the deepest workings of their wild spirits are revealed. Their grief is low and sorrow-struck, or it is loud and passionate; now breaking into some plaintive wail over the virtues of the departed, now bursting into a frenzied appeal to the Father of Mercies as to the justice of recalling those from earth who were its blessing: while, stranger than all, a dash of reckless merriment will break in upon the gloom; but it is like the red lightning through the storm, that as it rends the cloud only displays the havoc and desolation around, and at its parting leaves even a blacker darkness behind it.

From my infancy I had been familiar with scenes of this kind; and my habit of stealing away unobserved from home to witness a

country wake had endeared me much to the country-people, who felt this no small kindness from “the master’s son.” Somehow the ready welcome and attention I always met with had worked on my young heart, and I learned to feel all the interest of these scenes fully as much as those about me. It was, then, with a sense of desolation that I looked upon the one solitary mourner who now sat at the hearth, – that poor old idiot man who gazed on vacancy, or muttered with parched lip some few words to himself. That he alone should be found to join his sorrows to ours, seemed to me like utter destitution, and as I leaned against the chimney I burst into tears.

“Don’t cry, alannah! don’t cry,” said the old man; “it ‘s the worst way at all. Get up again and ride him at it bould. Oh vo! look at where the thief is taking now, – along the stonewall there!” Here he broke out into a low, wailing ditty: —

“And the fox set him down and looked about —
And many were feared to follow;
‘Maybe I ‘m wrong,’ says he, ‘but I doubt
That you ‘ll be as gay to-morrow.
For loud as you cry, and high as you ride,
And little you feel my sorrow,
I’ll be free on the mountain-side,
While you ‘ll lie low to-morrow.
Oh, Moddideroo, aroo, aroo!”

“Ay, just so; they ‘ll run to earth in the cold churchyard.

Whisht! – hark there! Soho, soho! That’s Badger I hear.”

I turned away with a bursting heart, and felt my way up the broad oak stair, which was left in complete darkness. As I reached the corridor, off which the bedrooms lay, I heard voices talking together in a low tone; they came from my father’s room, the door of which lay ajar. I approached noiselessly and peeped in: by the fire, which was the only light now in the apartment, sat two persons at a set table, one of whom I at once recognized as the tall, solemn-looking figure of Doctor Finnerty; the other I detected, by the sharp tones of his voice, to be Mr. Anthony Basset, my father’s confidential attorney.

On the table before them lay a mass of papers, parchments, leases, deeds, together with glasses and a black bottle, whose accompaniments of hot water and sugar left no doubt as to its contents. The chimney-piece was crowded with a range of vials and medicine bottles, some of them empty, some of them half finished.

From the bed in the corner of the room came the heavy sound of snoring respiration, which either betokened deep sleep or insensibility. If I enjoyed but little favor in my father’s house, I owed much of the coldness shown to me to the evil influence of the very two persons who sat before me in conclave. Of the precise source of the doctor’s dislike I was not quite clear, except, perhaps, that I recovered from the measles when he predicted my certain death; the attorney’s was, however, no mystery.

About three years before, he had stopped to breakfast at our

house on his way to Ballinasloe fair. As his pony was led round to the stable, it caught my eye. It was a most tempting bit of horseflesh, full of spirit and in top condition, for he was going to sell it. I followed him round, and appeared just as the servant was about to unsaddle him. The attorney was no favorite in the house, and I had little difficulty in persuading the man, instead of taking off the saddle, merely to shorten the stirrups to the utmost limit. The next minute I was on his back flying over the lawn at a stretching gallop. Fences abounded on all sides, and I rushed him at double ditches, stone walls, and bog-wood rails, with a mad delight that at every leap rose higher. After about three quarters of an hour thus passed, his blood, as well as my own, being by this time thoroughly roused, I determined to try him at the wall of an old pound which stood some few hundred yards from the front of the house. Its exposure to the window at any other time would have deterred me from even the thought of such an exploit, but now I was quite beyond the pale of such cold calculations; besides that, I was accompanied by a select party of all the laborers, with their wives and children, whose praises of my horsemanship would have made me take the lock of a canal if before me. A fine gallop of grass sward led to the pound, and over this I went, cheered with as merry a cry as ever stirred a light heart. One glance I threw at the house as I drew near the leap. The window of the breakfast parlor was open; my father and Mr. Basset were both at it, I saw their faces red with passion; I heard their loud shout; my very spirit sickened within me. I saw

no more; I felt the pony rush at the wall, – the quick stroke of his feet, – the rise, – the plunge, – and then a crash, – and I was sent spinning over his head some half-dozen yards, ploughing up the ground on face and hands. I was carried home with a broken head; the pony's knees were in the same condition. My father said that he ought to be shot for humanity's sake; Tony suggested the same treatment for me, on similar grounds. The upshot, however, was, I secured an enemy for life; and worse still, one whose power to injure was equalled by his inclination.

Into the company of these two worthies I now found myself thus accidentally thrown, and would gladly have retreated at once, but that some indescribable impulse to be near my father's sickbed was on me; and so I crept stealthily in and sat down in a large chair at the foot of the bed, where unnoticed I listened to the long-drawn heavings of his chest, and in silence wept over my own desolate condition.

For a long time the absorbing nature of my own grief prevented me hearing the muttered conversation near the fire; but at length, as the night wore on and my sorrow had found vent in tears, I began to listen to the dialogue beside me.

“He 'll have five hundred pounds under his grandfather's will, in spite of us. But what 's that?” said the attorney.

“I 'll take him as an apprentice for it, I know,” said the doctor, with a grin that made me shudder.

“That's settled already,” replied Mr. Basset. “He's to be articled to me for five years; but I think it 's likely he 'll go to

sea before the time expires. How heavily the old man is sleeping! Now, is that natural sleep?"

"No, that's always a bad sign; that puffing with the lips is generally among the last symptoms. Well, he'll be a loss anyhow, when he's gone. There's an eight-ounce mixture he never tasted yet, – infusion of gentian with soda. Put your lips to that."

"Devil a one o' me will ever sup the like!" said the attorney, finishing his tumbler of punch as he spoke. "Faugh! how can you drink them things that way?"

"Sure it's the compound infusion, made with orangepeel and cardamom seeds. There is n't one of them did n't cost two and ninepence. He 'll be eight weeks in bed come Tuesday next."

"Well, well! If he lived till the next assizes, it would be telling me four hundred pounds; not to speak of the costs of two ejectments I have in hand against Mullins and his father-in-law."

"It's a wonder," said the doctor, after a pause, "that Tom didn't come by the coach. It's no matter now, at any rate; for since the eldest son's away, there's no one here to interfere with us."

"It was a masterly stroke of yours, doctor, to tell the old man the weather was too severe to bring George over from Eton. As sure as he came he'd make up matters with Tom; and the end of it would be, I 'd lose the agency, and you would n't have those pleasant little bills for the tenantry, – eh. Fin?"

"Whisht! he's waking now. Well, sir; well, Mr. Burke, how do you feel now? He 's off again!"

"The funeral ought to be on a Sunday," said Basset, in a

whisper; “there ‘ll be no getting the people to come any other day. He ‘s saying something, I think.”

“Fin,” said my father, in a faint, hoarse voice, – “Fin, give me a drink. It ‘s not warm!”

“Yes, sir; I had it on the fire.”

“Well, then, it ‘s myself that ‘s growing cold. How ‘s the pulse now. Fin? Is the Dublin doctor come yet?”

“No, sir; we ‘re expecting him every minute. But sure, you know, we ‘re doing everything.”

“Oh! I know it. Yes, to be sure, Fin; but they ‘ve many a new thing up in Dublin there, we don’t hear of. Whisht! what’s that?”

“It ‘s Tony, sir, – Tony Basset; he ‘s sitting up with me.”

“Come over here, Tony. Tony, I’m going fast; I feel it, and my heart is low. Could we withdraw the proceedings about Freney?”

“He ‘s the biggest blackguard – ”

“Ah! no matter now; I ‘m going to a place where we ‘ll all need mercy. What was it that Canealy said he ‘d give for the land?”

“Two pound ten an acre; and Freney never paid thirty shillings out of it.”

“It’s mighty odd George didn’t come over.”

“Sure, I told you there was two feet of snow on the ground.”

“Lord be about us, what a severe season! But why isn’t Tom here?” I started at the words, and was about to rush forward, when he added, – “I don’t want him, though.”

“Of course you don’t,” said the attorney; “it’s little comfort he ever gave you. Are you in pain there?”

“Ay, great pain over my heart. Well, well! don’t be hard to him when I ‘m gone.”

“Don’t let him talk so much,” said Basset, in a whisper, to the doctor.

“You must compose yourself, Mr. Burke,” said the doctor. “Try and take a sleep; the night isn’t half through yet.”

The sick man obeyed without a word; and soon after, the heavy respiration betokened the same lethargic slumber once more.

The voices of the speakers gradually fell into a low, monotonous sound; the long-drawn breathings from the sickbed mingled with them; the fire only sent forth an occasional gleam, as some piece of falling turf seemed to revive its wasting life, and shot up a myriad of bright sparks; and the chirping of the cricket in the chimney-corner sounded to my mournful heart like the tick of the death-watch.

As I listened, my tears fell fast, and a gulping fulness in my throat made me feel like one in suffocation. But deep sorrow somehow tends to sleep. The weariness of the long day and dreary night, exhaustion, the dull hum of the subdued voices, and the faint light, all combined to make me drowsy, and I fell into a heavy slumber.

I am writing now of the far-off past, – of the long years ago of my youth, – since which my seared heart has had many a sore and scalding lesson; yet I cannot think of that night, fixed and graven as it lies in my memory, without a touch of boyish softness. I

remember every waking thought that crossed my mind: my very dream is still before me. It was of my mother. I thought of her as she lay on a sofa in the old drawing-room; the window open, and the blinds drawn, the gentle breeze of a June morning flapping them lazily to and fro as I knelt beside her to repeat my little hymn, the first I ever learned; and how at each moment my eyes would turn and my thoughts stray to that open casement, through which the odor of flowers and the sweet song of birds were pouring, and my little heart was panting for liberty, while her gentle smile and faint words bade me remember where I was. And then I was straying away through the old garden, where the very sunlight fell scantily through the thick-woven branches, loaded with perfumed blossoms; the blackbirds hopped fearlessly from twig to twig, mingling their clear notes with the breezy murmur of the leaves and the deep hum of summer bees. How happy was I then! And why cannot such happiness be lasting? Why can we not shelter ourselves from the base contamination of worldly cares, and live on amid pleasures pure as these, with hearts as holy and desires as simple as in childhood?

Suddenly a change came over my dream, and the dark clouds began to gather from all quarters, and a low, creeping wind moaned heavily along. I thought I heard my name called. I started and awoke. For a second or two the delusion was so strong that I could not remember where I was; but as the gray light of a breaking morning fell through the half-open shutters, I beheld the two figures near the fire. They were both sound asleep, the

deep-drawn breathing and nodding heads attesting the heaviness of their slumber.

I felt cold and cramped, but still afraid to stir, although a longing to approach the bedside was still upon me. A faint sigh and some muttered words here came to my ear, and I listened. It was my father; but so indistinct the sounds, they seemed more like the ramblings of a dream. I crept noiselessly on tiptoe to the bed, and drawing the curtain gently over, gazed within. He was lying on his back, his hands and arms outside the clothes. His beard had grown so much and he had wasted so far that I could scarcely have known him. His eyes were wide open, but fixed on the top of the bed; his lips moved rapidly, and by his hands, as they were closely clasped, I thought it was in prayer. I leaned over him, and placed my hand in his. For some time he did not seem to notice it; but at last he pressed it softly, and rubbing the fingers to and fro, he said, in a low, faint voice, – “Is this your hand, my boy?”

I thought my heart had split, as in a gush of tears I bent down and kissed him.

“I can’t see well, my dear; there’s something between me and the light, and a weight is on me – here – here – ”

A heavy sigh, and a shudder that shook his whole frame, followed these words.

“They told me I wasn’t to see you once again,” said he, as a sickly smile played over his mouth; “but I knew you’d come to sit by me. It ‘s a lonely thing not to have one’s own at such an hour

as this. Don't weep, my dear, my own heart's failing me fast."

A broken, muttering sound followed, and then he said, in a loud voice; "I never did it! it was Tony Basset. He told me, – he persuaded me. Ah! that was a sore day when I listened to him. Who 's to tell me I 'm not to be master of my own estate? Turn them adrift, – ay, every man of them. I 'll weed the ground of such wretches, – eh, Tony? Did any one say Freney's mother was dead? they may wake her at the cross roads, if they like. Poor old Molly! I 'm sorry for her, too. She nursed me and my sister that's gone; and maybe her deathbed, poor as she was, was easier than mine will be, – without kith or kin, child or friend. Oh, George! – and I that doted on you with all my heart! Whose hand's this? Ah, I forgot; my darling boy, it's you. Come to me here, my child! Was n't it for you that I toiled and scraped this many a year? Wasn't it for you that I did all this? and – God, forgive me! – maybe it 's my soul that I 've perilled to leave you a rich man. Where 's Tom? where 's that fellow now?"

"Here, sir!" said I, squeezing his hand, and pressing it to my lips.

He sprang up at the words, and sat up in his bed, his eyes dilated to their widest, and his pale lips parted asunder.

"Where?" cried he, as he felt me over with his thin fingers, and drew me towards him.

"Here, father, here!"

"And is this Tom?" said he, as his voice fell into a low, hollow sound; and then added: "Where's George? answer me at once.

Oh, I see it! He isn't here; he would n't come over to see his old father. Tony! Tony Basset, I say!" shouted the sick man, in a voice that roused the sleepers, and brought them to his bedside, "open that window there. Let me look out, – do it as I bid you, – open it wide. Turn in all the cattle you can find on the road. Do you hear me, Tony? Drive them in from every side. Finnerty, I say, mind my words; for" (here he uttered a most awful and terrific oath), "as I linger on this side of the grave, I 'll not leave him a blade of grass I can take from him."

His chest heaved with a convulsive spasm; his face became pale as death; his eyes fixed; he clutched eagerly at the bedclothes; and then, with a horrible cry, he fell back upon the pillow, as a faint stream of red blood trickled from his nostril and ran down his chin.

"It 's all over now!" whispered the doctor.

"Is he dead?" said Basset.

The other made no reply; but drawing the curtains close, he turned away, and they both moved noiselessly from the room.

CHAPTER II. DARBY THE "BLAST."

If there are dreams which, by their vividness and accuracy of detail, seem altogether like reality, so are there certain actual passages in our lives which, in their indistinctness while occurring, and in the faint impression they leave behind them, seem only as mere dreams. Most of our early sorrows are of this kind. The warm current of our young hearts would appear to repel the cold touch of affliction; nor can grief at this period do more than breathe an icy chill upon the surface of our affections, where all is glowing and fervid beneath. The struggle then between the bounding heart and the depressing care renders our impressions of grief vague and ill defined.

A stunning sense of some great calamity, some sorrow without hope, mingled in my waking thoughts with a childish notion of freedom. Unloved, uncared for, my early years presented but few pleasures. My boyhood had been a long struggle to win some mark of affection from one who cared not for me, and to whom still my heart had clung, as does the drowning man to the last plank of all the wreck. The tie that bound me to him was now severed, and I was without-one in the wide world to look up to or to love.

I looked out from my window upon the bleak country. A

heavy snowstorm had fallen during the night. A lowering sky of leaden hue stretched above the dreary landscape, across which no living thing was seen to move. Within doors all was silent. The doctor and the attorney had both taken their departure; the deep wheel-track in the snow marked the road they had followed. The servants, seated around the kitchen fire, conversed in low and broken whispers. The only sound that broke the stillness was the ticking of the clock upon the stair. There was something that smote heavily on my heart in the monotonous ticking of that clock: that told of time passing beside him who had gone; that seemed to speak of minutes close to one whose minutes were eternity. I crept into the room where the dead body lay, and as my tears ran fast, I bent over it. I thought sometimes the expression of those cold features changed, – now frowning heavily, now smiling blandly on me. I watched them, till in my eager gaze the lips seemed to move and the cheek to flush. How hard is it to believe in death! how difficult to think that “there is a sleep that knows no waking!” I knelt down beside the bed and prayed. I prayed that now, as all of earth was nought to him who was departed, he would give me the affection he had not bestowed in life. I besought him not to chill the heart that in its lonely desolation had neither home nor friend. My throat sobbed to bursting as in my words I seemed to realize the fulness of my affliction. The door opened behind me as with bent-down head I knelt. A heavy footstep slowly moved along the floor; and the next moment the tottering figure of old Lanty stood beside me,

gazing on the dead man. There was that look of vacancy in his filmy eye that showed he knew nothing of what had happened.

“Is he asleep. Master Tommy?” said the old man, in a faint whisper.

My lips trembled, but I could not speak the word.

“I thought he wanted the ‘dogs’ up at Meelif; but I ‘m strained here about the loins, and can’t go out myself. Tell him that, when he wakes.”

“He’ll never wake now, Lanty; he’s dead!” said I, as a rush of tears half choked my utterance.

“Dead!” said he, repeating the word two or three times, – “dead! Well, well! I wonder will Master George keep the dogs now. There seldom comes a better; and ‘twas himself that liked the cry o’ them.”

He tottered from the room as he spoke, and I could hear him muttering the same words over and over, as he crept slowly down the stair.

I have said that this painful stroke of fortune was as a dream to me; and so for three days I felt it. The altered circumstances of everything about me were inexplicable to my puzzled brain. The very kindness of the servants, so unusual to me, struck me forcibly. They felt that the time was past when any sympathy for me had been the passport to disfavor, and they pitied me.

The funeral took place on the third morning. Mr. Basset having acquainted my brother that there was no necessity for his presence, even that consolation was denied me, – to meet

him who alone remained of all my name and house belonging to me. How I remember every detail of that morning! The silence of the long night broken in upon by heavy footsteps ascending the stairs; strange voices, not subdued like those of all in our little household, but loud and coarse; even laughter I could hear, the noise increasing at each moment. Then the muffled sound of wheels upon the snow, and the cries of the drivers as they urged their horses forward. Then a long interval, in which nought was heard save the happy whistle of some poor postilion, who, careless of his errand, whiled away the tedious time with a lively tune. And lastly, there came the dull noise of feet moving step by step down the stair, the muttered words, the shuffling sound of feet as they descended, and the clank of the coffin as it struck against the wall.

The long, low parlor was filled with people, few of whom I had ever seen before. They were broken up into little knots, chatting cheerfully together while they made a hurried breakfast. The table and sideboard were covered with a profusion I had never witnessed previously. Decanters of wine passed freely from hand to hand; and although the voices fell somewhat as I appeared amidst them, I looked in vain for one touch of sorrow for the dead, or even respect for his memory.

As I took my place in the carriage beside the attorney, a kind of dreamy apathy settled down on me, and I scarcely knew what was passing. I only remember the horrible shrinking sense of dread with which I recoiled from his one attempt at consolation,

and the abrupt way in which he desisted, and turned to converse with the doctor. How my heart sickened as we drew near the churchyard, and I beheld the open gate that stood wide awaiting us! The dusky figures, with their mournful black cloaks, moved slowly across the snow, like spirits of some gloomy world; while the death-bell echoed in my ears, and sent a shuddering through my frame.

“What is to become of the second boy?” said the clergyman, in a low whisper, but which, by some strange fatality, struck forcibly on my ear.

“It’s not much matter,” replied Basset, still lower; “for the present he goes home with me. Tom, I say, you come back with me to-day.”

“No,” said I, boldly; “I’ll go home again.”

“Home!” repeated he, with a scornful laugh, – “home I And where may that be, youngster?”

“For shame, Basset!” said the clergyman; “don’t speak that way to him. My little man, you can’t go home today. Mr. Basset will take you with him for a few days, until your late father’s will is known, and his wishes respecting you.”

“I’ll go home, sir!” said I, but in a fainter tone, and with tears in my eyes.

“Well, well! let him do so for to-day; it may relieve his poor heart. Come, Basset, I’ll take him back myself.”

I clasped his hand as he spoke, and kissed it over and over.

“With all my heart,” cried Basset. “I’ll come over and fetch

him to-morrow;" and then he added, in a lower tone, "and before that you 'll have found out quite enough to be heartily sick of your charge."

All the worthy vicar's efforts to rouse me from my stupor or interest me failed. He brought me to his house, where, amid his own happy children, he deemed my heart would have yielded to the sympathy of my own age. But I pined to get back; I longed – why, I knew not – to be in my own little chamber, alone with my grief. In vain he tried every consolation his kind heart and his life's experience had taught him; the very happiness I witnessed but reminded me of my own state, and I pressed the more eagerly to return.

It was late when he drew up to the door of the house, to which already the closed window shutters had given a look of gloom and desertion. We knocked several times before any one came, and at length two or three heads appeared at an upper window, in half-terror at the unlooked-for summons for admission.

"Good-by, my dear boy!" said the vicar, as he kissed me; "don't forget what I have been telling you. It will make you bear your present sorrow better, and teach you to be happier when it is over."

"Come down to the kitchen, alannah!" said the old cook, as the hall door closed; "come down and sit with us there. Sure it 's no wonder your heart 'ud be low."

"Yes, Master Tommy; and Darby "the Blast" is there, and a tune and the pipes will raise you."

I suffered myself to be led along listlessly between them to the kitchen, where, around a huge fire of red turf, the servants of the house were all assembled, together with some neighboring cottagers; Darby “the Blast” occupying a prominent place in the party, his pipes laid across his knees as he employed himself in concocting a smoking tumbler of punch.

“Your most obadient!” said Darby, with a profound reverence, as I entered. “May I make so bowld as to surmise that my presence is n’t unsaysonable to your feelings? for I wouldn’t be contumacious enough to adjudicate without your honor’s permission.”

What I muttered in reply I know not; but the whole party were speedily reseated, every eye turned admiringly on Darby for the very neat and appropriate expression of his apology.

Young as I was and slight as had been the consideration heretofore accorded me, there was that in the lonely desolation of my condition which awakened all their sympathies, and directed all their interests towards me; and in no country are the differences of rank such slight barriers in excluding the feeling of one portion of the community from the sorrows of the others: the Irish peasant, however humble, seems to possess an intuitive tact on this subject, and to minister all the consolations in his power with a gentle delicacy that cannot be surpassed.

The silence caused by my appearing among them was unbroken for some time after I took my seat by the fire; and the only sounds were the clinking of a spoon against the glass, or,

the deep-drawn sigh of some compassionate soul, as she wiped a stray tear from the corner of her eye with her apron.

Darby alone manifested a little impatience at the sudden change in a party where his powers of agreeability had so lately been successful, and fidgeted on his chair, unscrewed his pipes, blew into them, screwed them on again, and then slyly nodded over to the housemaid, as he raised his glass to his lips.

“Never mind me,” said I to the old cook, who, between grief and the glare of a turf fire, had her face swelled out to twice its natural size, – “never mind me, Molly, or I ‘ll go away.”

“And why would you, darlin’? Troth, no! sure there ‘s nobody feels for you like them that was always about you. Take a cup of tay, alannah; it ‘ll do you good.”

“Yes, Master Tom,” said the butler; “you never tasted anything since Tuesday night.”

“Do, sir, av ye plaze!” said the pretty housemaid, as she stood before me, cup in hand.

“Arrah! what’s tay?” said Darby, in a contemptuous tone of voice. “A few dirty laves, with a drop of water on top of them, that has neither beatification nor invigoration. Here ‘s the *fons animi!*” said he, patting the whisky bottle affectionately. “Did ye ever hear of the ancients indulging in tay? D’ye think Polyphamus and Jupither took tay?”

The cook looked down abashed and ashamed.

“Tay’s good enough for women, – no offence, Mrs. Cook! – but you might boil down Paykin, and it’d never be potteen. *Ex*

quo vis ligno non fit Mercurius, – ‘You can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.’ That’s the meaning of it; ligno ‘s a sow.”

Heaven knows I was in no mirthful mood at that moment; but I burst into a fit of laughing at this, in which, from a sense of politeness, the party all joined.

“That’s it, acushla!” said the old cook, as her eyes sparkled with delight; “sure it makes my heart light to see you smilin’ again. Maybe Darby would raise a tune now, and there ‘s nothing equal to it for the spirits.”

“Yes, Mr. M’Keown,” said the housemaid; “play ‘Kiss me twice!’ Master Tom likes it.”

“Devil a doubt he does!” replied Darby, so maliciously as to make poor Kitty blush a deep scarlet; “and no shame to him! But you see my fingers is cut. Master Tom, and I can’t perform the reduplicating intonations with proper effect.”

“How did that happen. Darby?” said the butler.

“Faix, easy enough. Tim Daly and myself was hunting a cat the other evening, and she was under the dhresser, and we wor poking her with a burnt stick and a raypinghook, and she somehow always escaped us, and except about an inch of her tail, that we cut off, there was no getting at her; and at last I hated a toastin’-fork and put it in, when out she flew, teeth and claws, at me. Look, there ‘s where she stuck her thieving nails into my thumb, and took the piece clean out. The onnatural baste!”

“Arrah!” said the old cook, with a most reflective gravity, “there ‘s nothing so treacherous as a cat! “ – a moral to the story

which I found met general assent among the whole company.

“Nevertheless,” observed Darby, with an air of ill-dissembled condescension, “if it isn’t umbrageous to your honor, I ‘ll intonate something in the way of an ode or a canticle.”

“One of your own. Darby,” said the butler, interrupting.

“Well, I’ve no objection,” replied Darby, with an affected modesty; “for you see, master, like Homer, I accompany myself on the pipes, though – glory be to God! – I’m not blind. The little thing I ‘ll give you is imitated from the ancients – like Tibullus or Euthropeus – in the natural key.”

Mister M’Keown, after this announcement, pushed his empty tumbler towards the butler with a significant glance gave a few preparatory grunts with the pipes, followed by a long dolorous quaver, and then a still more melancholy cadence, like the expiring bray of an asthmatic jackass; all of which sounds, seeming to be the essential preliminaries to any performance on the bagpipes, were listened to with great attention by the company. At length, having assumed an imposing attitude, he lifted up both elbows, tilted his little finger affectedly up, dilated his cheeks, and began the following to the well-known air of “Una:” —

MUSIC

Of all the arts and sciences,

'T is music surely takes the sway;
It has its own appliances
To melt the heart or make it gay.
To raise us,
Or plaze us,
There 's nothing with it can compare;
To make us bowld,
Or hot or cowld,
Just as suits the kind of air.

There 's not a woman, man, or child.
That has n't felt its powers too;
Don't deny it! – when you smiled
Your eyes confess'd, that so did you.

The very winds that sigh or roar;
The leaves that rustle, dry and sear;
The waves that beat upon the shore, —
They all are music to your ear.
It was of use
To Orpheus, —
He charmed the fishes in the say;
So everything
Alive can sing, —
The kettle even sings for tay!

There's not a woman, man, or child.
That hau n't felt its power too;
Don't deny it! – when you smiled

Your eyes confess'd, that so did you.

I have certainly since this period listened to more brilliant musical performances, but for the extent of the audience, I do not think it was possible to reap a more overwhelming harvest of applause. Indeed, the old cook kept repeating stray fragments of the words to every air that crossed her memory for the rest of the evening; and as for Kitty, I intercepted more than one soft glance intended for Mister M'Keown as a reward for his minstrelsy.

Darby, to do him justice, seemed fully sensible of his triumph, and sat back in his chair and imbibed his liquor like a man who had won his laurels, and needed no further efforts to maintain his eminent position in life.

As the wintry wind moaned dismally without, and the leafless trees shook and trembled with the cold blast, the party drew in closer to the cheerful turf fire, with that sense of selfish delight that seems to revel in the contrast of indoor comfort with the bleakness and dreariness without.

“Well, Darby,” said the butler, “you weren't far wrong when you took my advice to stay here for the night; listen to how it 's blowing.”

“That 's hail!” said the old cook, as the big drops came pattering down the chimney, and hissed on the red embers as they fell. “It 's a cruel night, glory be to God!” Here the old lady blessed herself, – a ceremony which the others followed.

“For all that,” said Darby, “I ought to be up at Crocknavorrigha

this blessed evening. Joe Neale was to be married to-day.”

“Joe! is it Joe?” said the butler.

“I wish her luck of him, whoever she is!” added the cook.

“Faix, and he’s a smart boy!” chimed in the housemaid, with something not far from a blush as she spoke.

“He was a raal devil for coortin’, anyhow!” said the butler.

“It’s just for peace he’s marrying now, then,” said Darby; “the women never gave him any quietness. Just so, Kitty; you need n’t be looking cross that way, – it ‘s truth I’m telling you. They were always coming about him, and teasing him, and the like, and he could n’t bear it any longer.”

“Arrah, howld your prate!” interrupted the old cook, whose indignation for the honor of the sex could not endure more. “He’s the biggest liar from this to himself; and that same ‘s not a small word. Darby M’Keown.”

There was a pointedness in the latter part of this speech which might have led to angry consequences, had I not interposed by asking Mr. M’Keown himself if he ever was in love.

“Arrah, it ‘s wishing it, I am, the same love. Sure my back and sides is sore with it; my misfortunes would fill a book. Did n’t I bind myself apprentice to a carpenter for love of Molly Scraw, a niece he had, just to be near her and be looking at her; and that ‘s the way I shaved off the top of my thumb with the plane. By the mortal, it was near killing me. I usedn’t to eat or drink; and though I was three years at the thrade, faix, at the end of it, I could n’t tell you the gimlet from the handsaw!”

“And you wor never married, Mister M’Keown?” said Kitty.

“Never, my darling, but often mighty near it. Many ‘s the quare thing happened to me,” said Darby, meditatively; “and sure if it was n’t my guardian angel, or something of the kind, prevented it, I ‘d maybe have more wives this day than the Emperor of Roossia himself.”

“Arrah, don’t be talking!” grunted out the old cook, whose passion could scarcely be restrained at the boastful tone Mister M’Keown assumed in descanting on his successes.

“There was Biddy Finn,” continued Darby, without paying any attention to the cook’s interruption; “she might be Mrs. M’Keown this day, av it wasn’t for a remarkable thing that happened.”

“What was that?” said Kitty, with eager curiosity.

“Tell us about it. Mister M’Keown,” said the butler.

“The devil a word of truth he’ll tell you,” grumbled the cook, as she raked the ashes with a stick.

“There ‘s them here does not care for agreeable intercourse,” said Darby, assuming a grand air.

“Come, Daxby; I ‘d like to hear the story,” said I.

After a few preparatory scruples, in which modesty, offended dignity, and conscious merit struggled, Mr. M’Keown began by informing us that he had once a most ardent attachment to a certain Biddy Finn, of Ballyclough, – a lady of considerable personal attractions, to whom for a long time he had been constant, and at last, through the intervention of Father Curtin, agreed to marry. Darby’s consent to the arrangements was not

altogether the result of his reverence's eloquence, nor indeed the justice of the case; nor was it quite owing to Biddy's black eyes and pretty lips; but rather to the soul-persuading powers of some fourteen tumblers of strong punch which he swallowed at a *séance* in Biddy's father's house one cold evening in November, after which he betook himself to the road homewards, where – But we must give his story in his own words:

“Whether it was the prospect of happiness before me, or the potteen,” quoth Darby, “but so it was, – I never felt a step of the road home that night, though it was every foot of five mile. When I came to a stile, I used to give a whoop, and over it; then I'd run for a hundred yards or two, flourish my stick, cry out, ‘Who 'll say a word against Biddy Finn?’ and then over another fence, flying. Well, I reached home at last, and wet enough I was; but I did n't care for that. I opened the door and struck a light; there was the least taste of kindling on the hearth, and I put some dry sticks into it and some turf, and knelt down and began blowing it up.

“‘Troth,’ says I to myself, ‘if I wor married, it isn't this way I'd be, – on my knees like a nagur; but when I 'd come home, there 'ud be a fine fire blazin' fornint me, and a clean table out before it, and a beautiful cup of tay waiting for me, and somebody I won't mintion, sitting there, looking at me, smilin'.”

“‘Don't be making a fool of yourself, Darby M'Keown,’ said a gruff voice near the chimley.

“I jumped at him, and cried out, ‘Who 's that?’ But there was no answer; and at last, after going round the kitchen, I began to

think it was only my own voice I heard; so I knelt down again, and set to blowing away at the fire.

“And it’s yerself, Biddy,’ says I, ‘that would be an ornament to a dacent cabin; and a purtier leg and foot –’

“Be the light that shines, you’re making me sick. Darby M’Keown,’ said the voice again.

“The heavens be about us!’ says I, ‘what ‘s that? and who are you at all?’ for someways I thought I knew the voice.

“I ‘m your father!’ says the voice.

“My father!’ says I. ‘Holy Joseph, is it truth you ‘re telling me?’

“The divil a word o’ lie in it,’ says the voice. ‘Take me down, and give me an air o’ the fire, for the night ‘s cowld.’

“And where are you, father,’ says I, ‘av it’s plasing to ye?’

“I ‘m on the dhresser,’ says he. ‘Don’t you see me?’

“Sorra bit o’ me. Where now?’

“Arrah, on the second shelf, next the rowling-pin. Don’t you see the green jug? – that’s me.’

“Oh, the saints in heaven be about us!’ says I; ‘and are you a green jug?’

“I am,’ says he; ‘and sure I might be worse. Tim Healey’s mother is only a cullender, and she died two years before me.’

“Oh! father, darlin’,’ says I, ‘I hoped you wor in glory; and you only a jug all this time!’

“Never fret about it,’ says my father; ‘it ‘s the transmogrification of sowls, and we ‘ll be right by and by. Take me down, I say, and put me near the fire.’

“So I up and took him down, and wiped him with a clean cloth, and put him on the hearth before the blaze.

“‘Darby,’ says he, ‘I’m famished with the druth. Since you took to coortin’ there ‘s nothing ever goes into my mouth; haven’t you a taste of something in the house?’

“I wasn’t long till I hated some wather, and took down the bottle of whiskey and some sugar, and made a rousing jugful, as strong as need be.

“‘Are you satisfied, father?’ says I.

“‘I am,’ says he; ‘you ‘re a dutiful child, and here ‘s your health, and don’t be thinking of Biddy Finn,’

“With that my father began to explain how there was never any rest nor quietness for a man after he married, – more be token, if his wife was fond of talking; and that he never could take his dhrop of drink in comfort afterwards.

“‘May I never,’ says he, ‘but I ‘d rather be a green jug, as I am now, than alive again wid your mother. Sure it ‘s not here you’d be sitting to-night,’ says he, ‘discoorsing with me, av you wor married; devil a bit. Fill me,’ says my father, ‘and I ‘ll tell you more.’

“And sure enough I did, and we talked away till near daylight; and then the first thing I did was to take the ould mare out of the stable, and set off to Father Curtin, and towld him all about it, and how my father would n’t give his consent by no means.

“‘We’ll not mind the marriage,’ says his rivirence; ‘but go back and bring me your father, – the jug, I mean, – and we ‘ll try and

get him out of trouble; for it 's trouble he 's in, or he would n't be that way. Give me the two pound ten,' says the priest; 'you had it for the wedding, and it will be better spent getting your father out of purgatory than sending you into it. "'

"Arrah, aren't you ashamed of yourself?" cried the cook, with a look of ineffable scorn, as he concluded.

"Look now," said Darby, "see this; if it is n't thruth – "

"And what became of your father?" interrupted the butler.

"And Biddy Finn, what did she do?" said the housemaid.

Darby, however, vouchsafed no reply, but sat back in his chair with an offended look, and sipped his liquor in silence.

A fresh brew of punch under the butler's auspices speedily, however, dispelled the cloud that hovered over the conviviality of the party; and even the cook vouchsafed to assist in the preparation of some rashers, which Darby suggested were beautiful things for the thirst at this hour of the night; but whether in allaying or exciting it, he did n't exactly lay down. The conversation now became general; and as they seemed resolved to continue their festivities to a late hour, I took the first opportunity I could, when unobserved, to steal away and return to my own room.

No sooner alone again than all the sorrow of my lonely state came back upon me; and as I laid my head on my pillow, the full measure of my misery flowed in upon my heart, and I sobbed myself to sleep.

CHAPTER III. THE DEPARTURE

The violent beating of the rain against the glass, and the loud crash of the storm as it shook the window-frames or snapped the sturdy branches of the old trees, awoke me. I got up, and opening the shutters, endeavored to look out; but the darkness was impenetrable, and I could see nothing but the gnarled and grotesque forms of the leafless trees dimly marked against the sky, as they moved to and fro like the arms of some mighty giant. Masses of heavy snow melted by the rain fell at intervals from the steep roof, and struck the ground beneath with a low sumpth like thunder. A grayish, leaden tinge that marked the horizon showed it was near daybreak; but there was nought of promise in this harbinger of morning. Like my own career, it opened gloomily and in sadness: so felt I at least; and as I sat beside the window, and strained my eyes to pierce the darkening storm, I thought that even watching the wild hurricane without was better than brooding over the sorrows within my own bosom.

How long I remained thus I know not; but already the faint streak that announces sunrise marked the dull-colored sky, when the cheerful sounds of a voice singing in the room underneath attracted me. I listened, and in a moment recognized the piper. Darby M'Keown. He moved quickly about, and by his motions I could collect that he was making preparations for his journey.

If I could venture to pronounce, from the merry tones of his

voice and the light elastic step with which he trod the floor, I certainly would not suppose that the dreary weather had any terror for him. He spoke so loud that I could catch a great deal of the dialogue he maintained with himself, and some odd verses of the song with which from time to time he garnished his reflections.

“Marry, indeed! Catch me at it – nabocklish – with the countryside before me, and the hoith of good eating and drinking for a blast of the chantre. Well, well! women ‘s quare craytures anyway.

‘Ho, ho! Mister Ramey,
No more of your blarney,
I ‘d have yoa not make so free;
You may go where you plaze.
And make love at your ease.
But the devil may have you for me.’

Very well, ma’am. Mister M’Keown is your most obedient, – never say it twice, honey; and isn’t there as good fish, eh? – whoop!

‘Oh! my heart is unazy.
My brain is run crazy,
Sure it ‘s often I wish I was dead;
‘Tis your smile now so sweet!
Now your ankles and feet.
That ‘s walked into my heart, Molly Spread!

Tol de rol, de rol, oh!

Whew! thttt 's rain, anyhow. I would n't mind it, bad as it is, if I hadn't the side of a mountain before me; but sure it comes to the same in the end. Catty Delany is a good warrant for a pleasant evening; and, please God, I 'll be playing 'Baltiorum' beside the fire there before this time to-night.

'She 'd a pig and boneens.

And a bed and a dresser.

And a nate little room

For the father confessor;

With a cupboard and curtains, and something, I 'm towld.

That his riv'rance liked when the weather was cowld.

And it 's hurroo, hurroo! Biddy O'Rafferty!

After all, aix, the priest bates us out. There 's eight o'clock now, and I'm not off; devil a one's stirring in the house either. Well, I believe I may take my leave of it; sorrow many tunes of the pipes it's likely to hear, with Tony Basset over it. And my heart 's low when I think of that child there. Poor Tom! and it was you liked fun when you could have it."

I wanted but the compassionate tone in which these few words were spoken to decide me in a resolution that I had been for some time pondering over. I knew that ere many hours Basset would come in search of me; I felt that, once in his power, I had nothing to expect but the long-promised payment of his old debt of hatred

to me. In a few seconds I ran over with myself the prospect of misery before me, and determined at once, at every hazard, to make my escape. Darby seemed to afford me the best possible opportunity for this purpose; and I dressed myself, therefore, in the greatest haste, and throwing whatever I could find of my wardrobe into my carpet-bag, I pocketed my little purse, with all my worldly wealth, – some twelve or thirteen shillings, – and noiselessly slipped downstairs to the room beneath. I reached the door at the very moment Darby opened it to issue forth. He started back with fear, and crossed himself twice.

“Don’t be afraid. Darby,” said I, uneasy lest he should make any noise that would alarm the others; “I want to know which road you are travelling this morning.”

“The saints be about us, but you frightened me. Master Tommy; though, intermediately, I may observe, I ‘m by no ways timorous. I ‘m going within two miles of Athlone.”

“That’s exactly where I want to go. Darby; will you take me with you?” for at the instant Captain Bubbleton’s address flashed on my mind, and I resolved to seek him out and ask his advice in my difficulties.

“I see it all,” replied Darby, as he placed the tip of his finger on his nose. “I conceive your embarrassments, – you’re afraid of Basset; and small blame to you. But don’t do it. Master Tommy, – don’t do it, alannah! that ‘s the hardest life at all.”

“What?” said I, in amazement.

“To ‘list! Sure I know what you’re after. Faix, it would sarve

you better to larn the pipes.”

I hastened to assure Darby of his error; and in a few words informed him of what I had overheard of Basset’s intentions respecting me.

“Make you an attorney!” said Darby, interrupting me abruptly, “an attorney! There’s nothing so mean as an attorney. The police is gentlemen compared to them, – they fight it out fair like men; but the other chaps sit in a house planning and contriving mischief all day long, inventing every kind of wickedness, and then getting people to do it. See, now, I believe in my conscience the devil was the first attorney, and it was just to serve his own ends that he bred a ruction between Adam and Eve. But whisht! there’s somebody stirring. Are you for the road?”

“Yes, Darby; my mind’s made up.”

Indeed, his own elegant eulogium on legal pursuits assisted my resolution, and filled my heart with renewed disgust at the thought of such a guardian as Tony Basset.

We walked stealthily along the gloomy passages, traversed the old hall, and noiselessly withdrew the heavy bolts and the great chain that fastened the door. The rain was sweeping along the ground in torrents, and the wind dashed it against the window panes in fitful gusts. It needed all our strength to close the door after us against the storm, and it was only after several trials that we succeeded in doing so. The hollow sound of the oak door smote upon my heart as it closed behind me; in an instant the sense of banishment, of utter destitution, was present to my

mind. I turned my eyes to gaze upon the old house, – to take my last farewell of it forever! Gloomy as my prospect was, my sorrow was less for the sad future than for the misery of the moment.

“No, Master Tom! no, you must go back,” said Darby, who watched with a tender interest the sickly paleness of my cheek, and the tottering uncertainty of my walk.

“No, Darby,” said I, with an effort at firmness; “I’ll not look round any more.” And bending my head against the storm, I stepped out boldly beside my companion. We walked on without speaking, and soon left the neglected avenue and ruined gate lodge behind us, as we reached the highroad that led to Athlone.

Darby, who only waited to let my first burst of sorrow find its natural vent, no sooner perceived from my step and the renewed color of my cheek that I had rallied my courage once more, than he opened all his stores of agreeability, which, to my inexperience in such matters, were by no means inconsiderable. Abandoning at once all high-flown phraseology, – which Mr. M’Keown, I afterwards remarked, only retained as a kind of gala suit for great occasions, – he spoke freely and naturally. Lightening the way with many a story, – now grave, now gay, – he seemed to care little for the inclemency of the weather, and looked pleasantly forward to a happy evening as an ample reward for the present hardship.

“And the captain, Master Tom; you say he’s an agreeable man?” said Darby, alluding to my late companion on the coach, whose merits I was never tired of recapitulating.

“Oh, delightful! He has travelled everywhere, and seems to know everybody and everything. He ‘s very rich, too; I forget how many houses he has in England, and elephants without number in India.”

“Faix, you were in luck to fall in with him!” observed Darby.

“Yes, that I was I I ‘m sure he ‘ll do something for me; and for you too, Darby, when he knows you have been so kind to me.”

“Me! What did I do, darling? and what could I do, a poor piper like me? Wouldn’t it be honor enough for me if a gentleman’s son would travel the road with me? Darby M’Keown’s a proud man this day to have you beside him.”

A ruined cabin in the road, whose blackened walls and charred timbers denoted its fate, here attracted my companion’s attention. He stopped for a second or two to look on it; and then, kneeling down, he muttered a short prayer for the eternal rest of some one departed, and taking up a stone, he threw it on a heap of similar ones which lay near the doorside.

“What happened there, Darby?” said I, as he resumed his way.

“They wor out in the thrubles!” was his only reply, as he cast a glance behind, to perceive if any one had remarked him.

Though he made no further allusion to the fate of those who once inhabited the cabin, he spoke freely of his own share in the eventful year of ‘Ninety-eight’ justifying, as it then seemed to me, every step of the patriotic party, and explaining the causes of their unsuccess so naturally and so clearly that I could not help following with interest every detail of his narrative, and joining

in his regrets for the unexpected and adverse strokes fortune dealt upon them. As he warmed with his subject, he spoke of France with an enthusiasm that I soon found contagious. He told me of the glorious career of the French armies in Italy and Austria; and of that wonderful man, of whom I then heard for the first time, as spreading a halo of victory over his nation, – contrasting, as he went on, the rewards which awaited heroism and bravery in that service with the purchased promotion in ours, artfully illustrating his position by a reference to myself, and what my fortunes would have been if born under that happier sky. “No elder brother there,” said he, “to live in affluence, while the younger ones are turned out to wander on the wide world, houseless and penniless. And all these things we might have done, had we been but true to ourselves.” I drank in all he said with avidity. The bearing of his arguments on my own fortunes gave them an interest and an apparent truth my young mind eagerly devoured; and when he ceased to speak, I pondered over all he told me in a spirit that left its impress on my whole future life.

It was a new notion to me to connect my own fortunes with anything in the political condition of the country; and while it gave my young heart a kind of martyred courage, it set my brain a-thinking on a class of subjects which never before possessed any interest for me. There was a flattery, too, in the thought that I owed my straitened circumstances less to any demerits of my own, than to political disabilities. The time was well chosen by my companion to instil his doctrines into my heart. I was

young, ardent, enthusiastic; my own wrongs had taught me to hate injustice and oppression; my condition had made me feel, and feel bitterly, the humiliation of dependence; and if I listened with eager curiosity to every story and every incident of the bygone Rebellion, it was because the contest was represented to me as one between tyranny on one side and struggling liberty on the other. I heard the names of those who sided with the insurgent party extolled as the great and good men of their country; their ancient families and hereditary claims furnishing a contrast to many of the opposite party, whose recent settlement in the island and new-born aristocracy were held up in scoff and derision. In a word, I learned to believe that the one side was characterized by cruelty, oppression, and injustice; the other, conspicuous only for endurance, courage, patriotism, and truth. What a picture was this to a mind like mine! and at a moment, too, when I seemed to realize in my own desolation an example of the very sufferings I heard of!

If the portrait McKeown drew of Ireland was sad and gloomy, he painted France in colors the brightest and most seductive. Dwelling less on the political advantages which the Revolution had won for the popular party, he directed my entire attention to the brilliant career of glory the French army had followed; the triumphant success of the Italian campaign; the war in Germany; and the splendor of Paris, which he represented as a very paradise on earth; but above all, he dwelt on the character and achievements of the First Consul, recounting many anecdotes of

his early life, from the period when he was a schoolboy at Brienne to the hour when he dictated the conditions of peace to the oldest monarchies of Europe, and proclaimed war with the voice of one who came as an avenger.

I drank in every word he spoke with avidity. The very enthusiasm of his manner was contagious; I felt my heart bound with rapturous delight at some hardy deed of soldierlike daring, and conceived a kind of wild idolatry for the man who seemed to have infused his own glorious temperament into the mighty thousands around him, and converted a whole nation into heroes.

Darby's information on all these matters – which seemed to me something miraculous – had been obtained at different periods from French emissaries who were scattered through Ireland; many of them old soldiers who had served in the campaigns of Egypt and Italy.

“But sure, if you ‘d come with me, Master Tom, I could bring you where you’ll see them yourself; and you could talk to them of the battles and skirmishes, for I suppose you spake French.”

“Very little. Darby. How sorry I am now that I don’t know it well.”

“No matter; they’ll soon teach you, and many a thing besides. There ‘s a captain I know of, not far from where we are this minute, could learn you the small sword, – in style, he could. I wish you saw him in his green uniform with white facings, and three elegant crosses upon it that General Bonaparte gave him with his own hands; he had them on one Sunday, and I never

see'd anything equal to it.”

“And are there many French officers hereabouts?”

“Not now; no, they're almost all gone. After the rising they went back to France, except a few. Well, there'll be call for them again, please God.”

“Will there be another Rebellion, then, Darby?”

As I put this question fearlessly, and in a voice loud enough to be heard at some distance, a horseman, wrapped up in a loose cloth cloak, was passing. He suddenly pulled up short, and turning his horse round, stood exactly opposite to the piper. Darby saluted the stranger respectfully, and seemed desirous to pass on; but the other, turning round in his saddle, fixed a stern look on him, and he cried out, —

“What! at the old trade, M'Keown. Is there no curing you, eh?”

“Just so, major,” said Darby, assuming a tone of voice he had not made use of the entire morning; “I 'm conveying a little instrumental recreation.”

“None of your damned gibberish with me. Who 's that with you?”

“He 's the son of a neighbor of mine, your honor,” said Darby, with an imploring look at me not to betray him. “His father 's a schoolmaster, — a philomath, as one might say.”

I was about to contradict this statement bluntly, when the stranger called out to me, —

“Mark me, young sir, you 're not in the best of company this morning, and I recommend you to part with your friend as soon

as may be. And you,” said he, turning to Darby, “let me see you in Athlone at ten o’clock to-morrow. D’ ye hear me?”

The piper grew pale as death as he heard this command, to which he only responded by touching his hat in silence; while the horseman, drawing his cloak around, dashed his spurs into his beast’s flanks, and was soon out of sight. Darby stood for a moment or two looking down the road, where the stranger had disappeared; a livid hue colored his cheek, and a tremulous quivering of his under-lip gave him the appearance of one in ague.

“I’ll be even with ye yet,” muttered he between his clenched teeth; “and when the hour comes —”

Here he repeated some words in Irish with a vehemence of manner that actually made my blood tingle; then suddenly recovering himself, he assumed a kind of sickly smile. “That’s a hard man, the major.”

“I’m thinking,” said Darby, after a pause of some minutes, — “I ‘m thinking it ‘s better for you not to go into Athlone with me; for if Basset wishes to track you out, that ‘ll be the first place he ‘ll try. Besides, now that the major has seen you, he’ll never forget you.”

Having pledged myself to adopt any course my companion recommended, he resumed, —

“Ay, that ‘s the best way. I ‘ll lave you at Ned Malone’s in the Glen; and when I ‘ve done with the major in the morning, I ‘ll look after your friend the captain, and tell him where you are.”

I readily assented to this arrangement; and only asked what distance it might yet be to Ned Malone's, for already I began to feel fatigue.

“A good ten miles,” said Darby, – “no less; but we ‘ll stop here above, and get something to eat, and then we ‘ll take a rest for an hour or two, and you ‘ll think nothing of the road after.”

I stepped out with increased energy at the cheering prospect; and although the violence of the weather was nothing abated, I consoled myself with thinking of the rest and refreshment before me, and resolved not to bestow a thought upon the present. Darby, on the other hand, seemed more depressed than before, and betrayed in many ways a state of doubt and uncertainty as to his movements, – sometimes pushing on rapidly for half a mile or so; then relapsing into a slow and plodding pace; often looking back too, and more than once coming to a perfect stand-still, talking the whole time to himself in a low muttering voice.

In this way we proceeded for above two miles, when at last I descried through the beating rain the dusky gable of a small cabin in the distance, and eagerly asked if that were to be our halting place.

“Yes,” said Darby, “that ‘s Peg’s cabin; and though it ‘s not very remarkable in the way of cookery or the like, it ‘s the only house within seven miles of us.”

As we came nearer, the aspect of the building became even less enticing. It was a low mud hovel, with a miserable roof of sods, or scraws, as they are technically called; a wretched attempt

at a chimney occupying the gable; and the front to the road containing a small square aperture, with a single pane of glass as a window, and a wicker contrivance in the shape of a door, which, notwithstanding the severity of the day, lay wide open to permit the exit of the smoke, which rolled more freely through this than through the chimney. A filthy pool of stagnant, green-covered water stood before the door, through which a little causeway of earth led. Upon this a thin, lank-sided sow was standing to be rained, on, her long, pointed snout turned meditatively towards the luscious mud beside her. Displacing this Important member of the family with an unceremonious kick. Darby stooped to enter the low doorway, uttering as he did so the customary "God save all here!" As I followed him in, I did not catch the usual response to the greeting, and from the thick smoke which filled the cabin, could see nothing whatever around me.

"Well, Peg," said Darby, "how is it with you the day?"

A low grunting noise issued from the foot of a little mud wall beside the fireplace. I turned and beheld the figure of a woman of some seventy years of age, seated beside the turf embers; her dark eyes, bleared with smoke and dimmed with age, were still sharp and piercing; and her nose, thin and aquiline, indicated a class of features by no means common among the people. Her dress was the blue frieze coat of a laboring man, over the woollen gown usually worn by women. Her feet and legs were bare; and her head was covered with an old straw bonnet, whose faded ribbon and tarnished finery betokened its having once belonged

to some richer owner. There was no vestige of any furniture, — neither table nor chair, nor dresser, nor even a bed, unless some straw laid against the wall in one corner could be thus called; a pot suspended over the wet and sodden turf by a piece of hay rope, and an earthen pipkin with water stood beside her. The floor of the hovel, lower in many places than the road without, was cut up into sloppy mud by the tread of the sow, who ranged at will through the premises. In a word, more dire and wretched poverty it was impossible to conceive.

Darby's first movement was to take off the lid and peer into the pot, when the bubbling sound of the boiling potatoes assured him that we should have at least something to eat; his next, was to turn a little basket upside down for a seat, to which he motioned me with his hand; then, approaching the old woman, he placed his hand to his mouth and shouted in her ear, —

“What 's the major after this morning, Peg?”

She shook her head gloomily a couple of times, but gave no answer.

“I 'm thinking there 's bad work going on at the town there,” cried he, in the same loud tone as before.

Peg muttered something in Irish, but far too low to be audible.

“Is she mad, poor thing?” said I, in a whisper.

The words were not well uttered when she darted on me her black and piercing eyes, with a look so steadfast as to make me quail beneath them.

“Who 's that there?” said the hag, in a croaking, harsh voice.

“He ‘s a young boy from beyond Loughrea.”

“No!” shouted she, in a tone of passionate energy; “don’t tell me a lie. I ‘d know his brows among a thousand, – he ‘s a son of Matt Burke’s, of Cronmore.”

“Begorra, she is a witch; devil a doubt of it!” muttered Darby between his teeth. “You ‘re right, Peg,” continued he, after a moment. “His father’s dead, and the poor child’s left nothing in the world.”

“And so ould Matt’s dead?” interrupted she. “When did he die?”

“On Tuesday morning, before day.”

“I was driaming of him that morning, and I thought he kem up here to the cabin door on his knees, and said, ‘Peggy, Peggy M’Casky! I’m come to ax your pardon for all I done to you.’ And I sat up in my bed, and cried out, ‘Who ‘s that?’ and he said, ‘T is me, – ‘t is Mister Burke; I ‘m come to give you back your lease.’ ‘I ‘ll tell you what you ‘ll give me back,’ says I; ‘give me the man whose heart you bruck with bad treatment; give me the two fine boys you transported for life; give me back twenty years of my own, that I spent in sorrow and misery.’”

“Peg, acushla! don’t speak of it any more. The poor child here, that ‘s fasting from daybreak, he is n’t to blame for what his father did. I think the praties is done by this time.”

So saying, he lifted the pot from the fire, and carried it to the door to strain off the water. The action seemed to rouse the old woman, who rose rapidly to her legs, and, hastening to the door,

snatched the pot from his hand and pushed him to one side.

“‘Tis two days since I tasted bit or sup; ‘tis God himself knows when and where I may have it again; but if I never broke my fast, I’ll not do it with the son of him that left me a lone woman this day, that brought the man that loved me to the grave, and my children to shame forever.”

As she spoke, she dashed the pot into the road with such force as to break it into fifty pieces; and then, sitting down on the outside of the cabin, she wrung her hands and moaned piteously, in the very excess of her sorrow.

“Let us be going,” said Darby, in a whisper. “There ‘a no spaking to her when she ‘s one of them fits on her.”

We moved silently from the hovel, and gained the road. My heart was full to bursting; shame and abasement overwhelmed me, and I dared not look up.

“Good-by, Peg. I hope we ‘ll be better friends when we meet again,” said Darby, as he passed out.

She made no reply, but entered the cabin, from which, in an instant after, she emerged, carrying a lighted sod of turf in a rude wooden tongs.

“Come along quick!” said Darby, with a look of terror; “she’s going to curse you.”

I turned round, transfixed and motionless. If my life depended on it, I could not have stirred a limb. The old woman by this time had knelt down on the road, and was muttering rapidly to herself.

“Come along, I say I,” said Darby, pulling me by the arm.

“And now,” cried the hag aloud, “may bad luck be your shadow wherever you walk, with sorrow behind and bad hopes before you! May you never taste happiness nor ease; and, like this turf, may your heart be always burning here, and – ”

I heard no more, for Darby, tearing me away by main force, dragged me along the road, just as the hissing turf embers had fallen at my feet where the hag had thrown them.

CHAPTER IV. MY WANDERINGS

I CANNOT deny it, – the horrible imprecation I had heard uttered against me seemed to fill up the cup of my misery. An outcast, without home, without a friend, this alone was wanting to overwhelm me with very wretchedness; and as I covered my face with both hands, I thought my heart would break.

“Come, come. Master Tom!” said Darby, “don’t be afeard; it’ll never do you harm, all she said. I made the sign of the cross on the road between you and her with the end of my stick, and you ‘re safe enough this time. Faix, she ‘s a quare divil when she ‘s roused, – to destroy an illigint pot of praties that way! But sure she had hard provocation. Well, well! you war n’t to blame, anyhow; Tony Basset will have a sore reckoning some day for all this.”

The mention of that name recalled me in a moment to the consideration of my own danger if he were to succeed in overtaking me, and I eagerly communicated my fear to Darby.

“That’s thrue,” said he; “we must leave the highroad, for Basset will be up at the house by this, and will lose no time in following you out. If you had a bit of something to eat.”

“As to that. Darby,” said I, with a sickly effort to smile, “Peg’s curse took away my appetite, full as well as her potatoes would have done.”

“T is a bad way to breakfast, after all,” said Darby. “Do you

ever take a shaugh of the pipe, Master Tom?”

“No,” said I, laughing, “I never learned to smoke yet.”

“Well,” replied he, a little piqued by the tone of my answer, “’t is worse you might be doin’ than that same. Tobacco’s a fine thing for the heart! Many’s the time, when I ‘m alone, if I had n’t the pipe I ‘d be lone and sorrowful, – thinking over the hard times and the like; but when I ‘ve filled my dudeen, and do be watching the smoke curling up, I begin dhraming about sitting round the fire with pleasant companions, chatting away, and discoorsing, and telling stories. And then I invint the stories to myself about quare devils of pipers travelling over the country, making love here and there, and playing dhroll tunes out of their own heads; and then I make the tunes to them. And after that, maybe, I make words, and sometimes lay down the pipe and begin singing to myself; and often I take up the bagpipes and play away with all my might, till I think I see the darlinest little fairies ever you seen dancing before me, setting to one another, and turning round, and capering away, – down the middle and up again; small chaps, with three-cornered hats, and wigs, and little red coats all slashed with goold; and beautiful little craytures houlding their petticoats, this way to show a nate leg and foot; and I do be calling out to them, – ‘Hands round!’ ‘That ‘s your sowl!’ ‘Look at the green fellow; ‘tis himself can do it!’ ‘Rise the jig, hoo!’ – and faix ‘t is sorry enough I ‘m when they go, and lave me all alone by myself.”

“And how does all that come into your head. Darby?” “Troth,

'tis hard to tell," said Darby, with a sigh. "But my notion is, that the poor man that has neither fine houses, nor fine clothes, nor horses, nor sarvants to amuse him, that Providence is kind to him in another way, and fills his mind with all manner of dhrroll thoughts and quare stories and bits of songs, and the like, and lets him into many a sacret about fairies and the good people that the rich has no time for. And sure you must have often remarked it, that the quality has never a bit of fun in them at all, but does be always coming to us for something to make them laugh. Did you never lave the parlor, when the company was sitting with lashings of wine and fruit, and every convaniency, and go downstairs to the kitchen, where maybe there was nothing but a salt herrin' and a jug of punch; and if you did, where wais the most fun, I wondher? Arrah, when they bid me play a tune for them, and I look at their sorrowful pale faces, and their dim eyes and the stiff way they sit upon their chairs, I never put heart in it; but when I rise 'Dirty James,' or 'The Little Bould Fox,' or 'Kiss my Lady,' for the boys and girls, sure 't is my whole sowl does be in the bag, and I squeeze the notes out of it with all my might."

In this way did Darby converse until we reached a cross road, when, coming to a halt, he pointed with his finger to the distance, and said, —

"Athlone is down beyond that low mountain. Now, Ned Malone's is only six short miles from this. You keep this byroad till you reach the smith's forge; then turn off to the lift, across the fields, till you come to an ould ruin; lave that to your right hand,

and follow the boreen straight; 'twill bring you to Ned's doore."

"But I don't know him," said I.

"What signifies that? Sure 'tis no need you have. Tell him you 'll stop there till Darby the Blast comes for you. And see, now, here 's all you have to do: put your right thumb in the palm of your left hand, – this way, – and then kiss the other thumb, and then you have it. But mind you don't do that till you 're alone with him; 't is a token between ourselves."

"I wish you were coming with me, Darby; I'd rather not leave you!"

"'Tis myself mislikes it, too," said Darby, with a sigh. "But I daren't miss going to Athlone; the major would soon ferret me out; and it's worse it would be for me."

"And what am I to do if Mr. Basset comes after me?"

"If he has n't a throop of horse at his back, you may laugh at him in Ned Malone's, And now good-by, acushla; and don't let your heart be low, – you 'll be a man soon, you know."

The words of encouragement could not have been more happily chosen to raise my drooping spirits. The sense of opening manhood was already stirring within me, and waited but for some direct occasion to elicit it in full vigor.

I shook Darby's hand with a firm grasp, and assuming the easiest smile I could accomplish, I set out on the path before me with all the alacrity in my power.

The first thought that shot across my mind when I parted with my companion was the utter loneliness of my condition;

the next – and it followed immediately on the other – was the bold consciousness of personal freedom. I enjoyed at the moment the untrammelled liberty to wander without let or control. All memory of Tony Basset was forgotten, and I only remembered the restraint of school and the tyranny of my master. My plan – and already I had formed a plan – was to become a farmer's servant, to work as a daily laborer. Ned Malone would probably accept of me, young as I was, in that capacity; and I had no other ambition than such as secured my independence.

As I travelled along I wove within my mind a whole web of imaginary circumstances: of days of peaceful toil; of nights of happy and contented rest; of friendship formed with those of my own age and condition; of the long summer evenings when I should ramble alone to commune with myself on my humble but happy lot; on the red hearth in winter, around which the merry faces of the cottagers were beaming, as some pleasant tale was told; – and as I asked myself, would I exchange a life like this for all the advantages of fortune my brother's position afforded him, my heart replied, No! Even then the words of the piper had worked upon me, and already had I connected the possession of wealth with oppression and tyranny, and the lowly fortunes of the poor man as alone securing high-souled liberty of thought and freedom of speech and action.

I trudged along through the storm, turning from time to time to see that I was not pursued; for as the day waned, my fear of being overtaken increased, and in every moaning of the

wind and every rustle of the branches I thought I heard Tony Basset summoning me to stop and surrender myself his prisoner. This dread gradually gave way, as the loneliness of the road was unbroken by a single traveller; the wild half-tilled fields presented no living object far or near; the thick rain swooped along the swampy earth, and, in its misty darkness, shut out all distant prospect; and a sadder picture eye never rested on.

At length I reached the ruined church Darby spoke of, and following the track he indicated, soon came out upon the breen, where for the first time some little shelter existed.

It was only at nightfall, when fatigue and hunger had nearly obtained the victory over me, that I saw, at some short distance in front, the long roof of a well-thatched cabin. As I came nearer, I could perceive that it contained several windows, and that the door was sheltered by a small porch, – marks of comfort by no means common among the neighboring farmers; lights moved here and there through the cabin; and the voices of people driving in the cows, and the barking of dogs, were welcome sounds to my ear. A half-clad urchin, of some seven years old, armed with a huge bramble, was driving a flock of turkeys before him as I approached; but instead of replying to my question, “If this were Ned Malone’s,” the little fellow threw down his weapon, and ran for his life. Before I could recover from my surprise at his strange conduct, the door opened, and a large, powerful-looking man, in a long blue coat, appeared. He carried a musket in his hand, which, as soon as he perceived the figure before him, he laid

down within the porch, calling out to some one inside, —

“Go back, Maurice, — it’s nothing. Well, sir,” continued he, addressing me, “do you want anybody hereabouts?”

“Is this Ned Malone’s, may I ask?” said I.

“It is,” answered he; “and I am Ned Malone, at your service. And what then?”

There was something in the cold, forbidding tone in which he spoke, as well as in the hard severity of his look, that froze all my resolution to ask a favor, and I would gladly have sought elsewhere for shelter for the night had I known where to look.

The delay this indecision on my part created, caused him to repeat his question, while he fixed his eyes on me with a dark and piercing expression.

“Darby the Blast told me,” said I, with a great effort to seem at ease, “that you would give me shelter to-night. To-morrow morning he ‘s to come here for me.”

“And who are you,” said he, harshly, “that I am to take into my house? In these troublesome times a man may ask the name of his lodger.”

“My name is Burke. My father’s name was Burke, of Cremore; but he ‘s dead now.”

“‘T is you that Basset is after all day, is it?”

“I can’t tell; but I fear it may be.”

“Well, some one told him that you took the Dublin road, and another sent him up here, and the boys here sent him to Durragh. And what are you after, young gentleman? Do you dislike Tony

Basset? Is that it?"

"Yes," said I; "I 'm resolved never to go home and live with him. He made my father hate me, and through him I have been left a beggar."

"There 's more than you has a score to settle with Tony. Come into the house and get your clothes dried. But stop, I have a bit of a caution to give you. If you see anything or anybody while you 're under my roof that you did n't expect – "

"Trust me there!" interrupted I, eagerly, and making the sign the piper had taught me.

"What!" cried Malone, in astonishment; "are you one of us? Is a son of Matt Burke's going to redress the wrongs his father and grandfather before him inflicted? Give me your hand, my brave boy; there 's nothing in this house isn't your own from this minit."

I grasped his strong hand in mine, and with a proud and swelling heart, followed him into the cabin.

A whisper crept round the various persons that sat and stood about the kitchen fire as I appeared among them; and the next moment one after another pressed anxiously forward to shake hands with me.

"Help him off with his wet clothes, Maurice," said Malone, to a young man of some twenty years; and in a few seconds my wet garments were hung on chairs before the blaze, and I myself, accompanied with a frieze coat that would make a waistcoat for an elephant, sat basking before the cheerful turf fire. The savory steam of a great mess of meat and potatoes induced me to peep

into the large pot over the fire. A hearty burst of laughing from the whole party acknowledged their detection of my ravenous hunger, and the supper was smoking on the board in a few minutes after. Unhappily, a good number of years have rolled over my head since that night; but I still hesitate to decide whether to my appetite or to Mrs. Malone's cookery should attribute it, but certainly my performance on that occasion called forth unqualified admiration.

I observed during the supper that one of the girls carried a plateful of the savory dish into a small room at the end of the kitchen, carefully closing the door after her as she entered; and when she came out, exchanging with Malone a few hurried words, to which the attention of the others was evidently directed. The caution I had already received, and my own sense of propriety, prevented my paying any attention to this, and I conversed with those about me, freely narrating the whole circumstances of my departure from home, my fear of Basset, and my firm resolve, come what might, never to become an inmate of his house and family. Not all the interest they took in my fortunes, nor even the warm praises of what they called my courage and manliness, could ward off the tendency to sleep, and my eyes actually closed as I lay down in my bed, and notwithstanding the noise of voices and the sounds of laughter near me, sank into the heaviest slumber.

CHAPTER V. THE CABIN

Before day broke the stir and bustle of the household awoke me, and had it not been for the half-open door, which permitted a view of the proceedings in the kitchen, I should have been sadly puzzled to remember where I was. The cheerful turf fire, the happy faces, and the pleasant voices all reminded me of the preceding night, and I lay pondering over my fortunes, and revolving within myself many a plan for the future.

In all the daydreams of ambition in which youth indulges, there is this advantage over the projects of maturer years, – the past never mingles with the future. In after life our bygone existence is ever tingeing the time to come; the expectations friends have formed of us, the promises we have made to our own hearts, the hopes we have created, seem to pledge us to something which, if unattained, sounds like failure. But in earlier years, the budding consciousness of our ability to reach the goal does but stimulate us, and never chills our efforts by the dread of disappointment; we have, as it were, only bound ourselves in recognizances with our own hearts, – the world has not gone bail for us, and our falling short involves not the ruin of others, nor the loss of that self-respect which is but the reflex of the opinion of society. I felt this strongly; and the more I ruminated on it, the more resolutely bent was I to adopt some bold career, – some enterprising path, where ambition should supply to me the

pleasures and excitements that others found among friends and home.

I now perceived how unsuitable would be to me the quiet monotony of a peasant's life; how irksome the recurrence of the same daily occupations, the routine of ceaseless labor, the intercourse with those whose views and hopes strayed not beyond their own hedgerows. A soldier's life appeared to realize all that I looked for; but then the conversation of the piper recurred to me, and I remembered how he painted these men to me as mere hireling bravos, to whom glory or fame was nothing, – merely actuated by the basest of passions, the slaves of tyranny. All the atrocities he mentioned of the military in the past year came up before me, and with them the brave resistance of the people in their struggle for independence. How my heart glowed with enthusiasm as I thought over the bold stand they had made, and how I panted to be a man, and linked in such a cause! Every gloomy circumstance in my own fate seemed as the result of that grinding oppression under which my country suffered, – even to the curse vented on me by one whose ruin and desolation lay at my own father's door. My temples throbbed, and my heart beat painfully against my side, as I revolved these thoughts within me; and when I rose from my bed that morning, I was a rebel with all my soul.

The day, like the preceding one, was stormy and inclement; the rain poured down without ceasing, and the dark, lowering sky gave no promise of better things. The household of the cottage

remained all at home, and betook themselves to such occupations as indoor permitted. The women sat down to their spinning-wheels; some of the men employed themselves in repairing their tools, and others in making nets for fishing: but all were engaged. Meanwhile, amid the sounds of labor was mixed the busy hum of merry voices, as they chatted away pleasantly, with many a story and many a song lightening the long hours of the dark day. As for me, I longed impatiently for Darby's return: a thousand half-formed plans were flitting through my mind; and I burned to hear whether Basset was still in pursuit of me; what course he was adopting to regain me within his control; if Darby had seen my friend Bubbleton, and whether he showed any disposition to befriend and protect me. These and such like thoughts kept passing through my mind; and as the storm would shake the rude door, I would stand up with eagerness, hoping every moment to see him enter. But the day moved on, and the dusky half-light of a wintry afternoon was falling, and Darby made not his appearance. When I spoke of him to the others, they expressed no surprise at his absence, merely remarking that he was always uncertain, – no one knew when to expect him; that he rarely came when they looked for him, and constantly dropped in when no one anticipated it.

“There he is now, then!” said one of the young men, springing up and opening the door; “I hear his voice in the glen.”

“Do you see him, Maurice?” cried Malone. “Is it him?”

The young man stepped back, his face pale as death, and his

mouth partly open.

He whispered a word in the old man's ear; to which the other responded, — "Where?"

The youth pointed with his finger. "How many are they?" was his next question, while his dark eye glanced towards the old musket that hung on the wall above the fire.

"Too many, — too many for us," said Maurice, bitterly.

The women, who had gathered around the speaker, looked at each other with an expression of utter wretchedness, when one of them, breaking from the others, rushed into the little inner room off the kitchen, and slammed the door violently behind her. The next instant the sound of voices was heard from the room, as if in altercation. Malone turned round at once, and throwing the door wide open, called out, —

"Be quiet, I say; there's not a moment to be lost. Maurice, put that gun away; Shamus, take up your net again; sit down, girls."

At the same instant he drew from his bosom a long horse pistol, and having examined the loading and priming, replaced it within his waistcoat, and sat down on a chair beside the fire, his strongly marked countenance fixed on the red blaze, while his lips muttered rapidly some words to himself.

"Are ye ready there?" he cried, as his eyes were turned towards the small door.

"In a minit," said the woman from within.

At the same instant the sounds of voices and the regular tramp of men marching were heard without.

“Halt! stand at ease!” called out a deep voice; and the clank of the muskets as they fell to the ground was heard through the cabin.

Meanwhile, every one within had resumed his previous place and occupation, and the buzz of voices resounded through the kitchen as though no interruption whatever had taken place. The latch was now lifted, and a sergeant, stooping to permit his tall feather to pass in, entered, followed by a man in plain clothes.

The latter was a short, powerfully-built man, of about fifty; his hair, of a grizzly gray, contrasted with the deep purple of his countenance, which was swollen and bloated; the mouth, its most remarkable feature, was large and thick-lipped, the under-lip, projecting considerably forward, and having a strange, convulsive motion when he was not speaking.

“It’s a hard day. Mister Barton,” said Malone, rising from his seat, and stroking down his hair with one hand; “won’t ye come over and take an air at the fire?”

“I will, indeed, Ned,” said he, taking the proffered seat, and stretching out his legs to the blaze. “It’s a severe season we have. I don’t know how the poor are to get in the turf; the bogs are very wet entirely.”

“They are, indeed, sir; and the harvest ‘ill be very late getting in now,” said one of the young men, with a most obsequious voice. “Won’t ye sit down, sir?” said he to the sergeant.

A nod from Mister Barton in acquiescence decided the matter, and the sergeant was seated.

“What’s here, Mary?” said Barton, striking the large pot that hung over the fire with his foot.

“It’s the boys’ dinner, sir,” said the girl.

“I think it wouldn’t be a bad job if we joined them,” replied he, laughingly, — “eh, sergeant?”

“There ‘ill be enough for us all,” said Malone; “and I’m sure ye’re welcome to it.”

The table was quickly spread, the places next the fire being reserved for the strangers; while Malone, unlocking a cupboard, took down a bottle of whiskey, which he placed before them, remarking, as he did so, —

“Don’t be afeard, gentlemen, ‘tis Parliament.”

“That ‘s right, Malone. I like a man to be loyal in these bad times; there’s nothing like it. (Faith, Mary, you’re a good cook; that’s as savory a stew as ever I tasted.) Where ‘s Patsey now? I have n’t seen him for some time.”

The girl’s face grew dark red, and then became as suddenly pale; when, staggering back, she lifted her apron to her face, and leaned against the dresser.

“He’s transported for life,” said Malone, in a deep, sepulchral voice, while all his efforts to conceal agitation were fruitless.

“Oh, I remember,” said Barton, carelessly; “he was in the dock with the Hogans. (I ‘ll take another bone from you, Ned. Sergeant, that ‘s a real Irish dish, and no bad one either.)”

“What’s doing at the town to-day?” said Malone, affecting an air of easy indifference.

“Nothing remarkable, I believe. They have taken up that rascal. Darby the Blast, as they call him. The major had him under examination this morning for two hours; and they say he ‘ll give evidence against the Dillons, (a little more fat, if ye please;) money, you know, Ned, will do anything these times.”

“You ought to know that, sir,” said Maurice, with such an air of assumed innocence as actually made Barton look ashamed. In an instant, however, he recovered himself, and pretended to laugh at the remark. “Your health, sergeant; Ned Malone, your health; ladies, yours; and boys, the same.” A shower of “thank ye, sir’s,” followed this piece of unlooked-for courtesy. “Who’s that boy there, Ned?” said he, pointing to me as I sat with my eyes riveted upon him.

“He’s from this side of Banagher, sir,” said Malone, evading the question.

“Come over here, younker. What ‘s his name?”

“Tom, sir.”

“Come over, Tom, till I teach you a toast. Here’s a glass, my lad; hold it steady, till I fill you a bumper. Did you ever hear tell of the croppies?”

“No, never!”

“Never heard of the croppies! Well, you’re not long in Ned Malone’s company anyhow, eh? ha! ha! ha! Well, my man, the croppies is another name for the rebels, and the toast I ‘m going to give you is about them. So mind you finish it at one pull. Here now, are you ready?”

“Yes, quite ready,” said I, as I held the brimming glass straight before me.

“Here ‘s it, then, —

“May every croppy taste the rope.
And find some man to hang them;
May Bagnal Harvey and the Pope
Have Heppenstal to hang them!”

I knew enough of the meaning of his words to catch the allusion, and dashing the glass with all my force against the wall, I smashed it into a hundred pieces. Barton sprang from his chair, his face dark with passion. Clutching me by the collar with both hands, he cried out, —

“Halloo! there without, bring in the handcuffs here! As sure as my name ‘s Sandy Barton, we ‘ll teach you that toast practically, and that ere long.”

“Take care what you do there,” said Malone, fiercely. “That young gentleman is a son of Matthew Burke of Cremore; his relatives are not the kind of people to figure in your riding-house.”

“Are you a son of Matthew Burke?”

“I am.”

“What brings you here then? why are you not at home?”

“By what right do you dare to ask me? I have yet to learn how far I am responsible for where I go to a thief-catcher.”

“You hear that, sergeant? you heard him use a word to bring

me into contempt before the people, and excite them to use acts of violence towards me?”

“No such thing. Mister Barton!” said Malone, coolly; “nobody here has any thought of molesting you. I told you that young gentleman’s name and condition, to prevent you making any mistake concerning him; for his friends are not the people to trifle with.”

This artfully-put menace had its effect. Barton sat down again, and appeared to reflect for a few minutes; then taking a roll of paper from his pocket, he began leisurely to peruse it. The silence at this moment was something horribly oppressive.

“This is a search-warrant, Mr. Malone,” said Barton, laying down the paper on the table, “empowering me to seek for the body of a certain French officer, said to be concealed in these parts. Informations on oath state that he passed at least one night under your roof. As he has not accepted the amnesty granted to the other officers in the late famous attempt against the peace of this country, the law will deal with him as strict justice may demand; at the same time, it is right you should know that harboring or sheltering him, under these circumstances, involves the person or persons so doing in his guilt. Mr. Malone’s well-known and tried loyalty,” continued Barton, with a half grin of most malicious meaning, “would certainly exculpate him from any suspicion of this nature; but sworn informations are stubborn things, and it is possible, that in ignorance of the danger such a proceeding would involve – ”

“I thought the thrubbles was over, sir,” interrupted Malone, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand, “and that an honest, industrious man, that minded his own business, had nothing to fear from any one.”

“And you thought right,” said Barton, slowly and deliberately, while he scanned the other’s features with a searching look; “and that is the very fact I’m come to ascertain. And now, with your leave, we’ll first search the house and offices, and then I’ll put a little interrogatory to such persons as I think fit, touching this affair.”

“You’re welcome to go over the cabin whenever you like,” said Malone, rising, and evidently laboring to repress his passionate indignation at Barton’s coolness.

Barton stood up at the same moment, and giving a wink at the sergeant to follow, walked towards the small door I’ve already mentioned. Malone’s wife at this started forward, and catching Barton’s arm, whispered a few words in his ear.

“She must be a very old woman by this time,” said Barton, fixing his sharp eyes on the speaker.

“Upwards of ninety, sir, and bedridden for twelve years,” said the woman, wiping a tear away with her apron.

“And how comes it she’s so afraid of the soldiers, if she’s doting?”

“Arrah! they used to frighten her so much, coming in at night, and firing shots at the doore, and drinking and singing songs, that she never got over it; an that’s the rayson. I’ll beg of your honor

not to bring in the sergeant, and to disturb her only as little as you can, for it sets her raving about battles and murders, and it 's maybe ten days before we 'll get her mind at ease again."

"Well, well, I'll not trouble her," said he, quickly, "Sergeant, step back for a moment."

With this he entered the room, followed by the woman whose uncertain step and quiet gesture seemed to suggest caution.

"She 's asleep, sir," said she, approaching the bed. "It 's many a day since she had as fine a sleep as that. 'T is good luck you brought us this morning, Mister Barton."

"Draw aside the curtain a little," said Barton, in a low voice, as if fearing to awake the sleeper.

"'Tis rousing her up, you'll be, Mister Barton, she feels the light at wanst."

"She breathes very long for so old a woman," said he somewhat louder, "and has a good broad shoulder, too. T 'd like, if it was only for curiosity, just to see her face a little closer. I thought so! Come, captain; it 's no use – "

A scream from the woman drowned the remainder of the speech, while at the same instant one of the young men shut-to the outside door, and barred it. The sergeant was immediately pinioned with his hands behind his back, and Malone drew his horse-pistol from his bosom, and holding up his hand, called out,
—

"Not a word, – not a word! If ye spake, it will be the last time ever you 'll do so!" said he to the sergeant

At the same moment, the noise of a scuffle was heard in the inner room, and the door burst suddenly open, and Barton issued forth, dragging in his strong hands the figure of a young, slightly-formed man. His coat was off, but its trousers were braided with gold, in military fashion; and his black mustache denoted the officer. The struggle of the youth to get free was utterly fruitless; Barton's grasp was on his collar, and he held him as though he were a child.

Malone stooped down towards the fire, and, opening the pan of his pistol, examined the priming; then, slapping it down again, he stood erect, "Barton," said he, in a tone of firm determination I heard him use for the first time, – "Barton, it 's bad to provoke a man with the halter round his neck. I know what 's before me well enough now. But see, let him escape; give him two hours to get away, and here I 'll surrender myself your prisoner, and follow you where you like."

"Break in the door, there, blast ye!" was the reply to this offer, as Barton shouted to the soldiers at the top of his voice. Two of the young men darted forward as he spoke, and threw themselves against it. "Fire through it!" cried Barton, stamping with passion.

"You will have it, will you, then?" said Malone, as he ground his teeth in anger; then raising his pistol, he sprang forward, and holding it within a yard of Barton's face, shouted out, "There!"

The powder flashed in the lock, and quick as its own report. Barton hurled the Frenchman round to protect him from the ball, but only in time to receive the shot in his right arm as he held

it uplifted. The arm fell powerless to his side; while Malone, springing on him like a tiger, grasped him in his powerful grip, and they both rolled upon the ground in terrible conflict. The Frenchman stood for an instant like one transfixed; then, bursting from the spot, dashed through the kitchen to the small room I had slept in. One of the young men followed him. The crash of glass and the sounds of breaking woodwork were heard among the other noises; and at the same moment the door gave way in front, and the soldiers with fixed bayonets entered at a charge.

“Fire on them I fire on them!” shouted Barton, as he lay struggling on the ground; and a random volley rang through the cabin, filling it with smoke.

A yell of anguish burst forth at the moment; and one of the women lay stretched upon the hearth, her bosom bathed in blood. The scene was now a terrible one; for although overpowered by numbers, the young men rushed on the soldiers, and regardless of wounds, endeavored to wrest their arms from them. The bayonets glanced through the blue smoke, and shouts of rage and defiance rose up amid frightful screams of suffering and woe. A bayonet stab in the side, received I know not how, sent me half fainting into the little room through which the Frenchman had escaped. The open window being before me, I did not deliberate a second, but mounting the table, crept through it, and fell heavily on the turf outside. In a moment after I rallied, and staggering onwards, reached a potato field, where, overcome by pain and weakness, I sank into one of the furrows, scarcely conscious of what had

occurred.

Weak and exhausted as I was, I could still hear the sounds of the conflict that raged within the cabin. Gradually, however, they grew fainter and fainter, and at last subsided altogether. Yet I feared to stir; and although night was now falling, and the silence continued unbroken, I lay still, hoping to hear some well-known voice, or even the footstep of some one belonging to the house. But all was calm, and nothing stirred; the very air, too, was hushed, – not a leaf moved in the thin, frosty atmosphere. The dread of finding the soldiers in possession of the cabin made me fearful of quitting my hiding place, and I did not move. Some hours had passed over ere I gained courage enough to raise my head and look about me.

My first glance was directed towards the distant highroad, where I expected to have seen some of the party who attacked the cabin, but far as my eye could reach, no living thing was to be seen; my next was towards the cabin, which, to my horror and amazement, I soon perceived was enveloped in a thick, dark smoke, that rolled lazily from the windows and doorway, and even issued from the thatched roof. As I looked, I could hear the crackling of timber and the sound of wood burning. These continued to increase; and then a red, forked flame shot through one of the casements, and turning upwards, caught the thatch, where, passing rapidly across the entire roof, it burst into a broad sheet of fire, which died out again as rapidly, and left the gloomy smoke triumphant.

Meanwhile a roaring sound, like that of a furnace, was heard from within; and at last, with an explosion like a mortar, the roof burst open, and the bright blaze sprang forth. The rafters were soon enveloped in fire, and the heated straw rose into the air, and floated in thin streaks of flame through the black sky. The door cases and the window frames were all burning, and marked their outlines against the dark walls: and as the thatch was consumed, the red rafters were seen like the ribs of a skeleton; but they fell in one by one, sending up in their descent millions of red sparks into the dark air. The black wall of the cabin had given way to the heat, and through its wide fissure I could see the interior, now one mass of undistinguishable ruin: nothing remained, save the charred and blackened walls.

I sat gazing at this sad sight like one entranced. Sometimes it seemed to me as a terrible dream; and then the truth would break upon me with fearful force, and my heart felt as though it would burst far beyond my bosom. The last flickering flame died away, the hissing sounds of the fire were stilled, and the dark walls stood out against the bleak background in all their horrible deformity, as I rose and entered the cabin. I stood within the little room where I had slept the night before, and looked out into the kitchen, around whose happy hearth the merry voices were so lately heard. I brought them up before me, in imagination, as they sat there. One by one I marked their places in my mind, and thought of the kindness of their welcome to me, and the words of comfort and encouragement they spoke' The hearth was now

cold and black; the pale stars looked down between the walls, and a chill moonlight flickered through the gloomy ruin. My heart had no room for sorrow; but another feeling found a place within it: a savage thirst for vengeance, – vengeance upon those who had desecrated a peaceful home, and brought blood and death among its inmates! Here was the very realization before my eyes of what M'Keown had been telling me; here the horrible picture he had drawn of tyranny and outrage. In the humble cottagers I saw but simpleminded peasants, who had opened their doors to some poor unfriended outcast, – one who, like myself, had neither house nor home. I saw them offering their hospitality to him who sought it, freely and openly; and at last adventuring all they possessed in the world, rather than betray him, – and their reward was this! Oh, how my heart revolted at such oppression! how my spirit fired at such indignity! I thought a life passed in opposition to such tyranny were too short a vengeance; and I knelt me down beside that blackened hearth, and swore myself its enemy to the death.

CHAPTER VI. MY EDUCATION

As I thought over the various incidents the last few days of my life had presented, I began to wonder with myself whether the world always went on thus, and if the same scenes of misery and woe I had witnessed were in the ordinary course of nature. The work of years seemed to me to have been accomplished in a few brief hours. Here, where I stood but yesterday, a happy family were met together; and now, death and misfortune had laid waste the spot, and save the cold walls, nothing marked it as a human habitation. What had become of them? where had they gone to? Had they fled from the blood-stained hands of the cruel soldiery, or were they led away to prison? These were the questions constantly recurring to my mind. And the French officer, too, – what of him? I felt the deepest interest in his fate. Poor fellow! he looked so pale and sickly; and yet there was something both bold and manly in his flashing eye and compressed lip. He was doubtless one of those Darby alluded to. What a lot was his! and how little did my own sorrows seem, as I compared them with his houseless, friendless condition!

As my thoughts thus wandered on, a dark shadow fell across the gleam of moonlight that lit up the ruined cabin. I turned suddenly, and saw the figure of a man leaning against the doorpost. For a second or two fear was uppermost in my mind, but rallying soon, I called out, “Who ‘s there?”

“‘T is me. Darby M’Keown!” said a well-known voice, but in a tone of deepest sorrow. “I came over to have a look at the ould walls once more.”

“You heard it all, then. Darby?”

“Yes; they wor bringing the prisoners into Athlone as I left the town, and I thought to myself you ‘d maybe be hiding somewhere hereabouts. Is the captain away? Is he safe?”

“The French officer? Yes, he escaped early in the business. I know he must be far off by this time; Heaven knows which way, though.”

“Maybe I could guess,” said Darby, quietly. “Well, well! it ‘s hard to know what ‘s best. Sometimes it would seem the will of God that we are n’t to succeed; and if we hadn’t right on our side, it would not be easy to bear up against such misfortunes as these.”

There was a silence on both sides after these words, during which I pandered them well in my mind.

“Come, Mister Tom!” said Darby, suddenly; “‘tis time we were moving. You ‘re not safe here no more nor others. Basset is looking for you everywhere, and you ‘ll have to leave the neighborhood, for a while at least. Your friend, the captain, too, is gone; his regiment marched yesterday. So now make up your mind what to do.”

“That’s easily done, Darby,” said I, attempting to seem at ease. “Whichever is your road shall be mine, if you let me.”

“Let you? Yes, with a hearty welcome, too, my darling! But the first thing is to get you some clothes that won’t discover on

you. Here 's a hat I squeezed into my own that 'll just fit you; and I 've a coat here that 's about your size. That's enough for the present; and as we go along, I 'll teach you your part, how you are to behave, and he 'll be no fool that 'll find you out after ten days or a fortnight."

My change of costume was soon effected, and my wound, which turned out to be a trifling one, looked after. I took a farewell look at the old walls, and stepped after my companion down the boren.

"If we make haste," said Darby, "we'll be beyond Shannon Harbor before day; and then, when we 're on the canal, we 'll easy get a lift in some of the boats going to Dublin."

"And are you for Dublin?" inquired I, eagerly.

"Yes. I'm to be there on the twenty-fourth of this month, please God. There 's a meeting of the friends of Ireland to be then, and some resolutions will be taken about what 's to be done. There 's bad work going on in the Parliament."

"Indeed, Darby! What is it?"

"Oh! you couldn't understand it well. But it's just as if we war n't to have anything to say to governing ourselves; only to be made slaves of, and sent abroad to fight for the English, that always hate us and abuse us."

"And are we going to bear with this?" cried I, passionately.

"No," said Darby, laying his hand on my shoulder, – "no; not at least if we had twenty thousand like you, my brave boy. But you'll hear everything yourself soon. And now, let me attend to

your education a bit, for we're not out of the enemy's country."

Darby now commenced his code of instruction to me, by which I learned that I was to perform a species of second to him in all minstrelsy; not exactly on the truest principles of harmony, but merely alternating with him in the verses of his songs. These, which were entirely of his own composition, were all to be learned, – and orally, too, for Mister M'Keown was too jealous of his copyright ever to commit them to writing, and especially charged me never to repeat any lyric in the same neighborhood.

"It's not only the robbery I care for," quoth Darby, "but the varmint destroys my poethry completely; some' times changing the words, injuring the sentiments, and even altering the tune. Now, it's only last Tuesday I heerd 'Behave politely,' to the tune of 'Look how he sarved me!'"

Besides the musical portion of my education, there was another scarcely less difficult to be attended to: this was, the skilful adaptation of our melodies, not only to the prevailing tastes of the company, but to their political and party bearings; Darby supplying me with various hints how I was to discover at a moment the peculiar bias of any stranger's politics.

"The boys," said Darby, thereby meaning his own party, "does be always sly and careful, and begin by asking, maybe, for 'Do you incline?' or 'Crows in the barley,' or the like. Then they 'll say, 'Have you anything new, Mister M'Keown, from up the country?' 'Something sweet, is it?' says I. 'Ay, or sour, av ye have it,' they 'll

‘say. ‘Maybe ye’d like “Vinegar-hill,” then,’ says I. Arrah, you’d see their faces redden up with delight; and how they ‘ll beat time to every stroke of the tune, it ‘s a pleasure to play for them. But the yeos (meaning the yeomen) will call out mightily, – ‘Piper! halloo there! piper, I say, rise The Boyne water, or Croppies lie down.’”

“And of course you refuse, Darby?”

“Refuse! Refuse, is it? and get a bayonet in me? Devil a bit, my dear. I ‘ll play it up with all the spirit I can; and nod my head to the tune, and beat the time with my heel and toe; and maybe, if I see need of it, I fasten this to the end of the chanter, and that does the business entirely.”

Here Darby took from the lining of his hat a bunch of orange ribbon, whose faded glories showed it had done long and active service in the cause of loyalty.

I confess Darby’s influence over me did not gain any accession of power by this honest avowal of his political expediency; and the bold assertion of a nation’s wrongs, by which at first he won over my enthusiasm, seemed sadly at variance with this truckling policy. He was quicksighted enough to perceive what was passing in my mind, and at once remarked, —

“Tis a hard part we’re obliged to play, Master Tom; but one comfort we have, – it ‘s only a short time we ‘ll need it. You know the song? “Here he broke into the popular tune of the day: —

“And the French will come again,

Says the Shan van vaugh;
And they 'll bring ten thousand men.
Says the Shan van vaugh;
And with powder and with ball,
For our rights we 'll loudly call:
Don't you think they 'll hear us then!
Says the Shan van vaugh.'

Ye must larn that air, Master Tom. And see, now, the yeos is as fond of it as the boys; only remember to put their own words to it, – and devil a harm in that same when one 's not in earnest. See, now, I believe it 's a natural pleasure for an Irishman to be humbugging somebody; and faix, when there 's nobody by he 'd rather be taking a rise out of himself than doing nothing. It 's the way that 's in us, God help us! Sure it 's that same makes us sich favorites with the ladies, and gives us a kind of native janius for coortin':

“'T is the look of his eye,
And a way he can sigh,
Makes Paddy a darlin' wherever he goes;
With a sugary brogue.
Ye 'd hear the rogue
Cheat the girls before their nose.’

And why not? Don't they like to be chated, when they 're sure to win after all, – to win a warm heart and a stout arm to fight for them?”

This species of logic I give as a specimen of Mister M'Keown's power of, if not explaining away a difficulty, at least getting out of all reach of it, – an attribute almost as Irish as the cause it was 'employed to defend.

As we journeyed along, Darby maintained a strict reserve as to the event which had required his presence in Athlone; nor did he allude to the mayor but passingly, observing that he did n't know how it happened that a Dublin magistrate should have come up to these parts, – “though, to be sure, he 's a great friend of the Right Honorable.”

“And who is he?” asked I.

“The Right Honorable! Don't you know, then? Why, I did n't think there was a child in the county could n't tell that. Sure, it 's Denis Browne himself.”

The name seemed at once to suggest a whole flood of recollections; and Darby expatiated for hours long on the terrible power of a man by whose hands life and death were distributed, without any aid from judge or jury, – thus opening to me another chapter of the lawless tyranny to which he was directing my attention, and by which he already saw my mind was greatly influenced.

About an hour after daybreak we arrived at a small cabin; which served as a lockhouse on the canal side. It needed not the cold, murky sky, nor the ceaseless pattering of the rain, to make this place look more comfortless and miserable than anything I had ever beheld. Around, for miles in extent, the country was one

unbroken flat, without any trace of wood, or even a single thorn hedge, to relieve the eye. Low, marshy meadows, where the rank flaggers and reedy grass grew tall and luxuriant, with here and there some stray patches of tillage, were girt round by vast plains of bog, cut up into every variety of trench and pit. The cabin itself, though slated and built of stone, was in bad repair; the roof broken in many places, and the window mended with pieces of board, and even straw. As we came close. Darby remarked that there was no smoke from the chimney, and that the door was fastened on the outside.

“That looks bad,” said he, as he stopped short about a dozen paces from the hovel, and looked steadily at it; “they’ve taken him too!”

“Who is it, Darby?” said I; “what did he do?”

M’Keown paid no attention to my question, but unfastening the hasp, which attached the door without any padlock, entered. The fire was yet alive on the hearth, and a small stool drawn close to it showed where some one had been sitting. There was nothing unusual in the appearance of the cabin; the same humble furniture and cooking utensils lying about as were seen in any other. Darby, however, scrutinized everything most carefully, looking everywhere and into everything; till at last, reaching his hand above the door, he pulled out from the straw of the thatch a small piece of dirty and crumpled paper, which he opened with the greatest care and attention, and then flattening it out with his hand, began to read it over to himself, his eye flashing and his

cheek growing redder as he pored over it. At last he broke silence with, —

“‘T is myself never doubted ye, Tim, my boy. Look at that, Master Tom. But sure, you wouldn’t understand it, after all. The yeos took him up last night. ‘T is something about cutting the canal and attacking the boat that ‘s again’ him; and he left that there — that bit of paper — to give the boys courage that he wouldn’t betray them’ That ‘s the way the cause will prosper, — if we ‘ll only stick by one another. For many a time, when they take a man up, they spread it about that he’s turned informer against the rest; and then the others gets careless, and don’t mind whether they’re taken or not.”

Darby replaced the piece of paper carefully; and then, listening for a moment, exclaimed, — “I hear the boat coming; let’s wait for it outside.”

While he employed himself in getting his pipes into readiness, I could not help ruminating on the strength of loyalty to one another the poor people observed amid every temptation and every seduction; how, in the midst of such misery as theirs, neither threats nor bribery seemed to influence them, was a strong testimony in favor of their truth, and, to such a reasoner as I was, a no less cogent argument for the goodness of the cause that elicited such virtues.

As the boat came alongside, I remarked that the deck was without a passenger. Heaps of trunks and luggage littered it the entire way; but the severity of the weather had driven every one

under cover, except the steersman and the captain, who, both of them wrapped up in thick coats of frieze, seemed like huge bears standing on their hindquarters.

“How are you, Darby?” shouted the skipper. “Call out that lazy rascal to open the lock.”

“I don’t think he’s at home, sir,” said Darby, as innocently as though he knew nothing of the reason for his absence.

“Not at home! The scoundrel, where can he be, then? Come, youngster,” cried he, addressing me, “take the key there, and open the lock.”

Until this moment, I forgot the character which my dress and appearance assigned to me. But a look from the piper recalled me at once to recollection; and taking up the iron key, I proceeded, under Darby’s instructions, to do what I was desired, while Darby and the captain amused themselves by wondering what had become of Tim, and speculated on the immediate consequences his absence would bring down on him.

“Are you going with us, Darby?” said the captain.

“Faix, I don’t know, sir,” said he, as if hesitating. “Ar there was any gentleman that liked the pipes – ”

“Yes, yes; come along, man,” rejoined the skipper. “Is the boy with you? Very well; come in, youngster.”

We were soon under way again; and Darby, having arranged his instrument to his satisfaction, commenced a very spirited voluntary to announce his arrival. In an instant the cabin door opened, and a red-faced, coarse-looking fellow, in uniform,

called out, —

“Halloo, there! is that a piper?”

“Yes, sir,” said Darby, without turning his face round; while, at the same time, he put a question in Irish to the skipper, who answered it with a single word.

“I say, piper, come down here!” cried the yeoman, for such he was, — “come down here, and let ‘s have a tune!”

“I ‘m coming, sir!” cried Darby, standing up; and holding out his hand to me, he called out, — “Tom, alannah, lead me down stairs.”

I looked up in his face, and to my amazement perceived that he had turned up the white of his eyes to represent blindness, and was groping with his hand like one deprived of sight. As any hesitation on my part might have betrayed him at once, I took his hand, and led him along, step by step, to the cabin door.

I had barely time to perceive that all the passengers were habited in uniform, when one of them called out, — “We don’t want the young fellow; let him go back. Piper, sit down here.”

The motion for my exclusion was passed without a negative; and I closed the door, and sat down by myself among the trunks on deck.

For the remainder of the day I saw nothing of Darby, — the shouts of laughter and clapping of hands below stairs occasionally informing me how successful were his efforts to amuse his company; while I had abundant time to think over my own plans, and make some resolutions for the future.

CHAPTER VII. KEVIN STREET

How this long, melancholy day wore on I cannot say. To me it was as gloomy in revery as in its own dismal aspect; the very sounds of mirth that issued from the cabin beneath grated harshly on my ear; and the merry strains of Darby's pipes and the clear notes of his rich voice seemed like treachery from one who so lately had spoken in terms of heart-breathing emotion of his countrymen and their wrongs. While, therefore, my estimation for my companion suffered, my sorrow for the cause that demanded such sacrifices deepened at every moment, and I panted with eagerness for the moment when I might take my place among the bold defenders of my country, and openly dare our oppressors to the battle. All that M'Keown had told me of English tyranny and oppression was connected in my mind with the dreadful scene I had so lately been a witness to, and for the cause of which I looked no further than an act of simple hospitality. From this I wandered on to the thought of those brave allies who had deserted their career of Continental glory to share our almost hopeless fortunes here; and how I burned to know them, and learn from them something of a soldier's ardor.

Night had fallen when the fitful flashing of lamps between the tall elms that lined the banks announced our approach to the capital. There is something dreadfully depressing in the aspect of a large city, to the poor, unfriended youth, who without house or

home is starting upon his life's journey. The stir, the movement, the onward tide of population, intent on pleasure or business, are things in which he has no part. The appearance of wealth humiliates, while the sight of poverty affrights him; and, while every one is animated by some purpose, he alone seems like a waif thrown on the shores of life, unclaimed, unlocked for. Thus did I feel among that busy crowd who now pressed to the deck, gathering together their luggage, and preparing for departure. Some home awaited each of these, – some hearth, some happy faces to greet their coming. But I had none of these. This was a sorrowful thought; and as I brooded over it, my head sank upon my knees, and I saw nothing of what was going forward about me.

“Tom,” whispered a low voice in my ear, – “Master Tom, don't delay, my dear; let us slip out here. The soldiers want me to go with them to their billets, and I have promised; but I don't mean to do it.”

I looked up. It was Darby, buttoned up in his coat, his pipes unfastened for the convenience of carriage.

“Slip out after me at the lock here; it 's so dark we 'll never be seen.”

Keeping my eye on him, I elbowed my way through the crowded deck, and sprang out just as the boat began her forward movement.

“Here we are, all safe!” said Darby, patting me on the shoulder. “And now that I 've time to ask you, did you get your

dinner, my child?"

"Oh yes; the captain brought me something to eat."

"Come, that's right, anyhow. Glory be to God! I ate heartily of some bacon and greens; though the blackguards – bad luck to them for the same! – made me eat an orange lily whole, afraid the *greens*, as they said, might injure me."

"I wonder. Darby," said I, "that you haven't more firmness than to change this way at every moment."

"Firmness, is it? Faix, it's firm enough I'd be, and Stiff, too, if I did n't. Sure it 's the only way now at all. Wait, my honey, till the time comes round for ourselves, and faix, you 'll never accuse me of coorting their favor; but now, at this moment, you perceive, we must do it to learn their plans. What do you think I got to-night? I learned all the signs the yeos have when they 're drinking together, and what they say at each sign. Thers 's a way they have of gripping the two little fingers together that I'll not forget soon."

For some time we walked on at a rapid pace, without exchanging more than an occasional word. At last we entered a narrow, ill-lighted street, which led from the canal harbor to one of the larger and wider thoroughfares.

"I almost forget the way here," said Darby, stopping and looking about him.

At last, unable to solve the difficulty, he leaned over the half-door of a shop, and called out to a man within, "Can you tell where is Kevin Street?"

“No. 39?” said the man, after looking at him steadily for a moment.

Darby stroked down one side of his face with his hand slowly; a gesture immediately imitated by the other man.

“What do you know?” said Darby.

“I know ‘U,’” replied the man.

“And what more?”

“I know ‘N’”

“That ‘ill do,” said Darby, shaking hands with him cordially.

“Now, tell me the way, for I have no time to spare.”

“Begorra! you ‘re in as great haste as if ye were Darby the Blast himself. Ye ‘ll come in and take a glass?”

Darby only laughed, and again excusing himself, he asked the way; which having learned, he wished his newly-made friend good-night, and we proceeded.

“They know you well hereabouts; by name, at least,” said I, when we had walked on a little.

“That they do,” said Darby, proudly. “From Wexford to Belfast there ‘s few does n’t know me; and they ‘ll know more of me, av I ‘m right, before I die.”

This he spoke with more of determination than I ever heard him use previously.

“Here ‘s the street now; there ‘s the lamp, – that one with the two burners there. Faix, we ‘ve made good track since morning, anyhow.”

As he spoke we entered a narrow passage, through which the

street lamp threw a dubious half-light. This conducted us to a small paved court, crossing which we arrived at the door of a large house. Darby knocked in a peculiar manner, and the door was speedily opened by a man who whispered something, to which M'Keown made answer in the same low tone.

"I 'm glad to see you again," said the man, louder, as he made way for him to pass.

I pushed forward to follow, when suddenly a strong arm was stretched across my breast, and a gruff voice asked, – "Who are you?"

Darby stepped back, and said something in his ear. The other replied, sturdily, in the negative; and although Darby, as it appeared, used every power of persuasion he possessed, the man was inexorable.

At last, when the temper of both appeared nearly giving way. Darby turned to me, and said, – "Wait for me a moment, Tom, where you are, and I 'll come for you."

So saying, he disappeared, and the door closed at the same time, leaving me in darkness on the outside. My patience was not severely taxed; ere five minutes the door opened, and Darby, followed by another person, appeared.

"Mr. Burke," said this latter, with the tone of voice that at once bespoke a gentleman, "I am proud to know you." He grasped my hand warmly as he spoke, and shook it affectionately. "I esteem it an honor to be your sponsor here. Can you find your way after me? This place is never lighted; but I trust you 'll know it better

ere long.”

Muttering some words of acknowledgment, I followed my unseen acquaintance along the dark corridor.

“There’s a step, here,” cried he; “and now mind the stairs.”

A long and winding flight conducted us to a landing, where a candle was burning in a tin sconce. Here my conductor turned round.

“Your Christian name is Thomas, I believe,” said he. At the same moment, as the light fell on me, he started suddenly back, with an air of mingled astonishment and chagrin. “Why, M’Keown, you told me – ” The rest of the sentence was lost in a whisper.

“It ‘s a disguise I made him wear,” said Darby. “He ‘d no chance of escaping the country without it.”

“I ‘m not speaking of that,” retorted the other, angrily.

“It is his age, I mean; he’s only a boy. How old are you, sir?” continued he, addressing me, but with far less courtesy than before.

“Old enough to live for my country; or die for it either, if need be,” said I, haughtily.

“Bravo, my darling!” cried the piper, slapping me on the shoulder with enthusiasm.

“That’s not exactly my question,” said the stranger, smiling good-naturedly; “I want to know your age.”

“I was fourteen in August,” said I.

“I had rather you could say twenty,” responded he,

thoughtfully. "This is a sad mistake of yours, Darby. What dependence can be placed on a child like this? He's only a child, after all."

"He's a child I'll go bail for with my head," said Darby.

"Your head has fully as much on it as it is fit to carry," said the other, in a tone of rebuke. "Have you told him anything of the object and intentions of this Society? But of course you have revealed everything. Well, I 'll not be a party to this business. Young gentleman," continued he, in a voice of earnest and impressive accent, "all I know of you is the few particulars this man has stated respecting your unfriended position, and the cruelty to which you fear to expose yourself in trusting to the guardianship of Mr. Basset. If these reasons have induced you, from recklessness and indifference, to risk your life, by association with men who are actuated by high and noble principles, then, I say, you shall not enter here. If, however, aware of the object and intentions of our Union, you are desirous to aid us, young though you be, I shall not refuse you."

"That's it," interrupted Darby; "if you feel in your heart a friend to your country –"

"Silence!" said the other, harshly; "let him decide for himself."

"I neither know your intentions, nor even guess at them," said I, frankly. "My destitution, and the poor prospect before me, make me, as you suppose, indifferent to what I embark in, provided that it be not dishonorable.

"It is not danger that will deter me, that 's all I can promise

you.”

“I see,” said the stranger, “this is but another of your pranks, Mr. M’Keown; the young gentleman was to be kidnapped amongst us. One thing,” said he, turning to me, “I feel assured of, that anything you have witnessed here is safe within your keeping; and now we’ll not press the matter further. In a few days you can hear, and make up your mind on all these things; and as you are not otherwise provided, let us make you our guest in the mean while.”

Without giving me time to reply, he led me downstairs again, and unlocking a room on the second floor, passed through several rooms, until he reached one comfortably fitted up like a study.

“You must be satisfied with a sofa here for to-night but to-morrow I will make you more comfortable.”

I threw my eyes over the well-filled bookshelf with delight, and was preparing to thank him for all his kindness to me, when he added, —

“I must leave you now, but we ‘ll meet to-morrow; so good-night. Come along, M’Keown; we shall want you presently.”

I would gladly have detained Darby to interrogate him about my new abode and its inhabitants; but he was obliged to obey, and I heard the door locked as they closed it on the outside, and shortly after the sounds of their feet died away, and I was left in silence.

Determined to con over, and if possible explain to myself, the mystery of my position, I drew my sofa towards the fire and sat

down; but fatigue, stronger than all my curiosity, had the mastery, and I was soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER VIII. NO. 39, AND ITS FREQUENTERS

When my eyes opened the following morning, it was quite pardonable in me if I believed I was still dreaming. The room, which I had scarcely time to look at the previous evening, now appeared handsomely, almost richly furnished. Books in handsome bindings covered the shelves, prints in gilded frames occupied the walls, and a large mirror filled the space above the chimney. Various little articles of taste, in bronze and marble, were scattered about, and a silver tea equipage of antique pattern graced a small table near the fire. A pair of splendidly mounted pistols hung at one side of the chimney glass, and a gorgeously gilt sabre occupied the other.

While I took a patient survey of all these, and was deliberately examining myself as to how and when I had first made their acquaintance, a voice from an adjoining room, the door of which lay open, exclaimed, —

“*Sacristi! quel mauvais temps!*” and then broke out into a little French air, to which, after a minute, the singer appeared to move, in a kind of dancing measure. “*Qui, c’est ça!*” exclaimed he, in rapture, as he whirled round in a pirouette, overturning a dressing-table and its contents with a tremendous crash upon the floor.

I started up, and without thinking of what I was doing, rushed in.

“Ha! bonjour,” said he, gayly, stretching out two fingers of a hand almost concealed beneath a mass of rings. And then suddenly changing to English, which he spoke perfectly, saving with a foreign accent, – “How did you sleep? I suppose the *tintamarre* awoke you.”

I hastened to apologize for my intrusion; which he stopped at once by asking if I had passed a comfortable night, and had a great appetite for breakfast.

Assuring him of both facts, I retreated into the sitting room, where he followed me, laughing heartily at his mishap, which he confessed he had not patience to remedy. “And what ‘s worse,” added he; “I have no servant. But here ‘s some tea and coffee; let us chat while we eat.”

I drew over my chair at his invitation, and found myself – before half an hour went by – acted on by that strange magnetism which certain individuals possess, to detail to my new friend the principal events of my simple story, down to the very moment in which we sat opposite to each other. He listened to me with the greatest attention, occasionally interposing a question, or asking an explanation of something which he did not perfectly comprehend; and when I concluded, he paused for some minutes, and then, with a slight laugh, said: —

“You don’t know how you disappointed the people here. Your travelling companion had given them to understand that you were

some other Burke, whose alliance they have been long desiring. In fact, they were certain of it; but," said he, starting up hastily, "it is far better as it is. I suspect, my young friend, the way in which you have been entrapped. Don't fear; we are perfectly safe here. I know all the hackneyed declamations about wrongs and slavery that are in vogue; and I know, too, how timidly they shrink from every enterprise by which their cause might be honorably, boldly asserted. I am myself another victim to the assumed patriotism of this party. I came over here two years since to take the command. A command, – but in what an army! An undisciplined rabble, without arms, without officers, without even clothes; their only notion of warfare, a midnight murder, or a reckless and indiscriminate slaughter. The result could not be doubtful, – utter defeat and discomfiture. My countrymen, disgusted at the scenes they witnessed, and ashamed of such *confrerie*; accepted the amnesty, and returned to France. I – "

Here he hesitated, and blushed slightly; after which he resumed: —

"I yielded to a credulity for which there was neither reason nor excuse: I remained. Promises were made me, oaths were sworn, statements were produced to show how complete the organization of the insurgents really was, and to what purpose it might be turned. I drew up a plan of a campaign; corresponded with the different leaders; encouraged the wavering; restrained the headstrong; confirmed the hesitating; and, in fact, for fourteen months held them together, not only against their

opponents, but their own more dangerous disunion. And the end is, – what think you? I only learned it yesterday, on my return from an excursion in the West which nearly cost me my life. I was concealed in a cabin in woman's clothes – ”

“At Malone's, in the Glen?”

“Yes; how did you know that?”

“I was there. I saw you captured and witnessed your escape.”

“*Diantre!* How near it was!”

He paused for a second, and I took the opportunity to recount to him the dreadful issue of the scene, with the burning of the cabin. He grew sickly pale as I related the circumstance; then flushing as quickly, he exclaimed, —

“We must look to this; these people must be taken care of, I 'll speak to Dalton; you know him?”

“No; I know not one here.”

“It was he who met you last night; he is a noble fellow. But stay; there 's a knock at the door.”

He approached the fireplace, and taking down the pistols which hung beside it, walked slowly towards the door.

“'Tis Darby, sir, – Darby the Blast, coming to speak a word to Mister Burke,” said a voice from without.

The door was opened at once, and Darby entered. Making a deep reverence to the French officer, in whose presence he seemed by no means at his ease. Darby dropped his voice to its most humble cadence, and said, —

“Might I be so bould as to have a word with ye, Master Tom?”

There was something in the way this request was made that seemed to imply a desire for secrecy, – so, at least, the Frenchman understood it, – and turning hastily round he said, —

“Yes, to be sure. I ‘ll go into my dressing-room; there is nothing to prevent your speaking here.”

No sooner was the door closed, than Darby drew a chair close to me, and bending down his head, whispered, —

“Don’t trust him, – not from here to that window. They ‘re going to do it without him; Mahony told me so himself. But my name was not drawn, and I ‘m to be off to Kildare this evening. There ‘s a meeting of the boys at the Curragh, and I want you to come with me.”

The state of doubt and uncertainty which had harassed my mind for the last twenty-four hours was no longer tolerable; so I boldly asked M’Keown for an explanation as to the people in whose house I was, – their objects and plans, and how far I was myself involved in their designs.

In fewer words than I could convey it. Darby informed me that the house was the meeting place of the United Irishmen, who still cherished the hope of reviving the scenes of ‘98; that, conscious the failure before was attributable to their having taken the field as an army when they should have merely contented themselves with secret and indirect attacks, they had resolved to adopt a different tactique. It was, in fact, determined that every political opponent to their party should be marked, – himself, his

family, and his property; that no opportunity was to be lost of injuring him or his, and, if need be, of taking away his life; that various measures were to be propounded to Parliament by their friends, to the maintenance of which threats were to be freely used to the Government members; and with respect to the great measure of the day, – the Union, – it was decided that on the night of the division a certain number of people should occupy the gallery above the Ministerial benches, armed with hand-grenades and other destructive missiles; that, on a signal given, these were to be thrown amongst them, scattering death and ruin on all sides.

“It will be seen, then,” said Darby, with a fiendish grin, “how the enemies of Ireland pay for their hatred of her! Maybe they ‘ll vote away their country after that!”

Whether it was the tone, the look, or the words that suddenly awoke me from my dreamy infatuation, I know not; but coming so soon after the Frenchman’s detail of the barbarism of the party, a thorough disgust seized me, and the atrocity of this wholesale murder lost nothing of its blackness from being linked with the cause of liberty.

With ready quickness, Darby saw what my impression was, and hastily remarked: —

“We ‘ll be all away out of this, Master Tom, you know, before that. We ‘ll be up in Kildare, where we ‘ll see the boys exercising and marching; that’s what ‘ill do your heart good to look at. But before we go, you ‘ll have to take the oath, for I’m answerable for you all this time with my own head; not that I care for that same,

but others might mistrust ye.”

“Halloo!” cried the Frenchman, from within; “I hope you have finished your conference there, for you seem to forget there’s no fire in this room.”

“Yes, sir; and I beg a thousand pardons,” said Darby, servilely. “And Master Tom only wants to bid you goodby before he goes.”

“Goes! goes where? Are you so soon tired of me?” said he, in an accent of most winning sweetness.

“He’s obliged to be at the Curragh, at the meeting there,” said Darby, answering for me.

“What meeting? I never heard of it.”

“It ‘s a review, sir, of the throops, that ‘s to be by moonlight.”

“A review!” said the Frenchman, with a scornful laugh. “And do you call this midnight assembly of marauding savages a review?”

Darby’s face grew dark with rage, and for a second I thought he would have sprung on his assailant; but with a fawning, shrewd smile he lisped out, —

“It’s what they call it. Captain; sure the poor boys knows no better.”

“Are you going to this review?” said the Frenchman, with an ironical pronunciation of the word.

“I scarce know where to go, or what to do,” said I, in a tone of despairing sadness; “any certainty would be preferable to the doubts that harass me.”

“Stay with me,” said the Frenchman, interrupting me and

laying his hand on my shoulder; “we shall be companions to each other. Your friend here knows I can teach you many things that may be useful to you hereafter; and perhaps, with all humility I may say, your stay will be as profitable as at the camp yonder.”

“I should not like to desert one who has been so kind to me as Darby; and if he wishes – ”

Before I could finish my sentence, the door was opened by a key from without, and Dalton, as he was called, stood amongst us.

“What, Darby!” said he, in a voice of something like emotion; “not gone yet! You know I forbid you coming up here; I suspected what you would be at. Come, lose no more time; we ‘ll take care of Mr. Burke for you.”

Darby hung his head sorrowfully, and left the room without speaking, followed by Dalton, whose voice I heard in a tone of anger as he descended the stairs.

There was a certain openness, an easy air of careless freedom, in the young Frenchman, which made me feel at home in his company almost the very moment of our acquaintance; and when he asked some questions about myself and my family, I hesitated not to tell him my entire history, with the causes which had first brought me into Darby’s society, and led me to imbibe his doctrines and opinions. He paused when I finished, and after reflecting for some minutes, he looked me gravely in the face, and said, —

“But you are aware of the place you are now in?”

“No,” said I; “further than the fact of my having enjoyed a capital night’s rest and eaten an excellent breakfast, I know nothing about it.”

A hearty burst of laughter from my companion followed this very candid acknowledgment on my part.

“Then, may I ask, what are your intentions for the future? Have you any?”

“At least one hundred,” said I, smiling; “but every one of them has about as many objections against it. I should like much, for instance, to be a soldier, – not in the English service though. I should like to belong to an army where neither birth nor fortune can make nor mar a man’s career. I should like, too, to be engaged in some great war of liberty, where with each victory we gained the voices of a liberated people would fall in blessings upon us. And then I should like to raise myself to high command by some great achievement.”

“And then,” said the Frenchman, interrupting, “to come back to Ireland, and cut off the head of this terrible Monsieur Basset. N’est-ce pas, Tom?”

I could not help joining in his laugh against myself; although in good truth I had felt better pleased if he had taken up my enthusiasm in a different mood.

“So much for mere dreaming!” said I, with half a sigh, as our laughter subsided.

“Not so,” said he, quickly, – “not so; all you said is far more attainable than you suspect. I have been in such a service myself. I

won my 'grade' as officer at the point of my sword, when scarcely your age; and before I was fifteen, received this."

He took down the sword that hung over the chimney as he said these words, and drawing it from the scabbard, pointed to the inscription, which in letters of gold adorned the blade, – "Rivoli," "Arcole;" then turning the reverse, I read, – "Au Lieutenant Charles Gustave de Meudon, Troisième Cuirassiers."

"This, then, is your name?" said I, repeating it half aloud.

"Yes," replied he, as he drew himself up, and seemed struggling to repress a feeling of pride that sent the blood rushing to his cheek and brow.

"How I should like to be you!" was the wish that burst from me at that moment, and which I could not help uttering in words.

"Hélas, non!" said the Frenchman, sorrowfully, and turning away to conceal his agitation; "I have broken with fortune many a day since."

The tone of bitter disappointment in which these words were spoken left no room for reply, and we were both silent.

Charles – for so I must now call him to my reader, as he compelled me to do so with himself – Charles was the first to speak.

"Not many months ago my thoughts were very like your own; but since then how many disappointments! how many reverses!"

He walked hurriedly up and down the room as he said this; then stopping suddenly before me, laid his hand on my shoulder, and with a voice of impressive earnestness said: —

“Be advised by me: join not with these people; do not embark with them in their enterprise. Their enterprise!” repeated he, scornfully: “they have none. The only men of action here are they with whom no man of honor, no soldier, could associate; their only daring, some deed of rapine and murder. No! liberty is not to be achieved by such hands as these. And the other, – the men of political wisdom, who prate about reform and the people’s rights, who would gladly see such as me adventure in the cause they do not care themselves to advocate, – they are all false alike. Give me,” cried he, with energy, and stamping his foot upon the ground, – “give me a demibrigade of ours, some squadrons of Milhaud’s cavalry, and trois bouches a feu to open the way before us. But why do I speak of this? Some midnight burning, some savage murder, some cowardly attack on unarmed and defenceless people, – these are our campaigns here. And shall I stain this blade in such a conflict?”

“But you will go back to France?” said I, endeavoring to say something that might rally him from his gloom.

“Never,” replied he, firmly, “never! I alone, of all my countrymen, maintained, that to leave the people here at such a crisis was unfair and unmanly. I alone believed in the representations that were made of extended organization, of high hopes, and ardent expectations. I accepted the command of their army. Their army! what a mockery! When others accepted the amnesty, I refused, and lived in concealment, my life hanging upon the chance of being captured. For fourteen months I have

wandered from county to county, endeavoring to rally the spirit I had been taught to think only needed restraint to hold back its impetuous daring. I have spent money largely, for it was largely placed at my disposal; I have distributed places and promises; I have accepted every post where danger offered; and in return, I hoped that the hour was approaching when we should test the courage of our enemies by such an outbreak as would astonish Europe. And what think you has all ended in? But my cheek burns at the very thought! An intended attack on the Government Members of Parliament, – an act of base assassination, – a cowardly murder! And for what, too? – to prevent a political union with England I Have they forgotten that our cause was total rupture! independence! open enmity with England! But, c'est fini, I have given them my last resolve. Yesterday evening I told the delegates the only chance that, in my opinion, existed of their successfully asserting their own independence. I gave them the letters of French officers, high in command and station, concurring with my own views; and I have pledged myself to wait one month longer, – if they deem my plans worthy of acceptance, – to consider all the details, and arrange the mode of proceeding. If they refuse, then I leave Ireland forever within a week. In America, the cause I glory in is still triumphant; and there, no prestige of failure shall follow me to damp my own efforts, nor discourage the high hopes of such as trust me. But you, my poor boy, – and how have I forgotten you in all this sad history I – I will not suffer you to be misled by

false representations and flattering offers. It may be the only consolation I shall carry with me from this land of anarchy and misfortune. But even that is something, – if I rescue one untried and uncorrupted heart from the misery of such associates. You shall be a soldier, – be my companion here while I stay. I ‘ll arrange everything for your comfort; we ‘ll read and talk together; and I will endeavor to repay the debt I owe to France, by sending back there one better than myself to guard her eagles.”

The tears ran fast down my cheeks as I heard these words; but not one syllable could I utter.

“You do not like my plan. Well – ”

Before he could conclude, I seized his hand with rapture within both of mine, and pressed it to my lips.

“It is a bargain, then,” said he, gayly. “And now let us lose no more time; let us remove this breakfast-table, and begin at once.”

Another table was soon drawn over to the fire, upon which a mass of books, maps, and plates were heaped by my companion, who seemed to act in the whole affair with all the delight of a schoolboy in some exploit of amusement.

“You are aware, Tom, that this place is a prison to me, and therefore I am not altogether disinterested in this proposal. You, however, can go out when you please; but until you understand the precautions necessary to prevent you from being traced here, it is better not to venture into the city.”

“I have no wish whatever to leave this,” said I, quickly, while I ranged my eye with delight over the pile of books before me,

and thought of all the pleasure I was to draw from their perusal.

“You must tell me so three weeks hence, if you wish to flatter me,” replied Charles, as he drew over his chair, and pointed with his hand to another.

It needed not the pleasing and attractive power of my teacher to make my study the most captivating of all amusements. Military science, even in its gravest forms, had an interest for me such as no other pursuit could equal. In its vast range of collateral subjects, it opened an inexhaustible mine to stimulate industry and encourage research. The great wars of the world were the great episodes in history, wherein monarchs and princes were nothing, if not generals. With what delight, then, did I hang over the pages of Carnot and Jomini! With what an anxious heart would I read the narrative of a siege, where, against every disadvantage of numbers and munitions of war, some few resisted all the attacks of the adverse forces, with no other protection save that of consummate skill! With what enthusiasm did I hear of Charles the Twelfth, of Wallenstein, of the Prince Eugene! And how often-times did I ask myself in secret, Why had the world none such as these to boast of now? – till at last the name of Bonaparte burst from my companion’s lips, as, with a torrent of long-restrained devotion, he broke forth into an eloquent and impassioned account of the great general of his age!

That name once heard, I could not bear to think or speak of any other. How I followed him, – from the siege of Toulon, as he knelt down beside the gun which he pointed with his own hand,

to the glorious battlefields of Italy, – and heard, from one who listened to his shout of “Suivez-moi” on the bridge of Lodi, the glorious heroism of that day! I tracked him across the pathless deserts of the East, – beneath the shadow of the Pyramids, whose fame seems somehow to have revived in the history of that great man. And then I listened to the stories – and how numerous were they! – of his personal daring; the devotion and love men bore him; the magic influence of his presence; the command of his look. The very short and broken sentences he addressed to his generals were treasured up in my mind, and repeated over and over to myself. Charles possessed a miniature of the First Consul, which he assured me was strikingly like him; and for hours long I could sit and gaze upon that cold, unimpassioned brow, where greatness seemed to sit enthroned. How I longed to look upon that broad and massive forehead, – the deep-set, searching eye, – the mouth, where sweetness and severity seemed tempered, – and that finely rounded chin, that gave his head so much the character of antique beauty! His image filled every avenue of my brain; his eye seemed on me in my waking moments, and I thought I heard his voice in my dream. Never did lover dwell more rapturously on the memory of his mistress than did my boyish thoughts on Bonaparte. What would I not have done to serve him? What would I not have dared to win one word, one look of his, in praise? All other names faded away before his; – the halo around him paled every other star; the victories! had thought of before with admiration I now only regarded as

trifling successes, compared with the overwhelming torrent of his conquests. Charles saw my enthusiasm, and ministered to it with eager delight. Every trait in his beloved leader that could stimulate admiration or excite affection, he dwelt on with all the fondness of a Frenchman for his idol; till at last the world seemed to my eyes but the theatre of his greatness, and men the mere instruments of that commanding intellect that ruled the destinies and disposed of the fortunes of nations.

In this way, days and weeks, and even months rolled on, for Charles's interest in my studies had induced him to abandon his former intention of departure; and he now scarcely took any part in the proceedings of the delegates, and devoted himself almost exclusively to me. During the daytime we never left the house; but when night fell we used to walk forth, not into the city, but by some country road, often along the canal-side, – our conversation on the only topic wherein we felt interested. And these rambles still live within my memory with all the vivid freshness of yesterday; and while my heart saddens over the influence they shed upon my after life, I cannot help the train of pleasure with which even yet I dwell upon their recollection. How guarded should he be who converses with a boy, forgetting with what power each word is fraught by the mere force of years, – how the flattery of equality destroys judgment, and saps all power of discrimination, – and, more than all, how dangerous it is to graft upon the tender sapling the ripe fruits of experience, not knowing how, in such, they may grow to very rankness! Few

are there who cannot look back to their childhood for the origin of opinions that have had their influence over all their latter years; and when these have owed their birth to those we loved, is it wonderful that we should cling to faults which seemed hallowed by friendship?

Meanwhile I was becoming a man, if not in years, at least in spirit and ambition. The pursuits natural to my age were passed over for the studies of more advanced years. Military history had imparted to me a soldier's valor, and I could take no pleasure in anything save as it bore upon the one engrossing topic of my mind. Charles, too, seemed to feel all his own ambition revived in mine, and watched with pride the progress I was making under his guidance.

CHAPTER IX. THE FRENCHMAN'S STORY

While my life slipped thus pleasantly along, the hopes of the insurgent party fell daily and hourly lower; disunion and distrust pervaded all their councils, jealousies and suspicions grew up among their leaders. Many of those whose credit stood highest in their party became informers to the Government, whose persevering activity increased with every emergency; and finally, they who would have adventured everything but some few months before, grew lukewarm and indifferent. A dogged carelessness seemed to have succeeded to their outbreak of enthusiasm, and they looked on at the execution of their companions and the wreck of their party with a stupid and stolid indifference.

For some time previous the delegates met at rare and irregular intervals, and finally ceased to assemble altogether. The bolder portion of the body, disgusted with the weak and temporizing views of the others, withdrew first: and the less determined formed themselves into a new Society, whose object was merely to get up petitions and addresses unfavorable to the great project of the Government, – a Legislative Union with England.

From the turn events had taken, my companion, as it may be supposed, took no interest in their proceedings. Affecting to

think that all was not lost, – while in his heart he felt bitterly the disappointment of his hopes, – a settled melancholy, unrelieved even by those flashes of buoyancy which a Frenchman rarely loses in any misfortune, now grew upon him. His cheek grew paler, and his frame seemed wasting away, while his impaired strength and tottering step betrayed that something more than sorrow was at work within him. Still he persevered in our course of study, and notwithstanding all my efforts to induce him to relax in his labors, his desire to teach me grew with every day. For some time a short, hacking cough, with pain in his chest, had seized on him, and although it yielded to slight remedies, it returned again and again. Our night walks were therefore obliged to be discontinued, and the confinement to the house preyed upon his spirits and shook his nerves. Boy as I was, I could not look upon his altered face and attenuated figure without a thrilling fear at my heart lest he might be seriously ill. He perceived my anxiety quickly, and endeavored, with many a cheering speech, to assure me that these were attacks to which he had been long accustomed, and which never were either lasting or dangerous; but the very hollow accents in which he spoke robbed these words of all their comfort to me.

The winter, which had been unusually long and severe, at length passed away, and the spring, milder and more genial than is customary in our climate, succeeded; the sunlight came slanting down through the narrow court, and fell in one rich yellow patch upon the floor. Charles started; his dark eyes,

hollow and sunk, glowed with unwonted brightness, and his haggard and hollow cheek suddenly flushed with a crimson glow.

“Mon cher,” said he, in a voice tremulous with emotion, “I think if I were to leave this I might recover.”

The very possibility of his death, until that moment, had never even crossed my mind, and in the misery of the thought I burst into tears. From that hour the impression never left my mind; and every accent of his low, soft voice, every glance of his mild, dark eye, sank into my heart, as though I heard and saw them for the last time. There was nothing to fear now, so far as political causes were concerned, in our removing from our present abode; and it was arranged between us that we should leave town, and take up our residence in the county of Wicklow. There was a small cottage at the opening of Glenmalure which my companion constantly spoke of; he had passed two nights there already, and left it with many a resolve to return and enjoy the delightful scenery of the neighborhood.

The month of April was drawing to a close, when one morning soon after sunrise we left Dublin. A heavy mist, such as often in northern climates ushers in a day of unusual brightness, shrouded every object from our view for several miles of the way. Charles scarcely spoke; the increased exertion seemed to have fatigued and exhausted him, and he lay back in the carriage, his handkerchief pressed to his mouth, and his eyes half closed.

We had passed the little town of Bray, and entered upon that long road which traverses the valley between the two Sugar

Loaves, when suddenly the sun burst forth; the lazy mists rolled heavily up the valley and along the mountainsides, disclosing as they went patches of fertile richness or dark masses of frowning rock. Above this, again, the purple heath appeared glowing like a gorgeous amethyst, as the red sunlight played upon it, or sparkled on the shining granite that rose through the luxuriant herbage. Gradually the ravine grew narrower; the mountain seemed like one vast chain, severed by some great convulsion, – their rugged sides appeared to mark the very junction; trunks of aged and mighty trees hung threateningly above the pass; and a hollow echoing sound arose as the horses trod along the causeway. It was a spot of wild and gloomy grandeur, and as I gazed on it intently, suddenly I felt a hand upon my shoulder. I turned round: it was Charles's, his eyes riveted on the scene, his lips parted with eagerness. He spoke at length; but at first his voice was hoarse and low, by degrees it grew fuller and richer, and at last rolled on in all its wonted strength and roundness.

“See there, – look!” cried he, as his thin, attenuated figure pointed to the pass. “What a ravine to defend! The column, with two pieces of artillery in the road; the cavalry to form behind, where you see that open space, and advance between the open files of the infantry; the tirailleurs scattered along that ridge where the furze is thickest, or down there among those masses of rock. Sacristi! what a volume of fire they ‘d pour down! See how the blue smoke and the ring of the musket would mark them out as they dotted the mountain-side, and yet were unapproachable to

the enemy! And think then of the rolling thunder of the eighteen-pounders shaking these old mountains, and the long, clattering crash of the platoon following after, and the dark shakos towering above the smoke! And then the loud ‘Viva!’ – I think I hear it.”

His cheek became purple as he spoke, his veins swollen and distended; his voice, though loud, lost nothing of its musical cadence; and his whole look betokened excitement, almost bordering on madness. Suddenly his chest heaved, a tremendous fit of coughing seized him, and he fell forward upon my shoulder. I lifted him up; and what was my horror to perceive that all his vest and cravat were bathed in florid blood, which issued from his mouth! He had burst a blood-vessel in his wild transport of enthusiasm, and now lay pale, cold, and senseless in my arms.

It was a long time before we could proceed with our journey, for although fortunately the bleeding did not continue, fainting followed fainting for hours after. At length we were enabled to set out again, but only at a walking pace. For the remainder of the day his head rested on my shoulder, and his cold hand in mine, as we slowly traversed the long, weary miles towards Glenmalure. The night was falling as we arrived at our journey’s end. Here, however, every kindness and attention awaited us; and I soon had the happiness of seeing my poor friend in his bed, and sleeping with all the ease and tranquillity of a child.

From that hour every other thought was merged in my fears for him. I watched with an agonizing intensity every change of his malady; I scanned with an aching heart every symptom day

by day. How many times has the false bloom of hectic shed happiness over me! How often in my secret walks have I offered up my prayer of thankfulness, as the deceitful glow of fever colored his wan cheek, and lent a more than natural brilliancy to his sunk and filmy eye! The world to me was all nothing, save as it influenced him. Every cloud that moved above, each breeze that rustled, I thought of for him; and when I slept, his image was still before me, and his voice seemed to call me oftentimes in the silence of the night, and when I awoke and saw him sleeping, I knew not which was the reality.

His debility increased rapidly; and although the mild air of summer and the shelter of the deep valley seemed to have relieved his cough, his weakness grew daily more and more. His character, too, seemed to have undergone a change as great and as striking as that in his health. The high and chivalrous ambition, the soldierlike heroism, the ardent spirit of patriotism that at first marked him, had given way to a low and tender melancholy, – an almost womanish tenderness, – that made him love to have the little children of the cabin near him, to hear their innocent prattle and watch their infant gambols. He talked, too, of home; of the old château in Provence, where he was born, and described to me its antiquated terraces and quaint, old-fashioned alleys, where as a boy he wandered with his sister.

“Pauvre Marie!” said he, as a deep blush covered his pale cheek, “how have I deserted you!” The thought seemed full of anguish for him, and for the remainder of the day he scarcely

spoke.

Some days after his first mention of his sister, we were sitting together in front of the cabin, enjoying the shade of a large chestnut-tree, which already had put forth its early leaves, and tempered if it did not exclude the rays of the sun.

“You heard me speak of my sister,” said he, in a low and broken voice. “She is all that I have on earth near to me. We were brought up together as children; learned the same plays, had the same masters, spent not one hour in the long day asunder, and at night we pressed each other’s hands as we sunk to sleep. She was to me all that I ever dreamed of girlish loveliness, of woman’s happiest nature; and I was her ideal of boyish daring, of youthful boldness, and manly enterprise. We loved each other, – like those who felt they had no need of other affection, save such as sprang from our cradles, and tracked us on through life. Hers was a heart that seemed made for all that human nature can taste of happiness; her eye, her lip, her blooming cheek knew no other expression than a smile; her very step was buoyancy; her laugh rang through your heart as joy-bells fill the air; and yet, – and yet! I brought that heart to sorrow, and that cheek I made pale, and hollow, and sunken as you see my own. My cursed ambition, that rested not content with my own path in life, threw its baleful shadow across hers. The story is a short one, and I may tell it to you.

“When I left Provence to join the army of the South, I was obliged to leave Marie under the care of an old and distant

relative, who resided some two leagues from us on the Loire. The chevalier was a widower, with one son about my own age, of whom I knew nothing save that he had never left his father's house; had been educated completely at home; and had obtained the reputation of being a sombre, retired bookworm, who avoided the world, and preferred the lonely solitude of a provincial château to the gay dissipations of Paris.

“My only fear in intrusting my poor sister in such hands was the dire stupidity of the *séjour*; but as I bid her goodby, I said, laughingly, ‘Prenez garde, Marie, don't fall in love with Claude de Lauzan.’

“‘Poor Claude!’ said she, bursting into a fit of laughter; ‘what a sad affair that would be for him!’ So saying, we parted.

“I made the campaign of Italy, where, as I have perhaps too often told you, I had some opportunities of distinguishing myself, and was promoted to a squadron on the field of Arcole. Great as my boyish exultation was at my success, I believe its highest pleasure arose from the anticipation of Marie's delight when she received my letter with the news. I wrote to her nearly every week, and heard from her as frequently. At the time I did not mark, as I have since done, the altered tone of her letters to me: how, gradually, the high ambitious daring that animated her early answers became tamed down into half regretful fears of a soldier's career; her sorrows for those whose conquered countries were laid waste by fire and sword; her implied censure of a war whose injustice she more than hinted at; and, lastly, her avowed

preference for those peaceful paths in life that were devoted to the happiness of one's fellows, and the worship of Him who deserved all our affection. I did not mark, I say, this change, – the bustle of the camp, the din of arms, the crash of mounted squadrons, are poor aids to reflection, and I thought of Marie but as I left her.

“It was after a few months of absence I returned to Provence, – the *croix d'honneur* on my bosom, the sabre I won at Lodi by my side. I rushed into the room bursting with impatience to clasp my sister in my arms, and burning to tell her all my deeds and all my dangers. She met me with her old affection; but how altered in its form! Her gay and girlish lightness, the very soul of buoyant pleasure, was gone; and in its place a mild, sad smile played upon her lip, and a deep, thoughtful look was in her dark brown eye. She looked not less beautiful, – no, far from it; her loveliness was increased tenfold. But the disappointment smote heavily on my heart. I looked about me like one seeking for some explanation; and there stood Claude – pale, still, and motionless – before me: the very look she wore reflected in his calm features; her very smile was on his lips. In an instant the whole truth flashed across me: she loved him.

“There are thoughts which rend us, as lightning does the rock, opening new surfaces that lay hid since the Creation, and tearing our fast-knit sympathies asunder like the rent granite: mine was such. From that hour I hated him; the very virtues that had, under happier circumstances, made us like brothers, but added fuel to

the flame. My rival, he had robbed me of my sister; – he had left me without that one great prize I owned on earth; and all that I had dared and won seemed poor, and barren, and worthless, since she no longer valued it.

“That very night I wrote a letter to the First Consul. I knew the ardent desire he possessed to attach to Josephine’s suite such members of the old aristocracy as could be induced to join it. He had more than once hinted to me that the fame of my sister’s beauty had reached the Tuileries; that with such pretensions as hers, the seclusion of a château in Provence was ill suited to her. I stated at once my wish that she might be received as one of the Ladies of the Court, avowing my intention to afford her any sum that might be deemed suitable to maintain her in so exalted a sphere. This, you are not aware, is the mode by which the members of a family express to the consul that they surrender all right and guardianship in the individual given, tendering to him full power to dispose of her in marriage, exactly as though he were her own father.

“Before day broke my letter was on its way to Paris; in less than a week came the answer, accepting my proposal in the most flattering terms, and commanding me to repair to the Tuileries with my sister, and take command of a regiment d’ elite then preparing for service.

“I may not dwell on the scene that followed; the very memory of it is too much for my weak and failing spirits. Claude flung himself at my feet, and confessed his love. He declared his

willingness to submit to any or everything I should dictate: he would join the army; he would volunteer for Egypt. Poor fellow! his trembling accents and bloodless lip comported ill with the heroism of his words. Only promise that in the end Marie should be his, and there was no danger he would not dare, no course in life, however unsuited to him, he would not follow at my bidding. I know not whether my heart could have withstood such an appeal as this, had I been free to act; but now the die was cast. I handed him the First Consul's letter. He opened it with a hand trembling like palsy, and read it over; he leaned his head against the chimney when he finished, and gave me back the letter without a word. I could not bear to look on him, and left the room.

“When I returned he was gone. We left the château the same evening for Paris. Marie scarcely spoke one word during the journey; a fatuous, stupid indifference to everything and every one had seized her, and she seemed perfectly careless whither we went. This gradually yielded to a settled melancholy, which never left her. On our arrival in Paris, I did not dare to present myself with her at the Tuileries; so, feigning her ill health as an excuse, I remained some weeks at Versailles, to endeavor by affection and care to overcome this sad feature of her malady. It was about six weeks after this that I read in the ‘Journal des Débats’ an announcement that, Claude de Lauzan had accepted holy orders, and was appointed *curé* of La Flèche, in Brittany.’ At first the news came on me like a thunder-clap; but after a while’s

reflection I began to believe it was perhaps the very best thing could have happened. And under this view of the matter I left the paper in Marie's way.

"I was right. She did not appear the next morning at breakfast, nor the entire day after. The following day the same; but in the evening came a few lines written with a pencil, saying she wished to see me. I went; – but I cannot tell you. My very heart is bursting as I think of her, as she sat up in her bed; her long, dark hair falling in heavy masses over her shoulders, and her darker eyes flashing with a brightness that seemed like wandering intellect. She fell upon my neck and cried; her tears ran down my cheek, and her sobs shook me. I know not what I said: but I remember that she agreed to everything I had arranged for her; she even smiled a sickly smile as I spoke of what an ornament she would be to the belle cour, – and we parted.

"That was the last good-night I ever wished her. The next day she was received at Court, and I was ordered to Normandy; thence I was sent to Boulogne, and soon after to Ireland."

"But you have written to her, – you have heard from her?"

"Alas! no. I have written again and again; but either she has never received my letters, or she will not answer them."

The tone of sorrow he concluded in left no room for any effort at consolation, and we were silent; at last he took my hand in his, and as his feverish fingers pressed it, he said, – "T is a sad thing when we work the misery of those for whose happiness we would have shed our heart's blood."

CHAPTER X. THE CHURCHYARD

The excitement caused by the mere narration of his sister's suffering weighed heavily on De Meudon's weak and exhausted frame. His thoughts would flow in no other channel; his reveries were of home and long past years; and a depression far greater than I had yet witnessed settled down upon his jaded spirits.

"Is not my present condition like a just retribution on my ambitious folly?" was his continued reflection. And so he felt it. With a Frenchman's belief in destiny, he regarded the failure of all his hopes, and the ruin of the cause he had embarked in, as the natural and inevitable consequences of his own ungenerous conduct; and even reproached himself for carrying his evil fortune into an enterprise which, without him, might have been successful. These gloomy forebodings, against which reason was of no avail, grew hourly upon him, and visibly influenced his chances of recovery.

It was a sad spectacle to look on one who possessed so much of good, so many fair and attractive qualities, thus wasting away without a single consolation he could lay to his bruised and wounded spirit. The very successes he once gloried to remember, now only added bitterness to his fallen state. To think of what he had been, and look on what he was, was his heaviest affliction; and he fell into deep, brooding melancholy, in which he scarcely spoke, but sat looking at vacancy, waiting as it were for death.

I remember it well. I had been sitting silently by his bedside; for hours he had not spoken, but an occasional deep-drawn sigh showed he was not sleeping. It was night, and all in the little household were at rest; a slight rustling of the curtain attracted me, and I felt his hand steal from the clothes and grasp my own.

“I have been thinking of you, my dear boy,” said he, “and what is to become of you when I’m gone. There, do not sob! The time is short now, and I begin to feel it so; for somehow, as we approach the confines of eternity, our mental vision grows clearer and more distinct, – doubts that have long puzzled us seem doubts no longer. Many of our highest hopes and aspirations – the daydreams that made life glorious – pass before our eyes, and become the poor and empty pageants of the hour. Like the traveller, who as he journeys along sees little of the way, but at the last sits down upon some grassy bank, and gazes over the long line of road; so, as the close of life draws near, we throw a backward glance upon the past. But how differently does all seem to our eyes! How many of those we envied once do we pity now! how many of those who appeared low and humble, whose thoughts seemed bowed to earth, do we now recognize as soaring aloft, high above their fellow-men, like creatures of some other sphere!” He paused; then in a tone of greater earnestness added: “You must not join these people, Tom. The day is gone by when anything great or good could have been accomplished. The horrors of civil war will ever prevent good men from uniting themselves to a cause which has no other road save through

bloodshed; and many wise ones, who weigh well the dangers, see it hopeless. France is your country: there liberty has been won; there lives one great man, whose notice, were it but passingly bestowed, is fame. If life were spared me, I could have served you there; as it is, I can do something.”

He paused for a while, and then drawing the curtain gently to one side, said, – “Can it be moonlight? it is so very bright.”

“Yes,” said I; “the moon is at the full.”

He sat up as I spoke, and looked eagerly out through the little window.

“I have got a fancy, – how strange, too; it is one I have often smiled at in others, but I feel it strongly now: it is to choose some spot where I shall be laid when I am dead. There is a little ruin at the bottom of this glen; you must remember it well. If I mistake not, there is a well close beside it. I remember resting there one hot and sultry day in July. It was an eventful day, too. We beat the King’s troops, and took seventy prisoners; and I rode from Arklow down here to bring up some ammunition that we had secreted in one of the lead mines. Well I recollect falling asleep beside that well, and having such a delightful dream of home when I was a child, and of a pony which Marie used to ride behind me; and I thought we were galloping through the vineyard, she grasping me round the waist, half laughing, half in fear, – and when I awoke I could not remember where I was. I should like to see that old spot again, and I feel strong enough now to try it.”

I endeavored, with all my power of persuasion, to prevent

his attempting to walk such a distance, and in the night air too; but the more I reasoned against it, the more bent was he on the project, and at last I was obliged to yield a reluctant consent, and assist him to rise and dress. The energy which animated him at first soon sank under the effort, and before we had gone a quarter of a mile he grew faint and weary; still he persevered, and leaning heavily on my arm, he tottered along.

“If I make no better progress,” said he, smiling sadly, “there will be no need to assist me coming back.”

At last we reached the ruin, which, like many of the old churches in Ireland, was a mere gable, overgrown with ivy, and pierced with a single window, whose rudely-formed arch betokened great antiquity. Vestiges of the side walls remained in part, but the inside of the building was filled with tombstones and grave-mounds, selected by the people as being a place of more than ordinary sanctity; among these the rank dock weeds and nettles grew luxuriantly, and the tall grass lay heavy and matted. We sat for some time looking on this same spot. A few garlands were withering on some rude crosses of stick, to mark the latest of those who sought their rest there; and upon these my companion’s eyes were bent with a melancholy meaning.

How long we sat there in silence I know not; but a rustling of the ivy behind me was the first thing to attract my attention. I turned quickly round, and in the window of the ruin beheld the head of a man bent eagerly in the direction we were in; the moonlight fell upon him at the moment, and I saw that the face

was blackened.

“Who’s that?” I called aloud, as with my finger I directed De Meudon to the spot. No answer was returned, and I repeated my question yet louder; but still no reply, while I could mark that the head was turned slightly round, as if to speak with some one without. The noise of feet, and the low murmur of several voices, now came from the side of the ruin; at the same instant a dozen men, their faces blackened, and wearing a white badge on their hats, stood up as if out of the very ground around us.

“What are you doing here at this time of night?” said a hard voice, in tones that boded but little kindness.

“We are as free to walk the country, when we like it, as you are, I hope,” was my answer.

“I know his voice well,” said another of the crowd; “I told you it was them.”

“Is it you that stop at Wild’s, in the glen?” said the first speaker.

“Yes,” replied I.

“And is it to get share of what ‘s going, that ye ‘re come to join us now?” repeated he, in a tone of mockery.

“Be easy, Lanty; ‘tis the French officer that behaved so stout up at Ross. It ‘s little he cares for money, as myself knows. I saw him throw a handful of goold among the boys when they stopped to pillage, and bid them do their work first, and that he ‘d give them plenty after.”

“Maybe he ‘d do the same now,” said a voice from the crowd,

in a tone of irony; and the words were received by the rest with a roar of laughter.

“Stop laughing,” said the first speaker, in a voice of command; “we’ve small time for joking.” As he spoke he threw himself heavily on the bank beside De Meudon, and placing his hand familiarly on his arm, said, in a low but clear voice: “The boys is come up here to-night to draw lots for three men to settle Barton, that ‘s come down here yesterday, and stopping at the barrack there. We knew you war n’t well lately, and we did n’t trouble you; but now that you ‘re come up of yourself among us, it ‘s only fair and reasonable you ‘d take your chance with the rest, and draw your lot with the others.”

“Arrah, he ‘s too weak; the man is dying,” said a voice near.

“And if he is,” said the other, “who wants his help? sure, is n’t it to keep him quiet, and not bethray us?”

“The devil a fear of that,” said the former speaker; “he’s throe to the backbone; I know them that knows him well.”

By this time De Meudon had risen to his feet, and stood leaning upon a tall headstone beside him; his foraging cap fell off in his effort to stand, and his long thin hair floated in masses down his pale cheeks and on his shoulders. The moon was full upon him; and what a contrast did his noble features present to the ruffian band that sat and stood around him!

“And is it a scheme of murder, of cold, cowardly assasination, you have dared to propose to me?” said he, darting a look of fiery indignation on him who seemed the leader. “Is it thus you

understand my presence in your country and in your cause? Think ye it was for this that I left the glorious army of France, – that I quitted the field of honorable war to mix with such as you? Ay, if it were the last word I were to speak on earth, I ‘d denounce you, wretches that stain with blood and massacre the sacred cause the best and boldest bleed for!”

The click of a trigger sounded harshly on my ear, and my blood ran cold with horror. De Meudon heard it too, and continued, – “You do but cheat me of an hour or two, and I am ready.”

He paused, as if waiting for the shot. A deadly silence followed; it lasted for some minutes, when again he spoke, – “I came here to-night not knowing of your intentions, not expecting you; I came here to choose a grave, where, before another week pass over, I hoped to rest. If you will it sooner, I shall not gainsay you.”

Low murmurs ran through the crowd, and something like a tone of pity could be heard mingling through the voices.

“Let him go home, then, in God’s name!” said one of the number; “that’s the best way.”

“Ay, take him home,” said another, addressing me; “Dan Kelly ‘s a hard man when he ‘s roused.”

The words were repeated on every side, and I led De Meudon forth leaning on my arm; for already, the excitement over, a stupid indifference crept over him, and he walked on by my side without speaking.

I confess it was not without trepidation, and many a backward glance towards the old ruin, that I turned homeward to our cabin. There was that in their looks at which I trembled for my companion; nor do I yet know why they spared him at that moment.

CHAPTER XI. TOO LATE

The day which followed the events I have mentioned was a sad one to me. The fatigue and the excitement together brought on fever with De Meudon. His head became attacked, and before evening his faculties began to wander. All the strange events of his checkered life were mixed up in his disturbed intellect; and he talked on for hours about Italy, and Egypt, the Tuileries, La Vendee, and Ireland, without ceasing. The entire of the night he never slept, and the next day the symptoms appeared still more aggravated. The features of his insanity were wilder and less controllable. He lost all memory of me; and sometimes the sight of me at his bedside threw him into most terrific paroxysms of passion; while at others, he would hold my hand for hours together, and seem to feel my presence as something soothing. His frequent recurrence to the scene in the churchyard showed the deep impression it had made upon his mind, and how fatally it had influenced the worst symptoms of his malady.

Thus passed two days and nights. On the third morning, exhaustion seemed to have worn him into a false calm. His wild, staring eye had become heavier, his movements less rapid; the spot of color had left his cheek; the mouth was pinched up and rigid; and a flatness of the muscles of the face betokened complete depression. He spoke seldom, and with a voice hoarse and cavernous, but no longer in the tone of wild excitement

as before. I sat by his bedside still and in silence, my own sad thoughts my only company. As it grew later, the sleepless days and nights I had passed, and the stillness of the sickroom, overcame me, and I slept.

I awoke with a start; some dreamy consciousness of neglect had flashed across me, and I sat up. I peeped into the bed, and started back with amazement. I looked again, and there lay De Meudon, on the outside of the clothes, dressed in his full uniform, – the green coat and white facing, the large gold epaulettes, the brilliant crosses on the breast; his plumed chapeau lay at one side of him, and his sabre at the other. He lay still and motionless. I held the candle near his face, and could mark a slight smile that curled his cold lip, and gave to his wan and wasted features something of their former expression.

“Oui, mon cher,” said he, in a weak whisper, as he took my hand and kissed it, “c’est bien moi.” And then added, “It was another of my strange fancies to put on these once more before I died; and when I found you sleeping, I arose and did so. I have changed something since I wore this last: it was at a ball at Cambacérès.”

My joy at hearing him speak once more with full possession of his reason, was damped by the great change a few hours had worked in his appearance. His skin was cold and clammy; a gluey moisture rested on his cheek; and his teeth were dark and discolored. A slimy froth, too, was ever rising to his lips as he spoke; while at every respiration his chest heaved and waved like

a stormy sea.

“You are thirsty, Charles,” said I, stooping over him to wet his lips.

“No,” said he, calmly, “I have but one thing which wants relief; it is here.”

He pressed his hand to his heart as he spoke, while such a look of misery as crossed his features I never beheld.

“Your heart – ”

“Is broken,” said he, with a sigh. For some minutes he said nothing, then whispered: “Take my pocket-book from beneath my pillow; yes, that ‘s it. There is a letter you ‘ll give my sister; you ‘ll promise me that? Well, the other is for Lecharlier, the *chef* of the Polytechnique at Paris; that is for you, – you must be *un élève* there. There are some five or six thousand francs, – it ‘s all I have now: they are yours; Marie is already provided for. Tell her – But no; she has forgiven me long since, – I feel it. You ‘ll one day win your grade, – high up; yes, you must do so. Perhaps it may be your fortune to speak with General Bonaparte; if so, I beg you say to him, that when Charles de Meudon was dying, in exile, with but one friend left of all the world, he held this portrait to his lips, and with his last breath he kissed it.”

The fervor of the action drew the blood to his face and temples, which as suddenly became pale again. A shivering ran through his limbs; a quick heaving of his bosom; a sigh; and all was still. He was dead!

The stunning sense of deep affliction is a mercy from on high.

Weak human faculties, long strained by daily communing with grief, would fall into idiocy were their acuteness not blunted and their perception rendered dull. It is for memory to trace back through the mazes of misery the object of our sorrow, as the widow searches for the corpse of him she loved amid the slain upon the battlefield.

I sat benumbed with sorrow, a vague desire for the breaking day my only thought. Already the indistinct glimmerings of morning were visible, when I heard the sounds of men marching along the road towards the house. I could mark, by the clank of their firelocks and their regular step, that they were soldiers. They halted at the door of the cabin, whence a loud knocking now proceeded.

“Halloo, there!” said a voice, whose tones seemed to sink into my very heart; “halloo, Peter! get up and open the door.”

“What’s the matter?” cried the old man, starting up, and groping his way towards the door.

The sound of several voices and the noise of approaching footsteps drowned the reply; and the same instant the door of the little room in which I sat opened, and a sergeant entered.

“Sorry to disturb ye, sir,” said he, civilly; “but duty can’t be avoided. I have a warrant to arrest Captain de Meudon, a French officer that is concealed here. May I ask where is he?”

I pointed to the bed. The sergeant approached, and by the half-light could just perceive the glitter of the uniform, as the body lay shaded by the curtain.

"I arrest you, sir, in the King's name," said he. "Halloo, Kelly! this is your prisoner, isn't he?"

A head appeared at the door as he spoke; and as the eyes wandered stealthily round the chamber, I recognized, despite the change of color, the wretch who led the party at the churchyard.

"Come in, damn ye," said the sergeant, impatiently; "what are you afraid for? Is this your man? Halloo, sir!" said he, shaking the corpse by the shoulder.

"You must call even louder yet," said I, while something like the fury of a fiend was working within me.

"What!" said the sergeant, snatching up the light and holding it within the bed. He started back in horror as he did so, and called out, "He is dead!"

Kelly sprang forward at the word, and seizing the candle, held it down to the face of the corpse; but the flame rose as steadily before those cold lips as though the breath of life had never warmed them.

"I 'll get the reward, anyhow, sergeant, won't I?" said the ruffian, while the thirst for gain added fresh expression to his savage features.

A look of disgust was the only reply he met with, as the sergeant walked into the outer room, and whispered something to the man of the house. At the same instant the galloping of a horse was heard on the causeway. It came nearer and nearer, and ceased suddenly at the door, as a deep voice shouted out, —

"Well! all right, I hope, sergeant. Is he safe?"

A whispered reply, and a low, muttered sound of two or three voices followed, and Barton – the same man I had seen at the fray in Malone’s cabin – entered the room. He approached the bed, and drawing back the curtains, rudely gazed on the dead man, while over his shoulder peered the demoniac countenance of the informer Kelly, his savage features working in anxiety lest his gains should have escaped him.

Barton’s eye ranged the little chamber till it fell on me, as I sat still and motionless against the wall. He started slightly, and then advancing close, fixed his piercing glance upon me.

“Ha!” cried he, “you here! Well, that is more than I looked for this morning. I have a short score to settle with you. Sergeant, here ‘s one prisoner for you, at any rate.”

“Yes,” said Kelly, springing forward, “he was at the churchyard with the other; I’ll swear to that.”

“I think we can do without your valuable aid in this business,” said Barton, smiling maliciously. “Come along, young gentleman; we ‘ll try and finish the education that has begun so prosperously.”

My eyes involuntarily turned to the table where De Meudon’s pistols were lying. The utter hopelessness of such a contest deterred me not, I sprang towards them; but as I did so, the strong hand of Barton was on my collar, and with a hoarse laugh, he threw me against the wall, as he called out, —

“Folly, boy! mere folly. You are quite sure of the rope without that. Here, take him off!”

As he spoke, two soldiers seized me on either side, and before a minute elapsed, pinioned my arms behind my back. In another moment the men fell in, the order was given to march, and I was led away between the files, Kelly following at the rear; while Barton's voice might be heard issuing from the cabin, as he gave his orders for the burial of the body, and the removal of all the effects and papers to the barrack at Glencree.

We might have been about an hour on the road when Barton overtook us. He rode to the head of the party, and handing a paper to the sergeant, muttered some words, among which I could only gather the phrase, "Committed to Newgate;" then, turning round in his saddle, he fixed his eyes on Kelly, who, like a beast of prey, continued to hang upon the track of his victim.

"Well, Dan," cried he, "you may go home again now. I am afraid you 've gained nothing this time but character."

"Home!" muttered the wretch in a voice of agony; "is it face home after this morning's work?"

"And why not, man? Take my word for it, the neighbors will be too much afraid to meddle with you now."

"Oh, Mister Barton! oh, darling! don't send me back there, for the love of Heaven! Take me with you!" cried the miserable wretch, in tones of heart-moving misery.

"Oh, young gentleman," said he, taming towards me, and catching me by the sleeve, "spake a word for me this day!"

"Don't you think he has enough of troubles of his own to think of, Dan?" said Barton, with a tone of seeming kindness. "Go

back, man; go back! there 's plenty of work before you in this very county. Don't lay your hand on me, you scoundrel; your touch would pollute a hangman."

The man fell back as if stunned at the sound of these words; his face became livid, and his lips white as snow. He staggered a pace or two, like a drunken man, and then stood stock-still, his eyes fixed upon the road.

"Quick march!" said the sergeant.

The soldiers stepped out again; and as we turned the angle of the road, about a mile farther, I beheld Kelly still standing in the self same attitude we left him. Barton, after some order to the sergeant, soon left us, and we continued our march till near nine o'clock, when the party halted to breakfast. They pressed me to eat with every kind entreaty, but I could taste nothing, and we resumed our road after half an hour. But the day becoming oppressively hot, it was deemed better to defer our march till near sunset; we stopped, then, during the noon, in a shady thicket near the roadside, where the men, unbuckling their knapsacks and loosening their stocks, lay down in the deep grass, either chatting together or smoking. The sergeant made many attempts to draw me into conversation, but my heart was too full of its own sensations either to speak or listen; so he abandoned the pursuit with a good grace, and betook himself to his pipe at the foot of a tree, where, after its last whiff escaped, he sank into a heavy sleep.

Such of the party as were not disposed for sleep gathered

together in a little knot on a small patch of green grass, in the middle of a beech clump, where, having arranged themselves with as much comfort as the place permitted, they began chatting away over their life and its adventures pleasantly and freely. I was glad to seek any distraction from my own gloomy thoughts in listening to them, as I lay only a few yards off; but though I endeavored with all my might to attend to and take interest in their converse, my thoughts always turned to him I had lost forever, – the first, the only friend I had ever known. All care for myself and what fortune awaited me was merged in my sorrow for him. If not indifferent to my fate, I was at least unmindful of it, and although the words of those near me fell upon my ear, I neither heard nor marked them.

From this dreamy lethargy I was at last suddenly aroused by the hearty bursts of laughter that broke from the party, and a loud clapping of hands that denoted their applause of something or somebody then before them.

“I say, George,” said one of the soldiers, “he’s a queer ‘un, too, that piper.”

“Yes, he ‘s a droll chap,” responded the other solemnly, as he rolled forth a long curl of smoke from the angle of his mouth.

“Can you play ‘Rule Britannia,’ then?” asked another of the men.

“No, sir,” said a voice I at once knew to be no other than my friend Darby’s, – “no, sir. But av the ‘Fox’s Lament,’ or ‘Mary’s Dream;’ wasn’t uncongenial to your sentiments, it would be a

felicity to me to expatiate upon the same before yez.”

“Eh, Bell,” cried a rough voice, “does that beat you now?”

“No,” said another, “not a bit. He means he ‘ll give us something Irish instead; he don’t know ‘Rule Britannia! ’”

“Not know ‘Rule Britannia!’ Why, where the devil were you ever bred or born, man, – eh?”

“Kerry, sir, the kingdom of Kerry, was the nativity of my father; my maternal progenitrix emanated from Clare. Maybe you ‘ve heard the adage, —

“From Keiry his father, from Clare came his mother;
He ‘s more rogue nor fool on one side and the other.”

Not but that, in my humble individuality, I am an exceptions illustration of the proverbial catastrophe.”

Another shout of rude laughter from his audience followed this speech, amid the uproar of which Darby began tuning his pipes, as if perfectly unaware that any singularity on his part had called forth the mirth.

“Well, what are we to have, old fellow, after all that confounded squeaking and grunting?” said he who appeared the chief spokesman of the party.

“‘Tis a trifling production of my own muse, sir, – a kind of biographical, poetical, and categorical dissertation of the delights, devices, and daily doings of your obeydient servant and ever submissive slave, Darby the Blast.”

Though it was evident very little of his eloquent announcement was comprehended by the party, their laughter was not less ready, and a general chorus proclaimed their attention to the song.

Darby accordingly assumed his wonted dignity of port, and having given some half dozen premonitory flourishes, which certainly had the effect of astonishing and overawing the audience, he began, to the air of "The Night before Larry was stretched," the following ditty: —

DARBY THE BLAST

Oh! my name it is Darby the Blast;
My country is Ireland all over;
My religion is never to fast,
But live, as I wander, in clover;
To make fun for myself every day,
The ladies to please when I 'm able,
The boys to amuse as I play,
And make the jugs dance on the table.
Oh! success to the chanter, my dear!

Your eyes on each side you may cast,
But there is n't a house that is near ye
But they 're glad to have Darby the Blast,
And they 'll tell ye 'tis he that can cheer ye.
Oh! 't is he can put life in a feast;

What music lies under his knuckle;
As he plays “Will I send for the Priest?”
Or a jig they call “Cover the Buckle.”
Oh! good luck to the chanter, your sowl!

But give me an audience in rags;
They ‘re illigant people for list’ning;
‘T is they that can humor the bags
As I rise a fine tune at a christ’ning.
There ‘s many a weddin’ I make
Where they never get further nor sighing;
And when I perform at a wake,
The corpse looks delighted at dying.
Oh! success to the chanter, your sowl!

“Eh! what’s that?” cried a gruff voice; “the corpse does what?”

“‘T is a rhetorical amplification, that means he would if he could,” said Darby, stopping to explain.

“I say,” said another, “that’s all gammon and stuff; a corpse could n’t know what was doing, – eh, old fellow?”

“‘T is an Irish corpse I was describin’,” said Darby, proudly, and evidently, while sore pushed for an explanation, having a severe struggle to keep down his contempt for the company that needed it.

An effort I made at this moment to obtain a nearer view of the party, from whom I was slightly separated by some low brushwood, brought my hand in contact with something sharp; I started and looked round, and to my astonishment saw a clasp

knife, such as gardeners carry, lying open beside me. In a second I guessed the meaning of this. It had been so left by Darby, to give me an opportunity of cutting the cords that bound my arms, and thus facilitating my escape. His presence was doubtless there for this object, and all the entertaining powers he displayed only brought forth to occupy the soldiers' attention while I effected my deliverance. Regret for the time lost was my first thought; my second, more profitable, was not to waste another moment. So, kneeling down I managed with the knife to cut some of my fastenings, and after some little struggle freed one arm; to liberate the other was the work of a second, and I stood up untrammelled. What was to be done next? for although at liberty, the soldiers lay about me on every side, and escape seemed impossible. Besides, I knew not where to turn, where to look for one friendly face, nor any one who would afford me shelter. Just then I heard Darby's voice raised above its former pitch, and evidently intended to be heard by me.

“Sure, there's Captain Bubbleton, of the Forty-fifth Regiment, now in Dublin, in George's Street Barracks. Ay, in George's Street Barracks,” said he, repeating the words as if to impress them on me. “T is himself could tell you what I say is thtrue; and if you wouldn't put confidential authentication on the infirmation of a poor leather-squeezing, timber-tickling crayture like myself, sure you 'd have reverential obaydience to your own commissioned captain.”

“Well, I don't think much of that song of yours, anyhow, old

Blow, or Blast, or whatever your name is. Have you nothing about the service, eh? ‘The British Grenadiers;’ give us that.”

“Yes; ‘The British Grenadiers,’ that’s the tune!” cried a number of the party together.

“I never heard them play but onst, sir,” said Darby, meekly, “and they were in sich a hurry that day, I couldn’t pick up the tune.”

“A hurry! what d’ you mean?” said the corporal.

“Yes, sir; ‘t was the day but one after the French landed; and the British Grenadiers that you were talking of was running away towards Castlebar.”

“What ‘s that you say there?” cried out one of the soldiers, in a voice of passion.

“‘Tis that they wor running away, sir,” replied Darby, with a most insulting coolness; “and small blame to thim for that same, av they wor frightened.”

In an instant the party sprang to their legs, while a perfect shower of curses fell upon the luckless piper, and fifty humane proposals to smash his skull, break his neck and every bone in his body, were mooted on all sides. Meanwhile M’Keown remonstrated, in a spirit which in a minute I perceived was not intended to appease their irritation; on the contrary, his apologies were couched in very different guise, being rather excuses for his mishap in having started a disagreeable topic, than any regret for the mode in which he treated it.

“And sure, sir,” continued he, addressing the corporal, “‘t was

n't my fault av they tuck to their heels; would n't any one run for his life av he had the opportunity?"

He raised his voice once more at these words with such significance that I resolved to profit by the counsel if the lucky moment should offer. – I had not long to wait. The insulting manner of Darby, still more than his words, had provoked them beyond endurance, and one of the soldiers, drawing his bayonet, drove it through the leather bag of his pipes. A shout of rage from the piper, and a knockdown blow that levelled the offender, replied to the insult. In an instant the whole party were upon him. Their very numbers, however, defeated their vengeance; as I could hear from the tone of Darby's voice, who, far from declining the combat, continued to throw in every possible incentive to battle, as he struck right and left of him. "Ah, you got that! – Well done! – 'Tis brave you are! ten against one! – Devil fear you!"

The scuffle by this time had brought the sergeant to the spot, who in vain endeavored to ascertain the cause of the tumult, as they rolled over one another on the ground, while caps, belts, and fragments of bagpipes were scattered about on every side. The uproar had now reached its height, and Darby's yells and invectives were poured forth with true native fluency. The moment seemed propitious to me. I was free, – no one near; the hint about Bubbleton was evidently intended for my guidance. I crept stealthily a few yards beneath the brushwood, and emerged safely upon the road. The sounds of the conflict, amid which

Darby's own voice rose pre-eminent, told me that all were too busily engaged to waste a thought on me. I pressed forward at my best pace, and soon reached the crest of a hill, from which the view extended for miles on every side. My eyes, however, were bent in but one direction: they turned westwards, where a vast plain stretched away towards the horizon, its varied surface presenting all the rich and cultivated beauty of a garden; villas and mansions surrounded with large parks; waving cornfields and orchards in all the luxuriance of blossom. Towards the east lay the sea; the coast line broken into jutting promontories and little bays, dotted with white cottages, with here and there some white-sailed skiff, scarce moving in the calm air. But amid all this outspread loveliness of view, my attention was fixed upon a dense and heavy cloud that seemed balanced in the bright atmosphere far away in the distance. Thither my eyes turned, and on that spot was my gaze riveted, for I knew that beneath that canopy of dull smoke lay Dublin. The distant murmur of the angry voices still reached me as I stood. I turned one backward look; the road was lonely, not a shadow moved upon it. Before me the mountain road descended in a zigzag course till it reached the valley. I sprang over the low wall that skirted the wayside, and with my eyes still fixed upon the dark cloud, I hurried on. My heart grew lighter with every step; and when at length I reached the shelter of a pine-wood, and perceived no sign of being pursued, my spirits rose to such a pitch of excitement that I shouted for very joy.

For above an hour my path continued within the shelter of

the wood; and when at last I emerged, it was not without a sense of sudden fear that I looked back upon the mountains which frowned above me, and seemed still so near. I thought, too, I could mark figures on the road, and imagined I could see them moving backwards and forwards, like persons seeking for something; and then I shuddered to think that they too might be at that very moment looking at me. The thought added fresh speed to my flight, and for some miles I pressed forward without even turning once.

It was late in the evening as I drew near the city. Hungry and tired as I was, the fear of being overtaken was uppermost in my thoughts; and as I mingled in the crowds that strolled along the roads enjoying the delicious calmness of a summer's eve, I shrank from every eye like something guilty, and feared that every glance that fell on me was detection itself.

It was not until I entered the city, and found myself traversing the crowded and narrow streets that formed the outskirts, that I felt at ease; and inquiring my way to George's Street Barracks, I hurried on, regardless of the strange sights and sounds about. At that hour the humbler portion of the population was all astir; their daily work ended, they were either strolling along with their families for an evening walk, or standing in groups around the numerous ballad-singers, who delighted their audience with diatribes against the Union, and ridiculous attacks on the Ministry of the day. These, however, were not always unmolested, for as I passed on, I saw more than one errant

minstrel seized on by the soldiery, and hurried off to the guardhouse to explain some uncivil or equivocal allusion to Lord Castlereagh or Mr. Cook, – such evidences of arbitrary power being sure to elicit a hearty groan or shout of derision from the mob, which in turn was replied to by the soldiers. These scolding matches gave an appearance of tumult to the town, which on some occasions did not stop short at mere war of words.

In the larger and better streets such scenes were unfrequent; but here patrols of mounted dragoons or police passed from time to time, exchanging as they went certain signals as to the state of the city; while crowds of people thronged the pathways, and conversed in a low tone, which broke forth now and then into a savage yell as often as some interference on the part of the military seemed to excite their angry passions. At the Castle gates the crowd was more dense and apparently more daring, requiring all the efforts of the dragoons to keep them from pressing against the railings, and leave a space for the exit of carriages which from time to time issued from the Castle yard. Few of these, indeed, went forth unnoticed. Some watchful eye would detect the occupant as he lay back to escape observation; his name would be shouted aloud, as an inevitable volley of hisses and execrations showered upon him. And in this way were received the names of Mr. Bingham, Colonel Loftus, the Right Hon. Denis Browne, Isaac Corry, and several others who happened that day to be dining with the Lord-Lieutenant, and were now on their way to the House of Commons.

Nothing struck me so much in the scene as the real or apparent knowledge possessed by the mob of all the circumstances of each individual's personal and political career; and thus the price for which they had been purchased – either in rank, place, or pounds sterling – was cried aloud amid shouts of derision and laughter, or the more vindictive yells of an infuriated populace.

“Ha, Ben! what are you to get for Baltinglass? Boroughs is up in the market.” “Well, Dick, you won't take the place; nothing but hard cash.” “Don't be hiding, Jemmy.” “Look at the Prince of Orange, boys!” “A groan for the Prince of Orange!” – here a fearful groan from the mob echoed through the streets. “There 's Luke Fox; ha! stole away!” – here followed another yell.

With difficulty I elbowed my way through the densely-packed crowd, and at last reached the corner of George's Street, where a strong police force was stationed, not permitting the passage of any one either up or down that great thoroughfare. Finding it impossible to penetrate by this way, I continued along Dame Street, where I found the crowd to thicken as I advanced. Not only were the pathways, but the entire streets, filled with people; through whom the dragoons could with difficulty force a passage for the carriages, which continued at intervals to pass down. Around the statue of King William the mob was in its greatest force. Not merely the railings around the statue, but the figure itself was surmounted by persons, who, taking advantage of their elevated and secure position, hurled their abuse upon the police and military with double bitterness. These sallies of invective

were always accompanied by some humorous allusion, which created a laugh among the crowd beneath; to which, as the objects of the ridicule were by no means insensible, the usual reply was by charging on the people, and a command to keep back, – a difficult precept when pressed forward by some hundreds behind them. As I made my way slowly through the moving mass, I could see that a powerful body of horse patrolled between the mob and the front of the College, the space before which and the iron railings being crammed with students of the University, for so their caps and gowns bespoke them. Between this party and the others a constant exchange of abuse and insult was maintained, which even occasionally came to blows whenever any chance opportunity of coming in contact, unobserved by the soldiery, presented itself.

In the interval between these rival parties, each member's carriage was obliged to pass; and here each candidate for the honors of one and the execrations of the other, met his bane and antidote.

“Ha, broken beak, there you go! bad luck to you!” “Ha, old vulture, Flood!”

“Three cheers for Flood, lads!” shouted a voice from the College; and in the loud cry the yells of their opponents were silenced, but only to break forth the next moment into further license.

“Here he comes, here he comes!” said the mob; “make way there, or he ‘ll take you flying! it ‘s himself can do it. God bless

your honor, and may you never want a good baste under ye!”

This civil speech was directed to a smart, handsome-looking man of about five and forty, who came dashing along on a roan thoroughbred, perfectly careless of the crowd, through which he rode with a smiling face and a merry look. His leathers and tops were all in perfect jockey style, and even to his long-lashed whip he was in everything a sportsmanlike figure.

“That’s George Ponsonby,” said a man beside me, in answer to my question. “And I suppose you know who that is?”

A perfect yell from the crowd drowned my reply; and amid the mingled curses and execrations of the mass, a dark-colored carriage moved slowly on, the coachman evidently fearful at every step lest his horses should strike against some of the crowd, and thus license the outbreak that seemed only waiting an opportunity to burst forth.

“Ha, Bladderchops, Bloody Jack! are you there?” shouted the savage ringleaders, as they pressed up to the very glasses of the carriage, and stared at the occupant.

“Who is it?” said I, again.

“John Toler, the Attorney-General.”

Amid deafening cries of vengeance against him, the carriage moved on, and then rose the wild cheers of the College men to welcome their partisan.

A hurrah from the distant end of Dame Street now broke on the ear, which, taken up by those bearer, swelled into a regular thunder; and at the same moment the dragoons cried out to keep

back, a lane was formed in a second, and down it came six smoking thoroughbreds, the postilions in white and silver, cutting and spurring with all their might. Never did I hear such a cheer as now burst forth. A yellow chariot, its panels covered with emblazonry, came flying past; a hand waved from the window in return to the salutation of the crowd, and the name of Tom Conolly of Castletown rent the very air. Two outriders in their rich liveries followed, unable to keep their place through the thick mass that wedged in after the retiring equipage.

Scarcely had the last echo of the voices subsided when a cheer burst from the opposite side, and a waving of caps and handkerchiefs proclaimed that some redoubted champion of Protestant ascendancy was approaching. The crowd rocked to and fro as question after question poured in.

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