ФРЕДЕРИК МАРРИЕТ

THE POACHER; OR, JOSEPH RUSHBROOK

Фредерик Марриет

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The Poacher; Or, Joseph Rushbrook:

Содержание

Frederick Marryat
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Chapter One

In which there is more Ale than Argument

It was on a blusterous windy night in the early part of November, 1812, that three men were on the high road near to the little village of Grassford, in the south of Devonshire. The moon was nearly at the full, but the wild scud, and occasionally the more opaque clouds, passed over in such rapid succession, that it was rarely, and but for a moment or two, that the landscape was thrown into light and shadow; and the wind, which was keen and piercing, bent and waved the leafless branches of the trees which were ranged along the hedgerows, between which the road had been formed.

The three individuals to whom we have referred appeared all of them to have been indulging too freely in the ale which was sold at the public-house about half a mile from the village, and from which they had just departed. Two of them, however,

comparatively speaking, sober, were assisting home, by their *joint* efforts, the third, who, supported between them, could with difficulty use his legs. Thus did they continue on; the two swayed first on the one side of the road, and then on the other, by the weight of the third, whom they almost carried between them. At last they arrived at a bridge built over one of those impetuous streams so common in the county, when, as if by mutual understanding, for it was without speaking, the two more sober deposited the body of the third against the parapet of the bridge, and then for some time were silently occupied in recovering their breath. One of the two who remained leaning on the parapet by the side of their almost lifeless companion was a man of about forty years of age, tall and slender, dressed in a worn-out black coat, and a pair of trousers much too short for him, the original colour of which it would have been difficult to have surmised; a sort of clerical hat, equally the worse for wear, was on his head. Although his habiliments were mean, still there was something about his appearance which told of better days, and of having moved in a different sphere in society; and such had been the case. Some years before he had been the head of a grammar-school, with a comfortable income; but a habit of drinking had been his ruin, and he was now the preceptor of the village of Grassford, and gained his livelihood by instructing the children of the cottagers for the small modicum of twopence a head per week. This unfortunate propensity to liquor remained with him and he no sooner received his weekly stipend than he

hastened to drown his cares, and the recollection of his former position, at the ale-house which they had just quitted. The second personage whom we shall introduce was not of a corresponding height with the other: he was broad, square-chested, and short-dressed in knee-breeches, leggings, and laced boots—his coat being of a thick fustian, and cut short like a shooting-jacket: his profession was that of a pedlar.

"It's odd to me," said the pedlar, at last breaking silence, as he looked down upon the drunken man who lay at his feet, "why ale should take a man off his legs; they say that liquor gets into the head, not the feet."

"Well," replied the schoolmaster, who was much more inebriated than the pedlar, "there's argument even in that and, you see, the perpendicular deviation must arise from the head being too heavy, that's clear; and then, you see, the feet, from the centre of gravity being destroyed, become too light; and if you put that and that together, why, a man can't stand. You understand my demonstration?"

"It was heavy wet, that ale, and so I suppose it's all right," replied the pedlar; "but still ale a'n't poured into the head or into the feet of a man, but into the internals, which are right in the middle of a man; so, how do you make out your case, Mr Furness?"

"Why, Byres, you talk of the residuum."

"Never said a word about it; and, as I stand here, never even heard the word before."

"Perhaps not: the residuum is, you see, Byres, what is left."

"If that's residgium, I didn't mean to say a word about it; there was none left, for you drained the pot."

"Good, Byres; you have never been to college, that's clear. Now, observe, when a man pours down into his stomach a certain quantity of liquor, the spirituous or lighter part ascends to his head, and that makes his head heavy. Do you understand?"

"No; what's light can't make things heavy."

"Can't it?—you know nothing about the matter. Have you not a proof before you?" replied the schoolmaster, reeling, and catching hold of the parapet for support; "look at that unfortunate man, who has yielded to excess."

"Very true; I see that he's drunk, but I want to know how it is that he got drunk?"

"By drinking."

"That I knew before."

"Then why ask any more questions? Had we not better proceed, and take him home to his expectant and unhappy wife? 'Tis a sad, sad thing, that a man should 'put an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains.'"

"Half a pint will do that with Rushbrook," replied the pedlar; "they say that he was wounded on his head, and that half his brains are gone already, and that's why he has a pension."

"Yes, seventeen pounds a year; paid quarterly, without deduction, and only to walk four miles to get it," replied Furness; "yet how misplaced is the liberality on the part of the

government. Does he work? No; he does nothing but drink and lie in bed all day, while I must be up early and remain late, teaching the young idea at twopence per week. Friend Byres, 'mercy is not itself which oft looks so.' Now, it is my opinion that it would be a kindness to this poor wretch if we were to toss him, as he now is, over the bridge into the rushing stream; it would end all his troubles."

"And save us the trouble of getting him home," replied Byres, who determined to humour his more inebriated companion. "Well, Mr Furness, I've no objection. Why should he live? Is he not a sinecurist—one of the locusts who fatten on the sweat and blood of the people, as the Sunday paper says? Don't you remember my reading it this morning?"

"Very true, Master Byres."

"What d'ye say, then?—shall we over with him?"

"We must think a little," replied the schoolmaster, who put his hand up to his chin, and remained silent for a minute or two. "No," resumed he, at last; "on second thoughts I cannot do it. He halves his beer with me. No pension—no beer; that's a self-evident proposition and conclusion. It were ingratitude on my part, and I cannot consent to your proposal," continued the schoolmaster; "nay, more, I will defend him against your murderous intentions to the very last."

"Why, Master Furness, you must be somewhat the worse for liquor yourself: it was your proposal to throw him over the bridge, not mine."

"Take care what you say," replied the schoolmaster; "would you accuse me of murder, or intent to murder?"

"No, not by no means—only you proposed heaving him over the bridge: I will say that."

"Friend Byres, it's my opinion you'll say anything but your prayers; but in your present state I overlook it. Let us go on, or I shall have two men to carry home instead of one. Come, now, take one of his arms, while I take the other, and raise him up. It is but a quarter of a mile to the cottage."

Byres, who, as we observed, was by far the more sober of the two, did not think it worth his while to reply to the pedagogue. After a few staggers on the part of the latter, their comrade was raised up and led away between them.

The drunken man appeared to be so far aware of what was going on that he moved his legs mechanically, and in a short time they arrived at the cottage-door, which the pedagogue struck with his fist so as to make it rattle on its hinges. The door was opened by a tall, handsome woman, holding a candle in her hand.

"I thought so," said she, shaking her head. "The old story: now he will be ill all night, and not get up till noon."

"What a weary life it is with a drunken husband. Bring him and thank you kindly for your trouble."

"It has been hard work and hot work," observed the schoolmaster, sitting down in a chair, after they had placed their comrade on the bed.

"Indeed, and it must be," replied the wife. "Will you have a

drop of small beer, Mr Furness?"

"Yes, if you please, and so will Mr Byres, too. What a pity it is your good man will not keep to small beer."

"Yes, indeed," replied the wife, who went into the back premises, and soon returned with a quart mug of beer.

The schoolmaster emptied half the mug, and then handed it to the pedlar.

"And my little friend Joey, fast asleep, I'll warrant!"

"Yes, poor child, and so should I have been by this time; the clock has gone twelve."

"Well, Mrs Rushbrook, I wish you a good night. Come, Mr Byres, Mrs Rushbrook must want to be in bed."

"Good night, Mr Furness, and good night, sir, and many thanks."

The schoolmaster and pedlar quitted the cottage. Mrs Rushbrook, after having watched them for a minute, carefully closed the door.

"They're gone now," said she, as she turned to her husband.

What would have created much astonishment could anybody else have witnessed it, as soon as his wife had spoken, Rushbrook immediately sprang upon his feet, a fine-looking man, six feet in height, very erect in his bearing,—and proved to be perfectly sober.

"Jane, my dear," said he, "there never was such a night: but I must be quick, and lose no time. Is my gun ready?"

"Everything's ready; Joey is lying down on his bed, but all

ready dressed, and he awakes in a minute."

"Call him, then, for there is no time to lose. That drunken fool, Furness, proposed throwing me over the bridge. It was lucky for them that they did not try it, or I should have been obliged to settle them both, that they might tell no tales. Where's Mum?"

"In the wash-house. I'll bring him and Joey directly."

The wife left the room, while Rushbrook took down his gun and ammunition, and prepared himself for his expedition. In a minute or two a shepherd's dog, which had been released from the wash-house, made his appearance, and quietly lay down close to his master's feet; it was soon followed by Mrs Rushbrook, accompanied by Joey, a thin, meagre-looking boy, of about twelve years old, very small for his age, but apparently as active as a cat, and with energy corresponding. No one would have thought he had been roused from his sleep; there was no yawning or weariness of motion—on the contrary, his large eye was as bright as an eagle's, as he quietly, although quickly, provided himself with a sack, which he threw over his shoulders, and a coil of line, which he held in his hand, waiting until his father was ready to start. The wife put out the lights, softly opened the cottage-door, looked well round, and then returned to her husband, who, giving a low whistle, as a summons to Joey and the dog, walked out of the door. Not a word was spoken; the door was softly shut to; and the trio crept stealthily away.

Chapter Two

In which the Hero of the Tale is formally Introduced

Before we proceed with our narrative, perhaps it will be better to explain what may appear very strange to the reader. Joseph Rushbrook, who has just left the cottage with his son and his dog, was born in the village in which he was then residing. During his younger days, some forty years previous to his present introduction to the reader, the law was not so severe, or the measures taken against poachers so strong as they were at the period of which we write. In his youth he had been very fond of carrying a gun—as his father had been before him—but he never was discovered; and after having poached for many years, and gained a perfect knowledge of the country for miles round, he was persuaded, in a fit of semi-intoxication, at a neighbouring fair, to enlist in a marching regiment. He had not been more than three months at the depot when he was ordered out to India, where he remained eleven years before he was recalled. He had scarcely been six months in England, when the exigency of the war demanded the services of the regiment in the Mediterranean, where he remained for twelve years, and having received a severe wound in the head, he was then pensioned off and discharged.

He resolved to return to his native village, and settle down quietly, hoping by moderate labour and his pension, to gain a comfortable living. On his return he was hardly known; many had emigrated to a foreign clime; many had been transported for offences against the laws, particularly for the offence of poaching: and as most of his former allies had been so employed, he found himself almost a stranger where he expected to meet with friends. The property also about the village had changed hands. People recollected Squire So-and-So, and the Baronet, but now their lands were held by wealthy manufacturers or retired merchants. All was new to Joe Rushbrook, and he felt himself anywhere but at home. Jane Ashley, a very beautiful young woman, who was in service at the Hall, the mansion appertaining to the adjacent property, and the daughter of one of his earliest friends, who had been transported for poaching, was almost the only one who could talk to him after his absence of twenty-four years; not that she knew the people at the time, for she was then an infant, but she had grown up with them after Joe had left, and could narrate anecdotes of them, and what had been their eventual destinies. Jane having been the daughter of a man who had been transported for poaching, was to Joe a sort of recommendation, and it ended in his taking her for his wife. They had not been long settled in their cottage before Joe's former propensities returned; in fact, he could not be idle, he had carried a musket too long, and had lived such a life of excitement in the service of his country, that he found it impossible to exist

without shooting at something. All his former love of poaching came strong upon him, and his wife, so far from checking him, encouraged him in his feelings. The consequence was, that two years after his marriage, Joe Rushbrook was the most determined poacher in the county. Although often suspected, he had never been detected; one great cause of this was his appearing to be such a drunkard, a plan hit upon by his wife, who had observed that drunken men were not suspected of being poachers. This scheme had therefore been hit upon, and very successfully; for proving before a magistrate that a man was carried home dead drunk and speechless at midnight, was quite as good an *alibi* as could be brought forward. Joe Rushbrook had, therefore, the credit of being a worthless drunken fellow, who lived upon his pension and what his wife could earn; but no one had an idea that he was not only earning his livelihood, but laying by money from his successful night labours. Not that Joe did not like a drop occasionally—on the contrary, he would sometimes drink freely; but, generally speaking, the wounds in his head were complained of; and he would, if the wind was fresh and set in the right quarter, contrive to be carried home on the night in which he had most work to do. Such was the case, as we have represented in the first chapter.

Little Joey, who, as the reader may anticipate, will be our future hero, was born the first year after marriage, and was their only child. He was a quiet, thoughtful, reflective boy for his years, and had imbibed his father's love of walking out on a dark

night to an extraordinary degree: it was strange to see how much prudence there was, mingled with the love of adventure, in this lad. True it is, his father had trained him early, first to examine the snares and conceal the game, which a little shrimp like Joey could do, without being suspected to be otherwise employed than in picking blackberries. Before he was seven years old, Joey could set a springe as well as his father, and was well versed in all the mystery and art of unlawful taking of game. Indeed, he was very valuable to his father, and could do what his father could not have ventured upon without exciting suspicion. It was, perhaps, from his constant vigils, that the little boy was so small in size; at all events, his diminutive size was the cause of there being no suspicion attached to him. Joey went very regularly to the day-school of Mr Furness; and although often up the best part of the night, he was one of the best and most diligent of the scholars. No one could have supposed that the little fair-haired, quiet-looking boy, who was so busy with his books or his writing, could have been out half the night on a perilous excursion, for such it was at the time we are speaking of. It need hardly be observed that Joey had learned one important lesson, which was to be *silent*; not even *Mum*, the dog, who could not speak, was more secret or more faithful.

It is astonishing how much the nature and disposition of a child may be altered by early tuition. Let a child be always with its nurse, even under the guidance of a mother, regularly brought up as children usually are, and it will continue to be a child,

and even childish, after childhood is gone. But take the same child, put it by degrees in situations of peril, requiring thought and observation beyond its years, accustom it to nightly vigils, and to watching, and to hold its tongue, and it is astonishing how the mind of that child, however much its body may suffer, will develop itself so as to meet the demand upon it. Thus it is with lads that are sent early to sea, and thus it was with little Joey. He was a man in some points, although a child in others. He would play with his companions, laugh as loudly as the others, but still he would never breathe a hint of what was his father's employment. He went to church every Sunday, as did his father and mother; for they considered that poaching was no crime, although punished as such by the laws; and he, of course, considered it no crime, as he only did what his father and mother wished. Let it not be thought, therefore, that the morals of our little hero were affected by his father's profession, for such was not the case.

Having entered into this necessary explanation, we will now proceed. No band of North American Indians could have observed a better trail than that kept by our little party. Rushbrook walked first, followed by our hero and the dog Mum. Not a word was spoken; they continued their route over grass-lands and ploughed fields, keeping in the shade of the hedgerows: if Rushbrook stopped for a while to reconnoitre, so did Joey, and so did Mum at their relative distances, until the march was resumed. For three miles and a half did they thus continue, until

they arrived at a thick cover. The wind whistled through the branches of the bare trees, chiefly oak and ash; the cold, damp fog was now stationary, and shrouded them as they proceeded cautiously by the beaten track in the cover, until they had passed through it, and arrived on the other side, where the cottage of a gamekeeper was situated. A feeble light was burning, and shone through the diamond-paned windows.

Rushbrook walked out clear of the cover, and held up his hand to ascertain precisely the direction of the wind. Having satisfied himself; he retreated into the cover, in a direction so as to be exactly to leeward of the keeper's house, that the noise of the report of his gun might not be heard. Having cleared the hedge, he lowered his gun, so as to bring the barrel within two or three inches of the ground, and walked slowly and cautiously through the brushwood, followed, as before, by Joey and Mum. After about a quarter of a mile's walk, a rattling of metal was heard, and they stopped short; it was the barrel of the fowling-piece which had brushed one of the wires attached to a spring-gun, set for the benefit of poachers. Rushbrook lifted up his left hand, as a sign to Joey not to move; and following the wire, by continually rattling his barrel against it, he eventually arrived at the gun itself; opened the pan, threw out all the priming, leaving it with the pan open, so that it could not go off; in case they fell in with another of the wires. Rushbrook then proceeded to business, for he well knew that the gun would be set where the pheasants were most accustomed to roost; he put a small charge of powder in

his fowling-piece, that, being so near, he might not shatter the birds, and because the noise of the report would be much less; walking under an oak-tree he soon discovered the round black masses which the bodies of the roosting pheasants presented between him and the sky, and raising his piece, he fired; a heavy bound on the earth near his feet followed the discharge; Joey then slipped forward and put the pheasant into his bag; another and another shot, and every shot brought an increase to Joey's load. Seventeen were already in it when Mum gave a low growl. This was the signal for people being near. Rushbrook snapped his finger; the dog came forward to his side, and stood motionless, with ears and tail erect. In a minute's time was heard the rustling of branches as the party forced their way through the underwood. Rushbrook stood still, waiting the signal from Mum, for the dog had been taught, if the parties advancing had another dog with them, always to raise his fore-feet up to Rushbrook's knees, but not otherwise; Mum made no such sign, and then Rushbrook lay down in the brushwood, his motions being closely followed by his son and his dog.

Voices in whispers were now heard, and the forms of two men with guns were to be seen not four yards from where they were lying.

"Somewhere about here, I'll swear," said one.

"Yes, I think so; but it may be further on—the wind has brought down the sound."

"Very true, let's follow them, and they may fall back upon the

spring-gun."

The parties then advanced into the cover, and were soon out of sight; after a time Rushbrook held his ear to the wind, and, satisfied that all was safe, moved homewards, and arrived without further adventure, having relieved Joey of the heavy sack as soon as they were in the open fields.

At three o'clock in the morning, he tapped at the back door of the cottage. Jane opened it, and the spoils of the night having been put away in a secret place, they were all soon in bed and fast asleep.

Chapter Three

Train a Child in the Way he should go, and he will not depart from it

It is an old saying, that "if there were no receivers there would be no thieves," and it would have been of very little use for Rushbrook to take the game if he had not had the means of disposing of it. In this point, Byres, the pedlar, was a valuable accessory. Byres was a radical knave, who did not admire hard work. At first he took up the profession of bricklayer's labourer, one that is of a nature only affording occasional work and moderate wages. He did this that he might apply to the parish for relief; and do nothing for the major portion of the year. But even a few months' work would not suit him, and subsequently he gained his sustenance by carrying on his head a large basket of crockery, and disposing of his wares among the cottagers. At last he took out a pedlar's license—perhaps one of the most dangerous permits ever allowed by a government, and which has been the cause of much of the ill-will and discontent fomented among the lower classes. Latterly, the cheapness of printing and easiness of circulation have rendered the profession of less consequence: twenty years ago the village ale-houses were not

provided with newspapers; it was an expense never thought of; the men went to drink their beer and talk over the news of the vicinity, and if there was a disturbance in any other portion of the United Kingdom, the fact was only gained by rumour, and that vaguely and long after it had taken place. But when the pedlar Byres made his appearance, which he at last did, weekly or oftener, as it might happen, there was a great change; he was the party who supplied information, and, in consequence, he was always welcome, and looked upon as an oracle; the best seat near the fire was reserved for him, and having deposited his pack upon the table or in a corner, he would then produce the *Propeller*, or some other publication full of treason and blasphemy, and read it aloud for the benefit of the labourers assembled. A few months were more than sufficient to produce the most serious effects: men who had worked cheerfully through the day, and retired to bed satisfied with their lot, and thankful that work was to be obtained, now remained at the public-house, canvassing the conduct of government, and, leaving their resort, satisfied in their own minds that they were ill-used, harshly treated, and in bitter bondage. If they met their superiors, those very parties to whom they were indebted for employment, there was no respect shown to them as formerly or, if so, it was sullen and forced acknowledgement. The church was gradually deserted—the appearance of the pastor was no longer a signal for every hat to be lifted from the head; on the contrary, boys of sixteen or seventeen years of age would lean against the church, or the

walls of the churchyard, with their hands in both pockets, and a sort of leer upon their faces, as though they defied the pastor on his appearance—and there would they remain outside during the service, meeting, unquailed and without blushing, his eyes, cast upon them as he came out again. Such was the state of things in the village of Grassford in one year after the pedlar had added it to his continual rounds—and Byres was a great favourite, for he procured for the women what they commissioned him to obtain, supplied the girls with ribbons and gewgaws, and trusted to a considerable extent. His reappearance was always anxiously looked for; he lived scot-free at the public-house, for he brought so much custom, and was the occasion of the drinking of so much ale, that the landlord considered his coming as a godsend. His box of ware was well supplied in the sunnier months, for the fine weather was the time for the wearing of gay ribbons; but in the winter he travelled more to receive orders, or to carry away the game supplied to him by the poachers, with whom he was in league. Had his box been examined during the shooting season, it would have been found loaded with pheasants, not with trinkets and ribbons. It need hardly be observed after this that Byres was the party who took off the hands of Rushbrook all the game which he procured, and which he had notice to call for before daylight, generally the *second* morning after it had been obtained; for Rushbrook was too cautious to trust Byres with his secret, that of never going out of a night without having previously pretended intoxication, and having suffered himself

to be led or carried home.

Our readers will acknowledge that little Joey was placed in a very dangerous position; it is true that he was not aware that he was doing wrong in assisting his father; nevertheless, being a reflective boy, it did sometimes occur to him that it was odd that what was right should be done so secretly; and he attempted to make out how it was that the birds that flew about everywhere, and appeared to belong to every one, might not be shot in the open day. He knew that the laws forbade it; but he inquired of himself why such laws should be. Joey had heard but one side of the question, and was therefore puzzled. It was fortunate for him that the pastor of the parish, although he did not reside in it, did at least once a week call in at Mr F's school, and examine the boys. Mr Furness, who was always sober during the school hours, was very proud of these visits, and used to point out little Joey as his most promising scholar. This induced the pastor to take more immediate notice of our hero, and the commendation which he received, and the advice that was bestowed upon him, was probably the great cause why Joey did attend assiduously to his lessons, which his otherwise vagrant life would have disinclined him to do; and also kept a character for honesty and good principle, which he really deserved. Indeed, his father and mother, setting aside poaching, and the secrecy resorted to in consequence, were by no means bad examples in the ordinary course of life; they did to their neighbours as they would be done by, were fair and honest in their dealings, and

invariably inculcated probity and a regard to truth on their son. This may appear anomalous to many of our readers, but there are many strange anomalies in this world. It may therefore be stated in a very few words, that although our little hero had every chance of eventually following the road to ruin, yet, up to the present time, he had not entered it.

Such was the life led by little Joey for three years subsequent to our introduction of him to the reader; every day he became more useful to his father; latterly he had not attended school but in the forenoon, for, as we have before observed, Joey could, from his diminutive size and unsuspicious appearance, do much that his father would not have ventured to attempt. He was as well versed in the art of snaring as his father, and sauntering like a child about the fields and hedge-rows, would examine his nooses, take out the game, and hide it till he could bring it home. Sometimes he would go out at night attended only by Mum, and the dog would invariably give him mute notice, by simply standing with his ears and tail erect, when the keepers had discovered the snares, and were lying in wait for the poacher, to lay hold of him when he came to ascertain his success. Even in such a case, Joey very often would not retreat, but, crawling on his stomach, would arrive at the snare, and take out the animal without the keepers perceiving him; for their eyes were invariably directed to the horizon, watching the appearance of some stout figure of a man, while Joey crawled along, bearing away the prize unseen. At other times, Joey would reap a rich harvest in the broad day,

by means of his favourite game-cock. Having put on the animal his steel spurs, he would plunge into the thickest of the cover, and, selecting some small spot of cleared ground for the combat, he would throw down his gallant bird, and conceal himself in the brushwood; the game-cock would immediately crow, and his challenge was immediately answered by the pugnacious male pheasant, who flew down to meet him: the combat was short, for the pheasant was soon pierced by the sharp steel of his adversary; and as one antagonist fell dead, again would the game-cock crow, and his challenge be accepted by another. In an hour or two the small arena was a field of blood Joey would creep forward, put his victorious cock into his bag together with many dead adversaries, and watch an opportunity for a safe retreat.

Such was the employment of our hero; and although suspicion had often been attached to his father, none had an idea that there had been a violation of the laws on the part of the son, when an event took place which changed our hero's destiny.

Chapter Four

In which the Author has endeavoured, with all his Power, to suit the present Taste of the Public

We have said that Byres was the receiver of the game obtained by Rushbrook. It so happened, that in these accounts Byres had not adhered to his duty towards his neighbour; in fact, he attempted to over-reach, but without success, and from that time Byres became Rushbrook's determined, but secret, enemy. Some months had passed since their disagreement, and there was a mutual mistrust (as both men were equally revengeful in their tempers), when they happened to meet late on a Saturday night at the ale-house, which was their usual resort. Furness the schoolmaster was there; he and many others had already drunk too much; all were boisterous and noisy. A few of the wives of those drinking were waiting patiently and sorrowfully outside, their arms folded in their aprons as a defence against the cold, watching for their husbands to come out, that they might coax them home before the major part of the week's earnings had been spent in liquor. Byres had the paper in his hand—he had taken it from the schoolmaster, who was too far gone to read it, and was declaiming loudly against all governments,

monarchy, and laws when a stranger entered the tap-room where they were all assembled. Rushbrook was at the time sitting down, intending quietly to take a pint and walk home, as he had too much respect for the Sabbath to follow his profession of poacher on the morning of that day: he did not intend, therefore, to resort to his usual custom of pretending to be intoxicated; but when the stranger came in, to his great surprise he observed a glance of recognition between him and Byres, after which they appeared as if they were perfect strangers. Rushbrook watched them carefully, but so as not to let them perceive he was so doing, when a beckon from the stranger to Byres was again made. Byres continued to read the paper and to harangue, but at the same time took an opportunity of making a signal in reply. There was something in the stranger's appearance which told Rushbrook that he was employed as a keeper, or something in that way, for we often single out our enemies by instinct. That there was mischief in the wind Rushbrook felt sure, and his heart misgave him the more so, as occasionally the eyes of both were turned towards him. After a little reflection, Rushbrook determined to feign intoxication, as he had so often done before: he called for another pint, for some time talked very loud, and at last laid his head on the table; after a time he lifted it up again, drank more, and then fell back on the bench. By degrees the company thinned, until there was no one left but the schoolmaster, the pedlar, and the stranger. The schoolmaster, as usual, offered to assist the pedlar in helping Rushbrook to his cottage; but Byres

replied that he was busy, and that he need not wait for Rushbrook; the friend he had with him would assist him in taking home the drunken man. The schoolmaster reeled home, leaving the two together. They sat down on the bench, not far from Rushbrook, who appeared to them to be in the last stage of inebriety. Their conversation was easily overheard. The pedlar stated that he had watched several nights, but never could find when Rushbrook left his cottage, but he had traced the boy more than once; that R had promised to have game ready for him on Tuesday, and would go out on Monday night for it. In short, Rushbrook discovered that Byres was about to betray him to the man, whom, in the course of their conversation, he found out to be a game-keeper newly hired by the lord of the manor. After a while they broke up, Byres having promised to join the keeper in his expedition, and to assist in securing his former ally. Having made these arrangements, they then took hold of Rushbrook by the arms, and, shaking him to rouse him as much as they could, they led him home to the cottage, and left him in charge of his wife. As soon as the door was closed, Rushbrook's long-repressed anger could no longer be restrained: he started on his feet, and striking his fist on the table so as to terrify his wife, swore that the pedlar should pay dear for his peaching. Upon his wife's demanding an explanation, Rushbrook, in a few hurried sentences, explained the whole. Jane, however she might agree with him in his indignation, like all women, shuddered at the thought of shedding blood. She persuaded her husband to go to bed. He consented; but he slept

not: he had but one feeling, which was vengeance towards the traitor. When revenge enters into the breast of a man who has lived peaceably at home, fiercely as he may be impelled by the passion, he stops short at the idea of shedding blood. But when a man who had, like Rushbrook, served so long in the army, witnessed such scenes of carnage, and so often passed his bayonet through his adversary's body, is roused up by this fatal passion, the death of a fellow-creature becomes a matter of indifference, provided he can gratify his feelings. Thus it was with Rushbrook, who, before he rose on the morning of that Sabbath in which, had he gone to church, he could have so often requested his trespasses might be forgiven, as he "forgave them who trespassed against him," had made up his mind that nothing short of the pedlar's death would satisfy him. At breakfast he appeared to listen to his wife's entreaties, and promised to do the pedlar no harm; and told her that, instead of going out on the Monday night, as he had promised, he should go out on that very night, and by that means evade the snare laid for him. Jane persuaded him not to go out at all; but this Rushbrook would not consent to. He told her that he was determined to show them that he was not to be driven off his beat, and would make Byres believe on Tuesday night that he had been out on the Monday night. Rushbrook's object was to have a meeting with Byres, if possible, alone, to tax him with his treachery, and then to take summary vengeance.

Aware that Byres slept at the ale-house, he went down there a

little before dark, and told him that he intended going out on that night; that it would be better if, instead of coming on Tuesday, he were to meet him at the corner of one of the covers, which he described, at an hour agreed upon, when he would make over to him the game which he might have procured. Byres, who saw in this an excellent method of trapping Rushbrook, consented to it, intending to inform the keeper, so that he should meet Rushbrook. The time of meeting was arranged for two o'clock in the morning. Rushbrook was certain that Byres would leave the ale-house an hour or two before the time proposed, which would be more than sufficient for his giving information to the keeper. He therefore remained quietly at home till twelve o'clock, when he loaded his gun, and went out without Joey or the dog. His wife perceiving this, was convinced that he had not gone out with the intention to poach, but was pursuing his scheme of revenge. She watched him after he left the cottage, and observed that he had gone down in the direction of the ale-house; and she was afraid that there would be mischief between him and Byres, and she wakened Joey, desiring him to follow and watch his father, and do all he could to prevent it. Her communication was made in such a hurried manner, that it was difficult for Joey to know what he was to do, except to watch his father's motions, and see what took place. This Joey perfectly understood; and he was off in an instant, followed, as usual, by Mum, and taking with him his sack. Our hero crept softly down the pathway, in the direction of the ale-house. The night was dark, for the moon

did not rise till two or three hours before the morning broke, and it was bitterly cold: but to darkness and cold Joey had been accustomed, and although not seen himself; there was no object could move without being scanned by his clear vision. He gained a hedge close to the ale-house. Mum wanted to go on, by which Joey knew that his father must be lurking somewhere near to him: he pressed the dog down with his hand, crouched himself; and watched. In a few minutes a dark figure was perceived by Joey to emerge from the ale-house, and walk hastily over a turnip-field behind the premises: it had gained about half over, when another form, which Joey recognised as his father's, stealthily followed after the first. Joey waited a little time, and was then, with Mum, on the steps of both; for a mile and a half each party kept at their relative distances, until they came near a furze bottom, which was about six hundred yards from the cover; then the steps of Rushbrook were quickened, and those of Joey in proportion; the consequence was, that the three parties rapidly neared each other. Byres for it was he who had quitted the ale-house—walked along leisurely, having no suspicion that he was followed. Rushbrook was now within fifteen yards of the pedlar, and Joey at even less distance from his father, when he heard the lock of his father's gun click as he cocked it.

"Father," said Joey, not over loud, "don't—"

"Who's there?" cried the pedlar, turning round. The only reply was the flash and report of the gun; and the pedlar dropped among the furze.

"Oh father—father!—what have you done?" exclaimed Joey, coming up to him.

"You here, Joey!" said Rushbrook. "Why are you here?"

"Mother sent me," replied Joey.

"To be evidence against me," replied his father, in wrath.

"Oh no!—to stop you. What have you done, father?"

"What I almost wish I had not done now," replied he, mournfully; "but it is done, and—"

"And what, father?"

"I am a murderer, I suppose," replied Rushbrook. "He would have peached, Joey—have had me transported, to work in chains for the rest of my days, merely for taking a few pheasants. Let us go home;" but Rushbrook did not move, although he proposed so doing.

He leant upon his gun, with his eyes fixed in the direction where Byres had fallen.

Joey stood by him—for nearly ten minutes not a word was spoken. At last Rushbrook said—

"Joey, my boy, I've killed many a man in my time, and I have thought nothing of it; I slept as sound as ever the next night. But then, you see, I was a soldier, and it was my trade, and I could look on the man I had killed without feeling sorrow or shame; but I can't look upon this man, Joey. He was my enemy; but—I've murdered him—I feel it now. Go up to him, boy—you are not afraid to meet him—and see if he be dead."

Joey, although generally speaking fear was a stranger to him,

did, however, feel afraid; his hands had often been dyed with the blood of a hare or of a bird, but he had not yet seen death in his fellow-creatures. He advanced slowly and tremulously through the dark towards the furze-bush in which the body laid; Mum followed, raising first one paw and pausing, then the other, and as they came to the body, the dog raised his head and gave such a mournful howl, that it induced our hero to start back again. After a time Joey recovered himself; and again advanced to the body. He leant over it, he could distinguish but the form; he listened, and not the slightest breathing was to be heard; he whispered the pedlar's name, but there was no reply; he put his hand upon his breast, and removed it reeking with warm blood.

"Father, he must be dead, quite dead," whispered Joey, who returned trembling. "What shall we do?"

"We must go home," replied Rushbrook; "this is a bad night's work;" and, without exchanging another word until their arrival, Rushbrook and Joey proceeded back to the cottage, followed by Mum.

Chapter Five

The Sins of the Father are Visited upon the Child

Jane had remained in a state of great anxiety during her husband's absence, watching and listening to every sound; every five minutes raising the latch of the door, and looking out, hoping to see him return. As the time went on, her alarm increased; she laid her head down on the table and wept; she could find no consolation, no alleviation of her anxiety; she dropped down on her knees and prayed.

She was still appealing to the Most High, when a blow on the door announced her husband's return. There was a sulken gloom over his countenance as he entered: he threw his gun carelessly on one side, so that it fell, and rattled against the paved floor; and this one act was to her ominous of evil. He sat down without speaking; falling back in the chair, and lifting his eyes up to the rafters above, he appeared to be in deep thought, and unconscious of her presence.

"What has happened?" inquired his wife, trembling as she laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Don't speak to me now," was the reply.

"Joey," said the frightened woman in a whisper, "what has he

done?"

Joey answered not, but raised his hand, red with the blood which was now dried upon it.

Jane uttered a faint cry, dropped on her knees, and covered her face, while Joey walked into the back kitchen, and busied himself in removing the traces of the dark deed.

A quarter of an hour had elapsed—Joey had returned, and taken his seat upon his low stool, and not a word had been exchanged.

There certainly is a foretaste of the future punishment which awaits crime; for how dreadful were the feelings of those who were now sitting down in the cottage! Rushbrook was evidently stupefied from excess of feeling; first, the strong excitement which had urged him to the deed; and now from the reaction the prostration of mental power which had succeeded it. Jane dreaded the present and the future—whichever way she turned her eyes the gibbet was before her—the clanking of chains in her ears; in her vision of the future, scorn, misery, and remorse—she felt only for her husband. Joey, poor boy, he felt for both. Even the dog showed, as he looked up into Joey's face, that he was aware that a foul deed had been done. The silence which it appeared none would venture to break, was at last dissolved by the clock of the village church solemnly striking two. They all started up—it was a warning—it reminded them of the bell tolling for the dead—of time and of eternity; but time present quickly effaced for the moment other ideas; yes, it was time to

act; in four hours more it would be daylight, and the blood of the murdered man would appeal to his fellow-men for vengeance. The sun would light them to the deed of darkness—the body would be brought home—the magistrates would assemble—and who would be the party suspected?

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Jane, "what can be done?"

"There is no proof;" muttered Rushbrook.

"Yes, there is," observed Joey, "I left my bag there, when I stooped down to—"

"Silence!" cried Rushbrook. "Yes," continued he, bitterly, to his wife, "this is your doing; you must send the boy after me, and now there will be evidence against me; I shall owe my death to you."

"Oh, say not so! say not so!" replied Jane, falling down on her knees, and weeping bitterly as she buried her face in his lap; "but there is yet time," cried she, starting up; "Joey can go and fetch the bag. You will, Joey: won't you, dear? you are not afraid—you are innocent."

"Better leave it where it is, mother," replied Joey, calmly.

Rushbrook looked up at his son with surprise; Jane caught him by the arm; she felt convinced the boy had some reason for what he said—probably some plan that would ward off suspicion—yet how could that be, it was evidence against them, and after looking earnestly at the boy's face, she dropped his arm. "Why so, Joey?" said she, with apparent calmness.

"Because," replied Joey, "I have been thinking about it all this

time; I am innocent, and therefore I do not mind if they suppose me guilty. The bag is known to be mine—the gun I must throw into a ditch two fields off. You must give me some money, if you have any; if not, I must go without it; but there is no time to be lost. I must be off and away from here in ten minutes; to-morrow ask every one if they have seen or heard of me, because I have left the house some time during the night. I shall have a good start before that; besides, they may not find the pedlar for a day or two, perhaps; at all events, not till some time after I am gone; and then, you see, mother, the bag which is found by him, and the gun in the ditch, will make them think it is me who killed him; but they will not be able to make out whether I killed him by accident, and ran away from fear, or whether I did it on purpose. So now, mother, that's my plan, for it will save father."

"And I shall never see you again, my child!" replied his mother.

"That's as may be. You may go away from here after a time, mother, when the thing has blown over. Come, mother, there is no time to lose."

"Rushbrook, what say you—what think you?" said Jane to her husband.

"Why, Jane, at all events, the boy must have left us, for, you see, I told Byres, and I've no doubt but he told the keeper, if he met him, that I should bring Joey with me. I did it to deceive him; and, as sure as I sit here, they will have that boy up as evidence against his father."

“To be sure they will,” cried Joey; “and what could I do? I dare not—I don’t think I could tell a lie; and yet I would not peach upon father, neither. What can I do—but be out of the way?”

“That’s the truth—away with you, then, my boy, and take a father’s blessing with you—a guilty father’s, it is true; God forgive me. Jane give him all the money you have; lose not a moment: quick, woman, quick.” And Rushbrook appeared to be in agony.

Jane hastened to the cupboard, opened a small box, and poured the contents into the hands of Joey.

“Farewell, my boy,” said Rushbrook; “your father thanks you.”

“Heaven preserve you, my child!” cried Jane, embracing him, as the tears rained down her cheeks. “You will write—no! you must not—mercy!—mercy!—I shall never see him again!”—and the mother fainted on the floor.

The tears rose in our hero’s eyes as he beheld the condition of his poor mother. Once more he grasped his father’s hand; and then, catching up the gun, he went out at the back door, and driving back the dog, who would have followed him, made over the fields as fast as his legs would carry him.

Chapter Six

"The World before him, where to choose."

We have no doubt but many of our readers have occasionally, when on a journey, come to where the road divides into two, forking out in different directions, and the road being new to them, have not known which of the two branches they ought to take. This happens, as it often does in a novel, to be our case just now. Shall we follow little Joey, or his father and mother? —that is the question. We believe that when a road does thus divide, the wider of the two branches is generally selected, as being supposed to be the continuation of the high road. We shall ourselves act upon that principle; and, as the hero of the tale is of more consequence than characters accessory, we shall follow up the fortunes of little Joey. As soon as our hero had deposited the gun so that it might be easily discovered by any one passing by, he darted into the high road, and went off with all the speed that he was capable of, and it was not yet light when he found himself at least ten miles from his native village. As the day dawned, he quitted the high road, and took to the fields, keeping a parallel course, so as to still increase the distance; it was not until he had made fifteen miles, that, finding himself exhausted, he sat down

to recover himself.

From the time that he had left the cottage until the present, Joey had had but one overwhelming idea in his head, which was, to escape from pursuit, and by his absence to save his father from suspicion; but now that he had effected that purpose, and was in a state of quiescence, other thoughts rushed upon his mind. First, the scenes of the last few hours presented themselves in rapid array before him—he thought of the dead man, and he looked at his hand to ascertain if the bloody marks had been effaced; and then he thought of his poor mother's state when he quitted the cottage, and the remembrance made him weep bitterly: his own position came next upon him,—a boy, twelve years of age, adrift upon the world—how was he to live—what was he to do? This reminded him that his mother had given him money; he put his hand into his pocket, and pulled it out to ascertain what he possessed. He had 1 pound, 16 shillings; to him a large sum, and it was all in silver. As he had become more composed, he began to reflect upon what he had better do; where should he go to?—London. It was a long way, he knew, but the farther he was away from home, the better. Besides, he had heard much of London, and that every one got employment there. Joey resolved that he would go to London; he knew that he had taken the right road so far, and having made up his mind, he rose up, and proceeded. He knew that, if possible, he must not allow himself to be seen on the road for a day or two, and he was puzzled how he was to get food, which he already felt would be very acceptable; and then, what

account was he to give of himself if questioned? Such were the cogitations of our little hero as he wended his way till he came to a river, which was too deep and rapid for him to attempt to ford —he was obliged to return to the high road to cross the bridge. He looked around him before he climbed over the low stone wall, and perceiving nobody, he jumped on the footpath, and proceeded to the bridge, where he suddenly faced an old woman with a basket of brown cakes something like ginger-bread. Taken by surprise, and hardly knowing what to say, he inquired if a cart had passed that way.

"Yes, child, but it must be a good mile ahead of you," said the old woman, "and you must walk fast to overtake it."

"I have had no breakfast yet, and I am hungry; do you sell your cakes?"

"Yes, child, what else do I make them for? three a penny, and cheap too."

Joey felt in his pocket until he had selected a sixpence, and pulling it out, desired the old woman to give him cakes for it, and, taking the pile in his hand, he set off as fast as he could. As soon as he was out of sight, he again made his way into the fields, and breakfasted upon half his store. He then continued his journey until nearly one o'clock, when, tired out with his exertions, as soon as he had finished the remainder of his cakes, he laid down under a rick of corn, and fell fast asleep, having made twenty miles since he started. In his hurry to escape pursuit, and the many thoughts which occupied his brain, Joey had made

no observation on the weather; if he had, he probably would have looked after some more secure shelter than the lee-side of a haystack. He slept soundly, and he had not been asleep more than an hour, when the wind changed, and the snow fell fast; nevertheless, Joey slept on, and probably never would have awakened more, had it not been that a shepherd and his dog were returning home in the evening, and happened to pass close to the haystack. By this time Joey had been covered with a layer of snow, half an inch deep, and had it not been for the dog, who went up to where he laid, and commenced pawing the snow off of him, he would have been passed by undiscovered by the shepherd, who, after some trouble, succeeded in rousing our hero from his torpor, and half dragging, half lifting him, contrived to lead him across one or two fields, until they arrived at a blacksmith's shop, in a small village, before Joey could have been said to have recovered his scattered senses. Two hours' more sleep and there would have been no further history to give of our little hero.

He was dragged to the forge, the fire of which glowed under the force of the bellows, and by degrees, as the warmth reached him, he was restored to self-possession. To the inquiries made as to who he was, and from where he came, he now answered as he had before arranged in his mind. His father and mother were a long way before him; he was going to London, but having been tired, he had fallen asleep under the haystack, and he was afraid that if he went not on to London directly, he never might find his father and mother again.

"Oh, then," replied the shepherd, "they have gone on before, have they? Well, you'll catch them, no doubt."

The blacksmith's wife, who had been a party to what was going on, now brought up a little warm ale, which quite re-established Joey; and at the same time a waggon drove up to the door, and stopped at the blacksmith's shop.

"I must have a shoe tacked on the old mare, my friend," said the driver. "You won't be long?"

"Not five minutes," replied the smith. "You're going to London?"

"Yes, sure."

"Here's a poor boy that has been left behind by his father and mother somehow—you wouldn't mind giving him a lift?"

"Well, I don't know; I suppose I must be paid for it in the world to come."

"And good pay too, if you earn it," observed the blacksmith.

"Well, it won't make much difference to my eight horses, I expect," said the driver, looking at Joey; "so come along, youngster: you may perch yourself on top of the straw, above the goods."

"First come in with me, child," said the wife of the blacksmith; "you must have some good victuals to take with you—so, while you shoe the horse, John, I'll see to the boy."

The woman put before Joey a dish in which were the remains of more than one small joint, and our hero commenced his attack without delay.

"Have you any money, child?" inquired the woman.

Joey, who thought she might expect payment, replied, "Yes ma'am, I've got a shilling;" and he pulled one out of his pocket and laid it out on the table.

"Bless the child! what do you take me for, to think that I would touch your money? You are a long way from London yet, although you have got such a chance to get there. Do you know where to go when you get there?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Joey; "I shall get work in the stables, I believe."

"Well, I dare say that you will; but in the meantime you had better save your shilling—so we'll find something to put this meat and bread up for your journey. Are you quite warm now?"

"Yes, thank'ee, ma'am."

Joey, who had ceased eating, had another warm at the fire, and in a few minutes, having bade adieu, and giving his thanks to the humane people, he was buried in the straw below the tilt of the waggon, with his provisions deposited beside him, and the waggon went on his slow and steady pace, to the tune of its own jingling bells. Joey, who had quite recovered from his chill, nestled among the straw, congratulating himself that he should now arrive safely in London, without more questioning. And such was the case: in three days and three nights, without any further adventure, he found himself, although he was not aware of it, in Oxford-street, somewhat about eight or nine o'clock in the evening.

"Do you know your way now, boy?" said the carman.

"I can ask it," replied Joey, "as soon as I can go to the light and read the address. Good-bye, and thank you," continued he, glad at last to be clear of any more evasive replies.

The carman shook him by the hand as they passed the Boar and Castle, and bade him farewell, and our hero found himself alone in the vast metropolis.

What was he to do? He hardly knew—but one thought struck him, which was, that he must find a bed for the night. He wandered up and down Oxford Street for some time, but every one walked so quick that he was afraid to speak to them: at last a little girl, of seven or eight years of age, passed by him, and looked him earnestly in the face.

"Can you tell me where I can get a bed for the night?" said Joey.

"Have you any brads?" was the reply.

"What are those?" said Joey.

"Any money, to be sure; why, you're green—quite."

"Yes, I have a shilling."

"That will do—come along, and you shall sleep with me."

Joey followed her very innocently, and very glad that he had been so fortunate. She led him to a street out of Tottenham-court-road, in which there were no lamps—the houses, however, were large, and many stories high.

"Take my hand," said the girl, "and mind how you tread."

Guided by his new companion, Joey arrived at a door that was

wide open: they entered, and, assisted by the girl, he went up a dark staircase, to the second storey. She opened a room-door, when Joey found himself in company with about twenty other children, of about the same age, of both sexes. Here were several beds on the floor of the room, which was spacious. In the centre were huddled together on the floor, round a tallow candle, eight or ten of the inmates, two of them playing with a filthy pack of cards, while the others looked over them: others were lying down or asleep on the several beds. "This is my bed," said the girl; "if you are tired you can turn in at once. I shan't go to bed yet."

Joey was tired, and he went to bed; it was not very clean, but he had been used to worse lodgings lately. It need hardly be observed that Joey had got into very bad company, the whole of the inmates of the room consisting of juvenile thieves and pickpockets, who in the course of time obtain promotion in their profession, until they are ultimately sent off to Botany Bay. Attempts have been made to check these nurseries of vice: but pseudo-philanthropists have resisted such barbarous innovation: and upon the Mosaic principle, that you must not seethe the kid in the mother's milk, they are protected and allowed to arrive at full maturity, and beyond the chance of being reclaimed, until they are ripe for the penalties of the law.

Joey slept soundly, and when he awoke next morning found that his little friend was not with him. He dressed himself; and then made another discovery, which was, that every farthing of his money had been abstracted from his pockets. Of this

unpleasant fact he ventured to complain to one or two boys, who were lying on other beds with their clothes on; they laughed at him, called him a greenhorn, and made use of other language, which at once let Joey know the nature of the company with whom he had been passing the night. After some altercation, three or four of them bundled him out of the room, and Joey found himself in the street without a farthing, and very much inclined to eat a good breakfast.

There is no portion of the world, small as it is in comparison with the whole, in which there is more to be found to eat and to drink, more comfortable lodgings, or accommodation and convenience of every kind, than in the metropolis of England, provided you have the means to obtain it; but notwithstanding this abundance, there is no place, probably, where you will find it more difficult to obtain a portion of it, if you happen to have an empty pocket.

Joey went into a shop here and there to ask for employment —he was turned away everywhere. He spent the first day in this manner, and at night, tired and hungry, he laid down on the stone steps of a portico, and fell asleep. The next morning he awoke shivering with the cold, faint with hunger. He asked at the areas for something to eat, but no one would give him anything. At a pump he obtained a drink of water—that was all he could obtain, for it cost nothing. Another day passed without food, and the poor boy again sheltered himself for the night at a rich man's door in Berkeley-square.

Chapter Seven

If you want Employment go to London

The exhausted lad awoke again, and pursued his useless task of appeals for food and employment. It was a bright day, and there was some little warmth to be collected by basking in the rays of the sun, when our hero wended his way through Saint James's Park, faint, hungry, and disconsolate. There were several people seated on the benches; and Joey, weak as he was, did not venture to go near them, but crawled along. At last, after wandering up and down, looking for pity in everybody's face as they passed, and receiving none, he felt that he could not stand much longer, and emboldened by desperation, he approached a bench that was occupied by one person. At first he only rested on the arm of the bench, but, as the person sitting down appeared not to observe him, he timidly took a seat at the farther end. The personage who occupied the other part of the bench was a man dressed in a morning suit *à la militaire* and black stock. He had clean gloves and a small cane in his hand, with which he was describing circles on the gravel before him, evidently in deep thought. In height he was full six feet, and his proportions combined strength with symmetry. His features were remarkably

handsome, his dark hair had a natural curl, and his whiskers and mustachios (for he wore those military appendages) were evidently the objects of much attention and solicitude. We may as well here observe, that although so favoured by nature, still there would have been considered something wanting in him by those who had been accustomed to move in the first circles, to make him the refined gentleman. His movements and carriage were not inelegant, but there was a certain *retinue* wanting. He bowed well, but still it was not exactly the bow of a gentleman. The nursery-maids as they passed by said, "Dear me, what a handsome gentleman!" but had the remark been made by a higher class, it would have been qualified into "What a handsome man!" His age was apparently about five-and-thirty—it might have been something more. After a short time he left off his mechanical amusements, and turning round, perceived little Joey at the farther end. Whether from the mere inclination to talk, or that he thought it presuming in our hero to seat himself upon the same bench, he said to him—

"I hope you are comfortable, my little man; but perhaps you've forgot your message."

"I have no message, sir, for I know no one: and I am not comfortable, for I am starving," replied Joey, in a tremulous voice.

"Are you in earnest now, when you say that, boy; or is it that you're humbugging me?"

Joey shook his head. "I have eaten nothing since the day before

yesterday morning, and I feel faint and sick," replied he at last.

His new companion looked earnestly in our hero's face, and was satisfied that what he said was true.

"As I hope to be saved," exclaimed he, "it's my opinion that a little bread and butter would not be a bad thing for you. Here," continued he, putting his hand into his coat-pocket, "take these coppers, and go and get some thing into your little vitals."

"Thank you, sir, thank you, kindly. But I don't know where to go: I only came up to London two days ago."

"Then follow me as fast as your little pins can carry you," said the other. They had not far to go, for a man was standing close to Spring-garden-gate with hot tea and bread and butter, and in a few moments Joey's hunger was considerably appeased.

"Do you feel better now, my little cock?"

"Yes, sir, thank you."

"That's right, and now we will go back to the bench, and then you shall tell me all about yourself; just to pass away the time. Now," said he, as he took his seat, "in the first place, who is your father, if you have any; and if you haven't any, what was he?"

"Father and mother are both alive, but they are a long way off. Father was a soldier, and he has a pension now."

"A soldier! Do you know in what regiment?"

"Yes, it was the 53rd, I think."

"By the powers, my own regiment! And what is your name, then, and his?"

"Rushbrook," replied Joey.

"My pivot man, by all that's holy. Now haven't you nicely dropped on your feet?"

"I don't know, sir," replied our hero.

"But I do; your father was the best fellow I had in my company—the best forager, and always took care of his officer, as a good man should do. If there was a turkey, or a goose, or a duck, or a fowl, or a pig within ten miles of us, he would have it: he was the boy for poaching. And now tell me (and mind you tell the truth when you meet with a friend) what made you leave your father and mother?"

"I was afraid of being taken up—" and here Joey stopped, for he hardly knew what to say; trust his new acquaintance with his father's secret he dare not, neither did he like to tell what was directly false; as the reader will perceive by his reply, he partly told the truth.

"Afraid of being taken up! Why, what could they take up a spalpeen like you for?"

"Poaching," replied Joey; "father poached too: they had proof against me, so I came away with father's consent."

"Poaching! well, I'm not surprised at that, for if ever it was in the blood, it is in yours—that's truth. And what do you mean to do now?"

"Anything I can to earn my bread."

"What can you do—besides poaching, of course? Can you read and write?"

"Oh, yes."

“Would you like to be a servant—clean boots, brush clothes, stand behind a cab, run messages, carry notes, and hold your tongue?”

“I could do all that, I think—I am twelve years old.”

“The devil you are! Well then, for your father’s sake, I’ll see what I can do for you, till you can do better. I’ll fit you out as a tiger, and what’s more, unless I am devilish hard up, I won’t sell you. So come along. What’s your name?”

“Joey.”

“Sure that was your father’s name before you, I now recollect and should any one take the trouble to ask you what may be the name of your master, you may reply, with a safe conscience, that it’s Captain O’Donahue. Now come along. Not close after me—you may as well keep open file just now, till I’ve made you look a little more decent.”

Chapter Eight

A Dissertation upon Pedigree

Our readers will not perhaps be displeased if we introduce Captain O'Donahue more particularly to their notice: we shall therefore devote this chapter to giving some account of his birth, parentage, and subsequent career. If the father of Captain O'Donahue was to be believed, the race of the O'Donahues were kings in Ireland long before the O'Connors were ever heard of. How far this may be correct we cannot pretend to offer an opinion, further than that no man can be supposed to know so much of a family's history as the descendant himself. The documents were never laid before us, and we have only the positive assertion of the Squireen O'Donahue, who asserted not only that they were kings in Ireland before the O'Connors, whose pretensions to ancestry he treated with contempt, but further, that they were renowned for their strength, and were famous for using the longest bows in battle that were ever known or heard of. Here we have circumstantial evidence, although not proof. If strong, they might have been kings in Ireland, for there "might has been right" for many centuries; and certainly their acquirements were handed down to posterity, as no one was more

famous for drawing the long bow than the Squireen O'Donahue. Upon these points, however, we must leave our readers to form their own opinions. Perhaps some one more acquainted with the archives of the country may be able to set us right if we are wrong, or to corroborate our testimony if we are right. In his preface to "Anne of Geierstein," Sir Walter Scott observes, that "errors, however trivial, ought, in his opinion, never to be pointed out to the author without meeting with a candid and respectful acknowledgement." Following the example of so great a man, we can only say, that if any gentleman can prove or disprove the assertion of the Squireen O'Donahue, to wit, that the O'Donahues were kings of Ireland long before the O'Connors were heard of; we shall be most happy to acknowledge the favour, and insert his remarks in the next edition. We should be further obliged to the same party, or indeed, any other, it they would favour us with an idea of what was implied by a king of Ireland in those days; that is to say, whether he held a court, taxed his subjects, collected revenue, kept up a standing army, sent ambassadors to foreign countries, and did all which kings do nowadays? or whether his shillelagh was his sceptre, and his domain some furze-crowned hills and a bog, the intricacies of which were known only to himself? whether he was arrayed in jewelled robes, with a crown of gold weighing on his temples? or whether he went bare-legged and bare-armed, with his bare locks flowing in luxurious wildness to the breeze? We request an answer to this in full simplicity. We observe that even in Ireland

now, a fellow six feet high, and stout in proportion, is called a "prince of a fellow," although he has not wherewithal to buy a paper of tobacco to supply his dhudeen: and, arguing from this fact, we are inclined to think that a few more inches in stature, and commensurate muscular increase of power, would in former times have raised the "heir-apparent" to the dignity of the Irish throne. But these abstruse speculations have led us from our history, which we must now resume.

Whatever may once have been the importance of the house of O'Donahue, one thing is certain, that there are many ups and downs in this world; every family in it has its wheel of fortune, which revolves faster or slower as the fates decree, and the descendant of kings before the O'Connor's time was now descended into a species of Viceroy, Squireen O'Donahue being the steward of certain wild estates in the county of Galway, belonging to a family who for many years had shown a decided aversion to the natural beauties of the country, and had thought proper to migrate to where, if people were not so much attached to them, they were at all events more civilised. These estates were extensive, but not lucrative. They abounded in rocks, brushwood, and woodcocks during the season; and although the Squireen O'Donahue did his best, if not for his employer, at least for himself; it was with some difficulty that he contrived to support, with anything like respectability (which in that part of the country means "dacent clothes to wear"), a very numerous family, lineally descended from the most ancient of all the kings

of Ireland.

Before the squireen had obtained his employment, he had sunk his rank and travelled much—as a courier—thereby gaining much knowledge of the world. If, therefore, he had no wealth to leave his children, at all events he could impart to them that knowledge which is said to be better than worldly possessions. Having three sons and eight daughters, all of them growing up healthy and strong, with commensurate appetites, he soon found that it was necessary to get rid of them as fast as he could. His eldest, who, strange to say, for an O'Donahue, was a quiet lad, he had as a favour lent to his brother, who kept a small tobacconist and grocer's shop in Dublin, and his brother was so fond of him, that eventually O'Carroll O'Donahue was bound to him as an apprentice. It certainly was a degradation for the descendant of such ancient kings to be weighing out pennyworths of sugar, and supplying halfpenny papers of tobacco to the old apple and fish women; but still there we must leave the heir-apparent while we turn to the second son, Mr Patrick O'Donahue, whose history we are now relating, having already made the reader acquainted with him by an introduction in Saint James's Park.

Chapter Nine

In which the Advice of a Father deserves Peculiar Attention

It may be supposed that, as steward of the estates, Squireen O'Donahue had some influence over the numerous tenants on the property, and this influence he took care to make the most of. His assistance in a political contest was rewarded by the offer of an ensigncy for one of his sons, in a regiment then raising in Ireland, and this offer was too good to be refused. So, one fine day, Squireen O'Donahue came home from Dublin, well bespattered with mud, and found his son Patrick also well bespattered with mud, having just returned home from a very successful expedition against the woodcocks.

"Patrick, my jewel," said the Squireen, taking a seat and wiping his face, for he was rather warm with his ride, "you're a made man."

"And well made too, father, if the girls are anything of judges," replied Patrick.

"You put me out," replied the Squireen; "you've more to be vain of than your figure."

"And what may that be that you're discoursing about father?"

"Nothing more nor less, nor better nor worse, but you're an ensign in his Majesty's new regiment—the number has escaped my memory."

"I'd rather be a colonel, father," replied Patrick, musing.

"The colonel's to come, you spalpeen," said the Squireen.

"And the fortune to make, I expect," replied Patrick.

"You've just hit it but haven't you the whole world before you to pick and choose?"

"Well," replied Patrick, after a pause; "I've no objection."

"No objection! Why don't you jump out of your skin with delight? At all events, you might jump high enough to break in the caling."

"There's no ceiling to break," replied Patrick, looking up at the rafters.

"That's true enough; but still you might go out of your seven senses in a rational sort of a way."

"I really can't see for why, father dear. You tell me I'm to leave my poor old mother, who doats upon me; my sisters, who are fond of me; my friends here," patting the dogs, "who follow me; the hills, that I love; and the woodcocks, which I shoot; to go to be shot at myself, and buried like a dead dog, without being skinned, on the field of battle."

"I tell you to go forth into the world as an officer, and make your fortune; to come back a general, and be the greatest man of your family. And don't be too unhappy about not being skinned. Before you are older or wiser, dead or alive, you'll be skinned,

I'll answer for it."

"Well, father, I'll go; but I expect there'll be a good deal of ground to march over before I'm a general."

"And you've a good pair of legs."

"So I'm told every day of my life. I'll make the best use of them when I start; but it's the starting I don't like, and that's the real truth."

The reader may be surprised at the indifference shown by Patrick at the intelligence communicated by his father; but the fact was, Mr Patrick O'Donahue was very deep in love. This cooled his national ardour; and it must be confessed that there was every excuse, for a more lovely creature than Judith McCrae never existed. To part with her was the only difficulty, and all his family feelings were but a cloak to the real cause of his unwillingness.

"Nevertheless, you must start to-morrow, my boy," said his father.

"What must be, must," replied Patrick, "so there's an end of the matter. I'll just go out for a bit of a walk, just to stretch my legs."

"They require a deal of stretching, Pat, considering you've been twenty miles, at least, this morning, over the mountains," replied the Squireen. But Patrick was out of hearing; he had leapt over a stone wall which separated his father's potato ground from Cornelius McCrae's, and had hastened to Judith, whom he found very busy getting the dinner ready.

"Judith, my dear," said Patrick, "my heart's quite broke with the bad news I have to tell you. Sure I'm going to leave you to-morrow morning."

"Now, Patrick, you're joking, surely."

"Devil a joke in it. I'm an ensign in a regiment."

"Then I'll die, Patrick."

"More like that I will, Judith; what with grief and a bullet to help it, perhaps."

"Now, what d'ye mean to do, Patrick?"

"Mean to go, sure; because I can't help myself; and to come back again, if ever I've the luck of it. My heart's leaping out of my mouth entirely."

"And mine's dead," replied Judith, in tears.

"It's no use crying, mavourneen. I'll be back to dance at my own wedding, if so be I can."

"There'll be neither wedding for you, Patrick, nor wake either, for you'll lie on the cold ground, and be ploughed in like muck."

"That's but cold comfort from you, Judith, but we'll hope for a better ending; but I must go back now, and you'll meet me this evening beyond the shealing."

"Won't it be for the last time, Patrick," replied Judith, with her apron up to her eyes.

"If I've any voice in the matter, I say no. Please the pigs, I'll come back a colonel."

"Then you'll be no match for Judith McCrae," replied the sobbing girl.

"Shoot easy, my Judith, that's touching my honour; if I'm a general it will be all the same."

"Oh, Patrick! Patrick!"

Patrick folded Judith in his arms, took one kiss, and then hastened out of the house, saying—"Remember the shealing, Judith, dear, there we'll talk the matter over easy and comfortable."

Patrick returned to his house, where he found his mother and sisters in tears. They had received orders to prepare his wardrobe, which, by the bye, did not give them much trouble from its extent; they only had to mend every individual article. His father was sitting down by the hearth, and when he saw Patrick he said to him,—"Now just come here, my boy, and take a stool, while you listen to me and learn a little worldly wisdom, for I may not have much time to talk to you when we are at Dublin."

Patrick took a seat, and was all attention.

"You'll just observe, Pat, that it's a very fine thing to be an officer in the king's army; nobody dares to treat you ill, although you may ill-treat others, which is no small advantage in this world."

"There's truth in that," replied Patrick.

"You see, when you get into an enemy's country, you may help yourself; and, if you look sharp, there's very pretty pickings—all in a quiet way, you understand."

"That, indeed."

"You observe, Pat, that, as one of his officers, the king expects

you to appear and live like a gentleman, only he forgets to give you the means of so doing; you must, therefore, take all you can get from his Majesty, and other people must make up the difference."

"That's a matter o' course," said Patrick.

"You'll soon see your way clear, and find out what you may be permitted to do, and what you may not; for the king expects you to keep up the character of a gentleman as well as the appearance."

"O' course."

"Mayhap you may be obliged to run in debt a little—a gentleman may do that; mayhap you may not be able to pay—that's a gentleman's case very often: if so, never go so far as twenty pounds; first, because the law don't reach; and secondly, because twenty pound is quite enough to make a man suffer for the good of his country."

"There's sense in that, father."

"And, Patrick, recollect that people judge by appearances in this world, especially when they've nothing else to go by. If you talk small, your credit will be small; but if you talk large, it will be just in proportion."

"I perceive, father."

"It's not much property we possess in this said county of Galway, that's certain; but you must talk of this property as if I was the squire, and not the steward; and when you talk of the quantity of woodcocks you have bagged, you must say on *our*

property."

"I understand, father."

"And you must curse your stars at being a younger brother; it will be an excuse for your having no money, but will make them believe it's in the family, at all events."

"I perceive," replied Patrick.

"There's one thing more, Pat; it's an Irish regiment, so you must get out of it as soon as possible by exchange."

"For why?"

"This for why. You will be among those born too near home, and who may doubt all you say, because your story may interfere with their own. Get into an English regiment by all means, and there you'll be beyond the reach of contradiction, which ain't pleasant."

"True enough, father."

"Treasure up all I have told you—it's worldly wisdom, and you have your fortune to make; so now recollect, never hold back at a forlorn hope; volunteer for everything; volunteer to be blown from a cannon's mouth, so that they will give you promotion for that same; volunteer to go all over the world, into the other world, and right through that again into the one that comes after that, if there is any, and then one thing will be certain, either that you'll be colonel or general, or else—"

"Else what, father?"

"That you won't require to be made either, seeing that you'll be past all making; but luck's all, and lucky it is, by the bye, that

I have a little of the squire's rent in hand to fit you out with, or how we should have managed, the saints only know. As it is, I must sink it on the next year's account; but that's more easy to do than to fit you out with no money. I must beg the tenants off, make the potato crop fail entirely, and report twenty, by name at least, dead of starvation. Serve him right for spending his money out of Old Ireland. It's only out of real patriotism that I cheat him —just to spend the money in the country. And now, Patrick, I've done; now you may go and square your accounts with Judith, for I know now where the cat jumps; but I'll leave old Time alone for doing his work."

Such was the advice of the Squireen to his son; and, as worldly wisdom, it was not so bad; and, certainly, when a lad is cast adrift in the world, the two best things you can bestow on him are a little worldly wisdom and a little money, for without the former, the latter and he will soon part company.

The next day they set off for Dublin, Patrick's head being in a confused jumble of primitive good feeling, Judith McCrae, his father's advice, and visions of future greatness. He was fitted out, introduced to the officers, and then his father left him his blessing and his own way to make in the world. In a fortnight the regiment was complete, and they were shipped to Liverpool, and from Liverpool to Maidstone, where, being all newly raised men, they were to remain for a time to be disciplined. Before the year had expired, Patrick had followed his father's advice, and exchanged, receiving a difference, with

an ensign of a regiment going on foreign service. He was sent to the West Indies: but the seasons were healthy, and he returned home an ensign. He volunteered abroad again after five years, and gained his lieutenant's commission, from a death vacancy, without purchase.

After a fifteen years' hard service, the desired Captain's commission came at last, and O'Donahue, having been so unsuccessful in his military career, retired upon half-pay, determined, if possible, to offer his handsome person in exchange for competence. But, during the fifteen years which had passed away, a great change had come over the ingenuous and unsophisticated Patrick O'Donahue; he had mixed so long with a selfish and heartless world, that his primitive feelings had gradually worn away. Judith had, indeed, never been forgotten; but she was now at rest, for, by mistake, Patrick had been returned dead of the yellow fever, and at the intelligence she had drooped like a severed snowdrop, and died. The only tie strong enough to induce him to return to Ireland was therefore broken, his father's worldly advice had not been forgotten, and O'Donahue considered the world as his oyster. Expensive in his habits and ideas, longing for competence, while he vegetated on half-pay, he was now looking out for a matrimonial speculation. His generosity and his courage remained with him—two virtues not to be driven out of an Irishman—but his other good qualities lay in abeyance; and yet his better feelings were by no means extinguished; they were dormant, but by favourable

circumstances were again to be brought into action. The world and his necessities made him what he was; for many were the times, for years afterwards, that he would in his reveries surmise how happy he might have been in his own wild country, where half-pay would have been competence, had his Judith been spared to him, and he could have laid his head upon her bosom.

Chapter Ten

In which Major McShane narrates some curious Matrimonial Speculations

Our hero was soon fitted out with the livery of a groom, and installed as the confidential servant of Captain O'Donahue, who had lodgings on the third floor in a fashionable street. He soon became expert and useful, and, as the captain breakfasted at home, and always ordered sufficient for Joey to make another cold meal of during the day, he was at little or no expense to his master.

One morning, when Captain O'Donahue was sitting in his dressing-gown at breakfast, Joey opened the door, and announced Major McShane.

"Is it yourself, O'Donahue?" said the major, extending his hand; "and, now, what d'ye think has brought me here this fine morning? It's to do a thing that's rather unusual with me,—neither more nor less than to pay you the 20 pounds which you lent me a matter of three years ago, and which, I dare say, you never expected to see anything but the ghost of."

"Why, McShane, if the truth must be told, it will be something of a resurrection when it appears before me," replied O'Donahue;

"I considered it dead and buried; and, like those who are dead and buried, it has been long forgotten."

"Nevertheless, here it is in four notes—one, two, three, four: four times five are twenty; there's arithmetic for you, and your money to boot, and many thanks in the bargain, by way of interest. And now, O'Donahue, where have you been, what have you been doing, what are you doing, and what do you intend to do? That's what I call a comprehensive inquiry, and a very close one too."

"I have been in London a month, I have done nothing, I am doing nothing, and I don't know what I intend to do. You may take that for a comprehensive answer."

"I'll tell you all about myself without your asking. I have been in London for nearly two years, one of which I spent in courting, and the other in matrimony."

"Why, you don't mean to say that you are married, McShane; if so, as you've been married a year, you can tell me, am I to give you joy?"

"Why, yes, I believe you may; there's nothing so stupid, O'Donahue, as domestic happiness, that's a fact; but, altogether, I have been so large a portion of my life doubtful where I was to get a dinner, that I think that on the whole I have made a very good choice."

"And may I inquire who is the party to whom Major McShane has condescended to sacrifice his handsome person?"

"Is it handsome you mane? As the ugly lady said to the

looking-glass, I beg no reflections—you wish to know who she is; well, then, you must be content to listen to all my adventures from the time we parted, for she is at the end of them, and I can't read backwards."

"I am at your service, so begin as you please."

"Let me see, O'Donahue, where was it that we parted?"

"If I recollect, it was at the landing made at —, where you were reported killed."

"Very true, but that, I gave my honour, was all a lie; it was fat Sergeant Murphy that was killed, instead of me. He was a terrible fellow, that Sergeant Murphy; he got himself killed on purpose, because he never could have passed his accounts; well, he fought like a devil, so peace be with him. I was knocked down, as you know, with a bullet in my thigh, and as I could not stand, I sat upon the carcass of Sergeant Murphy, bound up my leg, and meditated on sublunary affairs. I thought what a great rogue he was, that Sergeant Murphy, and how he'd gone out of the world without absolution; and then I thought it very likely that he might have some money about him, and how much better it would be that I should have it to comfort me in prison than any rascally Frenchman, so I put my hand in his pocket and borrowed his purse, which was, taking the difference of size, as well lined as himself. Well, as you had all retreated and left me to be taken prisoner, I waited very patiently till they should come and carry me to the hospital, or wherever else they pleased. They were not long coming for me: one fellow would have passed his bayonet

through me, but I had my pistol cocked, so he thought it advisable to take me prisoner. I was taken into the town, not to the hospital or the prison, but quartered at the house of an old lady of high rank and plenty of money. Well, the surgeon came and very politely told me that he must cut off my leg, and I very politely told him to go to the devil; and the old lady came in and took my part, when she saw what a handsome leg it was, and sent for another doctor at her own expense, who promised to set me on my pins in less than a month. Well, the old lady fell in love with me; and although she was not quite the vision of youthful fancy, as the saying is, for she had only one tooth in her head, and that stuck out half an inch beyond her upper lip, still she had other charms for a poor devil like me; so I made up my mind to marry her, for she made cruel love to me as I laid in bed, and before I was fairly out of bed the thing was settled, and a week afterwards the day was fixed; but her relatives got wind of it, for, like an old fool, she could not help blabbing, and so one day there came a file of soldiers, with a corporal at their head, informing me that I was now quite well, and therefore, if it was all the same to me, I must go to prison. This was anything but agreeable, and contrary to rule. As an officer, I was entitled to my parole; and so I wrote to the commanding officer, who sent for me, and then he told me I had my choice, to give up the old lady, whose friends were powerful, and would not permit her to make a fool of herself (a personal remark, by the bye, which it was unhandsome to make to a gentleman in my circumstances), or to be refused parole, and

remain in prison, and that he would give me an hour to decide; then he made me a very low bow, and left me. I was twisting the affair over in my mind, one moment thinking of her purse and carriage and doubloons, and another of that awful long tooth of hers, when one of her relatives came in and said he had a proposal to make, which was, that I should be released and sent to Gibraltar, without any conditions, with a handsome sum of money to pay my expenses, if I would promise to give up the old lady now and for ever. That suited my book; I took the money, took my leave, and a small vessel took me to Gibraltar; so after all, you see, O'Donahue, the thing did not turn out so bad. I lost only an old woman with a long tooth, and I gained my liberty."

"No; you got out of that affair with credit."

"And with money, which is quite as good; so when I returned and proved myself alive, I was reinstated, and had all my arrears paid up. What with Sergeant Murphy's purse, and the foreign subsidy, and my arrears, I was quite flush; so I resolved to be circumspect, and make hay while the sun shone: notwithstanding which, I was as nearly trapped by a cunning devil of a widow. Two days more, and I should have made a pretty kettle of fish of it."

"What, at your age, McShane?"

"Ah, bother! but she was a knowing one—a widow on a first floor, good-looking, buxom, a fine armful, and about thirty—met her at a party—pointed out to me as without encumbrance, and well off—made up to her, escorted her home

—begged permission to call, was graciously received—talked of her departed husband, thought me like him—everything so comfortable—plenty of plate—good furniture—followed her up—received notes by a little boy in sky-blue and silver sugar-loaf buttons—sent me all her messages—one day in the week to her banker's to cash a check. Would you believe the cunning of the creature? She used to draw out 25 pounds every week, sending me for the money, and, as I found out afterwards, paid it in again in fifties every fortnight, and she only had 50 pounds in all. Wasn't I regularly humbugged? Made proposals—was accepted—all settled, and left off talking about her departed. One day, and only two days before the wedding, found the street-door open, and heard a noise between her and her landlady of the top of the stairs, so I waited at the bottom. The landlady was insisting upon her rent, and having all her plate back again—my charming widow entreating for a little delay, as she was to be married—landlady came downstairs, red as a turkey-cock, so I very politely begged her to walk into the parlour, and I put a few questions, when I discovered that my intended was a widow with a pension of 80 pounds a-year, and had six children, sent out of the way until she could find another protector, which I resolved, at all events, should not be Major McShane; so I walked out of the door, and have never seen her since."

"By the head of Saint Patrick, but that was an escape!"

"Yes, indeed, the she-devil with six children, and 80 pounds a year; it's a wicked world this, O'Donahue. Well, I kept clear of

such cunning articles, and only looked after youth and innocence in the city. At last I discovered the only daughter of a German sugar-baker in the Minories, a young thing about seventeen, but very little for her age. She went to a dancing-school, and I contrived, by bribing the maid, to carry on the affair most successfully, and she agreed to run away with me: everything was ready, the postchaise was at the corner of the street, she came with her bundle in her hand. I thrust it into the chaise, and was just tossing her in after it, when she cried out that she had forgotten something, and must go back for it; and away she went, slipping through my fingers. Well, I waited most impatiently for her appearance, and at last saw her coming; and what d'ye think she'd gone back for? By the powers, for *her doll*, which she held in her hand! And just as she came to the chaise, who should come round the corner but her father, who had walked from Mincing Lane. He caught my mincing Miss by the arm, with her doll and her bundle, and bundled her home, leaving me and the postchaise, looking like two fools. I never could see her again, or her confounded doll either."

"You have been out of luck, McShane."

"I'm not sure of that, as the affair has ended. Now comes another adventure, in which I turned the tables, anyhow. I fell in with a very pretty girl, the daughter of a lawyer in Chancery Lane, who was said to have, and (I paid a shilling at Doctors' Commons, and read the will) it was true enough, an independent fortune from her grandmother. She was always laughing full of

mischief and practical jokes. She pretended to be pleased, the hussey, with my addresses, and at last she consented, as I thought, to run away with me. I imagined that I had clinched the business at last, when one dark night I handed her into a chaise, wrapped up in a cloak, and crying. However, I got her in, and away we went as if the devil was behind us. I coaxed her and soothed her, and promised to make her happy; but she still kept her handkerchief up to her eyes, and would not permit me a chaste salute—even pushed me away when I would put my arm round her waist; all which I ascribed to the extra shame and modesty which a woman feels when she is doing wrong. At last, when about fifteen miles from town, there was a burst of laughter, and 'I think we have gone far enough, Major McShane.' By all the saints in the calendar, it was her scamp of a brother that had taken her place. 'My young gentleman,' said I, 'I think you have not only gone far enough, but, as I shall prove to you, perhaps a little too far,' for I was in no fool of a passion. So I set to, beat him to a mummy, broke his nose, blackened both his eyes, and knocked half his teeth down his throat; and when he was half dead, I opened the chaise door as it whirled along, and kicked him out to take his chance of the wheels, or any other wheels which the wheel of fortune might turn up for him. So he went home and told his sister what a capital joke it was, I've no doubt. I'll be bound the young gentleman has never run away with an Irishman since that: however, I never heard any more about him, or his lovely sister."

"Now, then, for the wind up, McShane."

"Courting's very expensive, especially when you order postchaises for nothing at all, and I was very nearly at the end of my rhino; so I said to myself, 'McShane, you must retrench.' And I did so; instead of dining at the coffee-house, I determined to go to an eating-house, and walked into one in Holborn, where I sat down to a plate of good beef and potatoes, and a large lump of plum-pudding, paid 1 shilling and 6 pence, and never was better pleased in my life; so I went there again, and became a regular customer; and the girls who waited laughed with me, and the lady who kept the house was very gracious. Now, the lady was good-looking, but she was rather too fat; there was an amiable look about her, even when she was carving beef; and by degrees we became intimate, and I found her a very worthy creature, and as simple-minded as a child, although she could look sharp after her customers. It was, and is now, a most thriving establishment —nearly two hundred people dine there every day. I don't know how it was, but I suppose I first fell in love with her beef; and then with her fair self; and finding myself well received at all times, I one day, as she was carving a beefsteak-pie which might have tempted a king for its fragrance, put the question to her, as to how she would like to marry again. She blushed, and fixed her eyes down upon the hole she had made in the pie, and then I observed that if there was a hole in my side as big as there was in the pie before her, she would see her image in my heart. This pretty simile did the business for me, and in a month we were married; and I never shall want a dinner as long as I live, either

for myself or friend. I will put you on the free list, O'Donahue, if you can condescend to a cook's shop: and I can assure you that I think I have done a very wise thing, for I don't want to present any wife at Court, and I have a very comfortable home."

"You have done a wise thing, in my opinion, McShane—you have a wife who makes money, instead of one who spends it."

"And, moreover, I have found my bargain better that I anticipated, which is seldom the case in this world of treachery and deceit. She has plenty of money, and is putting by more every year."

"Which you have the control of, at your disposition, do you mean to say?"

"Why, yes, I may say that now; but, O'Donahue, that is owing to my circumspection and delicacy. At first starting, I determined that she should not think that it was only her money that I wanted; so, after we were married, I continued to find myself, which, paying nothing for board and lodging and washing, I could easily do upon my half-pay; and I have done so ever since, until just now."

"I had not been married a week before I saw that she expected I would make inquiries into the state of her finances, but I would not. At last, finding that I would not enter into the business, she did, and told me that she had 17,000 pounds Consols laid by, and that the business was worth 1,000 pounds per annum (you may fish at Cheltenham a long while, O'Donahue, before you get such a haul as that). So I told her I was very glad she was well off, and

then I pretended to go fast asleep, as I never interfered with her, and never asked for money. At last she didn't like it, and offered it to me; but I told her I had enough, and did not want it; since which she has been quite annoyed at my not spending money; and when I told her this morning that there was a brother officer of mine arrived in town, to whom I had owed some money for a long while, she insisted upon my taking money to pay it, put a pile of bank-notes in my had, and was quite mortified when she found I only wanted 20 pounds. Now you see, O'Donahue, I have done this from principle. She earns the money, and therefore she shall have the control of it as long as we are good friends; and upon my honour, I really think I love her better than I ever thought I could love any woman in the world for she has the temper, the kindness, and the charity of an angel, although not precisely the figure; but one can't have everything in this world; and so now you have the whole of my story, and what do you think of it?"

"You must present me to your wife, McShane."

"That I will with pleasure. She's like her rounds of beef—it's cut and come again; but her heart is a beauty, and so is her beefsteak-pie—when you taste it."

Chapter Eleven

In which an Interchange and Confidence take place

"And now, O'Donahue," said McShane, "if you are not yet tired of my company, I should like to hear what you have been doing since we parted: be quite as explicit, but not quite so long-winded, as myself; for I fear that I tired you."

"I will be quite as explicit, my good fellow; but I have no such marvellous adventures to relate, and not such a fortunate wind up. I have been to Bath, to Cheltenham, to Harrogate, to Brighton, and everywhere else where people meet, and people are met with, who would not meet or be met with elsewhere. I have seen many nice girls; but the nice girls were, like myself, almost penniless; and I have seen many ill-favoured, who had money: the first I could only afford to look at—the latter I have had some dealings with. I have been refused by one or two, and I might have married seven or eight; but, somehow or other, when it came near the point, the vision of a certain angel, now in heaven, has risen before me, and I have not had the heart or the heartlessness to proceed. Indeed, I may safely say that I have seen but one person since we parted who ever made the least impression on me, or whom I could fancy in any degree to

replace her whom I have lost, and she, I fear, is lost also; so we may as well say no more about it. I have determined to marry for money, as you well know; but it appears to me as if there was something which invariably prevents the step being taken; and, upon my honour, fortune seems so inclined to balk me in my wishes, that I begin to snap my fingers at her, and am becoming quite indifferent. I suffer now under the evil of poverty; but it is impossible to say what other evils may be in store if I were to change my condition, as the ladies say. Come what will, in one thing I am determined—that if I marry a girl for money, I will treat her well, and not let her find it out; and as that may add to the difficulty of a man's position when he is not in love with his wife, why, all I can say is, Captain O'Donahue doesn't go cheap —that's decided."

"You're right, my jewel; there's not such a broth of a boy to be picked up every day in the week. Widows might bid for you, for without flattery, I think you a moral of a man, and an honour to Old Ireland. But O'Donahue, begging your pardon, if it's not a secret, who may have been this lady who appears to have bothered your brains not a little, since she could you forget somebody else?"

"I met her at the Lakes of Cumberland, and being acquainted with some of the party, was invited to join them. I was ten days in her company at Windermere, Ambleside, Derwentwater, and other places. She was a foreigner, and titled."

"Murder and Irish! you don't say so?"

"Yes; and moreover, as I was informed by those who were with her, has large property in Poland. She was, in fact, everything that I could desire—handsome, witty, speaking English and several other languages, and about two or three and twenty years old."

"And her name, if it's no offence to ask it?"

"Princess Czartorinski."

"And a princess in the bargain? And did you really pretend to make love to a princess?"

"Am not I an Irishman, McShane? and is a princess anything but a woman, after all? By the powers! I'd make love to, and run away with, the Pope himself; if he were made of the same materials as Pope Joan is said to have been."

"Then, upon my faith, O'Donahue, I believe you—so now go on."

"I not only made love to her, but in making love to her, I got most terribly singed myself; and I felt, before I quitted her, that if I had ten thousand a-year, and she was as poor as my dear Judith was, that she should have taken her place—that's the truth. I thought that I never could love again, and that my heart was as flinty as a pawnbroker's; but I found out my mistake when it was too late."

"And did she return you the compliment?"

"That I was not indifferent to her, I may without vanity believe. I had a five minutes alone with her just before we parted, and I took that opportunity of saying how much pain it was to part with her, and for once I told the truth, for I was almost choking

when I said it. I'm convinced that there was sincerity in my face, and that she saw that it was there; so she replied, 'If what you say is true, we shall meet at Saint Petersburg next winter; good-bye, I shall expect you.'"

"Well, that was as much as to say, come, at all events."

"It was; I stammered out my determination so to do, if possible; but I felt at the time that my finances rendered it impossible—so there was an end of that affair. By my hopes of salvation, I'd not only go to Saint Petersburg, but round the whole world, and to the north pole afterwards, if I had the means only to see her once more."

"You're in a bad way, O'Donahue; your heart's gone and your money too. Upon my soul, I pity you; but it's always the case in this world. When I was a boy, the best and ripest fruit was always on the top of the wall, and out of my reach. Shall I call to-morrow, and then, if you please, I'll introduce you to Mrs McShane?"

"I will be happy to see you and your good wife, McShane; health and happiness to you. Stop, while I ring for my little factotum to let you out."

"By the bye, a sharp boy that, O'Donahue, with an eye as bright as a hawk. Where did you pick him up?"

"In Saint James's Park."

"Well, that's an odd place to hire a servant in."

"Do you recollect Rushbrook in my company?"

"To be sure I do—your best soldier, and a famous caterer he

was at all times."

"It is his son."

"And, now I think of it, he's very like him, only somewhat better-looking."

O'Donahue then acquainted McShane with the circumstances attending his meeting with Joey, and they separated.

The next day, about the same time, McShane came to see his friend, and found O'Donahue dressed, and ready to go out with him.

"Now, O'Donahue, you mustn't be in such a hurry to see Mrs McShane, for I have something to tell you which will make her look more pretty in your eyes than she otherwise might have done upon first introduction. Take your chair again, and don't be putting on your gloves yet, while you listen to a little conversation which took place between us last night, just before we dropped into the arms of Murfy. I'll pass over all the questions she asked about you, and all the compliments I paid you behind your back: because, if I didn't, it would make you blush, Irishman as you are; but this she did say,—that it was great kindness on your part to lend me that money, and that she loved you for it; upon which I replied, I was sorry you were not easy in your mind, and so very unhappy: upon which she, in course, like every woman, asked me why; and then I told her merely that it was a love-affair, and a long story, as if I wished to go to sleep. This made her more curious, so, to oblige her, I stayed awake, and told her just what you told me, and how the winter was coming on and you not

able to keep your appointment. And what d'ye think the good soul said? 'Now,' says she, 'McShane, if you love me, and have any gratitude to your friend for his former kindness, you will to-morrow take him money enough, and more than enough, to do as he wishes, and if he gains his wife he can repay you; if not, the money is not an object.' 'That's very kind of you, dearest,' said I; 'but then will you consent to another thing? for this may prove a difficult affair, and he may want me with him; and would you have any objection to that, dearest?' for you see, O'Donahue, I took it into my head that I might be of the greatest use to you: and, moreover, I should like the trip, just by way of a little change. 'Couldn't he do without you?' replied she, gravely. 'I'm afraid not; and although I thought I was in barracks for life, and never to leave you again, yet still for his sake, poor fellow, who has been such a generous fellow to me—' 'An' how long would you be away?' said she. 'Why, it might be two months at the most,' replied I; 'but who can tell it to a day?' 'Well,' said she, 'I don't like that part of the concern at all; but still, if it is necessary, as you say, things shouldn't be done by halves,' and then she sighed, poor soul. 'Then I won't go,' says I. 'Yes,' says she, after a pause; 'I think it's your duty, and therefore you must.' 'I'll do just what you wish, my soul,' replied I; 'but let's talk more about it to-morrow.' This morning she brought up the subject, and said that she had made up her mind, and that it should be as we had said last night; and she went to the drawer and took out three hundred pounds in gold and notes, and said that if it was not enough, we had only

to write for more. Now ain't she a jewel, O'Donahue? and here's the money."

"McShane, she is a jewel, not because she has given me money, but because her heart's in the right place, and always will be. But I really do not like taking you away with me."

"Perhaps you don't think I'd be of any use?"

"Yes; I do not doubt but that you will be, although at present I do not know how."

"But I do, for I've thought upon it, and I shall take it very unkind if you don't let me go with you. I want a little divarsion; for you see, O'Donahue, one must settle down to domestic happiness by degrees."

"Be it so, then; all I fear is, I shall occasion pain to your excellent wife."

"She has plenty to do, and that drives care away; besides, only consider the pleasure you'll occasion to her when I come back."

"I forgot that. Now, if you please, I'll call and pay my respects, and also return my grateful thanks."

"Then, come along."

Captain O'Donahue found Mrs McShane very busily employed supplying her customers. She was, as McShane had said, a very good-looking woman, although somewhat corpulent: and there was an amiability, frankness, and kindness of disposition so expressed in her countenance, that it was impossible not to feel interested with her. They dined together. O'Donahue completely established himself in her good graces,

and it was agreed that on that day week the gentlemen should embark for Hamburg, and proceed on to Petersburg, Joey to go with them as their little valet.

Chapter Twelve

An Expedition, as of Yore, across the Waters for a Wife

The first step taken by O'Donahue was to obtain a passport for himself and suit; and here there was a controversy, McShane having made up his mind that he would sink the officer, and travel as O'Donahue's servant, in which capacity he declared that he would not only be more useful, but also swell his friend's dignity. After a long combat on the part of O'Donahue, this was consented to, and the passport was filled up accordingly.

"But, by Saint Patrick! I ought to get some letters of introduction," said O'Donahue; "and how is that to be managed —at all events to the English ambassador? Let me see—I'll go to the Horse Guards."

O'Donahue went accordingly, and, as was always the case there, was admitted immediately to an audience with the Commander of the Forces. O'Donahue put his case forward, stating that he was about to proceed on a secret mission to Russia, and requested his Royal Highness to give him a few letters of introduction. His Royal Highness very properly observed, that if sent on a secret mission, he would, of course, obtain

all the necessary introductions from the proper quarters, and then inquired of O'Donahue what his rank was, where he had served, etcetera. To the latter questions O'Donahue gave a very satisfactory reply, and convinced the Duke that he was an officer of merit. Then came the question as to his secret mission, which his Royal Highness had never heard of. "May it please your Royal Highness, there's a little mistake about this same secret mission; it's not on account of government that I'm going, but on my own secret service;" and O'Donahue, finding himself fairly in for it, confessed that he was after a lady of high rank, and that if he did not obtain letters of introduction, he should not probably find the means of entering the society in which she was to be found, and that as an officer who had served faithfully, he trusted that he should not be refused.

His Royal Highness laughed at his disclosure, and, as there was no objection to giving O'Donahue a letter or two, with his usual good-nature he ordered them to be written, and having given them to him, wished him every success. O'Donahue bowed to the ground, and quitted the Horse Guards, delighted with the success of his impudent attempt.

Being thus provided, the party set off in a vessel bound to Hamburg, where they arrived without any accident, although very sea-sick; from Hamburg they proceeded to Lübeck, and re-embarked at Travemünde in a brig, which was bound for Riga; the wind was fair, and their passage was short. On their arrival they put up at an hotel, and finding themselves in a country where

English was not understood, O'Donahue proceeded to the house of the English consul, informing him that he was going on a secret mission to Petersburg, and showing, as evidences of his respectability and the truth of his assertions, the letters given him by his Royal Highness. These were quite sufficient for the consul, who immediately offered his services. Not being able to procure at Riga a courier who could speak French or English, the consul took a great deal of trouble to assist them in their long journey to Petersburg. He made out a list of the posts, the number of versts, and the money that was to be paid; he changed some of O'Donahue's gold into Russian paper-money, and gave all the necessary instructions. The great difficulty was to find any carriage to carry them to the capital, but at last they found an old cabriolet on four wheels which might answer, and, bidding adieu to the consul, they obtained horses, and set off.

"Now, McShane, you must take care of the money, and pay the driver," said O'Donahue, pulling out several pieces of thick paper, some coloured red, some blue, and others of a dirty white.

"Is this money?" said McShane, with astonishment.

"Yes, that's roubles."

"Roubles, are they? I wonder what they'd call them in Ireland; they look like soup-tickets."

"Never mind. And now, McShane, there are two words which the consul has told me to make use of: one is *Scoro*, and when you say that, it means '*Go fast*,' and you hold up a small bit of money at the same time."

"*Scoro*! well, that's a word I sha'n't forget."

"But, then, there's another, which is *Scorae*."

"And what may be the English of that?"

"Why, that means '*Go faster*,' and with that you hold up a larger piece of money."

"Why, then, it's no use remembering *Scoro* at all, for *Scorae* will do much better; so we need not burden ourselves with the first at all. Suppose we try the effect of that last word upon our bear-skin friend who is driving!"

McShane held up a rouble, and called out to the driver —"*Scorae*!" The fellow turned his head, smiled, and lashed his horses until they were at the full speed, and then looked back at them for approval.

"By the powers, that's no fool of a word! it will take us all the way to Saint Petersburg as fast as we wish."

"We do not sleep on the road, but travel night and day," said O'Donahue, "for there is no place worth sleeping at."

"And the 'ating, O'Donahue?"

"We must get that by signs, for we have no other means."

On that point they soon found they had no difficulty; and thus they proceeded, without speaking a word of the language, day and night, until they arrived at the capital.

At the entrance their passports were demanded, and the officer at the guard-house came out and told them that a Cossack would accompany them. A Cossack, with a spear as long as a fir-tree, and a beard not quite so long, then took them in charge,

and trotted before the carriage, the driver following him at a slow pace.

"An't we prisoners?" inquired McShane.

"I don't know, but it looks very like it," replied O'Donahue.

This, however, was not the case. The carriage drove to a splendid street called the Neffsky Perspective, and as soon as it stopped at the entrance of an hotel, the Cossack, after speaking to the landlord, who came out, took his departure.

A journey of four hundred miles, day and night, is no joke: our travellers fell fast asleep in their spacious apartment, and it was not till the next day that they found themselves clean and comfortable, Joey being dressed in a rich livery, as a sort of page, and McShane doing duty as valet when others were present, and when sitting alone with O'Donahue, taking his fair share of the bottle.

Two days after their arrival, the landlord procured for O'Donahue a courier who could speak both English and French as well as Russian, and almost every other language. It was resolved by O'Donahue and McShane, in council, to dress him up in a splendid uniform; and a carriage having been hired for the month, O'Donahue felt that he was in a position to present his credentials to the English ambassador and the other parties for whom he had received letters of introduction.

Chapter Thirteen

In which there is some Information Relative to the City of St. Petersburg

For 300 roubles a month, O'Donahue had procured a drosky, very handsomely fitted up; the shaft horse was a splendid trotter, and the other, a beautiful-shaped animal, capered about curving his neck, until his nose almost touched his knee, and prancing, so as to be the admiration of the passers-by. His coachman, whose name was Athenasis, had the largest beard in Saint Petersburg; Joey was the smallest tiger; Dimitri, one of the tallest and handsomest yägers. Altogether, Captain O'Donahue had laid out his money well; and on a fine, sunny day he set off to present his letters to the English ambassador and other parties. Although the letters were very short, it was quite sufficient that they were written by so distinguished and so universally beloved a person as his Royal Highness. The ambassador, Lord Saint H, immediately desired O'Donahue to consider his house open to him, requesting the pleasure of his company to dinner on the following day, and offered to present him to the Emperor at the first levee. O'Donahue took his leave, delighted with his success, and then drove to the hotel of the Princess Woronzoff, Count

Nesselrode, and Prince Gallitzin, where he found himself equally well received. After his visits were all paid, O'Donahue sported his handsome equipage on the English and Russian quays, and up and down the Neffsky Perspective for an hour or two, and then returned to the hotel.

"I am very sorry," said O'Donahue, after he had narrated to McShane all that had taken place, "that I permitted you to put yourself down on the passport as valet in the foolish way you have. You would have enjoyed yourself as much as I probably shall, and have been in your proper position in society."

"Then I'm not sorry at all, O'Donahue, and I'll tell you why. I should have enjoyed myself, I do not doubt—but I should have enjoyed myself too much; and, after dining with ambassadors, and princes, and counts, and all that thing—should I ever have gone back comfortable and contented to Mrs McShane, and the cook's shop? No, no—I'm not exactly reconciled, as it is; and if I were to be drinking champagne, and 'ating French kickshaws with the Russian nobility for three or four months, dancing perhaps with princesses, and whispering in the ears of duchesses, wouldn't my nose turn up with contempt at the beefsteak pie, and poor Mrs McShane, with all her kind smiles, look twice as corpulent as ever? No, no, I'm better here, and I'm a wise man, although I say it myself."

"Well, perhaps you are, McShane; but still I do not like that I should be spending your money in this way without your having your share of it at least."

"My share of it—now, O'Donahue, suppose I had come over here on my own account, where should I have been? I could not have mustered up the amiable impudence you did, to persuade the commander-in-chief to give me letters to the ambassador: nor could I have got up such a turn-out, nor have fitted the turn-out so well as you do. I should have been as stupid as an owl, just doing what I have done the whole of the blessed morning for want of your company—looking after one of the floating bridges across the river, and spitting into the stream, just to add my mite to the Baltic Sea."

"I'm sorry you were not better amused."

"I was amused; for I was thinking of the good-humoured face of Mrs McShane, which was much better than being in high company, and forgetting her entirely. Let me alone for amusing myself after my own fashion, O'Donahue, and that's all I wish. I suppose you have heard nothing in your travels about your Powlish princess?"

"Of course not; it will require some tact to bring in her name —I must do it as if by mere accident."

"Shall I ask the courier if she is an acquaintance of his?"

"An acquaintance, McShane?"

"I don't mean on visiting terms; but if he knows anything about the family, or where they live?"

"No, McShane, I think you had better not; we do not know much of him at present. I shall dine at the ambassador's tomorrow, and there will be a large party."

During the day invitations for evening parties were brought in from the Prince Gallitzin and Princess Woronzoff.

"The plot thickens fast, as the saying is," observed McShane; "you'll be certain to meet your fair lady at some of these places."

"That is what I trust to do," replied O'Donahue; "if not, as soon as I'm intimate, I shall make inquiries about her; but we must first see how the land lies."

O'Donahue dined at the ambassador's, and went to the other parties, but did not meet with the object of his search. Being a good musician, he was much in request in so musical a society as that of Saint Petersburg. The emperor was still at his country palace, and O'Donahue had been more than a fortnight at the capital without there being an opportunity for the ambassador to present him at court.

Dimitri, the person whom O'Donahue engaged as courier, was a very clever, intelligent fellow; and as he found that O'Donahue had all the liberality of an Irishman, and was in every respect a most indulgent master, he soon had his interest at heart. Perhaps the more peculiar intimacy between O'Donahue and McShane, as a valet, assisted Dimitri in forming a good opinion of the former, as the hauteur and distance generally preserved by the English towards their domestics are very displeasing to the Continental servants, who, if permitted to be familiar, will not only serve you more faithfully, but be satisfied with more moderate wages. Dimitri spoke English and French pretty well, German and Russian of course perfectly. He was a Russian by

birth, had been brought up at the Foundling Hospital, at Moscow, and therefore was not a serf. He soon became intimate with McShane: and as soon as the latter discovered that there was no intention on the part of Dimitri to be dishonest, he was satisfied, and treated him with cordiality.

"Tell your master this," said Dimitri, "never to give his opinion on political matters before any one while in Petersburg, or he will be reported to the government, and will be looked upon with suspicion. All the servants and couriers here, indeed every third person you meet, is an agent of police."

"Then it's not at all unlikely that you are one yourself," replied McShane.

"I am so," replied Dimitri, coolly, "and all the better for your master. I shall be ordered to make my report in a few days, and I shall not fail to do so."

"And what will they ask you?" said McShane.

"They will ask me first who and what your master is? Whether I have discovered from you, if he is of family and importance in his own country? whether he has expressed any political opinions? and whether I have discovered the real business which brought him here?"

"And what will you reply to all this?" answered McShane.

"Why, I hardly know. I wish I knew what he wishes me to say, for he is a gentleman whom I am very fond of, and that's the truth; perhaps you can tell me?"

"Why, yes, I know a good deal about him, that's certain. As

for his family, there's not a better in Ireland or England, for he's royal if he had his right."

"What!" exclaimed Dimitri.

"As sure as I'm sitting in this old arm-chair, didn't he bring letters from the brother of the present king? does that go for nothing in this country of yours? or do you value men by the length of their beards?"

"Men are valued here not by their titles, but by their rank as officers. A general is a greater man than a prince," replied Dimitri.

"With all my heart, for then I'm somebody," replied McShane.

"You?" replied the courier.

"I mean my master," returned McShane, correcting himself; "for he's an officer, and a good one, too."

"Yes, that may be; but you said yourself," replied the courier, laughing. "My good friend, a valet to any one in Petersburg is no better than one of the mujiks who work in the streets. Well, I know that our master is an officer, and of high rank; as for his political opinions, I have never heard him express any, except his admiration of the city, and of course of the emperor."

"Most decidedly; and of the empress also," replied McShane.

"That is not at all necessary," continued Dimitri, laughing. "In fact, he has no business to admire the empress."

"But he admires the government and the laws," said McShane; "and you may add, my good fellow—the army and the navy—by the powers, he's all admiration, all over!—you may take my

word for it."

"Well, I will do so; but then there is one other question to reply to, which is, why did he come here? what is his business?"

"To look about him, to be sure; to spend his money like a gentleman; to give his letters of introduction; and to amuse himself," replied McShane. "But this is dry talking, so, Dimitri, order a bottle of champagne, and then we'll wet our whistle before we go on."

"Champagne! will your master stand that?" inquired Dimitri.

"Stand it? to be sure, and he'd be very angry if he thought I did not make myself comfortable. Tell them to put it down in the bill for me; if they doubt the propriety, let them ask my master."

Dimitri went and ordered the champagne. As soon as they had a glass, Dimitri observed, "Your master is a fine liberal fellow, and I would serve him to the last day of my life; but you see that the reasons you give for your master being here are the same as are given by everybody else, whether they come as spies or secret emissaries, or to foment insurrection; that answer, therefore, is considered as no answer at all by the police (although very often a true one), and they will try to find out whether it is so or not."

"What other cause can a gentleman like him have for coming here? He is not going to dirty his hands with speculation, information, or any other botheration," replied McShane, tossing off his glass.

"I don't say so; but his having letters from the king's brother will be considered suspicious."

"The devil it will. Now in our country that would only create a suspicion that he was a real gentleman—that's all."

"You don't understand this country," replied Dimitri.

"No, it beats my comprehension entirely, and that's a fact; so fill up your glass. I hope it's not treason; but if it is, I can't help saying it. My good friend Dimitri—"

"Stop," said Dimitri, rising and shutting the door, "now, what is it?"

"Why, just this; I haven't seen one good-looking woman since I've been in this good-looking town of yours; now, that's the truth."

"There's more truth than treason in that," replied the courier; "but still there are some beautiful women among the higher classes."

"It's to be hoped so; for they've left no beauty for the lower, at all events."

"We have very beautiful women in Poland," said the courier.

"Why don't you bring a few here, then?"

"There are a great many Polish ladies in Petersburg at this moment."

"Then go down and order another bottle," said McShane, "and we'll drink their healths."

The second bottle was finished, and McShane, who had been drinking before, became less cautious.

"You said," observed he, "that you have many Polish ladies in Petersburg; did you ever hear of a Princess Czartowinky?—

I think that's the name."

"Czartorinski, you mean," replied Dimitri; "to be sure I did; I served in the family some years ago, when the old prince was alive. But where did you see her?"

"In England, to be sure."

"Well, that's probable, for she has just returned from travelling with her uncle."

"Is she now in Petersburg, my good fellow?"

"I believe she is—but why do wish to know?"

"Merely asked—that's all."

"Now, Macshanovich,"—for such was the familiar way in which Dimitri addressed his supposed brother-servant—"I suspect this Princess Czartorinski is some way connected with your master's coming here. Tell me the truth—is such the case? I'm sure it is."

"Then you know more than I do," replied McShane, correcting himself, "for I'm not exactly in my master's secrets; all that I do know is, that my master met her in England, and I thought her very handsome."

"And so did he?"

"That's as may be; between ourselves, I've an idea he was a little smitten in that quarter; but that's only my own opinion, nothing more."

"Has he ever spoken about her since you were here?" said Dimitri.

"Just once, as I handed his waistcoat to him; he said—'I

wonder if all the ladies are as handsome as that Polish princess that we met in Cumberland?'"

"If I thought he wished it, or cared for her, I would make inquiry, and soon find out all about her; but otherwise, it's no use taking the trouble," replied the courier.

"Well, then, will you give me your hand, and promise to serve faithfully, if I tell you all I know about the matter?"

"By the blessed Saint Nicholas, I do!" replied Dimitri; "you may trust me."

"Well, then, it's my opinion that my master's over head and ears in love with her, and has come here for no other purpose."

"Well, I'm glad you told me that; it will satisfy the police."

"The police; why murder and Irish! you're not going to inform the police, you villain?"

"Not with whom he is in love, most certainly, but that he has come here on that account; it will satisfy them, for they have no fear of a man that's in love, and he will not be watched. Depend upon it, I cannot do a better thing to serve our master."

"Well, then, perhaps you are right. I don't like this champagne —get a bottle of Burgundy, Dimitri. Don't look so hard—it's all right. The captain dines out every day, and has ordered me to drink for the honour of the house."

"He's a capital master," replied Dimitri, who had begun to feel the effects of the former bottles.

As soon as the third bottle was tapped, McShane continued—

"Now, Dimitri, I've given my opinion, and I can tell you, if my

master has, as I suspect, come here about this young lady, and succeeds in obtaining her, it will be a blessed thing for you and me; for he's as generous as the day, and has plenty of money. Do you know who she is?"

"To be sure I do; she is an only daughter of the late Prince Czartorinski, and now a sort of ward under the protection of the Emperor. She inherits all the estates, except one which was left to found an hospital at Warsaw, and is a rich heiress. It is supposed the emperor will bestow her upon one of his generals. She is at the palace, and a maid of honour to the empress."

"Whew!" whistled McShane; "won't there be a difficulty."

"I should think so," replied the courier, gravely.

"He must run away with her," said McShane, after a pause.

"How will he get to see her?"

"He will not see her, so as to speak with her, in the palace; that is not the custom here; but he might meet her elsewhere."

"To be sure, at a party or a ball," said McShane.

"No, that would not do; ladies and gentlemen keep very apart here in general company. He might say a word or two when dancing, but that is all."

"But how is he to meet her, when, in this cursed place of yours, if men and women keep at arm's length?"

"That must depend upon her. Tell me, does she love him?"

"Well, now, that's a home question: she never told him she did, and she never told me, that's certain; but still I've an idea that she does."

“Then all I can say, Macshanovich, is, that your master had better be very careful what he is about. Of course, he knows not that you have told me anything; but as soon as he thinks proper to trust me, I then will do my utmost in his service.”

“You speak like a very rational, sensible, intelligent courier,” replied McShane, “and so now let us finish the bottle. Here’s good luck to Captain O’Donahue, alive or dead: and now—please the fleas—I’ll be asleep in less than ten minutes.”

Chapter Fourteen

Going to Court, and Courting

When McShane awoke the next morning he tried to recall what had passed between him and Dimitri, and did not feel quite convinced that he had not trusted him too much. "I think," said he, "it was all upon an *if*. Yes, sure; *if* O'Donahue was in love, and *if* she was. Yes, I'm sure that it was all upon *ifs*. However, I must go and tell O'Donahue what has taken place."

McShane did so; and O'Donahue, after a little thought, replied, "Well, I don't know: perhaps it's all for the best; for you see I must have trusted somebody, and the difficulty would have been to know whom to trust, for everybody belongs to the police here, I believe: I think, myself, the fellow is honest; at all events, I can make it worth his while to be so."

"He would not have told me he belonged to the police if he wished to trap us," replied McShane.

"That's very true, and on the whole I think we could not do better. But we are going on too fast; who knows whether she meant anything by what she said to me when we parted; or, if she did then, whether she may not have altered her mind since?"

"Such things have been—that's a fact, O'Donahue."

"And will be, as long as the world lasts. However, to-morrow I am to be presented—perhaps I may see her. I'm glad that I know that I may chance to meet her, as I shall now be on my guard."

"And what shall I say to Dimitri?"

"Say that you mentioned her name, and where she was, and that I had only replied, that I should like to see her again."

"Exactly; that will leave it an open question, as the saying is," replied McShane.

The next day O'Donahue, in his uniform, drove to the ambassador's hotel, to accompany him to the Annishkoff palace, where he was to be presented to the emperor. O'Donahue was most graciously received, the emperor walking up to him, as he stood in the circle, and inquiring after the health of his Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, what service he had been employed upon, etcetera. He then told O'Donahue that the Empress would be most glad to make his acquaintance, and hoped that he would make a long stay at Saint Petersburg.

It was with a quickened pulse that O'Donahue followed the ambassador into the empress's apartments. He had not waited there more than five minutes, in conversation with the ambassador when the doors opened, and the empress, attended by her chamberlain, and followed by her ladies in waiting and maids of honour, entered the room. O'Donahue had made up his mind not to take his eyes off the empress until the presentation was over. As soon as he had kissed hands, and answered the few questions which were graciously put to him, he retired to make

room for others, and then, for the first time, did he venture to cast his eyes on the group of ladies attending the empress. The first that met his view were unknown, but, behind all the rest, he at length perceived the Princess Czartorinski, talking and laughing with another lady. After a short time she turned round, and their eyes met. The princess recognised him with a start, and then turned away and put her hand up to her breast, as if the shock had taken away her breath. Once more she turned her face to O'Donahue, and this time he was fully satisfied by her looks that he was welcome. Ten minutes after, the ambassador summoned O'Donahue, and they quitted the palace.

"I have seen her, McShane," said O'Donahue; "she is more beautiful, and I am more in love than ever. And now, what am I to do?"

"That's just the difficulty," replied McShane. "Shall I talk with Dimitri, or shall I hold my tongue, or shall I think about it while you go to dinner at the ambassador's?"

"I cannot dine out to-day, McShane. I will write an excuse."

"Well, now, I do believe you're in for it in good earnest. My love never spoiled my appetite; on the contrary, it was my appetite that made me fall in love."

"I wish she had not been a princess," said O'Donahue, throwing himself on the sofa.

"That's nothing at all here," replied McShane. "A *princess* is to be had. Now, if she had been a *general* it would have been all up with you. Military rank is everything here, as Dimitri says."

"She's an angel," replied O'Donahue, with a sigh.

"That's rank in heaven, but goes for nothing in Petersburg," replied McShane. "Dimitri tells me they've *civil* generals here, which I conceive are improvements on our staff, for devil a civil general I've had the pleasure of serving under."

"What shall I do," said O'Donahue, getting up and preparing to write his note to the ambassador.

"Eat your dinner, drink a bottle of champagne, and then I'll come and talk it over with you, that's all you can do at present. Give me the note, and I'll send Dimitri off with it at once, and order up your dinner."

McShane's advice not being very bad, it was followed. O'Donahue had finished his dinner, and was sitting by the fire with McShane, when there was a knock at the door. McShane was summoned, and soon returned, saying, "There's a little fellow that wants to speak with you, and won't give his message. He's a queer little body, and not so bad-looking either, with a bolster on the top of his head, and himself not higher than a pillow; a pigeon could sit upon his shoulder and peck up peas out of his shoes; he struts like a grenadier, and, by the powers! a grenadier's cap would serve as an extinguisher for him. Shall I show him in?"

"Certainly," replied O'Donahue.

The reader may not be aware that there is no part of the globe where there are so many dwarfs as at Saint Petersburg; there is scarcely an hotel belonging to a noble family without one or two, if not more; they are very kindly treated, and are, both in

appearance and temper, very superior to the dwarfs occasionally met with elsewhere. One of this diminutive race now entered the room, dressed in a Turkish costume; he was remarkably well made and handsome in person; he spoke sufficient French to inquire if he addressed himself to Captain O'Donahue; and on being replied to in the affirmative, he gave him a small billet, and then seated himself on the sofa with all the freedom of a petted menial. O'Donahue tore open the note; it was very short:—

"As I know you cannot communicate with me, I write to say that I was delighted at your having kept your promise. You shall hear from me again as soon as I know where I can meet you; in the meantime, be cautious. The bearer is to be trusted; he belongs to me.

"C."

O'Donahue pressed the paper to his lips, and then sat down to reply. We shall not trouble the reader with what he said; it is quite sufficient that the lady was content with the communication, and also at the report from her little messenger of the Captain's behaviour when he had read her billet.

Two or three days afterwards, O'Donahue received a note from a German widow lady, a Countess Erhausen, particularly requesting he would call upon her in the afternoon, at three o'clock. As he had not as yet had the pleasure of being introduced to the countess, although he had often heard her spoken of in the first society, O'Donahue did not fail in his appointment, as he considered that it was possible that the Princess Czartorinski

might be connected with it; nor was he deceived, for on his entering the saloon, he found the princess sitting on the sofa with Madame Erhausen, a young and pretty woman, not more than twenty-five years of age. The princess rose, and greeted Captain O'Donahue, and then introduced the countess as her first cousin. A few minutes after his introduction, the countess retired, leaving them alone. O'Donahue did not lose this opportunity of pouring out the real feelings of his heart.

"You have come a long way to see me, Captain O'Donahue, and I ought to be grateful," replied the princess: "indeed, I have much pleasure in renewing our acquaintance."

O'Donahue, however, did not appear satisfied with this mere admission: he became eloquent in his own cause, pointed out the cruelty of having brought him over to see her again if he was not to be rewarded, and after about an hour's pleading he was sitting on the sofa by her side, with her fair hand in his, and his arm round her slender waist. They parted, but through the instrumentality of the little dwarf, they often met again at the same rendezvous. Occasionally they met in society, but before others they were obliged to appear constrained and formal; there was little pleasure in such meetings, and when O'Donahue could not see the princess his chief pleasure was to call upon Madame Erhausen and talk about her.

"You are aware, Captain O'Donahue," said the countess one day, "that there will be a great difficulty to overcome in this affair. The princess is a sort of ward of the emperor's, and it is

said that he has already, in his own mind, disposed of her hand."

"I am aware of that," replied O'Donahue; "and I know no other means than running away with her."

"That would never do," replied the countess; "you could not leave Petersburg without passports; nor could she leave the palace for more than an hour or two without being missed. You would soon be discovered, and then you would lose her for ever."

"Then what can I do, my dear madame? Shall I throw myself upon the indulgence of the emperor?"

"No, that would not answer either; she is too rich a prize to be permitted to go into foreign hands. I'll tell you what you must first do."

"I'm all attention."

"You must make love to me," replied the countess. "Nay, understand me. I mean that you must *appear* to make love to me, and the report of our marriage must be spread. The emperor will not interfere in such a case; you must do so to avoid suspicion. You have been here very often, and your equipage has been constantly seen at the door. If it is supposed you do not come on my account, it will be inquired why you do come; and there is no keeping a secret at Petersburg. After it is supposed that it is a settled affair between us, we then may consider what next ought to be done. My regard for my cousin alone induces me to consent to this; indeed, it is the only way she could avoid future misery."

"But is the emperor so despotic on these points?"

"An emperor is not to be trifled with; a ward of the emperor is

considered sacred—at least, so far, that if a Russian were to wed one without permission, he probably would be sent to Siberia. With an Englishman it is different, perhaps; and, once married, you would be safe, as you could claim the protection of your ambassador. The great point is, to let it be supposed that you are about to marry some one else; and then, suspicion not being awakened, you may gain your wish."

"But tell me, madame,—that I may be safe from the emperor's displeasure is true—but would the princess, after he discovered it? Could he not take her away from me, and send her to Siberia for disobedience?"

"I hope, by the means I propose, to get you both clear of the emperor—at least, till his displeasure is softened down. Me he cannot hurt; he can only order me out of his dominions. As for the princess, I should think that, if once married to you, she would be safe, for you could claim the protection of the ambassador for her, as your wife, as well as for yourself. Do you comprehend me now?"

"I do, madame; and may blessings follow you for your kindness. I shall in future act but by your directions?"

"That is exactly what I wished you to say; and so now, Captain O'Donahue, farewell."

Chapter Fifteen

A Runaway and a Hard Pursuit

"Well, now," said McShane, after he had been informed by O'Donahue of what had passed between him and the countess, —"this is all very pretty, and looks very well; but tell me, are we to trust that fellow Dimitri? Can we do without him? I should say not when it comes to the finale; and is it not dangerous to keep him out of our confidence, being such a sharp, keen-witted fellow? Nay, more, as he has stated his wish to serve you in any way, it is only treating him fairly. He knows the little dwarf who has been here so often; indeed, they were fellow-servants in the Czartorinski family, for he told me so. I would trust him."

"I think so, too; but we must not tell him all."

"No, that we certainly need not, for he will find it out without telling."

"Well, McShane, do as you please; but on second thoughts, I will speak to the countess to-morrow."

O'Donahue did so, the countess called upon the princess at the palace, and the next morning O'Donahue received a note stating that Dimitri was to be trusted. O'Donahue then sent for the courier, and told him that he was about to put confidence in

him on a promise of his fidelity.

"I understand you, sir, and all you intend to do; there is no occasion to say anything more to me, until you want my assistance. I will not, in the meantime, neglect your interest, for I hope to remain with you, and that is the only reward I ask for any services I may perform. I have only one remark to make now, which is, that it will be necessary, a few days before you leave Petersburg, to let me know, that I may advertise it."

"Advertise it!"

"Yes, sir, you must advertise your departure, that you may not run away in debt. Such is the custom; and without three notices being put in the *Gazette*, the police will not give you your passport."

"I am glad that you mentioned it. Of course you are aware that I am paying attention to the Countess Erhausen, and shall leave Petersburg with her, I trust, as my wife?"

"I understand sir, and shall take care that your intimacy there shall be known to everybody."

So saying, Dimitri left the room.

The winter now set in with unusual severity. The river was one mass of ice, the floating bridges had been removed, the Montagnes-Russes became the amusement of the day, and the sledges were galloping about in every direction. For more than a month O'Donahue continued his pretended addresses to the fair cousin of the princess, and during that time he did not once see the real object of his attachment: indeed, the dwarf never made

his appearance, and all communication, except an occasional note from her to the countess, was, from prudence, given up. The widow was rich, and had often been pressed to renew her bonds, but had preferred her liberty. O'Donahue, therefore, was looked upon as a fortunate man, and congratulated upon his success. Nor did the widow deny the projected union, except in a manner so as to induce people to believe in the certainty of its being arranged. O'Donahue's equipage was always at her door, and it was expected that the marriage would immediately take place, when O'Donahue attended a levee given by the emperor on the Feast of Saint Nicholas. The emperor, who had been very civil to O'Donahue, as he walked past him, said, "Well, Captain O'Donahue, so I understand that you intend to run away with one of our fairest and prettiest ladies—one of the greatest ornaments of my court?"

"I trust that I have your Majesty's permission so to do," replied O'Donahue, bowing low.

"Oh, certainly you have; and, moreover, our best wishes for your happiness."

"I humbly thank your Majesty," replied O'Donahue; "still I trust your Majesty does not think that I wish to transplant her to my own country altogether, and that I shall be permitted to reside, for the major part of the year, in your Majesty's dominions."

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure; and it will be a satisfaction to feel that I shall gain instead of losing by the

intended marriage."

"By the powers! but I will remind him of this, some day or another," thought O'Donahue. "Haven't I his permission to the marriage, and to remain in the country?"

Everything was now ripe for the execution of the plot. The countess gave out that she was going to her country-seat, about ten miles from Saint Petersburg; and it was naturally supposed that she was desirous that the marriage should be private, and that she intended to retire there to have the ceremony performed; and O'Donahue advertised his departure in the *Gazette*.

The Princess Czartorinski produced a letter from the countess, requesting her, as a favour, to obtain leave from the empress to pass two or three days with her in the country; and the empress, as the countess was first-cousin to the princess, did not withhold her consent; on the contrary, when the princess left the palace, she put a case of jewels in her hand, saying, "These are for the bride, with the good wishes and protection of the empress, as long as she remains in this country." One hour afterwards O'Donahue was rewarded for all his long forbearance by clasping his fair one in his arms. A priest had been provided, and was sent forward to the country château, and at ten in the morning all the parties were ready. The princess and her cousin set off in the carriage, followed by O'Donahue, with McShane and his suite. Everything was *en règle*. The passports had been made out for Germany, to which country it was reported the countess would proceed a few days after the marriage, and the

princess was to return to the palace. As soon as they arrived at the château the ceremony was performed, and O'Donahue obtained his prize; and to guard against any mishap, it was decided that they should leave the next morning, on their way to the frontier. Dimitri had been of the greatest use, had prepared against every difficulty, and had fully proved his fidelity. The parting between the countess and her cousin was tender. "How much do I owe, dear friend!" said the princess. "What risk do you incur for me! How will you brave the anger of the emperor?"

"I care little for his anger. I am a woman, and not a subject of his; but, before you go, you must both write a letter—your husband to the emperor, reminding him of his having given his consent to the marriage, and his wish that he should remain in his dominions; and let him add his sincere wish, if permitted, to be employed in his Majesty's service. You, my dear cousin, must write to the empress, reminding her of her promise of protection, and soliciting her good offices with the emperor. I shall play my own game; but, depend upon it, it will all end in a laugh."

O'Donahue and his wife both wrote their letters, and O'Donahue also wrote one to the English ambassador, informing him of what had taken place, and requesting his kind offices. As soon as they were finished, the countess bade them farewell, saying, "I shall not send these letters until you are well out of reach, depend upon it;" and, with many thanks for her kindness, O'Donahue and his bride bade her adieu, and set off on their long journey.

The carriage procured for their journey was what is called a German *bâtarde*, which is very similar to an English chariot with coach-box, fixed upon a sleigh. Inside were O'Donahue and his young bride, McShane preferring to ride outside on the box with Joey, that he might not be in the way, as a third person invariably is, with a newly married couple. The snow was many feet deep on the ground; but the air was dry, and the sun shone bright. The bride was handed in, enveloped in a rich mantle of sable; O'Donahue followed, equally protected against the cold; while McShane and Joey fixed themselves on the box, so covered up in robes of wolf-skins, and wrappers of bear-skins for their feet, that you could see but the tips of their noses. On the front of the sleigh, below the box of the carriage, were seated the driver and the courier; four fiery young horses were pawing with impatience; the signal was given, and off they went at the rate of sixteen miles an hour.

"Where's the guns, Joey, and the pistols, and the ammunition?" inquired McShane; "we're going through a wild sort of country, I expect."

"I have put them in myself, and I can lay my hands on them immediately, sir," replied Joey; "the guns are behind us, and your pistols and the ammunition are at my feet; the captain's are in the carriage."

"That's all right, then; I like to know where to lay my hands upon my tools. Just have the goodness to look at my nose now and then, Joey; and if you see a white spot on the tip of it, you'll

be pleased to tell me, and I'll do the same for you. Mrs McShane would be anything but pleased if I came home with only half a handle to my face."

The journey was continued at the same rapid pace until the close of the day, when they arrived at the post-house; there they stopped, McShane and Joey, with the assistance of the courier, preparing their supper from the stores which they brought with them. After supper they retired, O'Donahue and his wife sleeping in the carriage, which was arranged so as to form a bed if required; while McShane and Joey made it out how they could upon the cloaks and what little straw they could procure, on the floor of the post-house, where, as McShane said the next morning, they "had more bed-fellows than were agreeable, although he contrived to get a few hours' sleep in spite of the jumping vagabonds." When they rose the next morning, they found that the snow had just begun to fall fast. As soon as they had breakfasted they set out, nevertheless, and proceeded at the same pace. McShane telling Joey, who was, as well as himself, almost embedded in it before the day was half over, that it was "better than rain, at all events;" to be sure that was cold comfort, but any comfort is better than none. O'Donahue's request for McShane to come inside was disregarded; he was as tough as little Joey, at all events, and it would be a pity to interrupt the conversation. About four o'clock they had changed their horses at a small village, and were about three miles on their last stage, for that day's journey, when they passed through a pine-forest.

"There's a nice place for an ambuscade, Joey, if there were any robbers about here," observed McShane. "Murder and Irish! what's those chaps running among the trees so fast, and keeping pace with us? I say, Dimitri," continued McShane, pointing to them, "what are those?"

The courier looked in the direction pointed out, and as soon as he had done so, spoke to the driver, who, casting his eyes hastily in the direction, applied the lash to his horses, and set off with double speed.

"Wolves, sir," replied the courier, who then pulled out his pistols, and commenced loading them.

"Wolves!" said McShane, "and hungry enough, I'll warrant; but they don't hope to make a meal of us, do they? At all events we will give them a little fight for it. Come, Joey, I see that Dimitri don't like it, so we must shake off the snow, and get our ammunition ready."

This was soon done; the guns were unstrapped from the back of the coach-box, the pistols got from beneath their feet, and all were soon ready, loaded and primed.

"It's lucky there's such a mist on the windows of the carriage, that the lady can't see what we're after, or she'd be frightened, perhaps," said Joey.

The rapid pace at which the driver had put his horses had for a time left the wolves in the rear; but now they were seen following the carriage at about a quarter of a mile distant, having quitted the forest and taken to the road.

"Here they come, the devils! one, two, three—there are seven of them. I suppose this is what they call a covey in these parts. Were you ever wolf-hunting before, Joey?"

"I don't call this wolf-hunting," replied Joey; "I think the wolves are hunting us."

"It's all the same, my little poacher—it's a hunt, at all events. They are gaining on us fast; we shall soon come to an explanation."

The courier now climbed up to the coach-box to reconnoitre, and he shook his head, telling them in very plain English that he did not like it; that he had heard that the wolves were out in consequence of the extreme severity of the weather, and that he feared that these seven were only the advance of a whole pack; that they had many versts to go, for the stage was a long one, and it would be dark before they were at the end of it.

"Have you ever been chased by them before?" said Joey.

"Yes," replied the courier, "more than once; it's the horses that they are so anxious to get hold of. Three of our horses are very good, but the fourth is not very well, the driver says, and he is fearful that he will not hold out; however, we must keep them off as long as we can; we must not shoot at them till the last moment."

"Why not?" inquired McShane.

"Because the whole pack would scent the blood at miles, and redouble their efforts to come up with us. There is an empty bottle by you, sir; throw it on the road behind the carriage; that will stop them for a time."

"An empty bottle stop them! well, that's queer: it may stop a man drinking, because he can get no mote out of it. However, as you please, gentlemen; here's to drink my health, bad manners to you," said McShane, throwing the bottle over the carriage.

The courier was right: at the sight of the bottle in the road, the wolves, who are of a most suspicious nature, and think that there is a trap laid for them in everything, stopped short, and gathered round it cautiously; the carriage proceeded, and in a few minutes the animals were nearly out of sight.

"Well, that bothers me entirely," said McShane; "an empty bottle is as good to them as a charged gun."

"But look, sir, they are coming on again," said Joey, "and faster than ever. I suppose they were satisfied that there was nothing in it."

The courier mounted again to the box where Joey and McShane were standing. "I think you had a ball of twine," said he to Joey, "when you were tying down the baskets; where is it?"

"It is here under the cushion," replied Joey, searching for the twine and producing it.

"What shall we find to tie to it?" said the courier; "something not too heavy—a bottle won't do."

"What's it for?" inquired McShane.

"To trail, sir," replied the courier.

"To trail! I think they're fast enough upon our trail already; but if you want to help them, a red herring's the thing."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.