

Trollope Anthony

The Macdermots of Ballycloran



Anthony Trollope

The Macdermots of Ballycloran

«Public Domain»

Trollope A.

The Macdermots of Ballycloran / A. Trollope — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	8
CHAPTER III	10
CHAPTER IV	15
CHAPTER V	21
CHAPTER VI	30
CHAPTER VII	39
CHAPTER VIII	45
CHAPTER IX	53
CHAPTER X	61
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	64

Trollope Anthony

The Macdermots of Ballycloran

CHAPTER I

BALLYCLORAN HOUSE AS FIRST SEEN BY THE AUTHOR

In the autumn, 184 – , business took me into the West of Ireland, and, amongst other places, to the quiet little village of Drumsna, which is in the province of Connaught, County Leitrim, about 72 miles w. n.w. of Dublin, on the mail-coach road to Sligo. I reached the little inn there in the morning by the said mail, my purpose being to leave it late in the evening by the day coach; and as my business was but of short duration, I was left, after an early dinner, to amuse myself. Now, in such a situation, to take a walk is all the brightest man can do, and the dullest always does the same. There is a kind of gratification in seeing what one has never seen before, be it ever so little worth seeing; and the gratification is the greater if the chances be that one will never see it again. Now Drumsna stands on a bend in the Shannon; the street leads down to a bridge, passing over which one finds oneself in the County Roscommon; and the road runs by the well-wooded demesne of Sir G – K – ; moreover there is a beautiful little hill, from which the demesne, river, bridge, and village can all be seen; and what farther *agremens* than these could be wanted to make a pretty walk? But, alas! I knew not of their existence then. One cannot ask the maid at an inn to show one where to find the beauties of nature. So, trusting to myself, I went directly away from river, woods, and all, – along as dusty, ugly, and disagreeable a road as is to be found in any county in Ireland.

After proceeding a mile or so, taking two or three turns to look for improvement, I began to perceive evident signs on the part of the road of retrograding into lane-ism; the county had evidently deserted it, and though made for cars and coaches, its traffic appeared to be now confined to donkeys carrying turf home from the bog, in double kishes on their back. Presently the fragments of a bridge presented themselves, but they too were utterly fallen away from their palmy days, and in their present state afforded but indifferent stepping-stones over a bog stream which ran, or rather crept, across the road. These, however, I luckily traversed, and was rewarded by finding a broken down entrance to a kind of wood on the right hand. In Ireland, particularly in the poorer parts – to rank among which, County Leitrim has a right which will not be disputed – a few trees together are always the recognised sign of a demesne, of a gentleman's seat, or the place where a gentleman's seat has been; and I directly knew that this must be a demesne. But ah! how impoverished, if one might judge from outward appearances. Two brick pillars, from which the outside plaster had peeled off and the coping fallen, gave evidence of former gates; the space was closed up with a loose built wall, but on the outer side of each post was a little well worn footpath, made of soft bog mould. I of course could not resist such temptation, and entered the demesne. The road was nearly covered with that short dry grass which stones seem to throw up, when no longer polished by the wealthier portion of man or brute kind.

About thirty feet from the gap a tall fir had half fallen, and lay across the road, so that a man should stoop to walk under it; it was a perfect barrier to any equipage, however humble, and the roots had nearly refixed themselves in their reversed position, showing that the tree had evidently been in that fallen state for years.

The usual story, thought I, of Connaught gentlemen; an extravagant landlord, reckless tenants, debt, embarrassment, despair, and ruin. Well, I walked up the deserted avenue, and very shortly found myself in front of the house. Oh, what a picture of misery, of useless expenditure, unfinished pretence, and premature decay!

The house was two stories high, with large stone steps up to the front door, with four windows in the lower, and six in the upper story, and an area with kitchens, &c., below. The entire roof was off; one could see the rotting joists and beams, some fallen, some falling, the rest ready to fall, like the skeleton of a felon left to rot on an open gibbet. The stone steps had nearly dropped through into the area, the rails of which had been wrenched up. The knocker was still on the door, – a large modern lion-headed knocker; but half the door was gone; on creeping to the door-sill, I found about six feet of the floor of the hall gone also – stolen for fire wood. But the joists of the flooring were there, and the whitewash of the walls showed that but a few, a very few years back, the house had been inhabited. I leaped across the gulf, at great risk of falling into the cellar, and reached the bottom of the stairs; here my courage failed me; all that was left was so damp and so rotten, so much had been gradually taken away, that I did not dare to go up: the doors on the ground floor would not open; the ceiling above me was all gone, and I could see the threatening timbers of the roof, which seemed only hanging till they had an opportunity of injuring some one by their fall. I crept out of the demi-door again, and down the ruined steps, and walked round the mansion; not only was there not a pane of glass in the whole, but the window frames were all gone; everything that wanted keeping was gone; everything that required care to preserve it had perished. Time had not touched it. Time had evidently not yet had leisure to do his work. He is sure, but slow. Ruin works fast enough unaided, where once he puts his foot. Time would have pulled down the chimneys – Ruin had taken off the slates; Time would have bulged the walls – Ruin brought in the rain, rotted the timbers, and assisted the thieves. Poor old Time will have but little left him at Ballycloran! The gardens had been large; half were now covered by rubbish heaps, and the other half consisted of potato patches; and round the out-houses I saw clustering a lot of those wretched cabins which the poor Irish build against a deserted wall, when they can find one, as jackdaws do their nests in a superannuated chimney. In the front there had been, I presume, a tolerably spacious lawn, with a drive through it, surrounded on all sides, except towards the house, by thick trees. The trees remained, but the lawn, the drive, and the flower patches, which of course once existed there, were now all alike, equally prolific in large brown dock weeds and sorrels. There were two or three narrow footpaths through and across the space, up to the cabins behind the house, but other marks of humanity were there none.

A large ash, apparently cut down years ago, with the branches still on it, was stretched somewhat out of the wood: on this I sat, lighted a cigar, and meditated on this characteristic specimen of Irish life. The sun was setting beautifully behind the trees, and its imperfect light through the foliage gave the unnatural ruin a still stronger appearance of death and decay, and brought into my mind thoughts of the wrong, oppression, misery, and despair, to which some one had been subjected by what I saw before me.

I had not been long seated, when four or five ragged boys and girls came through the wood, driving a lot of geese along one of the paths. When they saw me, they all came up and stood round me, as if wondering what I could be. I could learn nothing from them – the very poor Irish children will never speak to you; but a middle aged man soon followed them. He told me the place was called Ballycloran: "he did not know who it belonged to; a gentleman in Dublin recaved the rints, and a very stiff gentleman he was too; and hard it was upon them to pay two pound tin an acre for the garden there, and that half covered with the ould house and the bricks and rubbish, only on behalf of the bog that was convaynient, and plinty of the timber, tho' that was rotten, and illigant outhouses for the pigs and the geese, and the ould bricks of the wall wor good manure for the praties" (this, in all my farming, I had never dreamt of); "but times was very hard on the poor, the praties being ninepence a stone in Carrick all last summer; God help the poor, the crayturs! for the gintlemin, their raal frinds, that should be, couldn't help thimselves now, let alone others" – and so on, now speaking of his sorrow and poverty, and again descanting on the "illigance" of his abode. I could only learn that a family called the Macdermots had lived there some six or seven years back, that they were an unfortunate people, he had heard tell, but he had not been in the country then, and it was a bloody story, &c. &c.

&c. The evening was drawing on, and the time for my coach to come was fast approaching; so I was obliged to leave Ballycloran, unsatisfied as to its history, and to return to Drumsna.

Here I had no time to make further inquiries, as Mr. Hartley's servants always keep their time; and very shortly the four horses clattered down the hill into the village. I got up behind, for McC – , the guard, was an old friend of mine; and after the usual salutations and strapping of portmanteaus, and shifting down into places, as McC – knows everything, I began to ask him if he knew anything of a place called Ballycloran.

"Deed then, Sir, and I do," said he, "and good reason have I to know; and well I knew those that lived in it, ruined, and black, and desolate, as Ballycloran is now: " and between Drumsna and Boyle, he gave me the heads of the following story. And, reader, if I thought it would ever be your good fortune to hear the history of Ballycloran from the guard of the Boyle coach, I would recommend you to get it from him, and shut my book forthwith.

CHAPTER II

THE MACDERMOT FAMILY

McC – 's story runs thus. About sixty years ago, a something Macdermot, true Milesian, pious Catholic, and descendant of king somebody, died somewhere, having managed to keep a comfortable little portion of his ancestors' royalties to console him for the loss of their sceptre. He having two sons, and disdaining to make anything but estated gentlemen of them, made over in some fictitious manner (for in those righteous days a Roman Catholic could make no legal will) to his eldest, the estate on which he lived, and to the youngest, that of Ballycloran – about six hundred as bad acres as a gentleman might wish to call his own. But Thaddeus, otherwise Thady Macdermot, being an estated gentleman, must have a gentleman's residence on his estate, and the house of Ballycloran was accordingly built. Had Thady Macdermot had ready money, it might have been well built; but though an estated gentleman, he had none. He had debts even when his father died; and though he planned, ordered, and agreed for a house, such as he thought the descendant of a Connaught Prince might inhabit without disgrace, it was ill built, half finished, and paid for by long bills. This, however, is so customary in poor Ireland that it but little harassed Thady. He had a fine, showy house, with stables, &c., gardens, an avenue, and a walk round his demesne; and his neighbours had no more. It was little he cared for comfort, but he would not be the first of the Macdermots that would not be respectable. When his house was finished, Thady went into County Galway, and got himself a wife with two thousand pounds fortune, for which he had to go to law with his brother-in-law. The lawsuit, the continual necessity of renewing the bills with which the builder in Carrick on Shannon every quarter attacked him, the fruitless endeavour to make his tenants pay thirty shillings an acre for half-reclaimed bog, and a somewhat strongly developed aptitude for potheen, sent poor Thady to another world rather prematurely, and his son and heir, Lawrence, came to the throne at the tender age of twelve. The Galway brother-in-law compromised the lawsuit; the builder took a mortgage on the property from the boy's guardian; the mother gave new leases to the tenants; Larry went to school at Longford; and Mrs. Mac kept up the glory of Ballycloran.

At the age of twenty, Lawrence, or Larry, married a Milesian damsel, portionless, but of true descent. The builder from Carrick had made overtures about a daughter he had at home, and offered poor Larry his own house, as her fortune. But the blood of the Macdermots could not mix with the lime and water that flowed in a builder's veins; he therefore made an enemy where he most wanted a friend, and brought his wife home to live with his mother. In order that we may quickly rid ourselves of encumbrances, it may be as well to say that during the next twenty-five years his mother and wife died; he had christened his only son Thaddeus, after his grandfather, and his only daughter had been christened Euphemia, after her grandmother. He had never got over that deadly builder, with his horrid percentage coming out of the precarious rents; twice, indeed, had writs been out against him for his arrears, and once he had received notice from Mr. Hyacinth Keegan, the oily attorney of Carrick, that Mr. Flannelly meant to foreclose. Rents were greatly in arrear, his credit was very bad among the dealers in Mohill, with Carrick he had no other dealings than those to which necessity compelled him with Mr. Flannelly the builder, and Larry Macdermot was anything but an easy man.

Thady was at this time about twenty-four. As had been the case with his father, he had been educated at a country school; he could read and write, but could do little more: he was brought up to no profession or business; he acted as his father's agent over the property – by which I mean to signify that he occupied himself in harrowing the tenantry for money which they had no means of paying; he was occasionally head driver and ejector; and he considered, as Irish landlords are apt to do, that he had an absolute right over the tenants, as feudal vassals. Still, they respected and to a certain extent loved him; "for why? wasn't he the mather's son, and wouldn't he be the mather hisself?" And

he had a regard, perhaps an affection, for the poor creatures; against any one else he would defend them; and would they but coin their bones into pounds, shillings, and pence, he would have been as tender to them as a man so nurtured could be. With all his faults, Thady was perhaps a better man than his father; he was not so indomitably idle; had he been brought up to anything, he would have done it; he was more energetic, and felt the degradation of his position; he felt that his family was sinking lower and lower daily; but as he knew not what to do, he only became more gloomy and more tyrannical. Beyond this, he had acquired a strong taste for tobacco, which he incessantly smoked out of a dhudheen; and was content to pass his dull life without excitement or pleasure.

Euphemia, or Feemy, was about twenty; she was a tall, dark girl, with that bold, upright, well-poised figure, which is so peculiarly Irish. She walked as if all the blood of the old Irish Princes was in her veins: her step, at any rate, was princely. Feemy, also, had large, bright brown eyes, and long, soft, shining dark hair, which was divided behind, and fell over her shoulders, or was tied with ribands; and she had a well-formed nose, as all coming of old families have; and a bright olive complexion, only the olive was a little too brown, the skin a little too coarse; and then Feemy's mouth was, oh! half an inch too long; but her teeth were white and good, and her chin was well turned and short, with a dimple on it large enough for any finger Venus might put there. In all, Feemy was a fine girl in the eyes of a man not too much accustomed to refinement. Her hands were too large and too red, but if Feemy got gloves sufficient to go to mass with, it was all she could do in that way; and though Feemy had as fine a leg as ever bore a pretty girl, she was never well shod, – her shoes were seldom clean, often slipshod, usually in holes; and her stockings – but no! I will not further violate the mysteries of Feemy's wardrobe. But if the beautiful girls of this poor country knew but half the charms which neatness has, they would not so often appear as poor Feemy too usually appeared.

Like her brother, she was ardent and energetic, if she had aught to be ardent about; she was addicted to novels, when she could get them from the dirty little circulating library at Mohill; she was passionately fond of dancing, which was her chief accomplishment; she played on an old spinnet which had belonged to her mother; and controlled the motions and actions of the two barefooted damsels who officiated as domestics at Ballycloran.

Such was the family at Ballycloran in the summer of 183 – , and though not perfect, I hope they have charms enough to make a further acquaintance not unacceptable.

CHAPTER III

THE TENANTRY OF BALLYCLORAN

"Thady," said old Macdermot, as he sat eating stirabout and thick milk, over a great turf fire, one morning about the beginning of October, "Thady, will you be getting the money out of them born divils this turn, and they owing it, some two, some three years this November, bad cess to them for tenants? Thady, I say," shouted, or rather screamed, the old man, as his son continued silently eating his breakfast, "Thady, I say; have they the money, at all at all, any of them; or is it stubborn they are? There's Flannelly and Keegan with their d – d papers and bills and costs; will you be making out the £142 7s. 6d. before Christmas for the hell-hounds; or it's them'll be masters in Ballycloran? Then let the boys see the landlord they'll have over them, that time!"

"Well, Larry," said the son (unless in a passion, he always called his father by his baptismal name, or rather by its abbreviation), "what's the use going on that way before the girls there, and Feemy too." Feemy, however, was reading the "Mysterious Assassin," and paying little heed to her father's lamentations. "When we're done, and the things is out, we'll have a look at the rent-book, and send for the boys to come in; and if they haven't it, why, Pat Brady must go round agin, and see what he can do with the potatoes and oats, and the pigs; but the times, Larry, is very hard on them; too hard entirely, so it is, poor things –"

"Poor things!" said the father, "and aint I a poor thing? and won't you and Feemy be poor things? Hard times, too! who is the times hardest on? See that sneaking ould robber, Flannelly, that cozened my father – good father for him – with such a house as this, that's falling this day over his son's head, and it not hardly fifty years built, bad luck to it for a house! See that ould robber, Flannelly, who has been living and thriving on it for all them years, and a stone or stick not as good as paid for yet; and he getting two hundred a year off the land from the crayturs of tenants."

True enough it was, that Mr. Joe Flannelly, of Carrick-on-Shannon, whatever might have been the original charge of building the Ballycloran mansion, now claimed £200 a year from that estate, to which his ingenious friend and legal adviser, Mr. Hyacinth Keegan usually managed to add certain mysterious costs and ceremonious expenses, which made each half year's rent of Larry Macdermot's own house about £140, before the poor man had managed to scrape it together. To add to this annoyance, Mr. Macdermot had continually before his eyes the time, which he could not but foresee was not distant, when this hated Flannelly would come down on the property itself, insist on being paid his principal, and probably not only sell, but buy, Ballycloran itself. And whither, then, would the Macdermots betake themselves?

Often and often did Larry, in his misfortunes, regret the slighted offers of Sally Flannelly's charms and cash. Oh, had he but then condescended to have married the builder's daughter, he would not now have been the builder's slave. But Sally Flannelly was now Sally Keegan, the wife of Hyacinth Keegan, Esq., Attorney; who, if he had not the same advantages as Larry in birth and blood, had compensation for his inferiority in cash and comforts. When the poor man thought of these things – and he did little else now but think of them – bitterly, though generally in silence, he cursed him whom he looked upon as his oppressor and incubus. It never occurred to him that if Mr. Flannelly built the house he lived in, he should be paid for it. He never reflected that he had lived to the extent of, and above his precarious income, as if his house had been paid for; that, instead of passing his existence in hating the Carrick tradesman, he should have used his industry in finding the means to pay him. He sometimes blamed his father, having an indefinite feeling that he ought not to have permitted Flannelly to have anything to do with Ballycloran, after building it; but himself he never blamed; people never do; it is so much easier to blame others, – and so much more comfortable. Mr. Macdermot thus regarded his creditor as a vulgar, low-born blood-sucker, who, having by chicanery

obtained an unwarrantable hold over him, was determined, if possible, to crush him. The builder, on the other hand, who had spent a long life of constant industry, but doubtful honesty, in scraping up a decent fortune, looked on his debtor as one who gave himself airs to which his poverty did not entitle him; and was determined to make him feel that though he could not be the father, he could be the master of a "rale gintleman."

After the short conversation between father and son the breakfast passed over in silence. The father finished his stirabout, and turned round to the blazing turf, to find consolation there. Feemy descended into the kitchen, to scold the girls, give out the dinner, – if there was any to give out; and to do those offices, whatever they be, in performing which all Irish ladies, bred, born, and living in moderate country-houses, pass the first two hours after breakfast in the kitchen. Thady took his rent-book and went into an outhouse, which he complimented by the name of his office, at the door of which he was joined by Pat Brady. Now Pat was an appendage, unfortunately very necessary in Ireland to such an estate as Macdermot's; and his business was not only to assist in collecting the rents, by taking possession of the little crops, and driving the cows, or the pig; but he was, moreover, expected to know who could, and who could not, make out the money; to have obtained, and always have ready, that secret knowledge of the affairs of the estate, which is thought to be, and is so, necessary to the managing of the Irish peasantry in the way they are managed. Pat Brady was all this; moreover, he had as little compunction in driving the cow or the only pig from his neighbour or cousin, and in selling off the oats or potatoes of his uncle or brother-in-law, as if he was doing that which would be quite agreeable to them. But still he was liked on the estate; he had a manner with him which had its charms to them; he was a kind of leader to them in their agrarian feelings and troubles; and though the tenants of Ballycloran half feared, they all liked and courted Pat Brady.

The most remarkable feature in his personal appearance was a broken nose; not a common, ordinary broken nose, such as would give it an apparent partiality to the right or left cheek, nor such as would, by indenting it, give the face that good-natured look which Irish broken noses usually possess. Pat Brady's broken nose was all but flattened on to his face, as if it had never lifted its head after the fatal blow which had laid it low. He was strong-built, round-shouldered, bow-legged, about five feet six in height, and he had that kind of external respectability about him, which a tolerably decent hat, strong brogues, and worsted stockings give to a man, when those among whom he lives are without such luxuries. When I add to the above particulars that Pat was chief minister, adviser, and confidential manager in young Macdermot's affairs, I have said all that need be said. The development of his character must be left to disclose itself.

"Well, Pat," began his master, seating himself on the solitary old chair, which, with a still older looking desk on four shaking legs, comprised the furniture of Macdermot's rent-office, "what news from Mohill to-day? was there much in the fair at all?"

"Well, yer honor, then, for them as had money to buy, the fair was good enough; but for them as had money to get, it was as bad as them that wor afore it, and as them as is likely to come afther it."

"Were the boys in it, Pat?"

"They wor, yer honor, the most of 'em."

"Well, Pat?"

"Oh, they wor just there, that's all."

"Tim Brady should have got the top price for that oats of his, Pat."

"Maybe he might, Masther Thady."

"What did he get? there should be twelve barrels there."

"Eleven, or thereabouts, yer honor."

"Did he sell it all, yesterday?"

"Divil a grain, then, at all at all, he took to the fair yesterday."

"Bad manners to him, and why didn't he? why he owes" (and Thady turned over the old book) "five half years this gale, and there's no use gammoning; father must get the money off the land, or Flannelly will help himself."

"I knows, Masther Thady; I knows all about it. Tim has between five and six acres, and he owes twenty-two pound tin; his oats is worth, maybe, five pound fifteen, – from that to six pound, and his cow about six pound more; that's all Tim has, barring the brats and the mother of them. An' he knows right well, yer honor, if he brings you the price of the oats, you wouldn't let him off that way; for the cow should folly the oats, as is nathural; the cabin would be saized next; so Tim ses, if you choose to take the corn yourself, you can do so; – well an' good, and save him the throuble of bringin' it to Mohill."

"Did the widow Reynolds sell her pig?"

"She did, yer honor, for two pound tin."

"And she owes seven pound. And Dan Coulahan –"

"Dan didn't cut the oats, good or bad."

"I'll cut it for him, then. Was ould Tierney there?"

"He war, yer honor; and I was tellin' him yer honor 'id be wantin' the money this week, an' I axed him to stip up o' Friday mornin'; an', sis I, 'Misthur Tierney' – for since he made out the mare and the ould car, it's Misthur Tierney he goes by – 'it's a fine saison any way for the corn,' sis I, 'the Lord be praised; an' the hay all saved on thim illigant bottoms of yours, Misthur Tierney. The masther was glad to hear the cocks was all up afore the heavy rain was come.' 'Well, Pat,' sis he, 'I'll be at Ballycloran o' Friday, plase God, but it's little I'll have with me but myself; an' if the masthur likes the corn an' the hay, he may just take them av' it's plazin' to him, for the divil a cock or grain will I sell, an' the prices so bad.'"

"Obstinate ould fool! why, Pat, he must have the money."

"Money, to be shure he has the money, Misthur Thady; but maybe he'd be the bigger fool if he gave it to your father."

"Do the boys mane to say they won't pay the rent at all?"

"They mane to say they can't; an' it's nearly thrue for them."

"Was Joe Reynolds at the fair, Pat?"

"He wor not; that's to say, he wor not at the fair, but I seen him in the evening, with the other boys from Drumleesh, at Mrs. Mulready's."

"Them boys has always the money when they want a drop of whiskey. By dad, if they go to Mulready's with the money in their pockets on a Tuesday, where's the wonder they come here with them empty on a Friday? Fetch me a coal for the pipe, Pat."

Whilst Pat walked into the kitchen for a lighted piece of turf (*Hibernice*, coal) to kindle his patron's pipe, Thady stuck the said pipe in his jaw, and continued poring over the unsatisfactory figures of the Ballycloran rent-book.

"I tell you what it is, Pat," said he, after finishing the process of blowing, and drawing, and throwing the coal on the earthen floor, and pressing down the hot burning tobacco with the top of his forefinger repeatedly, "Misthur Joe Reynolds will out of that. I told him so last April, and divil a penny of his we've seen since; he don't do the best he can for us; and my belief is, he hinders the others; eh, Brady?" and he looked up into Brady's face for confirmation or refutation of this opinion. But that gentleman, contrary to his usual wont, seemed to have no opinion on the matter; he continued scratching his head, and swinging one leg, while he stood on the other. Thady, finding that his counsellor said nothing, continued.

"Joe Reynolds will out of that this time, d'you hear? what has he on that bit of land of his?"

"Pratees mostly, Misthur Thady. He had half an acre of whate; he parted that on the ground to ould Tierney; he owed Tierney money."

"An' so the tenants buy the crops from one another, and yet won't pay their own rents. Well, my father's to blame himself; av he'd put a man like Keegan over them, or have let the land to some rough hand as would make them pay, divil a much he need care for Flannelly this day."

"An' you'd be for puttin' a stranger over thim, Misthur Thady; an' they that would stand between you an' all harum, or the masthur, or the old masthur afore him; becaze of the dirty money, and becaze a blaggard and a black ruffian like Flannelly has an ould paper signed by the masthur, or the like? An' as for Mr. Hyacinth Keegan, – I'm thinking, the first time he goes collectin' on the lands of Drumleesh, it's a warm welcome he'll be gettin'; at any rate, he'd have more recates in his carcass than in his pocket, that day."

"That's very fine talk, Pat; but if Keegan had them, he'd tame them, as he has others before; not but I'd be sorry they should be in his hands, the robber, bad as they are. But it'll come to that, whether or no. How's my father to get this money for Flannelly?"

"D – n Flannelly!" was Brady's easy solution of the family difficulties. "Let him take the house he built, and be d – d to him; and if we can't build a betther one for the masthur and Miss Feemy and you, without his help, may praties choke me!"

"By dad, if he'd take the house, and leave the ground, he's my welcome, and ceade mille faltha, Pat. But the land will stick to the house; and mark me, when ould Flannelly dies (an' the divil die along with him), Mr. Keegan of Carrick will write himself, Hyacinth Keegan, Esquire, of Ballycloran."

"May I nivr see that day, an' he an' I alive, amen," said Brady, as he crossed himself in sign of the sacred truth of his wish; "but I think, Masthur Thady, when you come to consider of it, you'll find plenty of manes of keepin' Mr. Keegan and Mrs. Keegan out of the parlour of Ballycloran. But about Joe Reynolds, yer honor was sayin' – "

"I was saying that divil another potato he should dig in Drumleesh, nor another grain of corn shall he sow or rape; that's what I was saying."

"Well, Misthur Thady, you're the masthur, thank God, an' if you say so, it must be done. But Joe Reynolds is not that bad either: he was sayin' tho' at Mrs. Mulready's that he expected little from yer honor, but just leave to go where he liked, and lave the cow and the praties behind him."

"What wor they saying at Mulready's, Pat?"

"They were only jist passin' their remarks, yer honor, about how thick you war this time back with Captain Ussher; an' Miss Feemy too, an' the masthur; an' that when the likes of him wor as one of the family, it's little the likes of them would be gettin' now from Ballycloran, only hard words, and maybe a help to Carrick Gaol."

"Because Captain Ussher visits at Ballycloran, is that any reason why he should interfere between my father and his tenants?"

"Sorra a one av me knows then, Misthur Thady; only that the tenants is no good frinds to the Captain; nor why should they, an' he going through the counthry with a lot of idle blaggards, with arms, an' guns, sazin' the poor divils for nothin' at all, only for thryin' to make out the rint for yer honor, with a thrifle of potheen? That's quare friendship; ay, an' it's the truth I'm tellin' you, Misthur Thady, for he's no frind to you or yours. Shure isn't Pat Reynolds in Ballinamore Bridewell on his account, an' two other boys from the mountains behind Drumleesh, becaze they found a thrifle of half malted barley up there among them? an' be the same token, Joe was sayin', if the frind of the family war parsecuting them that way, an' puttin' his brother in gaol, whilst the masthur wouldn't rise a finger, barrin' for the rint, the sooner he an' his were off the estate, the betther he'd like it; for Joe sed he'd not be fightin' agin his own masthur, but whin you war not his masthur any more, – then let every one look to hisself."

Whilst Brady was giving this short *exposé* of the feelings displayed at the little whiskey shop in Mohill on the previous fair day, young Macdermot was pulling hard at the dhudheen, as if trying to hide his embarrassment in smoke. Brady paused for some time, and then added.

"Joe mostly leads those boys up at Drumleesh, an' hard to lead they are; I'm thinking Captain Ussher, with all his revenue of peelers an' his guns, may meet his match there yit. They'll hole him, av he goes on much farther, as shure as my name's Pat."

"They'll get the worst of that, Brady – not that I care a thrawneen for him and his company. It's true for you; he is persecuting them too far; what with revenue police, constabulary police, and magistrates' warrants, they won't let them walk to mass quietly next. I didn't care what they did to Master Myles, but they'd have the worst of it in the end."

"And it's little you ought to care for the same Captain, Misthur Thady, av you heard all. It's little he's making of Miss Feemy's name with the police captain, and the young gauger, and young James Fitzsimon, when they're over there at Ballinamore together – and great nights they have of it too; though they all have it in Mohill he's to marry Miss Feemy. If so, indeed! but then isn't he a black Protestant, sorrow take them for Protestants! There's Hyacinth Keegan calls himself a Protestant now; his father warn't ashamed of the ould religion, when he sarved processes away to Drumshambo."

"And what wor the gentlemen saying about Feemy, Pat?"

"Oh, yer honor, how could I know what gentlemine is saying over their punch, together? only they do be sayin' in Ballinamore, that the Captain doesn't spake that dacently of Miss Feemy, as if they wor to be man and wife: sorrow blister his tongue the day he'd say a bad word of her!"

"Faith he'd better take care of himself, if it's my sister he's playing his game with; he'll find out, though there aint much to be got worth having at Ballycloran now, as long as there's a Macdermot in it, he may still get the traitment a blackguard desarves, if he plays his tricks with Feemy!"

Pat saw that his object had been gained; he suspected that no warm feelings of friendship existed in his master towards the aforesaid Captain, and he was determined there should be none if he could help it. He was not wrong in his surmises; for, from the constant visits of Myles Ussher to Ballycloran, people had for some time been saying that he meant to marry Feemy. They now began to say that he ought to do so.

While her brother and his minister are discussing that subject, and others – settling who could pay, or who should pay, at the convocation of the tenants to be held on the coming Friday, and who couldn't, and who should be ejected, and who not – we will obtain a little insight into Captain Ussher's affairs, and account for the residence of so gallant a gentleman in the little town of Mohill.

CHAPTER IV

MYLES USSHER

Every one knows that Ireland, for her sins, maintains two distinct, regularly organised bodies of police; the duties of the one being to prevent the distillation of potheen or illicit whiskey, those of the other to check the riots created by its consumption. These forces, for they are in fact military forces, have each their officers, sub-officers, and privates, as the army has; their dress, full dress, and half dress; their arms, field arms, and house arms; their barracks, stations, and military regulations; their captains, colonels, and commander-in-chief, but called by other names; and, in fact, each body is a regularly disciplined force, only differing from the standing army by being carried on in a more expensive manner.

The first of these – that for preventing the distillation of potheen, commonly called the revenue police – was, at the time of our story, honoured by the services of Myles Ussher. He held the office of one of the sub-inspectors in the county of Leitrim, and he resided in the town of Mohill; he had a body of about five-and-twenty men under him, with a sergeant; and his duty was, as I have before said, to prevent the distillation of potheen. This was only to be done by seizing it when made, or in the process of making; and, as a considerable portion of the fine levied in all cases possible from the dealers in the trade, became the perquisite of the sub-inspector or officer effecting the seizure, the situation in a wild lawless district was one of considerable emolument; consequently gentlemen of repute and good family were glad to get their sons into the service, and at the present time, a commission in the revenue police is considered, if not a more fashionable, at any rate a more lucrative appointment than a commission in the army. Among these officers some of course would be more active than others, and would consequently make more money; but it will be easily imagined, that however much the activity of a sub-inspector of revenue police might add to his character and standing at headquarters, it would not be likely to make him popular in the neighbourhood in which he resided.

Myles Ussher was most active in the situation which he filled; whether an impartial judge would have said that he was too much so, would be a question difficult to settle, as I have no impartial judge on the subject to whom I can refer; but the persons among whom he lived thought that he was. At the time I allude to, about ten years ago, a great deal of whiskey was distilled in the mountains running between the counties of Leitrim and Cavan, and in different parts of the County Leitrim. Father Mathew's pledge was then unknown; the district is a wild country, not much favoured by gentlemen's residences, and very poor; and, though it may seem to be an anomaly, it will always be found to be the case that the poorer the people are the more they drink; and, consequently, Captain Ussher, as he was usually called in the neighbourhood, found sufficient occupation for himself and his men.

Now the case is different; the revenue police remain, but their duties have, in most districts, gone; and they may be seen patrolling the roads with their officers accompanying them, being bound to walk so many miles a day. It is very seldom one hears of their effecting a seizure, and their inactivity is no doubt owing to the prevalence of Father Mathew's pledge of total abstinence.

Myles Ussher was a Protestant, from the County Antrim in the north of Ireland, the illegitimate son of a gentleman of large property, who had procured him the situation which he held; he had been tolerably well educated; that is, he could read and write sufficiently, understood somewhat of the nature of figures, and had learnt, and since utterly forgotten, the Latin grammar. He had natural abilities somewhat above par; was good-looking, strongly made, and possessed that kind of courage, which arises more from animal spirits, and from not having yet experienced the evil effects of danger, than from real capabilities of enduring its consequences. Myles Ussher had never yet been hit in a duel, and would therefore have no hesitation in fighting one; he had never yet been seriously injured in riding, and would therefore ride any horse boldly; he had never had his head broken in a row, and

therefore would readily go into one; he cared little for bodily pain if it did not incapacitate him, – little at least for any pain he had as yet endured, and his imagination was not strong enough to suggest any worse evil. And this kind of courage, which is the species by far most generally met with, was sufficient for the life he had to lead.

But the quality in which Ussher chiefly excelled, and which was most conducive to give him the character which he certainly held in the country for courage, talent, and gallantry, was his self-confidence and assurance. He believed himself inferior to none in powers of body and mind, and that he could accomplish whatever he perseveringly attempted. He had, moreover, an overwhelming contempt for the poor, amongst whom his duties so constantly brought him, and it is not therefore wonderful that he was equally feared and execrated by them. I should also state that Myles Ussher had had sagacity enough to keep some of the money which he had received, and this added not a little both to his reputation and standing in the country, and also to the real power which he possessed; for in Connaught ready money is scarce, and its scarcity creates its importance.

This, then, was Feemy's lover, and she certainly did love him dearly; he had all the chief ornaments of her novel heroes – he was handsome, he carried arms, was a man of danger, and talked of deeds of courage; he wore a uniform; he rode more gracefully, talked more fluently, and seemed a more mighty personage, than any other one whom Feemy usually met. Besides, he gloried in the title of Captain, and would not that be sufficient to engage the heart of any girl in Feemy's position? let alone any Irish girl, to whom the ornaments of arms are always dear. But whether he loved her as truly, might, I fear, be considered doubtful; if so, why were they not married?

Larry Macdermot was too broken-hearted a man, and too low-spirited, to have objected to Myles on the ground of his being a Protestant: it was not that he was indifferent about his religion, but he had not heart enough left to be energetic on any subject. In other respects, Myles was more than a match for his daughter, in the present fallen condition of the family. But the matter had not even been mentioned to him by his daughter or her lover. Ussher was constantly at Ballycloran, – was in the habit of riding over from Mohill, only three miles, almost daily, when disengaged, giving his horse to Patsy, the only male attendant at Ballycloran, and staying the whole morning, or the evening, there, without invitation; and Larry, if he never seemed particularly glad, at any rate never evinced any dislike to his visits.

Whatever war the sub-inspector might wage against run spirits in the mountains and bogs, he always appeared on good terms with it at Ballycloran, and as the Macdermots had but little else to give in the way of hospitality, this was well.

Young Thady could not but see that his sister was attached to Ussher; but he knew that she could not do better than marry him, and if he considered much about it, he thought that she was only taking her fun out of it, as other girls did, and that it would all come right. Thady was warmly attached to his sister; he had had no one else really to love; he was too sullen at his prospects, too gloomy from his situation, to have chosen for himself any loved one on whom to expend his heart; he was of a disposition too saturnine, though an Irishman, to go and look for love when it did not fall in his way, and all that he had to give he gave to his sister. But it must be remembered that poor Thady had no refinement; how should he? And though he would let no one injure Feemy if he could help it, he hardly knew how effectually to protect her. His suspicions were now aroused by his counsellor Pat Brady; but the effect was rather to create increased dislike in him against Ussher, than to give rise to any properly concerted scheme for his sister's welfare.

On the evening previous to the fair at Mohill mentioned in the last chapter, Captain Ussher with a party of his men had succeeded in making a seizure of some half-malted barley in a cabin on the margin of a little lake on the low mountains, which lay between Mohill and Cashcarrigan. He had, as in these cases was always his practice, received information from a spy in his pay, who accompanied him, dressed as one of his own men, to prevent any chance of his being recognised; this man's name was Cogan, and he had been in the habit of buying illicit whiskey from the makers

at a very cheap rate, and carrying it round to the farmers' houses and towns for sale, whereby he obtained considerable profit, – but at considerable risk. With this employment Captain Ussher had made himself acquainted, and instead of seizing the man whilst in possession of the whiskey, he had sounded him, and finding him sufficiently a villain, had taken him into his pay as a spy; this trade Cogan found more lucrative even than the former, but also more dangerous; as if detected he might reckon on his death as certain. He still continued to buy the spirits from the people, but in smaller quantities; he offered lower prices; and though he nominally kept up the trade, it was more for the purpose of knowing where the potheen was, than of buying and selling it.

It was not wonderful therefore that more seizures than ever had been lately made, and that the men were getting more cautious, and at the same time more irate and violent in their language. In the present instance the party had come on the cabin in question unawares; not that they might not have been noticed, but that the people were confident of not being suspected. No whiskey had been run there; and the barley had only lately been brought in turf kishes from another cabin where it was not thought to be safe.

Three men and an old woman were found in the cabin when Captain Ussher entered with three of his own men. On being questioned they denied the existence of either whiskey, malt, or barley; but on searching, the illicit article was found in the very kishes in which it had been brought; they were easily discovered shoved into the dark chimney corner farthest from the door.

"Dat I may never see the light," began the old woman, "if I thought it wor anything but the turf, and jist the kishes that Barney Smith left there, the morn; and he to say nothing of the barley, and bring all these throubles on me and yer honer, – the like of him, the spalpeen!"

"Never mind my trouble, my dear," said Ussher; "it is little we think of the trouble of easing you; and who's Barney Smith, ma'am?"

"Oh, then, Barney's jist my daughter's own son; and he coming down from the mountains with turf, and said he must lave the kishes here, till he just went back round Loch Sheen with the ass, he'd borrowed from Paddy Byrne, and he'd be – "

"And very good natured it was of him to leave you the malt instead of the turf; and who are you, my good men?"

The men had continued smoking their pipes quietly at the fire without stirring.

"We be sthrangers here, yer honer," said one; "that is, not sthrangers jist, but we don't live here, yer honer."

"Where do you live, and what's your names?"

"I and Joe Smith live down away jist on the road to Cash, about half a mile out of this; and Tim Reynolds, he lives away at Drumleesh, on Mr. Macdermot's land; and my name's Paddy Byrne."

"Oh, oh; so one of you is father of the lad who brought the donkey, and the other the owner of it; and you neither of you knew what was in the kishes."

"Sorrow a know, yer honer; ye see Barney brought them down here from the mountains when we warn't in it; and it war some of the boys up there was getting him to get away the malt unknownst, hearing of yer honer, maybe."

"Ah, yes I see – whose land is this on?"

"Counseller Webb's, yer honer."

"Who holds the cabin and potato garden?"

"I do, your honer, jist for my wife's mother, ye see; but I live down towards Cash."

"Ah, very good-natured of you to your wife's mother. I hope the three of you have no objection to take a walk to Mohill this evening."

"Ochone, ochone, and it's ruined we'll be, yer honer; and that I may never see the light if the boys knew it; and yer honer wouldn't have the death of an ould woman on ye!" the old woman was exclaiming, while the police began seizing the malt and making prisoners of the men.

"Carol, see and get an ass to put these kishes on," said Ussher. "Killeen, pass a rope across these fellows' arms; I suppose they'll go quiet."

It was now full time for the men to arise when they found that the rope was to be fastened across their arms; which meant that a rope was to be fastened on the right arm of one, passed behind his back, fastened to the arm of the second, and so behind his back to the third. Smith and Byrne, the former of whom in spite of his protestations to the contrary was the inhabitant of the cabin, had given the matter up as lost; but as the other, Tim Reynolds, did in fact reside at Drumleesh, he thought he might still show some cause why he should not be arrested for visiting his friend Joe Smith.

"Yer honer won't be afther taking an innocent boy like me," began Tim, "that knows nothing at all at all about it. Shure yer honer knows the masther, Mr. Thady down at Ballycloran; he will tell yer honer I'd nothing in life to do in it. Then don't you know yourself I live with Joe Reynolds down at Drumleesh, and war only up here jist gagging with the ould woman and the boys, and knew nothing in life – how could I? – about the malt, Captain Ussher."

"Oh no, Mr. Reynolds, of course you could not; how could you, as you justly observe, – particularly being the brother of that inoffensive character Mr. Joe Reynolds, and you living too on Mr. Macdermot's property. You and your brother never ran whiskey at Drumleesh, I suppose. Why should a tenant of the Macdermots escape any more than one of Counsellor Webb's?"

"No, yer honer, in course not; only you being so thick with the masther, and that like; and av he'd spake a good word for me – as why shouldn't he? – and I knowing nothing at all at all about it, perhaps yer honer – "

"I'm sorry, Mr. Reynolds, I cannot oblige you in this little matter, but that's not the way I do business. Come along, Killeen; hurry, it's getting d – d cold here by the water."

With this Captain Ussher walked out of the cabin, and the two men followed, each having an end of the rope. Smith and Byrne followed doggedly, but silently; but poor Reynolds, though no lawyer, could not but feel that he was unjustly treated.

"And will I go to gaol then, jist for coming up to see ould widow Byrne, Captain?"

"Yes, Mr. Reynolds, as far as I can foresee, you will."

"Then, Captain Ussher, it's you'll be sorry for the day you were trating that way an innocent boy that knows nothing at all at all about it."

"Do you mean to be threatening me, you ruffian?"

"No, Captain Ussher, I doesn't threaten you, but there is them as does; and it's this day's work, or this night's that's all the same, will be the black night work to you. It's the like of you that makes ruffians of the boys about; they isn't left the manes of living, not even of getting the dhry pratees; and when they tries to make out the rint with the whiskey, which is not for themselves but for them as is your own friends, you hunts them through the mountains and bogs like worried foxes; and not that only; but for them as does it, and them as does not be doing it, is all the same; and it's little the masther, or, for the like of that, the masther's daughter either, will be getting from being so thick with sich as you, – harrowing and sazing his tenants jist for your own fun and divarsion. Mind I am not threatening you, Captain Ussher, but it's little good you or them as is in Ballycloran will be getting for the work you're now doing – What are you pulling at, misther'? D'ye think I can't walk av myself, without your hauling and pulling like a gossoon at a pig's hind leg."

The last part of Tim's eloquence was addressed to the man who held the foremost end of the rope, and who was following his officer at a rapid pace.

Captain Ussher made no further answer to his remonstrating prisoner, but marched on rapidly towards Carrick after the advanced party, with whom was Cogan the informer. He, after having pointed out the cabin, of course did not wait to be recognised by its occupiers. This capture was the subject of the discussion held on the fair-day at Mulready's whiskey-shop in Mohill, at which Joe Reynolds the prisoner's brother had presided, as Brady informed Thady Macdermot, – or at any rate had taken the most noisy part. To tell the truth, our friend Pat himself had been present all the evening

at Mulready's, and if he did not talk so loud, he had said full as much as Joe. The latter was naturally indignant at the capture of his brother, who, in fact, at the time was living in his cabin, though he did hold an acre or two of ground in the same town-land as Joe Smith and the widow Byrne. He was not, however, engaged in the potheen making there; and though at the moment of the entrance of the police, the party were all talking of the malt, which had, in fact, been brought from Byrne's cabin to that of his mother and brother-in-law, Reynolds had really nothing to do with the concern.

His known innocence made the party more indignant, and they consequently swore that among them they'd put an end to our poor friend Ussher, or as Joe Reynolds expressed it, "we'll hole him till there ar'nt a bit left in him to hole." Now, for the benefit of the ignorant, I may say that, "holing a man," means putting a bullet through him.

The injuries done by the police were not, however, the only subject discussed at Mulready's that night.

Ribbonism, about 183 – , was again becoming very prevalent in parts of Ireland, at any rate so said the stipendiary magistrates and the inspectors of police; and if they said true, County Leitrim was full of ribbonmen, and no town so full as Mohill. Consequently the police sub-inspector at Ballinamore, Captain Greenough, had his spies as well as Captain Ussher, and Joe Reynolds was a man against whom secret information had been given. Joe was aware that he was a marked man, and consequently, if not actually a ribbonman, was very well inclined to that or anything else, which might be inimical to gaols, policemen, inspectors, gaugers, or any other recognised authority; in fact, he was a reckless man, originally rendered so by inability to pay high rent for miserably bad land, and afterwards becoming doubly so from having recourse to illegal means to ease him of his difficulties.

He, and many others in the neighbourhood of Mohill somewhat similarly situated, had joined together, bound themselves by oaths, and had determined to become ribbonmen; their chief objects, however, at present, were to free themselves from the terrors of Captains Ussher and Greenough, and to prevent their landlords ejecting them for non-payment of rent. It would be supposed a man of Pat Brady's discernment, station, and character, would not have wished to belong to, or have been admitted by, so desperate a society; but he, nevertheless, was not only of them, but one of their leaders, and it can only be supposed that "he had his reasons."

All these things were fully talked over at Mulready's that night. The indignities offered to humanity by police of every kind, the iniquities of all Protestants, the benefits likely to accrue to mankind from an unlimited manufacture of potheen, and the injustice of rents, were fully discussed; on the latter head certainly Brady fought the battle of his master, and not unsuccessfully; but not on the head that he had a right to his own rents, but what he was to do about Flannelly, if he did not get them.

"And shure, boys, what would the ould masther do, and what would Mr. Thady do without the rint among ye, – an' ould Flannelly dunning about him with his bonds, and his bills and morgidges? How'd ye like to see the good ould blood that's in it now, driven out by the likes of Flannelly and Keegan, and them to be masthers in Ballycloran?"

"That's all very well, Pat, and we'd be sorry to see harum come to Mr. Larry and the young masther along of such born robbers as them; but is them dearer to us than our own flesh and blood? As long as they and the like of them'd stand between us and want, the divil a Keegan of them all'd dare put a foot in Ballycloran. But who is it now rules all at Ballycloran? Who, but that bloody robber, Ussher? They'd go through the country for him, the born ruffian, – may food choke him! – and he making little of them all the time. Bad manners to the like of him! they say he never called an honest woman his mother. Will I, Mr. Brady, be giving my blood for them, and he putting my brother in gaol, and all for sitting up warming his shins at Loch Sheen? No; may this be my curse if I do!" and Joe Reynolds swallowed a glass of whiskey; "and you may tell Mr. Thady, Pat, if he wants the boys to stick to him, let him stick to them, and not be helping a d – d ruffian to be dhriving the lives out of them he should befriend. And maybe he will want us, and that soon; and if he'll stick to us now, as his fathers always did, sure it's little he need be fearing Flannelly and Keegan. By G – , the first foot

they set in Ballycloran they shall leave there forever, if Thady Macdermot will help rid his father's land of that bloody ruffian."

"It's little Mr. Thady loves the Captain, Joe, and it's little he ever will, I think; however, you can come up, you know, on Friday, and say your own say about your brother, and the rint and all."

"And so I will come, Pat; but there's all the rint I have, and Mrs. Mulready, I think, 'll have the best part of that," and he jingled a few halfpence in his pocket. So ended the meeting previous to the conversation in Macdermot's rent-office.

CHAPTER V

FATHER JOHN

The Rev. John McGrath was priest of the parish of Drumsna at the time of which we write. This parish contains the post town of Drumsna and the country adjacent, including the town-land and demesne of Ballycloran. At this time the spacious chapel which now stands on the hill about two miles out of Drumsna had not been built, and Father John's chapel was situated on the road from Drumsna to Ballycloran. Near this he had built himself a small cottage in the quasi-Gothic style, for Father John was a man of taste; he rented also about twenty acres of land, half of this being on the Macdermots' estate.

The Rev. Mr. McGrath is destined to appear somewhat prominently in this history, and I must therefore be excused in giving a somewhat elaborate description of him.

He had been, like many of the present parish priests in Ireland, educated in France; he had been at college at St. Omer, and afterwards at Paris, and had officiated as a curé there; he had consequently seen more of French manners and society than usually falls to the lot of Irish theological students in that capital. He was, also, which is equally unusual, a man of good family, and from his early avocations was more fitted than is generally the case with those of his order, to mix in society. He possessed also very considerable talents, and much more than ordinary acquirements, great natural *bonhomie*, and perpetual good temper. He was a thorough French scholar, and had read the better portion of their modern literature. On leaving Paris he had gone to Rome on a begging expedition, to raise funds for building chapels in his own country, and there too he had been well received; and from thence he had returned to take possession of a populous parish in one of the very poorest parts of Ireland.

With all his acquirements, however, in many things Father John was little better than a child. Though his zeal had enabled him to raise money for the church, he could never keep any of his own; he had always his little difficulties, and though he sedulously strove to live within his income, and never really much outstripped it, he was always in want of money. He had built his house, and, unlike his neighbour, had managed to pay for it; but he was always in trouble about it; the rats were in the roof, and his flooring was all warped, and his windows would neither open nor shut, and the damp would get to his books. Therefore, though his cottage was, exteriorly, the prettiest house in his parish, interiorly, it was discomfort personified.

A more hospitable man than Father McGrath never lived even in Connaught; he took a look in at dinner time as a personal favour; and whatever might be the state of his larder, his heart was always full, and the emptiness of the former never troubled him. He had not the slightest shame at asking any one to eat potatoes and cold mutton. They all knew him, and what they were likely to get at his house, and if they did not choose, they need not come. Whoever did come had as good as he had himself. A more temperate man never lived; but he had as much pleasure in seeing another man drink a tumbler of punch, as any one else would in drinking it himself. He kept under his own bed a great stone jar, always, partly at least, full of whiskey of native manufacture; and though, were he alone, the jar would long have remained untouched, as it was, it very often had to be refilled. Tumblers he had only two; when his guests exceeded that, the tea-cups made their appearance, and he would naïvely tell his friends that he meant to buy tumblers when he got any money; but, heaven help them! if he got in debt, the people would never be paid.

His whole domestic arrangements were on a par: his crockery was of a most heterogeneous and scanty description; his furniture of the most common kind, put in bit by bit, as it was found indispensable. In two things only did Father John show his extravagance; in the first, too, his expenditure was only so to be called, in comparison with that of others round him, of the same

profession. It was this – he was always dressed like a gentleman; Father John's black coat was always black, never rusty brown; his waistcoat, his trowsers, his garters, even shoes, the same; and not only did his clothes always look new, but they were always well made, as far as his figure would allow; his hat was neat, and his linen clean; his hands, too, were always clean, and, when he was from home, always gloved; even his steady cob, whom he called Paul (it was rumoured that he had called him St. Paul, but the bishop objected), together with his saddle and bridle, was always neat; this particular was nearly all that the polish of French society had left him, and those who are accustomed to see Irish priests will know that this peculiarity would be striking. His other expensive taste was that of books; he could not resist the temptation to buy books, books of every sort, from voluminous editions of St. Chrysostom to Nicholas Nicklebys and Charles O'Malleys; and consequently he had a great many. But alas! he had no book-shelves, not one; some few volumes, those of every day use, were piled on the top of one another in his little sitting-room; the others were closely packed in great boxes in different parts of the cottage – his bed-room, his little offertory, his parlour, and many in a little drawing-room, as he called it, but in which was neither chair nor table, nor ever appeared the sign of fire! No wonder the poor man complained the damp got to his books.

In all other respects Father John was a fair specimen of the Irish priesthood. He must have been an eloquent man, for he had been sent on different foreign missions to obtain money for building chapels by preaching sermons. But his appearance was anything but dignified; he was very short, and very fat, and had little or no appearance of neck; his face, however was intelligent; he had bright, small black eyes, a fine, high forehead, very white teeth, and short thick, curling, dark hair.

As I am on the subject of the church, I might as well say now that his curate, Father Cullen, was unlike him in everything but his zeal for the church. He was educated at Maynooth, was the son of a little farmer in the neighbourhood, was perfectly illiterate, – but chiefly showed his dissimilarity to the parish priest by his dirt and untidiness. He was a violent politician; the Catholic Emancipation had become law, and he therefore had no longer that grievance to complain of; but he still had national grievances, respecting which he zealously declaimed, when he could find a hearer. Repeal of the Union was not, at that time, the common topic, morning and night, at work and at rest, at table and even at the altar, as it afterwards became; but there were, even then, some who maintained that Ireland would never be herself, till the Union was repealed; and among these was Father Cullen. He was as zealous for his religion as for his politics; and he could become tolerable intimate with no Protestant, without thinking he was specially called on to convert him. A disciple less likely to make converts than Father Cullen it would be difficult to imagine, seeing that in language he was most violent and ungrammatical – in appearance most uncouth – in argument most unfair. He was impatient if any one spoke but himself. He relied in all such arguments on his power of proving logically that his own church was the true church, and as his education had been logical, he put all his arguments into syllogisms. If you could not answer him in syllogisms, he conceived that you must be, evidently to yourself, in the wrong, and that obstinacy alone prevented you from owning it. Father Cullen's redeeming point was his earnestness, – his reality; he had no humbug about him; whatever was there, was real; he had no possible appreciation for a joke, and he understood no ridicule. You might gull him, and dupe him for ever, he would never find you out; his heart and mind were full of the Roman Catholic church and of his country's wrongs; he could neither think nor speak of aught beside.

Ussher was the only Protestant whom this poor man was in the habit of meeting, and he was continually attempting to convert him; in which pursuit Ussher rather encouraged him with the purpose of turning him into ridicule.

Such were the spiritual guides of the inmates of Ballycloran and its neighbourhood.

On the Wednesday morning after the fair, Father John was sitting eating his breakfast in his little parlour, attending much more to a book on the table before him than to the large lumps of bread and butter which he unconsciously swallowed, when the old woman servant, Judy McCan, opened the door and said.

"Father John, plase, there's Denis McGoverly wanting to see yer riverence, below then."

People in Connaught always call the hall, door, and passage "below," the parlour, or sitting-room, "above," though, in nine cases out of ten, they are on the same floor.

"Why, then, Judy," said Father John, with his mouth full, "bad manners to them; mayn't I eat a bit of breakfast in peace and quiet? There was I at the widow Byrne's all night, destroyed with the cold, and nothing the matter with her at last, and now I must lose my breakfast, as well as my sleep."

"It's nothing of that sort, I'm thinking, Father John, but Denis McGoverly is afther going to get married, I hear."

"Oh," exclaimed Father John, "that's a horse of another colour; going to get married, is he? and why shouldn't he, and he able to support a wife? let him come in, Judy."

It will be remembered that the "above" and "below" in the priest's house were only terms of compliment, and, as Denis McGoverly was standing in the hall, – that is, at the open door of the very room in which Judy McCan had been announcing his attendance, – he, of course, had heard what had passed; therefore, when Father John said "let him come in," he wanted no further introduction, but, thrusting himself just through the door, and taking hold of a scanty lock of hair on his forehead, by way of reverential salutation, he said, "Iss, yer honor."

Now, laconic as this was, it was intended to convey, and did convey, a full assent not only to Judy's assertion that he was "afther going to get married," but also to the priest's remark, that there was no good reason on earth why he shouldn't, seeing that he was able to support a family.

"Iss, yer honor," said Denis McGoverly.

"Well, Denis – that'll do, Judy," meaning that Judy need not listen any longer, at any rate within the room – "so you are going to get married, are you?"

"Didn't Father Cullen say anything to your riverence about it, then?"

"Oh, yes, he did then; I didn't remember it just at first, when Judy mentioned your name."

"Iss, yer riverence; if ye plaze, I am going to be married."

The bridegroom in this case was a man about forty years of age, who seemed, certainly, never to have eaten the bread of idleness, for he was all gristle and muscle; nor had he; he was a smith living in Drumsna, and the reputed best shoer of horses in the neighbourhood; and consequently was, as the priest had said, able to maintain a family: in fact, Denis had the reputation of hoarded wealth, for it was said he had thirty or forty pounds in the Loan Fund Office at Carrick-on-Shannon. He was a hard-working, ill-favoured, saving man; but, as he was able to keep a comfortable home over a wife, he had no difficulty in getting one.

"Oh then it pleases me entirely, because you are the boy that's both able and willing to pay your clergyman respectably as you should – "

"In course, your riverence, though the likes of a poor boy like me hasn't much, I wouldn't not be married dacently, Father John; and in course I couldn't expect yer riverence to be doing it for nothing."

"For nothing indeed! Where would I be getting the coat on my back, and the roof over my head? – no, the poor themselves always make out something for me; and you, Denis, that are comfortable, would of course be sorry to set a bad example to those that are not so."

"Oh then, yer riverence is poking yer fun at me."

"No fun at all, Denis. If you that have the money don't pay your priest, who is to, I'd like to know. Fun indeed! no, but it's good earnest I'm talking; and if you have a character that you wish to support, and to give your children after you, it's now you should be looking to it."

Denis McGoverly began twirling his hat round in his hand, and bending his knees, as if nonplussed. He had known well enough, beforehand, what the priest would say to him, and the priest too, what answer he would get. The question in these cases is, which would cajole the other the best, and of course the priest would have the best of it. This may seem odd to those who do not know the country; but did he not do so, the Roman Catholic clergyman could not get even the moderate remuneration which he does receive for his laborious services.

"Oh, yer riverence," continued Denis, attempting a grim smile, "you know it's the young woman, or her friends, as always pays the priest mostly."

"And who is the young woman, Denis; Betsy Cane, isn't it?"

"No, Father John," said Denis, blushing almost black through his dark skin; "it ain't Betsy."

"Not Betsy Cane! why she told me three weeks ago you were to be married to her."

"And so I was, yer riverence, only ye see for a mistake as happened."

"A mistake! Was it she made the mistake or you?"

"Why it warn't exactly herself thin as did it; it war her mother."

"Her mother made a mistake! What mistake did her mother make?"

"Along of the cow, yer riverence." Denis seemed very slow of explaining, and Father John began to be impatient.

"What cow, Denis? How did the mother's making a mistake about the cow prevent your marrying her daughter?"

"Why, yer riverence, then, if you'll let me, I'll jist explain the matter. Ould Betsy Cane – that's her mother you know – promised me the brown cow, yer riverence may know, as is in the little garden behind the cabin, for her dater's fortin; and says I to her, 'Well, may be she may be worth four pound tin, Mrs. Cane.' 'Four pound tin,' says she, 'Mr. McGovery; and you to know no better than that, and she to calve before Christmas! well then, four pound tin indeed,' – jist in that manner, yer riverence. Well then I looks at the cow, and she seemed a purty sort of a cow, and I agreed to the bargain, yer honer, purviding the cow turned out to be with calf. Well, yer honer, now it's no such thing, but it's sticking me she was entirely about, the cow: so now she got the cow and her daughter both at home; and likely to for me."

"And so, Denis, you broke your promise, and refused to marry the girl you were engaged to, because a cow was not in calf?"

"No I didn't, yer honer; that is, I did refuse to marry the girl; why wouldn't I? But I didn't break my promise, becace I only promised, purviding – ; and you see, Father John, they was only decaving me."

"Well, Denis; and who is it after all that you are going to have?"

"Well, then, it's jist Mary Brady."

"What! Pat Brady's sister is it?"

"Iss, yer honer."

"And is her cow really in the family way?"

"Now yer riverence 'll make a handle of that agin me!"

"Never mind, Denis, how I handle the cow, so long as you handle the calf; but has Mary a cow?"

"No, Father John, she aint got a cow then, as I knows on."

"Well, Denis, and what fortune are you to get? You are not the man would take a wife unless she brought something with her."

"Well then, it's only jist a pair of young pigs and a small thrifle of change."

"A trifle of change, eh! Then, Mr. McGovery, I take it, it wasn't only along of the mistake about a cow that you left poor Betsy Cane, but you found you could do better, I suppose."

"Well then, it might be jist a little of both; but you see, Father John, they war the first to decave me."

"Well, Denis, and when's the wedding to be?"

"Oh – then, to-morrow evening, if yer riverence plazes."

"What! so soon, Denis? Take care; perhaps after all Betsy Cane's cow may calve; see; would you be too much in a hurry after the pigs?"

"Sorrow to the tongue of me then that I tould yer riverence a word about it!"

"But what are you in such a hurry about? Won't the pigs do as well at Pat Brady's as they will down at Drumsna?"

"Why you see, Father John, after to-morrow is Friday, which wouldn't do for the two legs of mutton Pat brought from Carrick with him yesterday, and the fine ham, yer riverence, Mrs. McKeon, long life to her, has sent us up from Drumsna; and Saturday wouldn't shute at all, seeing the boys will mostly be dhrunk, which may be yer honer wouldn't like on the morning of the blessed Sabbath."

"Nor on any other morning. Can't they take their fun without getting drunk, like beasts? But drunk they'll be, of course. And why would not Monday do?"

"Why that's next week, yer riverence!"

"You've remained single all this time, and only jilted poor Betsy Cane last week; and are you so hot after Mary Brady that you can't wait till next Monday to be married? Or is it the pigs, Denis? Are you afraid Pat may change his mind about the pigs, as you did about the cow?"

"Oh, drat the cow now, Father McGrath! and will ye never be aisy with yer joke agin a poor boy? It was not about the pigs then, nor nothing of the kind, but jist that I heard as how, but – " and Denis began scratching his head – "yer honer 'll be after twisting what I'll be tellin' yer, and poking your fun at me."

"Not I, my boy; out with it. You know nothing goes farther with me."

"Then it war just this, yer riverence, as makes me so hurried about getting the thing done. I heard tell that Tom Ginty, the pig-jobber, has comed home to Dromod from where he was away tiv' Athlone; and they do be telling me, he brought a thrifle of money with him; and yer honer knows Mary had half given a promise to Ginty afore he went: and so, yer riverence, lest there be any scrimmage betwixt Ginty and I, ye see it's as well to get the marriage done off hand."

"Oh yes, I see; you were afraid Tom Ginty would be taking Mary Brady's pigs to Athlone. That was it, was it?"

"No, yer honer, I war not afraid of that; but it might be as well there should be no scrimmage betwixt us, as in course there would not be, and we oncet man and wife. But as in course Mary has promised me now, she could not go and act like that."

"Why no, Denis, not well; unless, you know, she was to find your cow would not have any calf; eh?"

"Oh, bother it for a calf then!"

"No; for not being a calf, Denis."

"Well then, yer honer, I'll jist go and spake to Father Cullen. Though he is not so good-humoured like, – at least, he don't be always laughing at a boy."

"Come back, McGovery, and don't be a fool. Father Cullen's gone to Dromod. I think I heard him say Tom Ginty wanted him."

"Is it Tom Ginty? but shure what would Tom be doing with Father Cullen? wouldn't he be going to his own priest? Well, what time will yer riverence come up to Pat Brady's to-morrow?"

"Well, get the mutton done about seven to-morrow evening, and I'll be with you. But you'll ask Tom Ginty, eh?"

"Sorrow a foot, then!"

"Nor Betsy Cane, Denis?"

"It ar'nt for me to ax the company, Father John, but if Betsy likes to come up and shake her feet and take her sup, she's welcome for me."

"That's kind of you; and you know you could be asking after the – "

"Well then, Father John, may it be long before I spake another word to you, barring my sins!"

"Well, Denis, I've done. But, look ye now you've a good supper for the boys, and lots of the stuff, I'll go bail. Let there be plenty of them in it, and don't let them come with their pockets empty. By dad, they think their priest can live on the point without the potatoes."

"Oh, Father John, Pat says there'll be plenty of them in it, and a great wedding he says he'll make it: there's a lot of the boys over from Mohill is to be there."

"From Mohill, eh? then they've my leave to stay away; I don't care how little I see of the boys from Mohill. Why can't he get his company from Drumsna and the parish?"

"Oh shure, yer riverence, an' he'll do that too; won't there be all the Ballycloran tenants, and the boys and girls from Drumleesh?"

"Oh, yes, Drumleesh; Drumleesh is as bad as Mohill; I'm thinking it's those fellows in Drumleesh that make Mohill what it is; but I suppose Pat Brady would tell me he has a right to choose his own company."

"Oh, Pat would not tell your riverence the like of that."

"And he's the boy that would do it, directly. And mind this, McGoverly, you've the name of a prudent fellow – when you're once married, the less you see of your brother-in-law the better, and stick to your work in Drumsna."

"And so I manes. Oh, yer riverence, they won't be making me be wasting my hard arned wages at Mrs. Mulready's. Pat wanted me to be there last night of all, as I was coming out of the fair; but, no, says I; if ye'd like to see yer sister respectable, don't be axing me to go there; if ye'd like her to be on the roads, and me in Carrick Gaol, why that's the way, I take it."

"Stick to that, Denis, and you'll be the better of it. Well, I'll be down with you to-morrow evening; but mind now, two thirties is the very least; and you should make it more, if you want any luck in your marriage."

"I'll spake to Pat, Father John; you know that's his business; but your riverence, Father John, you'll not be saying anything up there before the boys and girls about you know – Betsy Cane, you know."

"Oh! the cow! – only, you see, if you don't come down with the money as you should, it might be an excuse for your poverty. But, Denis, I'll take care; and if any one should say anything about the price of cows or the like, I'll tell them all it isn't Betsy Cane's cow, who wouldn't have the calf, though she was engaged."

Denis McGoverly now hurried off. Father John called for Judy to take away the cold tea, and prepared to sally forth to some of his numerous parochial duties.

But Father McGrath was doomed to still further interruptions. He had not walked above a mile on his road, – he was going by Ballycloran, – when, coming down the avenue, he saw Pat Brady with his master, Mr. Thady, and of course he didn't pass without waiting to speak to them.

"Well, Thady," and "Well, Father John," as they shook hands; and, "Well, Pat Brady," and "Well, yer riverence," as the latter made a motion with his hand towards his hat, was the first salutation.

It will be remembered that Thady and the other had just been talking over affairs in the rent-office, and Thady did not seem as though he were exactly in a good humour.

"So, Pat, your sister is getting married to Denis McGoverly. I'll tell you what – she might do a deal worse."

"She might do what she plased for me, Father John. But, faix, I was tired enough of her myself; so, you see, Denis is welcome to his bargain."

"What! are you going to bring a wife of your own home then?"

"Devil a wife, then, axing your riverence's pardon. What'd I be doing with a wife?"

"Who'll keep the house over you now, Pat, your sister's as good as gone?"

"I won't be axing a woman to keep the house over me; so Mary's welcome to go; or, she wor welcome to stay, too, for me. I didn't ax her to have him, and, by the 'postles, when Denis is tired of his bargain, he'll be recollecting I wasn't axing him to have her."

"Well, Thady, I suppose you and Feemy 'll be at the wedding, eh? and, Pat, you must make them bring Captain Ussher. Mrs. McGoverly, as is to be, must have the Captain at her wedding; you'll be there, Thady?"

"Oh, Pat's been telling me about it, and I suppose I and Feemy must go down. If Brady chooses to ask the Captain, I've nothing to say; it's not for me to ask him, and, as he'd only be quizzing at all he saw, I think he might as well be away."

"Ah! Thady, but you never think of your priest; think of the half-crown it would be to me. Never mind, Pat, you ask him; he'll come anywhere, where Miss Feemy is likely to be; eh, Thady?"

"Then I wish Feemy had never set eyes on him, Father John; and can't you be doing better than coupling her name with that of his, that way? and he a black ruffian and a Protestant, and filling her head up with nonsense: I thought you had more respect for the family. Well, Pat, jist go down to them boys, and do as I was telling you," – and Pat walked off.

"And what more respect for the family could I have, Thady, than to wish to see your sister decently married?" and Father John turned round to walk back with young Macdermot the way he was going, "what better respect could I have? If Captain Ussher were not a proper young man in general, your father and you, Thady, wouldn't be letting him be so much with Feemy; and, now we're on it, if you did not mean it to be a match, and if you did not mean they should marry, why have you let him be so much at Ballycloran, seeing your father doesn't meddle much in anything now?"

"That's just the reason, Father John, I couldn't be seeing all day who was in it and who was not; besides, Feemy's grown now; she's no mother, and must learn to care for herself."

"No, Thady, she's no mother; and no father, poor girl, that can do much for her; and isn't that the reason you should care the more for her? Mind, I'm not blaming you, Thady, for I know you do care for her; and you only want to know how to be a better brother to her; and what could she do better than marry Captain Ussher?"

"But isn't he a black Protestant, Father John; and don't the country hate him for the way he's riding down the poor?"

"He may be Protestant, Thady, and yet not 'black.' Mind, I'm not saying I wouldn't rather see Feemy marry a good Catholic; but if she's set her heart on a Protestant, I wouldn't have you be against him for that: that's not the way to show your religion; it's only nursing your pride; and sure, mightn't she make a Catholic of him too?"

"Oh, Father Cullen has tried that."

"Well, I wouldn't tell him so, but I think your sister would show more power in converting a young fellow like Ussher than poor Cullen. And then, as to his riding down the poor; you know every one must do his duty, and if the boys will be acting against the laws, why, of course, they must bear the consequences. Not but that I think Captain Ussher is too hard upon them. But, Thady, are you telling me the truth in this? Is it not that you fear the young man won't marry Feemy, rather than that he will?"

"Why, Father John?"

"I'll tell you why, Thady: this Captain Ussher has been the intimate friend in your house now for more than six months back; he has been received there willingly by your father, and willingly by yourself, but still more willingly by Feemy; all the country knows this; of course they all said Feemy was to be married to him; and who could say why she shouldn't, if her father and brother agreed? I always thought it would be a match; and though, as I said before, I would sooner have married Feemy to a good Catholic, I should have thought myself much exceeding my duty as her priest, had I said a word to persuade her against it. Now people begin to say – and you know what they say in the parish always comes to my ears – that Captain Ussher thinks too much of himself to take a wife from Ballycloran, and that he has only been amusing himself with your sister; and I must tell you, Thady, if you didn't know more of Captain Ussher and his intentions than you seem to do, it isn't to-day you should be thinking what you ought to do."

Thady walked on with his head down, and the priest went on.

"I've been meaning to speak to you of this some days back, for your poor father is hardly capable to manage these things now; and it's the respect I have for the family, and the love I have for Feemy, –

and, for the matter of that, for you too, – that makes me be mentioning it. You aint angry with your priest, are you, Thady, for speaking of the welfare of your sister? If you are, I'll say no more."

"Oh no! angry, Father John! in course I aint angry. But what can I do then? Bad luck to the day that Ussher darkened the door of Ballycloran! By dad, if he plays Feemy foul he'll shortly enter no door, barring that of hell fire!"

"Whisht, Thady, whisht! it's not cursing 'll do you any good in life, or Feemy either;" – and then continued the priest, seeing that poor Macdermot still appeared miserably doubtful what to say or do, "come in here awhile," they had just got to the gate of Father John's Gothic cottage, "just come in here awhile, and we'll talk over what will be best to do."

They entered the little parlour in which McGoverly had shortly before been discussing his matrimonial engagements, and having closed the door, and, this time, taking care that Judy McCan was not just on the other side of it, and making Macdermot sit down opposite to him, the priest began, in the least disagreeable manner he could, to advise him on the very delicate subject in question.

"You see, Thady, there's not the least doubt in life poor Feemy's very fond of him; and how could she not be, poor thing, and she seeing no one else, and mewed up there all day with your father? – no blame to her – and in course she thinks he means all right; only she doesn't like to be asking him to be naming the day, or talking to you or Larry, or the like, and that's natural too; but what I fear is, that he's taking advantage of her ignorance and quietness, you see; and, though I don't think she would do anything really wrong, nor would he lead her astray altogether – "

"And av he did, Father John, I'd knock the brains out of the scoundrel, though they hung me in Carrick Gaol for it; I would, by G – !"

"Whisht, now, Thady; I don't mean that at all – but you get so hot – but what I really mean is this; though no actual harm might come of it, it doesn't give a girl a good name through the country, for her to be carrying on with a young man too long, and that all for nothing; and Feemy's too pretty and too good, to have a bad word about her. And so, to make a long story short, I think you'd better just speak to her, and tell her, if you like, what I say; and then, you know, if you find things not just as they should be, ask her not to be seeing the Captain any more, except just as she can't help; and do you tell him that he's not so welcome at Ballycloran as he was, or ask him at once what he means about your sister. It's making too little of any girl to be asking a man to marry her, but better than let her break her heart, and get ill spoken of through the country too."

"I don't think they dare do that yet, poor as the Macdermots now are, or, by heaven – "

"There's your pride, – bad pride, again, Thady. Poor or rich, high or low, don't let your sister leave it to any one to speak bad of her, or put it in any man's power to hurt her character. At any rate, by following my advice, you'll find how the land lies."

"But you see, Father John, she mightn't exactly mind what I say. Feemy has had so much of her own way, and up to this I haven't looked after her ways, – not so much as I should, perhaps; though, for the matter of that there's been little need, I believe; but she's been left to herself, and if she got cross upon me when I spoke of Ussher, it would only be making ill blood between us. I'd sooner a deal be speaking to Captain Ussher."

"Nonsense, Thady; do you mean to say you are afraid to speak to your sister when you see the necessity? By speaking to Captain Ussher you mean quarrelling with him, and that's not what'll do Feemy any good."

"Well, then, I'm sure, I'll do anything you tell me, Father John; but if she don't mind me, will you speak to her?"

"Of course I will, Thady, if you wish it; but go and see her now at once, while it's on your mind, and though Feemy may be a little headstrong, I think you'll find her honest with you."

"I'll tell you another thing, Father John; father is so taken up with Ussher, and – to out with it at once – he's trying to borrow a thrifle of money from him; not that that should stand in my way, but the ould man gets obstinate, you know."

"Oh, then, that'd be very bad, Thady; why doesn't he go to his natural friends for money, and not to be borrowing it of a false friend and a stranger?"

"Nathural friends! and who is his nathural friends! Is it Flannelly, and Hyacinth Keegan? I tell you what it is, Father John, Feemy and her father and I won't have the roof over our heads shortly, with such nathural friends as we have. God knows where I'm to make out the money by next November, even let alone what's to come after."

"Anything better than borrowing from Ussher, my boy; but sure, bad as the time is, the rints more than pay Flannelly's interest money, any how."

"I wish you had to collect them then, Father John, and then you'd see how plentiful they are; besides, little as is spent, or as there is to spend up above there, we can't live altogether for nothing."

"No, Thady, the Lord knows we can none of us do that – and, tell the truth now, only I stopped the words in your throat about poor Feemy's business, weren't you just going to be dunning me for the bit of rent? out with it now."

"It's little heart I have now to be saying to you what I was going to do, for my soul's sick within me, with all the throubles that are on me. An' av it warn't for Feemy then, Father John, bad as I know I've been to her, laving her all alone there at Ballycloran, with her novels and her trash, – av it warn't for her, it's little I'd mind about Ballycloran. There is them still as wouldn't let the ould man want his stirabout, and his tumbler of punch, bad as they all are to us; and for me, I'd sthrike one blow for the counthry, and then, if I war hung or shot, or murdered any way, devil a care. But I couldn't bear to see the house taken off her, and she to lose the respect of the counthry entirely, and the name of Macdermot still on her!"

"Oh, nonsense, Thady, about blows for your country, and getting hung and murdered. You're very fond of being hung in theory, but wait till you've tried it in practice, my boy."

"May be I may! there be many things to try me."

"Oh, bother Thady; stop with your nonsense now. Go up to your sister, and have your talk well out with her, and then come down to me. Judy McCan has got the best half of a goose, and there's as fine a bit of cold ham – or any way there ought to be – as ever frightened a Jew; and when you get a tumbler of punch in you, and have told me all you've said to Feemy, and all Feemy's said to you, why, then you can begin to dun in earnest, and we'll talk over how we'll make out the rint."

"No, Father John, I'd rather not be coming down."

"But it's yes, Father John, and I'm not saying what you'd rather do, but showing you your duty; so at five, Thady, you'll be down, and see what sort of a mess Judy makes of the goose."

There was no gainsaying this, so Thady started off for Ballycloran, and Father John once more set about performing his parochial duties.

CHAPTER VI

THE BROTHER AND SISTER

At the time that the priest and young Macdermot were talking over Feemy's affairs at the cottage, she and her lover were together at Ballycloran.

Nothing that her brother or Father John had said about her, either for her or against, would give a fair idea of her character.

She was not naturally what is called strong-minded; but her feelings and courage were strong, and they stood to her in the place of mind.

She would have been a fine creature had she been educated, but she had not been educated, and consequently her ideas were ill-formed, and her abilities were exercised in a wrong direction.

She was by far the most talented of her family, but she did not know how to use what God had given her, and therefore, abused it. Her mother had died before she had grown up, and her grandmother had soon followed her mother. Whatever her feelings were, – and for her mother they were strong, – the real effect of this was, that she was freed from the restraint and constant scolding of two stupid women at a very early age; consequently she was left alone with her father and her brother, neither of whom were at all fitting guides for so wayward a pupil. By both she was loved more than any other living creature; but their very love prevented them taking that care of her they should have taken.

Her father had become almost like the tables and chairs in the parlour, only much less useful and more difficult to move. What little natural power he had ever had, could not be said to have been impaired by age, for Lawrence Macdermot was not in years an old man – he was not above fifty; but a total want of energy, joined to a despairing apathy, had rendered him by this time little better than an idiot.

Very soon after his coming to his property Flannelly had become a daily and intolerant burthen to him. He had in his prime made some ineffectual fight against this man, – he had made some faint attempts rather to parry blows, than overcome his foe; but from the time that Keegan's cunning had been added to Flannelly's weight, poor Lawrence Macdermot had, as it were, owned himself thoroughly vanquished for this world. Since that time he had done nothing but complain.

Joined to all this – and no wonder – he had taken to drink, – not drinking in the would-be-jolly, rollicking, old Irish style, as his father had done before him; but a slow, desperate, solitary, continual melancholy kind of suction, which left him never drunk and never sober. It had come to that, that if he were left throughout the morning without his whiskey and water, he would cry like a child; whatever power he had of endurance would leave him, and he would sit over the fire whining the names of Flannelly and Keegan, and slobbering over his wrongs and persecutions, till he had again drank himself into silence and passive tolerance.

Not only his hair and his whiskers, but his very face had become grey from the effect of the miserable, torpid life he led. He looked as if he were degenerating into the grub even before he died.

The only visible feeling left to him was a kind of stupid family pride, which solely, or chiefly, showed itself in continual complaints that the descendants and the present family of the Macdermots should be harrowed and brought to the ground by such low-born ruffians as Flannelly and Keegan.

It is odd that though Feemy often thwarted him and Thady rarely did, – and though Thady was making the best fight he could, poor fellow, for the Macdermots and Ballycloran, – the old man always seemed cross to him, and never was so to her. May be he spent more of his time with her, and was more afraid of her; but so it was; and though he certainly loved her better than anything, excepting Ballycloran and his own name, it will be owned that he was no guide for a girl like Feemy, possessed of strong natural powers, stronger passions, and but very indifferent education.

And from circumstances her brother was not much better. He had been called on at a very early age to bear the weight of the family. From the time of his leaving school he had been subjected to constant vexation; on the contrary, his pleasures were very few and far between; his constant occupation for many years had been hunting for money, which was not to be got. If his heart could have been seen, the word "Rent" would have been found engraved on it. Collecting the rent, and managing the few acres of land which the Macdermots kept in their own hands, were his employments, and hard he laboured at them. He was therefore constantly out of the house; and of an evening after his punch, he spent his hours in totting and calculating, adding and subtracting at his old greasy book, till he would turn into bed, to forget another day's woes, and dream of punctual tenants and unembarrassed properties. Alas! it was only in his dreams he was destined to meet such halcyon things. What could such a man have to say to a young girl that would attract or amuse her? Poor Thady had little to say to any one, except in the way of business, and on that subject Feemy would not listen to him. She constantly heard her father growling about his Carrick foes, and her brother cursing the tenants; but she had so long been used to it, that now she did not think much of it. She knew they were very poor, and that it was with difficulty she now and again got the price of a new dress from her brother; and when she did, it was usually somewhat in this fashion: Pat Kelly owed two years' rent or so, may be five pounds. Mrs. Brennan, the Mohill haberdasher, took Pat's pig or his oats in liquidation of the small bill then due to her from Ballycloran, and Feemy's credit at the shop was good again about to the amount of another pig. It was very rarely ready money found its way to Ballycloran.

On the whole, therefore, she paid little or no attention to the family misfortunes. She had used to confine her desires to occasional visits to Carrick or Mohill; for they still possessed an old car, and sometimes she could take the old mare destined to perform the whole farming work of Ballycloran; and sometimes she coaxed the loan of Paul for a day from Father John; and if she could do that, could always have a novel from Mohill, and see her friends the Miss McKeons at Drumsna two or three times a week, she was tolerably contented and good-humoured. But of late things were altered. Feemy had got a lover. Her novels ceased to interest her; she did not care about going to Carrick, and the Miss McKeons were neglected. It was only quite lately, however, that Feemy had begun to show signs of petulance and ill temper. When her father grumbled she left him to grumble alone, and if her brother asked her to do any ordinary little thing about the house, she would show her displeasure. She did not attend either so closely as she used to do to Bidy and Katty, the two kitchen girls, and consequently the fare at Ballycloran grew worse than ever.

Larry always grumbled, but no one marked his grumbling more than heretofore. Thady had too many causes of real suffering to grumble much at trifles, and usually passed over his sister's petulance in silence: but the truth was, her lover was sometimes cross to her.

Soon after Father John and young Macdermot had turned their backs on Ballycloran, Pat Brady, who, stood smoking his pipe, and idly leaning against the gate-post from which, even then, the gate was half wrenched, heard the sounds of Captain Ussher's horse on the road from Mohill. As soon as he came up, Brady very civilly touched his hat: "Well then long life to you, Captain Ussher, and it's you enjoys a fine horse, and it'd be a pity you shouldn't have one. You war with the Carrick harriers last Monday, I'll go bail."

"No doubt, Mr. Brady, you would go bail for that or anything else; but I was not there."

"You war not! faix but you war in the wrong then, Captain, for they had fine sport, right away behind Lord Lorton's new farms – right to Boyle. I wonder yer honer warn't in it."

"Seeing you know very well I was arresting prisoners up at Loch Sheen, Mr. Brady, your wonder is wonderful."

"Sorrow a taste I knew then, Captain. I did hear at the fair poor Paddy Smith was in throuble about a thrifle of sperits, or the like. But I didn't know yer honer'd been at it yerself. If the boys, ye know, will be going agin the laws, why in course they'd be the worse of it, when they is took."

"A very true and moral reflection. Was it a note you were taking to Mr. Keegan's at Carrick from the master, about the money perhaps, on Monday evening?"

"Me in Carrick Monday evening!" said Pat, a little confused; "so I war shure enough, yer honer, jist to buy the mate for the supper as is to be for McGovery's marriage. You've heard in course, Captain, that Mary – that's my sister – is to be married to Denis McGovery to-morrow night?"

"Why I didn't see it in the Dublin newspapers."

"Oh, yer honer; the newspapers indeed! Perhaps, Captain, you'd not think it too much throuble to come down; Miss Feemy of course has promised Mary to be there," – and Pat attempted a facetious grin.

"I shall be most proud, Mr. Brady," and the Captain made a mock bow; "but do they sell mutton at Mr. Keegan's little office door?"

Here Brady again seemed confused, and muttered something about Keegan's boy and messages: but he was evidently annoyed.

"Shall I take yer honer's horse round then?" said he; and Ussher dismounted without saying anything further, and ran up the stone steps, at the top of which Feemy opened the hall door for him.

There were two sitting-rooms at Ballycloran, one at each side of the hall; in that on the right as you entered the family breakfasted, dined, and in fact lived; and here also Larry sat throughout the day sipping his grog, and warming his shins over the fire from morning to night. He would every now and again walk to the hall door; and if it were warm, he would slowly creep down the steps, and stand looking at the trees and the lawn till he was cold, when he would creep back again.

The other room seemed to be the exclusive property of Feemy; here she made and mended her clothes, and sometimes even washed and ironed them too; here she read her novels, received the two Miss McKeons, and thought of Captain Ussher; and here also it was, that he would tell her all the soft things which had filled her young heart, and made her dislike Ballycloran.

"Well, Myles," she said as soon as he was in the room, and before the door was shut, "where were you all this time, since Sunday?" and she stood on tiptoe to give him the kiss which she rather offered than he asked. "Who have you got in Mohill then that keeps you away from Feemy? It's Mary Cassidy now; what business had you shopping with Mary Cassidy?"

"And was I shopping with Mary Cassidy, Feemy? 'deed then I forget it. Oh yes, it was fair-day yesterday, and I saw them all in at Brennan's."

"And what did you want at Brennan's, Myles?" said she, playfully shaking his shoulder with her hand; "it's talking to that pretty girl in the shop you're after."

"Oh, of course, Feemy; I was making love to the three Miss Cassidys, and Jane Thompson, and old widow Brennan at once. But why was I there, you say? why then, I was just buying this for Mary Cassidy, and I wanted your opinion, my pet;" and he took from his pocket some article of finery he had bought for his mistress.

"Oh, Myles, how good of you! but why do you be squandering your money; but it is very pretty," and Feemy put the collar over her shoulders.

"Don't toss it now, or Mary Cassidy won't take it from me, and then it would be left on my hands, for Mrs. Brennan wouldn't take it back anyhow," and he put out his hand for the article.

"No fear, Myles; no fear," said the laughing girl, running round the table. "It won't be left on your hands; I'll wear it to-morrow at Mary Brady's wedding."

"But you won't keep it from me without paying me, Feemy?"

"Oh, paying you, Captain Ussher; oh, I'll pay you, bring in your bill;" – and she came round to him, and he took her in his arms and kissed her. Then at least he seemed fondly attached to her.

Her lover was evidently in one of his best humours, and Feemy was quite happy. I won't further violate their conversation, as it is not essential to the tale, and was much such as those conversations usually are.

Feemy told her lover of the wedding, and he told her that he had already been invited, and had promised to go; and then she was more happy, for Feemy dearly loved a dance, though it was only a jig at a country wedding; but a dance with her lover would be delightful; she had only danced with him twice. On the first of these occasions she had met him at a grand gala party, at Mrs. Cassidy's, the wife of Lord Birmingham's agent in Mohill, where first Captain Ussher had made up his mind that Feemy Macdermot was a finer girl than pretty little Mary Cassidy, though perhaps not so well educated; and once again at a little tea-party at Mrs. McKeon's, which had been got up on purpose by Feemy's friends, to ask her husband as was to be – when first people said it was a settled thing. Oh! that was a happy night to Feemy, for her friends then all thought that her intimacy with Ussher was as good a thing as could be wished for; and when Feemy danced the whole night with him, the Miss McKeons all thought what a happy girl she was; – and that night she was happy. Then he first told her she should be his wife, and swore that he never had loved, and never would love any but her; and oh, how truly she believed him! Why should she not? was not she happy to love him, and why should not he be as much so to love her? If any one had whispered a word of caution to her, how she would have hated the whisperer! But there was no one to whisper caution to Feemy, and she had given all she had – her heart, her love, her obedience, her very soul – to him, without having any guarantee that she really had aught in return.

It was not because she began to doubt her lover that she was now occasionally fretful and uneasy. No; the idea to doubt him never reached her, but nevertheless she felt that things were not quite as they should be.

He seldom talked of marriage though he said enough of love; and when he did, it was with vague promises, saying how happy they would be when she was his wife, how much more comfortable her home would be, how nicely she would receive her friends in Mohill. These, and little jokes about their future *ménage* in a married state, were all he had ever said. She never asked him – indeed, she did not dare to ask; she did not like to press him; and Captain Ussher had a frown about him, which, somehow, Feemy had already learnt to fear.

He treated her too a little cavalierly, and her father and brother not a little. He ridiculed openly all that with her, hitherto, had been most sacred – her priest and her religion. She was not angry at this; she was hardly aware of it; and, in fact, was gradually falling into his way of thinking; but the effect upon her was the same – it made her uncomfortable. A girl should never obey her lover till she is married to him; she may comply with his wishes, but she should not allow herself to be told with authority that this or that should be her line of conduct.

Now Feemy had so given herself up to her lover, that she was obedient to him in all things; to him, even in opposition to her brother or her priest, and consequently she was to a degree humiliated even in his eyes. She did not feel the degradation herself, but there was still a feeling within, which she could not define, which usually destroyed her comfort.

Now, however, Myles was in so good a temper, and seemed so kind to her, that that, and her little prospect of pleasure, did make her happy.

She was sitting in this humour on the old sofa close to him, leaning on his arm, which was round her waist, when she heard her brother's footstep at the hall door.

"Here's Thady, Myles; sit off a bit."

Myles got up and walked to the window, and Thady entered with anything but a gay look; he had just left Father John.

"Well, Thady?" said Feemy.

"How are you, Thady, this morning?" said the Captain, offering his hand, which the other reluctantly took.

"Good morning, Captain Ussher."

"Did you hear, Thady, I caught another of your boys with malt up at Loch Sheen last Monday, – Joe Reynolds, or Tim Reynolds, or something? He's safe in Carrick."

"I did hear you got a poor boy up there, who was in it by chance, and took him off just for nothing. But he's no tenant of ours, so I have nothing to do with it; his brother Joe lives on our land."

"Do you mean to tell me, Thady, you believe all that d – d nonsense about knowing nothing about it; and he sitting there in the cabin, and the malt hadn't been in it half an hour?"

"I don't know what you call d – d nonsense, Captain Ussher; but I suppose I may believe what I please without going to Carrick Gaol too for it."

"Believe what you please for me, Master Thady. Why you seem to have got out of bed the wrong side this morning; or have you and Keegan been striking up some new tiff about the 'rints?"

"Mr. Keegan's affairs with me arn't any affairs of yours, Captain Ussher. When I ask you to set them right, then you can talk to me about them."

"Hoity toity, Mr. Macdermot; your affairs, and Mr. Keegan's affairs, and my affairs! Why I suppose you'll be calling me out next for taking up a d – d whining thief of a fellow because his brother is a tenant of your father's, and send me the challenge by Mr. Brady, who invited me to a party at his house just now."

Thady said nothing to this, but stood with his back to the fire, looking as grim as death.

"Oh, Captain Ussher!" said Feemy, "you wouldn't be quarrelling with Thady about nothing? You know he has so much to bother him with the rents and things. Will you come to Mary's wedding to-morrow, Thady?"

"Quarrelling with him! 'Deed then and I will not, but it seems he wants to quarrel with me."

"When I do want to quarrel with you, Captain Ussher, – that is, should I ever want, – you may be quite certain it's not in a round about way I'll be telling you of it."

"No, don't, my boy, for ten to one I shouldn't understand what you'd be after. Didn't you say you'd walk up to Aughermore, Miss Macdermot?"

"I'm sorry to baulk Feemy of her walk, Captain Ussher, if she did say so. It's not very often I ask her to put herself out for me; but this afternoon, I shall feel obliged to her not to go."

Captain Ussher stared, and Feemy opened wide her large bright eyes; for what reason could her brother desire her to stay in doors?

"What can you want me in the house for, Thady, this time of day?"

"Well never mind, Feemy; I do want you, and you'll oblige me by staying."

Feemy still had on the new collar, and she pulled it off and threw it on the table; she evidently imagined that it had something to do with her brother's unusual request. She certainly would not have put it on in that loose way, had she thought he would have seen it; but then he so seldom came in there.

"Well, Captain Ussher," she at last said slowly, "I suppose then I can't go to Aughermore to-day."

Captain Ussher had turned to the window as if not to notice Thady's request, and now came back into the middle of the room, as if Feemy's last sentence had been the first he had heard on the subject.

"Oh! you have changed your mind, then," said he; and his face acquired the look that Feemy dreaded. "Ladies, you know, are at liberty to think twice."

"But, Thady, I did wish to go to Aughermore particularly to-day; wouldn't this evening or to-morrow do?"

"No, Feemy," and Thady looked still blacker than Myles; "this evening won't do, nor to-morrow."

"Well, Captain Ussher, you see we must put it off," and she looked deprecatingly at her lover.

His answering look gave her no comfort; far from it, but he said, "I see no must about it, but that's for you to judge; perhaps you should ask your father's leave to go so far from home."

This was a cruel cut at all the fallen family, the father's incapacity, the sister's helplessness, and the brother's weak authority. Feemy did not feel it so, she felt nothing to be cruel that came from

Ussher; but Thady felt it strongly, he was as indignant as if he had lived all his life among those who thought and felt nobly, but, poor fellow, he could not express his indignation as well.

"My sister, Captain Ussher, has long been left her own mistress to go in and out as she plazes, without lave from father, mother, or brother; better perhaps for her that she had not! God knows I have seldom stopped her wishes, though may be not often able to forward them. If she likes she may go now to Aughermore, but if a brother's love is anything to her, she'll stay this day with me."

Feemy looked from one to the other; she knew well by Myles' look, that he still expected her to go, and strange as it may be, she hardly dared to disobey him; but then her brother looked determined and sadly resolute, and it was so unusual in him to speak in that way.

"Well, Miss Macdermot," said Ussher, seeing he could not prevail without causing an absolute break with Thady, "your brother wants you to count the rent for him. I'm glad he has received so much; it must be that, I presume, for he seldom troubles himself on much else, I believe."

"I do what I have to do, and must do; God knows its throuble enough. Do you go and do the same; even that, bad as it is, is better than amusing my sister by laughing at me."

"Oh, Thady, how can you be saying such things! you see I am staying for you, and why can't you be quiet?"

Thady made no reply; the Captain twirled his hat, and ceremoniously bowing to the lady, took his leave.

Thady had screwed his courage to the sticking point while the Captain was the foe with whom he had to contend, and he had carried on the battle manfully while he spoke to Feemy in the Captain's presence; but to tell the truth, when he heard the clatter of his horse's feet he almost wished him back again, or that Feemy was away with him to Aughermore. He was puzzled how to begin; he could not think what he was to say; was he to quarrel with his sister for having a lover without telling him? was he to put it on the ground that her lover was a Protestant? That would have been the easiest line, but then Father John had especially barred that! Was he to scold her because her lover would not marry her at once? That seemed unreasonable. It had never occurred to him, in his indignation, to think of these difficulties, and he now stood with his back to the fire, looking awfully black, but saying nothing.

"Well, Thady, what is it I'll be doing for you, instead of going to Aughermore this morning?" at last said Feemy, the first to begin the disagreeable conversation.

When Thady looked up, thinking what to answer to this plain speech, his eye, luckily for him, fell on the new Mohill collar.

"Where were you getting that collar, Feemy?"

"And are you afther making me stay at home all the blessed day, and sending Captain Ussher all the way back to Mohill, and he having come over here by engagement to walk with me," – this was a fib of Feemy's, – "and all to ask me where I got a new collar?"

"May be I was, Feemy, and may be I wasn't; but I suppose there isn't any harum in my asking the question, or in you answering it?"

"Oh no, not the laist; only it ain't usual in you to be asking such questions."

"But if there's no harum, I ask it now; where were you getting the collar?"

"Well, you're very queer; but if you must know, Captain Ussher brought it with him from Mohill."

"And if you wanted a parcel from Mohill, why couldn't you let Brady bring it, who is in it constantly, instead of that upstart policeman, who'd think it more condescension to bring that from Mohill, than I would to be carrying a sack of potatoes so far."

"There then you're wrong; the policeman, as you're pleased to call him, thinks no such thing."

"Well, Feemy, but did you bid him bring it, or did he bring it of his own accord?"

Feemy could now shuffle no longer, so blushing slightly, she said, "Well, if you must know then, it was a present; and there's no such great harm in that, I suppose."

Here Thady was again bothered; he really did not know whether there was any harm in it or not; a week ago he certainly would have thought not, but he was now inclined to think that there was; but he was not sure, and he sadly wished for Father John to tell him what to do.

"Well, Thady, now what was it you were wanting of me?" – and then after a pause, she added, her courage rising as she saw her brother's falling: "Was it anything about Captain Ussher?"

"Yes, it was."

"Well?"

"Is there anything between you and he, Feemy?"

"What do you mean by between us, Thady?" and Feemy made a little fruitless attempt to laugh.

"Well then; you're in love with him, ain't you? there now, that's the long and the short."

"Supposing I was, why shouldn't I?"

"Only this, Feemy, he's not in love with you."

This put Feemy's back up, "'Deed then, it's little you know about it, for he just is; and I love him too with all my heart, and that's all about it; and you might have found that out without sending him back to Mohill."

"I wish then he'd stay at Mohill, and that I might never see him over the door at Ballycloran again!"

"That's kind of you, Thady, after what I just told you; but don't tell him so, that's all."

"But it's just what I mane to tell him, and what I shall go over to Mohill on purpose to tell him, to-morrow."

"Good gracious, Thady! and for why?"

"For why, Feemy! because I still want to see my father's daughter an honest woman, though she may be soon a beggar; because I don't want to see my sister crouching under a blackguard's foot; because I don't want the worst disgrace that can happen a family to blacken the name of Macdermot!"

Feemy was now really surprised; fear at her brother's strange words brought out at once what was ever most present in her mind.

"Oh, heavens, Thady! sure we're to be married."

It must be remembered that this was not an interview between a fashionable brother and an elegant sister, both highly educated, in which the former had considered himself called upon to remonstrate with the latter for having waltzed too often with the same gentleman, and in which any expression of actual blame would highly offend the delicacy of the lady. Thady and his sister had not been accustomed to delicacy; and though she was much shocked at his violence, she hardly felt the strong imputation against herself, as she had so good an answer for it. She therefore exclaimed.

"Oh heavens, Thady, sure we're to be married."

"Well, now, Feemy, jist listen to me. If Captain Ussher manes to marry you, under all circumstances, I don't know you could do better. I don't like him, as how should I, for isn't he a Protestant, and a low-born, impudent ruffian? but you do like him, and I suppose, if he marries you, it's because he likes you; if not, why should he do it? And when once married, you'll have to fight your own battles, and no joke it'll be for either of you. But if, as I'm thinking, he has no idea on arth of marrying you, no more than he has of Mary Brady, I'll be d – d if I let him come here fooling you, though you haven't sperit enough to prevent it yourself. We're low enough already, Feemy, but for heaven's sake don't be making us lower yet!"

"Well, now, Thady, is that all? and you're wrong then, as you always are, for Captain Ussher has asked me to have him, just as plain as I'm telling you now; and he's no ruffian. It is you're the ruffian to him, snubbing him when he speaks good-naturedly to you. And as for being a Protestant, I suppose he's none the worse for that, if he's none the better. I don't know why you do be hating him so, unless it's because I love him."

"I'm not talking about my hating him, or loving him. If he's honest to you, I'll neither say nor do anything to cross him. But if he does mane to marry you, it's time he did it; that's all. Did he say anything to father about it?"

"What should he be saying to him? Of course, dada would have no objection."

"And would you then be letting him come here as he likes, and settling nothing, and just maning to marry you or not, as he likes, and you and he talked of over the counthry these four months back, and he talking about you, jist as his misthress, through the counthry?"

Feemy was now regularly roused.

"That's a lie for you, Thady! and a black lie – about your own sister too, to say he ever spoke a bad word against me! Pat Brady was telling you that perhaps. It's what he never did, or would do; for he's as true as you are false; and it's from jealousy, and just from your hate, because everybody else likes him, makes you say it. And now we are on it, Thady, I'll just tell you one thing: I'm not to do what you tell me, nor will I, for I'm much more able to manage myself than you are for me. And for all you say about him, I'd attend more to one word from Myles, than to all you say, if you stood talking till night; and talk you may, but I'll not stand and hear you!" And she bounced out of the room, slamming the door in a manner which made Mr. Flannelly's building shake to the foundation.

Poor Thady was signally defeated. There he stood with his back to the fire, his old and dirty hat pulled low over his brow, his hands stuck into the pockets of his much worn shooting coat, his strong brogues and the bottoms of his corduroy trowsers covered with dirt and dry mould, with the same heavy discontented look about his face which he always now wore. He certainly appeared but a sorry Mentor for a young lady in a love affair! He felt that his sister despised him, the more from her being accustomed to the comparatively gentleman-like appearance and refined manners of her lover.

There he stood a long time without stirring, and so he stood in absolute silence. He had put his pipe down when first Captain Ussher left the room, and he had not resumed it, now even that he was alone. With Thady this was a sign that his heart was very full indeed; and so it was, full almost to breaking.

He had come there eager with two high feelings, love for his sister, real fond brotherly affection, and love and respect for his family name; he had wished to protect the former from insult and unhappiness, and to sustain the fallen respectability of the latter; and he had only been scoffed at and upbraided by the sister he loved. For he did love her, though little real communication had ever passed between them; he had always supposed that she loved him; he had taken it for granted, and had asked for no demonstrative affection; but her manner and her words now cut him very deep. He was not aware how very uncouth his own manner had been; that instead of reasoning with her gently he had begun by sneering at her lover, that he had taken the very course to offend her self-love, and that therefore Feemy was quite as convinced at the end of the meeting that she had a right to be angry, as he was that he was the injured party.

At any rate, there he stood perfectly baffled. His object had been to advise her, if Captain Ussher did not at once declare his purpose to her family, to put a stop to his further visits; and if she refused to comply with his advice, to tell her that he should himself ask Captain Ussher his intentions, and that if they were not such as he approved, he should inform him that he was no longer welcome at Ballycloran.

This had seemed, though disagreeable, straightforward and easy enough before the meeting; and now that it was over he could not think why he had not said exactly what he had come there to say. To give him his due, he blamed himself as much as he did his sister; he was very unhappy about it all, but he could not think how he had been so very stupid.

Had he lived more in the world, he would have had recourse to the common resort in cases where speech is difficult; he would have written a letter to his sister. But this never occurred to him; even had it done so, Thady's epistolary powers were very small, and his practice very limited; a memento to the better sort of tenants, as to their "thrifle of rint," or a few written directions to Pat

Brady, about seizing crops and driving pigs, was its extent; and these were written on pieces of coarse paper, which had been ruled for accounts, and were smeared rather than fastened with very much salivated wafers. His writing too was very slow, and his choice of language not extensive; a letter on such a subject from a brother to a sister should be well turned, impressive, terse, sententious: that scheme would never have done for Thady.

What then should he do? if he were to go to Captain Ussher now, and tell him to discontinue his visits, he would only be asked if he had his sister's authority for doing so, or his father's. Should he get, or try to get, his father's authority? The old man he knew was moping over the parlour fire, half drunk, half stupid, and half asleep.

After thinking over it alone there in Feemy's sitting-room for an hour, he determined that all he could do was to go back again to his only friend, Father John.

When Feemy slammed the door, as she did at the end of her violent oration above given, she betook herself to her bedroom, and began to cry.

Though she had so well assumed the air of an injured person, and had to the best of her abilities vindicated her absent lover, still she was very unhappy at what her brother had said to her. Nor, in truth, was it only because Thady had expressed himself unkindly about Myles, but she also could not but feel that there was something wrong. She never for a moment believed that her lover spoke loosely of her behind her back, for she never for a moment doubted his love; but she did feel that it would be more comfortable if Myles would speak, or let her speak to some of her family, if it were only to her father. Though she knew so little of what was usual in the world, still she felt that even his sanction, stupid, tipsy, unconscious as he was, would give to her attachment a respectability which it wanted now; and if a day for her marriage were fixed, though circumstances might require that it should be ever so distant, she would be able to talk much more satisfactorily of her prospects to Mary Cassidy, and the Miss McKeons. Besides, if she could bring matters to this state, she could so triumphantly prove that Thady was wrong in his unhandsome conjectures, and she determined before she had done thinking on the subject, to give Myles a few hints as to her wishes. The next day he would be sure to come to Ballycloran on his way to McGoverly's wedding, and he would probably ask why Thady had prevented their walk to Aughermore; and then she would have a good opportunity of saying what she wanted.

CHAPTER VII

THE PRIEST'S DINNER PARTY

Thady, as I said, walked off to the priest's cottage, to partake of the relics of a goose, and seek counsel of his friend; but it was not Father John's dinner hour yet, and he found no one in but Judy McCan. He walked into the priest's little parlour, and sat down to wait for him, again meditating on all the evils which hung over his devoted family, and sitting thus he at length fell fast asleep.

Here he slept for above an hour, when he was awakened by the door opening behind him, and in jumping up to meet Father John, as he thought, he encountered the lank and yellow features, much worn dress, and dirty, moist hand of Father Cullen.

"Were you sleeping, then, Mr. Thady, before Father McGrath's fire? 'deed, then, I dare say you've been walking a great sight, for you look jaded. I'm not that fresh myself, for I've been away to Loch Sheen, to widow Byrne's. Bad luck to the cratures, there's nothing but sick calls now, and my heart's broken with them, so it is."

Thady's only answer to this was, "How are you, Father Cullen?" He wished him back at Maynooth.

"Well, I hope Father McGrath isn't far off thin," and he looked at a watch nearly as big as a church clock, "for I'm very hungry, and, my! it's only twenty minutes to six –"

This gave Thady the very unwelcome intelligence that Father Cullen meant to dine at the cottage.

"And now the pony's lamed undher me, I had to walk all the way to Loch Sheen, in the dirt and gutther."

Thady's mind was full of one object, and he could not interest himself about the curate's misfortunes in the lameness of his pony and the dirt of his walk.

"And bad manners to them Commissioners and people they sent over bothering and altering the people! Couldn't we have our own parishes as we like, and fix them ourselves, but they must be sending English people to give us English parishes, altering the meerings just to be doing something? You know, Thady, the far end of Loch Sheen up there?"

"Yes, Father Cullen, I know where Loch Sheen is."

"Well, that used to be Cashcarrigan parish; and Father Comyns – that's the parish priest in Cash – don't live not two miles all out from there; and the widow Byrne's is six miles from where I live out yonder, if it's a step, and yet they must go and put Loch Sheen into this parish."

Father Cullen's misfortunes still did not come home to Macdermot; he sat looking at the fire.

"There's that poor ould woman, too, up there, left to starve by herself, the crature, now they've gone and put her two sons into gaol. I wonder what the counthry 'll be the better for all them boys being crammed into gaol. I wish they'd kept that Ussher down in the north when he was there; he's fitter for that place than County Leitrim, any how."

"What's that about Captain Ussher, Father Cullen?"

"Shure didn't you hear he put three more of the boys into gaol Tuesday evening, and one of them off Drumleesh?"

"Heard it! of course I heard it; and more than I'll be hearing it too. Oh, Father Cullen, wherever that Ussher came from, I wish they'd kept him there."

Thady's earnestness in this surprised the young priest.

"Why, I thought you and he were so thick; but I'm glad it's not so much so. Why would the like of you be making so free with a Protestant like him? Did you break with him, then, Mr. Thady?"

Macdermot by no means desired to admit Father Cullen into the conference about his sister; the strong expression of his dislike had fallen from him as it were involuntarily: he therefore turned off the question.

"Oh no; break with him! why would I break with him? But you can't think I like to see him dhiving the boys into the gaol like sheep to the shambles. What business had they sending Tim Reynolds into gaol? There'll be noise enough in the counthry about that yet, Father Cullen."

"There'll never be noise enough about that, and such like cruelties till he and all of the sort is put down intirely in the counthry; and that'll only be when the counthry rights herself as she should do, and, by God's blessing, will still; and that you and I, Mr. Thady, may live to see it –"

The further expression of Father Cullen's favourite political opinions was here interrupted by Father John's quick, heavy step on the little gravel walk.

"Well, boys," said he, sitting down and pulling off his dirty gaiters and shoes before the fire, "waiting for the goose, eh? Egad, when I found what time it was, I thought you'd be bribing Judy to divide it between you. Cullen, you look awfully hungry; I'd better set you at the ham first, or you'll make terrible work at the half bird – for a half is all there is for the three of us. Well, Judy, let's have the stew."

The dinner was now brought in, and Father John talked joyously, as though nothing was on his mind; and yet we know the sad conversation he had had with young Macdermot that very morning, and that Thady was there chiefly to tell the upshot of his mission, – and Thady's face was certainly no emblem of good news. He had also had a sad morning's work with his curate, his parishioners were in great troubles, the times were very bad on them; many of them were in gaol for illegal distillation; more were engaged in the business, and were determined so to continue in open defiance of the police; many of them were becoming ribbonmen, or, at any rate, were joining secret and illegal societies. Driven from their cabins and little holdings, their crops and cattle taken from them, they were everywhere around desperate with poverty, and discontented equally with their own landlords and the restraints put upon them by government. All this weighed heavily on Father John's mind, and he strongly felt the difficulty of his own situation; but he was not the man to allow his spirits to master him when entertaining others in his own house. Had only Cullen or only Thady been there, he would have tuned his own mind to that of his guest; but as their cases were so different, he tried to cheer them both.

"Egad, Thady, here's another leg – come, my boy, we've still a leg to stand upon – Cullen has just finished one, and I could have sworn I ate the other yesterday. See, did Judy put one of her own in the hash —'*ex pede Herculem*'— you'd know it so any way by the toughness. Lend me your fork, Thady, or excuse my own. Well, when I get the cash from Denis's marriage, I'll get a carving-knife and fork from Garley's; not but what I ought to have one. Judy, where's the big fork?"

"Why, didn't yer riverence smash it entirely drawing the cork from the bottle of sherry wine ye got for Doctor Blake the day he was here about the dispinsary business?"

This little explanation Judy bawled from the kitchen.

"It is true for you, Judy; so I did, and bad luck to the day and Doctor Blake, too. That same day, Thady, cost me three good shillings for a bottle of bad wine, my old fork, and a leg of mutton and all; for I thought I'd be able to come round the doctor about his coming down to Drumsna here once a week regular; and when he'd ate my mutton and drank the sherry, he just told me it was not possible."

"He'd sooner be making may be twenty or thirty poor sick cratur's be walking five or six miles, than he'd ride over to see them; though it's little he'd think of the distance av he'd a fee to touch."

"For the matter of that, Cullen, I think yourself would go quicker to a wedding than you would to a sick call. 'Deed, and I know myself I like the part of the business where the cash is."

"In course, Mr. McGrath, I'd go with more sperit, but not a foot quicker, nor so quick. May be I'd grumble at the one and not at the other; but what the church tells me, I'll do, if it plazes God to let me."

"Oh, Cullen, you'd make one think I was admonishing you. A fine martyr he'd make, wouldn't he, Thady?"

Cullen, who took everything in downright earnest, clasped his dirty hands, and exclaimed.

"If the church required it, and it was God's will, I hope I would."

"Well, well, but it'll be just at present much more comfortable for all parties you should square round a little, and take your punch. Come, Thady, are you going to be a martyr, too? it's a heathenish kind of penance, though, to be holding your tongue so long. Come, my boy, you were to bring the ticket about the rent with you."

Thady opened his ears at the word rent, but before he'd time to make any suitable reply, Judy was moving the things, Father John was pulling back the table, and pushing Cullen into a corner by the fire.

"Now, Judy, the fire under the pump, you know; out with the groceries, – see, but have I any sugar, then?"

"Sorrow a bit of lump, but moist and plenty, Father John."

"Well, my boys, you must make your punch with brown sugar for once in your life; and what's the harm? what we want in sugar, we'll make up in the whiskey, I'll be bound. Judy, bring the tumblers."

Out came the tumblers – that is, two tumblers, one with a stand, the other with a flat bottom, and a tea-cup with a spoon in it. The tea-cup was put opposite Father John's chair, and the reverend father himself proceeded to pour a tolerable modicum of spirits out of the stone jar into a good-sized milk jug, and placed it on the table.

"Isn't it queer, then, Thady, I can't get a bottle, or a decanter, or anything of glass to remain in the house at all? I'm sure I had a decanter, though I didn't see it these six months."

"And wouldn't it be odd if you did, Father John? wasn't it smashed last February?"

"Smashed! why, I think everything gets smashed."

"Well now, Mr. Thady, to hear his riverence going on the like of that," said the old woman, appealing to Macdermot; "and wasn't it himself sent the broth down in it to Widow Green the latter end of last winter, and didn't the foolish slip of a girl, her grand-dater, go to hait it over the hot coals for the ould woman, jist as it was, and in course the hait smashed the glass, and why wouldn't it, and the broth was all spilt? But isn't the jug just as good for the sperits, yer honers?"

"Well, well; boiling mutton broth over a turf fire, in my cut decanter! '*optat ephippia bos piger*.' That'll do, Judy, that'll do."

And the old woman retreated with a look of injured innocence.

Father John sniffed the whiskey. "'*Fumum bibere institutæ*;' it's the right smell of the smoke. Come, Cullen, make your punch; come, Thady, don't be sitting there that way;" – and he proceeded to make a most unpalatable-looking decoction of punch in his tea-cup, to which the moist sugar gave a peculiarly nasty appearance.

But all Father John's attempted jovialities and preparations for enjoyment could not dispel the sadness from Thady's face, or the settled solemnity from Father Cullen's visage; he never joked, and rarely conversed; when he did speak, it was usually to argue or declaim; and Thady, even in his best times, was but a sorry companion for such a man as Father John. There the three of them sat, with their eyes fixed on the fire, all drinking their punch, it is true, but with very little signs of enjoying it.

How long they remained thus, I am unable to say; but Father John was getting very tired of his company, when they were all three startled by a sharp rap at the hall door, and before they had had time to surmise who it was, Captain Ussher walked in.

Now, though neither Father John nor his curate were very fond of Ussher, they both were tolerably intimate with him; indeed, till lately, when the priest began to think the gallant Captain was playing his fair parishioner false, and the opinion was becoming general that he was acting the tyrant among the people, Father John had rather liked Ussher than not. He was lively; – and if

not well educated, he had some little general comprehension of which no others of those the priest knew around him could boast. He had met him first very frequently at Ballycloran, had since dined with him at Mohill, and had more than once induced him to join the unpretending festivities of the cottage. There was nothing, therefore, very singular in Captain Ussher's visit; and yet, from what was uppermost in the mind of each of the party, it did surprise them all.

Father John, however, was never taken aback. "Ah, my darling, and how are you? come to see we are drinking parliament and not cheating the king."

Although they were drinking potheen, and though Ussher might, doubtless, have put a fine of from five to fifty pounds on the priest for doing so, Father John knew that he was safe. It was at that time considered that no revenue officer would notice potheen if he met it, as a guest. People are rather more careful now on the matter.

"Oh, Father John, I never bring my government taster with me when I am not on service; but if you've any charity, give me an air of the fire and a drop of what's going forward, all for love. How are you, Father Cullen?" and he shook hands with the curate. "How are you, Thady, old boy?" and he slapped Macdermot on the back as though they were the best friends in the world.

"How are you, Captain Ussher?" said the former, sitting down again as though the Captain's salutation were a signal for him to do so, and as if he did not dare do it before. Nor would he. Father Cullen had been told that he should stand up when strangers came into a room, – that it was a point of etiquette; and there he would have stood, though it had been ten minutes, if Ussher had not addressed him.

Thady did not get up at all; in fact, he did not know what to do or to say. He had been waiting anxiously, hoping that Father Cullen would go, and now the difficulties in his way were more than doubled.

Captain Ussher, however, took no notice of his silence; but, sitting down by Father John, began rubbing and warming his hands at the fire.

"Well, may I be d – d – begging your reverence's pardon – if this isn't as cold a night as I'd wish to be out in, and as dark as my hat. I say, Thady, this'll be the night for the boys to be running a drop of the stuff; there'd be no seeing the smoke now, anyhow. I was dining early at Carrick, and was getting away home as quick as I could, and my mare threw a shoe, luckily just opposite the forge down there; so I walked up here, Father John, and I told them to bring the mare up when she's shod."

"I'm glad the mare made herself so agreeable. Come, Judy, another tumbler here. By the by, then, Cullen, you must take to a tea-cup like myself – you're used to it; and Captain Ussher, you must take brown sugar in your punch, though you are not used to it. If I could make lump sugar for you, I'd do it myself directly."

"Oh, what's the odds! I'm so cold I shan't feel it;" and without any apology, he took poor Father Cullen's tumbler, who emptied the rest of his punch into a tea-cup.

"Well, Thady, and who do you think there was at Hewson's, but Keegan, your friend, you know? and a very pleasant fellow he is in his way: but how he does abuse you Catholics!"

"Well, Captain, and it's little good you'll hear any of us say of him, so that's all fair," said Father John.

"Take it that way, so it is; but I thought I heard some of you at Ballycloran say he was once a Catholic," said Ussher turning to Thady; "your father was telling me so I think."

He seemed determined to make Thady say something, but he only muttered an affirmative.

"Whoever said so, said wrong," began Father Cullen, rising up and putting his hands on the table, as if he was going to make a speech, "Whoever said so, said wrong. His father was a Catholic, and his mother was a Catholic, but he never was a Catholic; and how could he, for he never was a Christian," – and as he sat down he turned round his large obtruding eyes for approval.

"Oh, if you go on that high ground, you'll lose half your flock. We are glad to get them whether they are Christians or not, so long as they are good Protestants; so you see Keegan's good enough for us; and what could he do, poor fellow? if you wouldn't have him, he must come to us."

"Oh then, Father John, he's satisfied to say men become Protestants when they are no longer fit to be Catholics; was that the way yourself become a Protestant, Captain Ussher?"

"If I'm to be d – d for that, you know, it's my father's and mother's fault. I ain't like Keegan. I didn't choose the bad road myself."

"Oh, but isn't it for yourself to choose the good road? didn't you say you knew ours was the old church as it stood always down from Christ? If you do go wrong, you don't do it from ignorance, but you do it wilfully, and your sowl will howl in hell for it."

Captain Ussher only burst out laughing at this little outbreak, but Father John exclaimed, "Whist! whist! Cullen, none of that here: if you can take any steps towards sending Captain Ussher to heaven, well and good; but don't be sending him the other way while the poor fellow is over his punch."

"Never mind, Father John; I and Father Cullen are very good friends, and I think he'll hear me read my recantation yet; but he can't do it to-night, as here's my mare. I must go by Ballycloran, Thady; will you walk as far as the avenue with me?"

"Thank you, Captain Ussher, I'll not be going out of this just yet."

"Ah, well; I see you're out with me for the tiff we had this morning. He's angry now, Father John, just through my telling him he couldn't count all the money he'd received this week."

Father John observed the different manners of the young men towards each other, and from Thady's silence, was quite sure that matters had gone amiss between them.

"I didn't know it before then, Captain Ussher," said Thady; "but if you must know, I've business to spake to Father John about."

"Oh, well; open confession's good for the soul; I hope he'll absolve you for your bad temper."

"It's I am to get the absolution, if I can, this time; it's the old story. Captain, 'a thrifle of rint that's owing, nothing more.'"

"Well, it's all one to me: good night to you all," and Captain Ussher rode away home to Mohill.

Father Cullen reseated himself by the fire, and again assumed his gaze at the hot turf, just as he was before Ussher came in, and looked hopelessly immovable. Thady shifted about uneasily in his chair, then got up and walked round the room, and then sat down again; but the curate wouldn't move. At last Father John ended the affair by saying.

"Any more punch, Cullen?"

"Thank you, no, Sir."

"Then just go home, there's a good fellow."

Cullen rose up, not the least offended – nothing would offend him – took his hat, and did as he was bid. At last Thady and Father John were left alone.

"Now, my boy," said the priest, as he put on more turf, "we'll be alone for half an hour, or it is odd. Well, you spoke to Feemy?"

"I did spake to her, Father John; but I'd better have left it alone; for when I began she only snubbed me, and she told me she'd manage her own business; but oh Father John, I fear it will be a bad business! She told me she loved him, and that he had gone so far as asking her to marry him, and all that; but as far as I could learn, it was only just talk, that. But I could say nothing to her, for she got the better of me, and then flew out of the room, saying, it did not matter what I said."

And then Macdermot told the priest exactly what had passed; how headstrong Feemy was, how infatuated she was with her lover, and how regardless of what any one could say to her on the subject; "and now, Father John, what on 'arth shall I do at all, for the heart's broken in me, with all the troubles that's on me."

"I'll tell you what, Thady: don't be falling out with Captain Ussher – any way, not yet – for he may mean honestly, you know, though I own my heart doubts him; but take my advice, and don't be falling out with him yet. I'll see Feemy to-morrow, and if she won't hear or won't heed what her priest says to her, I'll tell you what we'll do. One woman will always listen to another, and I'll ask Mrs. McKeon to speak to Feemy, and tell her the character she'll be giving herself. Mrs. McKeon has daughters of her own, and when I remind her that Feemy has neither mother, nor sister, nor female friend of any kind, she'll not be refusing me this, disagreeable though it may be to her. And now, Thady, do you go home to bed, and pray to God to protect your sister; and, remember, my boy, that though you may have reason to be displeased with her, as I said, she has neither mother nor sister; she has no one to look to but yourself, and if there is much in her to forgive, there are many causes for forgiveness."

Thady silently shook hands with his friend, and went home; and whether or no he obeyed the priest's injunctions to pray for protection for his sister, that good man himself did not go to sleep till he had long been on his knees, imploring aid for her, and the numerous unfortunates of his flock.

CHAPTER VIII

MISS MACDERMOT AT HOME

At any rate the priest's admonitions had this effect on Thady, that when he came in to breakfast after his morning avocations, he spoke to Feemy, whom he had not seen since their stormy interview of yesterday, with kindness, and, for him, gentleness. But she seemed only half inclined to accept the proffered olive branch. Thady's morning salutations couldn't go far towards putting a young girl in good humour, for even now that he meant to be gracious it was only – "Well, Feemy, how's yourself this morning; and will you be ready for Mary Brady's wedding?" But her answer – "Oh, in course; will you take your breakfast there?" showed him that she had not forgiven his aspersions against her lover, and the breakfast passed over in silence, with the exception of Larry's usual growls. Thady, therefore, when he had swallowed his potatoes and milk, betook himself again to Pat Brady and the fields. Larry was left alone to sleep, if he could, over the fire, and Feemy betook herself to her own parlour, and proceeded to penetrate farther into the mysteries of the "Mysterious Assassin."

There she sat – a striking contradiction of that proverb which we so often quote with reference to young ladies, and which so seldom can be quoted with truth, "Beauty unadorned, adorned the most."

Ussher would not come till the evening, and her hair was therefore in papers – and the very papers themselves looked soiled and often used. Her back hair had been hastily fastened up with a bit of old black ribbon and a comb boasting only two teeth, and the short hairs round the bottom of her well-turned head were jagged and uneven, as though bristling with anger at the want of that attention which they required. She had no collar on, but a tippet of different material and colour from her frock was thrown over her shoulders. Her dress itself was the very picture of untidiness; it looked as though it had never seen a mangle; the sleeves drooped down, hanging despondingly below her elbows; and the tuck of her frock was all ripped and torn – she had trod on it, or some one else had done it for her, and she had not been at the trouble of mending it. It was also too tight, or else Feemy had not fastened it properly, for a dreadful gap appeared in the back, showing some article beneath which was by no means as white as it should be; – "but then, wasn't it only her morning frock?" In front of it, too, was a streaked mark of grease, the long since deposited remains of some of her culinary labours. Her feet were stuffed into slippers – truth compels me to say they would more properly be called shoes down at heel – her stockings were wofully dirty, and, horror of all horrors, out at the heels! There she sat, with her feet on the fender, her face on her hands, and her elbows on her knees, with her thumb-worn novel lying in her lap between them.

There she sat; how little like the girl that had eclipsed Mary Cassidy at the ball at Mohill! Poor though Feemy was, she could make out a dress, and a handsome dress, for such an occasion as that. Then every hair on her fine head had been in its place; the curls of her rich brown hair were enough to win the heart of any man; the collar round her fair neck had been beautifully washed and ironed, for her own hands had been at work on it half the morning; her white long gloves had been new and well fitting, and her only pair of silk stockings had been scrupulously neat; her dress fitted her fine person as though made by Carson, and she had walked as though she knew she need not be ashamed of herself. But now how great was the contrast!

No girls know better how to dress themselves than Irish girls, or can do it with less assistance or less expense; but they are too much given to morning dishevelment. If they would only remember that the change in a man's opinion and mind respecting a girl will often take place as quick as the change in her appearance, and that the contrast will be quite as striking, they would be more particular. And they never can be sure of themselves, take what precautions they will. Lovers will drop in at most unseasonable hours; they have messages to deliver, plans to propose, or leave to take. They can never be kept out with certainty, and all the good done by a series of brilliant evenings – satin dresses, new

flowers for the hair, expensive patterns, and tediously finished toilets – may be, and often is, suddenly counteracted by one untidy head, soiled dress, or dirty stocking.

I will, however, return to my story. There sat Feemy, apparently perfectly contented with her appearance and occupation, till a tap at the door disturbed her, and in walked Mary Brady, the bride elect.

"Well, Miss Feemy, and how's your beautiful self this morning?"

"And how are you, Mary, now the time is coming so near?"

Mary Brady was a very tall woman, being about the same height as her brother, thirty or thirty-three years of age, with a plain, though good-humoured looking face, over which her coarse hair was divided on the left temple. She had long ungainly limbs, and was very awkward in the use of them, and though not absolutely disagreeable in her appearance, she was so nearly so, that she would hardly have got married without the assistance of the "two small pigs, and thrifle of change," which had given her charms in the eyes both of Ginty and Denis McGoverly.

"Oh! Miss Feemy, and I'm fretting so these two days, that is, ever since Denis said it was to be this blessed day, – the Lord help me! – and I with it all on my shouldhers, and the divil a one to lend a hand the laste taste in life."

"Why, Mary, what can there be so much to do at all?"

"Och! then, hadn't I my white dress to get made, and the pair of sheets to get hemmed, for Denis said his'n warn't large enough for him and I," – and here the Amazon gave a grin of modesty, – "and you know it was part of the bargain, I was to have a pair of new sheets" (Denis had kept this back from Father John in his inventory of his bride's fortune); "and isn't there the supper to get ready, and the things, and the house to ready and all! – and then when I'd done that, it war all for nothing, for the wedding isn't to be at Pat's at all."

"The wedding not to be at Brady's, where is it to be then?"

"Oh, jist at Mrs. Mehan's shop below, at the loch."

"Oh, that's better still, Mary; we won't have so far to go in the mud."

"That's jist what the boys war saying, Miss; and there be so much more room, and there be so many to be in it, they couldn't all be in it, at all at all, at home. So you see we is to be married in the room inside, where the two beds is, and they is to come out of it, and the supper is to be there, Miss, you see, and the most of the dhrinking, and then we'll have the big kitchen comfortable to oursells for the music and the dancing. And what do you think! Pat has got Shamus na Pe'bria, all the ways out of County Mayo, him that makes all the pipes through the counthry, Miss; and did the music about O'Connell all out of his own head, Miss. Oh, it 'll be the most illigant wedding intirely, Miss, anywhere through the counthry, this long time back! When one is to be married, it's as well to do it dacently as not; arn't it, Miss?"

"Oh! that it is Mary, and yours 'll be quite a dash."

"Yours 'll be the next, you know, Miss Feemy, and that will be the wedding! But there's one thing that bothers me intirely."

"Well, out with it at once, Mary; I suppose you want to borrow the plates, and knives, and forks, and things?"

"Oh, that's in course, Miss Feemy; and it's very good in you to be offering them that way before I axed the loan of them at all; but that ain't all. You see I'm so bothered intirely with them big sheets, and they not half finished, and not a taste in life done to the cap of me yet, and the pratees and vegetables to get ready, and the things to dress, and not a sowl to lend me a hand at all, unless jist Mrs. Mehan's bit of a girl, and she's busy readying the rooms; and so, Miss Feemy, if you'd jist let Bidly slip up for the afternoon, – you know Katty could be doing for you down here, – and then, Miss, I'd be made intirely."

"Well, Mary, I suppose she must go up then; one thing's certain, you can't be getting married every day."

"Why no, Miss, that is sartain; for even if Denis were to die away like, – as in course he must one day, for he ain't quite so young now, – I would have to be waiting a little, Miss, before I got my second."

Mary Brady had been above thirty years getting one husband; she was, therefore, probably right as to the delay she might experience in obtaining a second.

"Well, Mary, Bidy may go with you."

"Long life to you, Miss; and about the things then you know – the plates, and the knives, and the glasses?"

"Oh! Mary, I'll not have you bringing the glasses down there at all; sure Mrs. Mehan's glasses enough of her own, and she selling whiskey. You may take the knives, and the forks, and the plates; though you must leave us enough for ourselves – and there an't so many of them in it after all."

"Well, Miss Feemy, that's very good of you now. And you'll be bringing your own sweetheart with you, won't you, dear? – and it's I'd be sorry you'd be at my wedding, and no one fit to dance with your father's daughter."

"Oh! if you mean Captain Ussher, he told me Pat asked him himself, and he'd sure be there."

"And who else should I main, alanna; sure isn't he your own beau, and ain't you to be married to him, Miss Feemy?"

"Nonsense, Mary."

"Well, now, but sure you wouldn't be ashamed of telling me – isn't you going to have him, Miss?"

"But musn't I wait to be asked, like another? – Sure, Mary, you didn't go asking Denis McGovery, did you?"

"No, then, indeed I didn't, darling; and glad enough he was to be axing me."

"Well, and musn't I be the same?"

"Oh! in course; but, Miss Feemy, the Captain's been up here coorting at Ballycloran now these six months; sure he axed you before this, Miss Feemy?"

Feemy was rather puzzled; she didn't like to say she was not engaged; she had a presentiment Mary Brady was fishing to find out if the report about the Captain's inconstancy was true, and as matters stood she did not exactly like to say that the affair was arranged.

"Well, Mary, then I'll tell you exactly how it is – but mind, I don't want it talked about yet for reasons; so you won't say anything about it if I tell you?"

"Och then! is it I? Sorrow a word in life shall any one be the better av me, and you know, Miss Feemy, I wouldn't tell you a lie for worlds."

"Well, then, it's jist this way – I and the Captain is engaged, but there's reasons for him why we couldn't be married just immediately; so you see that's why I don't want it talked about."

"Ah! well dear, I knew there was something av that in it, and a nice handsome gentleman like the Captain wouldn't be trating the likes of you that way."

"What way, Mary?"

"Why they do be saying – "

"Who do be saying?"

"Why, jist through the counthry, – people you know, Miss, who must always have their gag; they do be saying – that's only some of them you know, Miss, who don't be quite frindly to Ballycloran – that the Captain don't main to be married at all, and is only playing his tricks with you, and that he's a schamer. But I knew you wouldn't be letting him go on that way, and so I said to Pat."

Feemy didn't quite like all this – it was a corroboration of what her brother had said; for though the Captain had certainly promised to marry her, he had never thought it necessary to ask her. She knew the matter did not rest on a proper footing; and though she was hardly aware of it, she felt the indignity of the probability of being jilted being talked over by such persons as Pat Brady.

"Your brother, Mary, might have saved himself the trouble of telling lies about either the Captain or me; not of course that I care."

"Oh! it warn't Pat, Miss, said it, only he heard it you know, Miss, through the country."

"Well, it don't signify who said it, but don't you be repeating what I told you."

"Is it I, Miss? Sorrow a word, Miss, will any one hear from me av it. Would I tell a lie about it? But I'll be glad to see the day you're married, for that'll be the great wedding through the country. – Oh laws!"

This exclamation was not a part of the last speech, but was a kind of long-drawn, melancholy sigh, which did not take place for some minute or two after she had done speaking, during which time Feemy had been thinking of her own affairs, quite forgetful of Mary Brady and her wedding.

"My! Mary, what are you sighing about?"

"Well then, Miss Feemy, and isn't it a dreadful thing to be laving one's home, and one's frinds like, and to be going right away into another house intirely, Miss; and altogether the thoughts of what is the married life at all frets me greatly."

"Why, you needn't be married unless you like it, Mary."

"Oh! Miss Feemy, that's in course too; but then a young woman is behove to do something for her family."

"But you haven't a family, you know, Mary, now."

"No, but Miss Feemy alanna, you know the chances is I shall have now I'm to be married; and it's for them, the little innocents, I does it."

The strength of this argument did not exactly strike Feemy, but she thought it was all right, and said nothing.

"And then the troubles of a married life, darling, – supposing them is too many for me, what'll I do at all? I wonder, Miss Feemy, will I get any sleep at all?"

"Indeed, Mary, I was never married; but why shouldn't you sleep?"

"Deed then, Miss, I don't jist know, but they do be saying that Denis is so noisy at nights, a-shoeing all the cattle over again as he shod in the day, and counting the money; and you see, av he was hammering away the blessed live-long night that way, maybe I'd be hurted."

"It's too late for you to think of that now; but he'll be quieter than that, I should think, when you're with him."

"Maybe he will, Miss; and as you say, I couldn't dacently be off it now. But thin – oh laws! – I'm thinking what will poor Pat be doing without me, and no one in it at all to bile the pratees and feed the pigs – the craturs!"

"That's nonsense, Mary – you and he was always fighting; he'll have more peace in it when you're gone."

"That's thrue for you, Miss, sartanly, and that's what breaks the heart of me intirely. Too much pace isn't good for Pat, no how; he'll never do no good, you'll see, when he comes to have so much of his own way. 'Deed then, the heart's low within me, to be laving Pat this way!" And Miss Brady put the tail of her gown into the corner of her eye.

"But Mary, you'll have to be caring more for your husband now. I suppose you love Denis McGoverly, don't you? I'd never marry a man unless I loved him."

"Oh! that's in course – I do love him; why wouldn't I? for he has a nice little room all dacently furnished for any young woman to go into – besides the shop; and he never has the horses at all into the one we sleeps in, as is to be. And he's a handful of money, and can make any woman comfortable; and in course I love him – so I do. But what's the use of loving a man, if he's to be hammering away at a horseshoe all night?"

"Oh, they're making game of you – they are, Mary; depend upon it, when he's tired working all day, he'll sleep sound enough."

"Well, I s'poses he will; but now, Miss Feemy, I wonder is he a quiet sort of man? will he be fighting at all, do you think?"

"Really then, I can't tell; but even if he does, they say you can take your own part pretty well, when it's necessary."

"For the matter of that, so I can; and I don't mind a scrimmage jist now and again – sich as I and Pat have – av it's only to show I won't be put under; but they do say Denis is very sthrong. I don't think I'd ever have had him, av' I'd known afore he'd been so mortal sthrong."

"Well, that's all too late now for you to be talking of; and take my advice, Mary, don't be fighting with him at all if you can help it; for from what people say of him I think your husband, as will be, sticks mostly to his own way, and I don't think he'll let his wife interfere. But he's a hard-working man, and it'll be a great comfort to you that you'll never see your children wanting."

"Oh, the childhren, the little dears! it's of them I'm thinking. God he knows, it's chiefly along of them as makes me do it; but – oh laws! Miss, it's a dreadful thing to come over one all at once. But it's a great comfort anyway your letting Biddy come down to ready the mutton and pratees, and things; and so, Miss, as I've so much to do, you'll excuse my waiting any longer; and you and Mr. Thady and the Captain, – for I'm thinking the Masther won't be coming, – 'll not be down later than sivin, for Father John's to be in it at sivin exact."

"And who's to get the kiss, Mary?"

"Oh, Miss!"

"The Captain says he'll have a try for it anyway."

"Oh that'd be too much honor intirely, Miss. But av here isn't Father John coming up the avenue!"

And Mary hurried off into the realms under ground to secure the willing assistance of Biddy, and Father John's ponderous foot up the hall steps gave Feemy anything but a pleasant sensation. She was very fond of Father John too, but somehow, just at present she did not feel quite pleased to see him.

The doors were all open, and Father John walked into Feemy's boudoir. However, he was only Father John, and it wasn't her dress therefore that annoyed her; any dress would do for a priest.

After the common greetings were over, and Father John had asked after the family, and Feemy had surmised that it was either her father or her brother that he wished to see, the priest began his task.

"No, Feemy, my dear, it's not your father or your brother I want to see this turn, but just your own self." And Father John sat himself down by the fire. "I'm come just to have a little chat with you, and you musn't be angry with me for meddling with what, perhaps, you'll say was no business of mine."

This exordium made Feemy's heart palpitate, for she knew it must be about Captain Ussher, but she only said.

"Oh! no, Father John, I won't be angry with you."

"That's my darling, for you know it's only out of love for you and Thady that I'm speaking, and a real friend to you can't do you any harm, if after all you shouldn't take his advice."

"Oh! no, Father John, and I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you."

Father John himself hardly knew how to take the sting from the rebuke, which he was aware his mission could not but convey; and he was no less aware, that unless the dose had a little sugar in it, at any rate to hide its unprepossessing appearance even if it did not render it palatable, his patient would never take it.

"Thady, you know, was dining with me yesterday, and we were talking over Ballycloran and old Flannelly's money matters; and I was, you see, just making a bad tenant's excuses to him, and so on from one thing to another, till we got talking about you, Feemy; – in short, he didn't seem quite happy about you."

"I don't know I ever did anything to make him unhappy."

"No, it wasn't anything you had done to make him unhappy, but he is afraid you ain't happy in yourself; and Feemy, my dear, you should always remember, that though Thady is rough in his manners, and perhaps not at all times so gentle in his words as he should be, his heart is in the right place, – at any rate where you are concerned. Though maybe he doesn't say so as often as others might, he's a very fond brother to you."

"And I'm sure I'm always very fond of him – but then he's so queer; but, Father John, if I've offended Thady, I'll beg his pardon, for I'm sure I don't want to be out with him."

"I'm sure you don't, Feemy; but that's not exactly it either. Thady's not the least in life offended with you; he's not at all easy to take offence, at least not with you; but he doesn't think you are just at ease with yourself; and to come to the truth at once, he was telling me what passed between you yesterday."

Feemy blushed up to her paper curls, but she said nothing.

"Now, I'm thinking Thady didn't go about saying what he wanted to say yesterday, quite the way he should have done, and I am not sure I shall do it any better myself. But I thought it as well to step up, as I was certain you'd hear whatever your priest had to say to you."

"I don't think the better of Thady, though, for going and talking about me. If he'd only let me alone by myself I'd do well enough; it's all that talking does the harm, Father John."

Father John didn't exactly like to tell Feemy that girls in her situation were just the people that ought not to be left alone by themselves, – which probably means being left alone with some one of their own choosing; and that he was of opinion that she would not do very well if left alone in that way. That, however, was what he wished to convey to her.

"Oh, but, my dear, you must think better of Thady for wishing to protect you as well as he can, and you left alone so much yourself here. So you know," – and Father John even blushed a little as he said it, – "it's about this fine lover of yours we are speaking. Now, my dear, I've nothing whatever to say against Captain Ussher, for you know he and I are great cronies; indeed, it's only last night he was taking his punch with your brother and Cullen down at the cottage –"

"You weren't saying anything to Captain Ussher about me, Father John?"

"You may take your oath of that, my dear. I respect a lady's secret a great deal too much for that. No; I was only saying that he was down at the cottage last night, to prove that he and I are friends, and it's not out of any prejudice I'm speaking – about his being a Protestant, and all that; not but that I'd sooner be marrying you to a good Catholic, Feemy – but that's neither here nor there. But you've known him now a long time; it's now four months since we all heard for certain it was to be a match; and, to tell you the truth, my dear, people are saying that Captain Ussher doesn't mean anything serious."

"I think they'll dhrove me mad with their talk! And what good will it do for you and Thady to be coming telling me what they say?"

"This good, Feemy; if what they say is false and unfounded, as I am sure I hope it is, – and if you're so fond of Captain Ussher, – don't you think it would be as well to put an end to the report by telling your father and brother of your being engaged, and settling something about your marriage, and all that?"

"I did tell my brother I was engaged, Father John; what would you have?"

"I'll tell you what I'd have. I'd have Captain Ussher ask your father or brother's consent: there's no doubt, we all know, but he'd get it; but it's customary, and, in my mind, it would only be decent."

"So he will, I dare say; but mayn't there be reasons why he don't wish to have it talked about yet?"

"Then, Feemy, in your situation, do you think a long clandestine engagement is quite the thing for you; is quite prudent?"

"And how can it be clandestine, Father John, when you and Thady, and every one else almost, knows all about it?"

Feemy's sharpness was too much for Father John, so he had to put it on another tack.

"Well, Feemy, now just look at the matter this way, one moment: supposing now – only just for supposition – this lover of yours was not the sort of man we all take him to be, and that he was to turn out false, or inconstant; suppose now it turned out he had another wife somewhere else – "

"Oh, that's nonsense, you know, Father John."

"Yes, but just supposing it, – or that he took some vagary into his head, and changed his mind! You must have heard of men doing such things, and why shouldn't your lover as well as another girl's? We're all likely to be deceived in people, and why mayn't we be as well deceived in Captain Ussher, as others have been in those they loved as well? We'll all hope, and think, and believe it's not so; but isn't it as well to be on the safe side, particularly in so important a thing as your happiness, Feemy? You wouldn't like it to be said through the country that you'd been jilted by the handsome captain, and that you'd been thrown off by your lover as soon as he was tired of you?"

"And that's thrue for you, Father John; but Myles isn't tired of me, else why should he be coming up here to see me oftener than ever?"

"But it's that he never may be tired of you, Feemy; take my word for it, he'll respect you a great deal more if you'll show more respect to yourself."

"Well, Father John, and what is it you'd have me be doing?"

"Why, then, I'd just ask him to speak a word to Thady – just to propose himself in the regular way."

"But Thady hates him so."

"No; Thady don't hate him: he's only jealous lest Captain Ussher isn't treating you quite as he ought to do."

"But Thady is so queer in his manners; and I know Myles wouldn't like to be asking leave and permission to be courting me."

"But, Feemy, he must like it; and you shouldn't like your lover the more for thinking so little of your brother, or, for the matter of that, of yourself either."

"You know, Father John, I can't help what he thinks of Thady. As to his thinking of me, I'm quite satisfied with that, and I suppose that's enough."

Father John was beginning to wax wroth, partly because he was displeased with Feemy himself, and partly because Feemy answered him too knowingly.

"Well, then, Feemy, it'll be one of the two: either Captain Ussher will have to speak to Thady, and settle something about the marriage in a proper and decent way; or else Thady will be speaking to him. And now, which do you think will be the best?"

"It's not like you, Father John, to be making Thady quarrel with Captain Ussher. You know it'd come to a quarrel if Thady was to be spaking to Myles that way; and he would never think of doing so av you didn't be putting him up to it."

"And that's little like you, Feemy, to be saying that to your priest; telling me I put the young men up to be quarrelling: it's to save you many a heart-ache, and many a sting of sorrow and remorse; it's to prevent all the evil of unlawful love – bad blood, and false looks – that I've come here on a most disagreeable and thankless errand; and now you tell me I'd be putting the young men up to fight!"

Feemy had, by this time, become sullen, but she didn't dare go farther with her priest.

"I didn't say you'd be making them fight, Father John. I only said, if you told Thady not to be meddling with Myles, why, in course, they wouldn't be quarrelling."

"And how could I tell a brother not to meddle with his sister's honour, and reputation, and happiness? But now, Feemy, I'll propose another plan to you. If you don't think my advice on such a subject likely to be good – and very likely it isn't, for you see I never had a lover of my own – what do you say to your speaking to your friend, Mrs. McKeon, about it? Or, if you like, I'll speak to her; and then, perhaps, you won't be against taking her advice on the subject. Supposing, now, she was to speak to Captain Ussher – from herself, you know, as your friend – do you think he'd love the girl

that's to be his wife worse for having a friend that was willing to stand in the place of a mother to her, when she'd none of her own?"

"Why, I do think it would look odd, Mrs. McKeon meddling with it."

"Well, then, Feemy, what in the blessed name do you mean to do, if you won't let any of your friends act for you? I think you must be very much afraid of this lover of yours, when you won't allow any one speak to him about you. Are you afraid of him, Feemy?"

"Afraid of him? – no, of course I'm not afraid of him; but men don't like to be bothered about such things."

"That's very true; men, when they're false, and try to deceive young girls, and are playing their own wicked game with them, do not like to be bothered about such things. But I never heard of an honest man, who really wanted to marry a young woman, being bothered by getting her friends' consent. And you think, then, things should go on just as they are?"

"Now, Father John, only you've been scolding me so much, I'd have told you before. I mane to spake to Myles myself to-night, just to arrange things; and then I won't have Mrs. McKeon cocking over me that she made up the match."

"There's little danger of that kind, I fear, Feemy, nor would she be doing so; but if you are actually going to speak to Captain Ussher yourself to-night, I'll say no more about it now; but I hope you'll tell Thady to-morrow what passes."

"Oh, Father John, I won't promise that."

"Will you tell me, then, or Mrs. McKeon?"

"Oh, perhaps I'll be telling you, you know, when I come down to confession at Christmas; but indeed I shan't be telling Mrs. McKeon anything about it, to go talking over the country."

"Then, Feemy, I may as well tell you at once – if you will not trust to me, to your brother, or any friend who may be able to protect you from insult – nor prevail on your lover to come forward in a decent and respectable way, and avow his purpose – it will become your brother's duty to tell him that his visits can no longer be allowed at Ballycloran."

"Ballycloran doesn't belong to Thady, and he can't tell him not to come."

"That's not well said of you, Feemy; for you know your father is not capable of interfering in this business; but if, as under those circumstances he will do, Thady quietly and firmly desires Captain Ussher to stay away from Ballycloran, I think he'll not venture to come here. If he does, there are those who will still interfere to prevent him."

"And if among you all, that are so set up against him because he's not one of your own set, you dhrive him out of Ballycloran, I can tell you, I'll not remain in it!"

"Then your sins and your sorrows must be on your own head!"

And without saying anything further, Father John took his hat, and walked off. Feemy snatched her novel into her lap, to show how little what was said impressed her, and resumed her attitude over the fire. But she didn't read; her spirit was stubborn and wouldn't bend, but her reason and her conscience were touched by what the priest had said to her, and the bitter thought for the first time came over her, that her lover, perhaps, was not so true to her, as she to him. There she sat, sorrowfully musing; and though she did not repent of what she thought her own firmness, she was bitterly tormented by the doubts with which her brother, Mary Brady, and the priest, had gradually disturbed her happiness.

She loved Ussher as well as ever – yes, almost more than ever, as the idea that she might perhaps lose him came across her – but she began to be discontented with herself, and to think that she had not played her part as well as she might. In fact, she felt herself to be miserable, and, for the time, hated her brother and Father John for having made her so.

Father John walked sorrowfully back to his cottage, thinking Miss Feemy Macdermot the most stiff-necked young lady it had ever been his hard lot to meet.

CHAPTER IX

MOHILL

We must now request our reader to accompany us to the little town of Mohill; not that there is anything attractive in the place to repay him for the trouble of going there.

Mohill is a small country town, standing on no high road, nor on any thoroughfare from the metropolis; and therefore it owes to itself whatever importance it may possess – and, in truth, that is not much. It is, or, at any rate, was, at the time of which we are writing, the picture of an impoverished town – the property of a non-resident landlord – destitute of anything to give it interest or prosperity – without business, without trade, and without society. The idea that would strike one on entering it was chiefly this: "Why was it a town at all? – why were there, on that spot, so many houses congregated, called Mohill? – what was the inducement to people to come and live there? – Why didn't they go to Longford, to Cavan, to Carrick, to Dublin, – anywhere rather than there, when they were going to settle themselves?" This is a question which proposes itself at the sight of many Irish towns; they look so poor, so destitute of advantage, so unfriended. Mohill is by no means the only town in the west of Ireland, that strikes one as being there without a cause.

It is built on the side of a steep hill, and one part of the town seems constantly threatening the destruction of the other. Every now and again, down each side of the hill, there is a slated house, but they are few and far between; and the long spaces intervening are filled with the most miserable descriptions of cabins – hovels without chimneys, windows, door, or signs of humanity, except the children playing on the collected filth in front of them. The very scraughs of which the roofs are composed are germinating afresh, and, sickly green with a new growth, look more like the tops of long-neglected dungheaps, than the only protection over Christian beings from the winds of heaven.

Look at that mud hovel on the left, which seems as if it had thrust itself between its neighbours, so narrow is its front! The doorway, all insufficient as it is, takes nearly the whole facing to the street. The roof, looking as if it were only the dirty eaves hanging from its more aspiring neighbour on the right, supports itself against the cabin on the left, about three feet above the ground. Can that be the habitation of any of the human race? Few but such as those whose lot has fallen on such barren places would venture in; but for a moment let us see what is there.

But the dark misery within hides itself in thick obscurity. The unaccustomed eye is at first unable to distinguish any object, and only feels the painful effect of the confined smoke; but when, at length, a faint, struggling light makes its way through the entrance, how wretched is all around!

A sickly woman, the entangled nature of whose insufficient garments would defy description, is sitting on a low stool before the fire, suckling a miserably dirty infant; a boy, whose only covering is a tattered shirt, is putting fresh, but, alas, damp turf beneath the pot in which are put to boil the potatoes – their only food. Two or three dim children – their number is lost in their obscurity – are cowering round the dull, dark fire, atop of one another; and on a miserable pallet beyond – a few rotten boards, propped upon equally infirm supports, and covered over with only one thin black quilt – is sitting the master of the mansion; his grizzly, unshorn beard, his lantern jaws and shaggy hair, are such as his home and family would lead one to expect. And now you have counted all that this man possesses; other furniture has he none – neither table nor chair, except that low stool on which his wife is sitting. Squatting on the ground – from off the ground, like pigs, only much more poorly fed – his children eat the scanty earnings of his continual labour.

And yet for this abode the man pays rent.

The miserable appearance of Irish peasants, when in the very lowest poverty, strikes one more forcibly in the towns than in the open country. The dirt and filth around them seems so much more oppressive on them; they have no escape from it. There is much also in ideas and associations. On

a road-side, or on the borders of a bog, the dusty colour of the cabin walls, the potato patch around it, the green scraughs or damp brown straw which form its roof, all the appurtenances, in fact, of the cabin, seem suited to the things around it. But in a town this is not so. It evidently should not be there – its squalidness and filth are all that strike you. Poverty, to be picturesque, should be rural. Suburban misery is as hideous as it is pitiable.

Again, see that big house, with such pretensions to comfort, and even elegance, – with its neat slated roof, brass knocker on the door, verandahs to the large sashed windows, and iron railing before the front. Its very grandeur is much more striking, that from each gable-end hangs another cabin, the same as those we have above described. It is true that an entrance for horses, cars, and carriages has been constructed, as it were through one end of the house itself; otherwise the mansion is but one house in the continuous street.

Here lives Mr. Cassidy, the agent; a fat, good-natured, easy man, with an active grown up son. Every one says that Mr. Cassidy is a good man, as good to the poor as he can be. But he is not the landlord, he is only the agent. What can he do more than he does? Is the landlord then so hard a man? so regardless of those who depend on him in all their wants and miseries? No, indeed; Lord Birmingham is also a kind, good man, a most charitable man! Look at his name on all the lists of gifts for unfortunates of every description. Is he not the presiding genius of the company for relieving the Poles? a vice-presiding genius for relieving destitute authors, destitute actors, destitute clergymen's widows, destitute half-pay officers' widows? Is he not patron of the Mendicity Society, patron of the Lying-in, Small Pox, Lock, and Fever Hospitals? Is his name not down for large amounts in aid of funds of every description for lessening human wants and pangs? How conspicuous and eager a part too he took in giving the poor Blacks their liberty! was not his aid strongly and gratefully felt by the friends of Catholic emancipation? In short, is not every one aware that Lord Birmingham has spent a long and brilliant life in acts of public and private philanthropy? 'Tis true he lives in England, was rarely in his life in Ireland, never in Mohill. Could he be blamed for this? Could he live in two countries at once? or would the world have been benefited had he left the Parliament and the Cabinet, to whitewash Irish cabins, and assist in the distribution of meal?

This would be his own excuse, and does it not seem a valid one? Yet shall no one be blamed for the misery which belonged to him; for the squalid sources of the wealth with which Poles were fed, and literary paupers clothed? Was no one answerable for the grim despair of that half-starved wretch, whom but now we saw, looking down so sadly on the young sufferers to whom he had given life and poverty? That can hardly be. And if we feel the difficulty which, among his numerous philanthropic works, Lord Birmingham must experience in attending to the state of his numerous dependents, it only makes us reflect more often, that from him to whom much is given, much indeed will be required!

But we are getting far from our story. Going a little further down the hill, there is a lane to the right. This always was a dirty, ill-conditioned lane, of bad repute and habits. Father Mathew and the rigour of the police have of late somewhat mended its manners and morals. Here too one now sees, but a short way from the main street, the grand new stirring poor-house, which ten years ago was not in being.

In this lane at the time to which we allude the widow Mulready kept the shebeen shop, of which mention has before been made.

In her business Mrs. Mulready acquired much more profit than respectability, for, whether well or ill-deserved, she had but a bad name in the country; in spite of this, however, to the company assembled here on Wednesday evening, – the same evening that Thady dined with Father John, – we must introduce our readers.

The house, or rather cabin, consisted only of two rooms, both on the ground, and both without flooring or ceiling; the black rafters on which the thatch was lying was above, and the uneven soil below; still this place of entertainment was not like the cabins of the very poor: the rooms were both long, and as they ran lengthways down the street, each was the full breadth of the house: in the first

sat the widow Mulready, a strong, red-faced, indomitable-looking woman about fifty. She sat on a large wooden seat with a back, capable of containing two persons; there was an immense blazing fire of turf, on which water was boiling in a great potato pot, should any of her guests be able to treat themselves to the expensive luxury of punch. A remarkably dirty small deal table was beside her, on which were placed a large jar, containing a quantity of the only merchandize in which she dealt, and an old battered pewter measure, in which she gave it out; in a corner of the table away from the fire was cut a hole through the board, in which was stuck a small flickering candle. No further implements appeared necessary to Mrs. Mulready in the business which she conducted. A barefooted girl, with unwashed hands and face, and unbrushed head, crouched in the corner of the fire, ready to obey the behests of Mrs. Mulready, and attend to the numerous calls of her customers. This Hebe rejoiced in the musical name of Kathleen.

The Mohill resort of the wicked, the desperate, and the drunken, was not certainly so grand, nor so conspicuous, as the gas-lighted, mahogany fitted, pilastered gin palaces of London; but the freedom from decent restraint, and the power of inebriety at a cheap rate, were the same in each.

There was a door at the further end of the room, which opened into the one where Mrs. Mulready's more known and regular visitors were accustomed to sit and drink, and here rumour said a Ribon lodge was held; there was a fire also here, at the further end, and a long narrow table ran nearly the whole length of the room under the two windows, with a form on each side of it. Opposite this was Mrs. Mulready's own bed, which proved that whatever improprieties might be perpetrated in the house, the careful widow herself never retired to rest till they were all over.

The assembly on the night in question was not very numerous; there might be about twelve in it, and they all were of the poorer kind; some even had neither shoes or stockings, and there was one poor fellow had neither hat nor coat, – nothing but a tattered shirt and trousers.

The most decent among them all was Pat Brady, who occupied a comfortable seat near the fire, drinking his tumbler of punch and smoking like a gentleman; Joe Reynolds was sitting on the widow's bed, with a spade in his hand; he had only just come in. They were all from Drumleesh, with one or two exceptions; the man without the coat was Jack Byrne, the brother of the man whom Captain Ussher had taken when the malt was found in his brother-in-law's house.

"Kathleen, agra," halloed Joe Reynolds, "bring me a glass of sperrits, will you?"

"Send out the rint, Joe," halloed out the wary widow, and Kathleen came in for the money.

"Sorrow to your sowl then, mother Mulready; d'ye think I'm so bad already then, that they haven't left me the price of a glass?" and he put three halfpence into the girl's hand.

"Oh, Joe," said Brady, "don't be taking your sperrits that way; come over here, like a dacent fellow, and we'll be talking over this."

"Oh, that's all right for you, Pat; you've nothing to be dhriving the life out of yer very heart. I am cowl'd within me, and divil a word I'll spake, till I dhriv it out of me with the sperrits," and he poured the glass of whiskey down his throat, as though he was pouring it into a pitcher. "And now, my boys, you'll see Joe Reynolds 'll talk may be as well as any of you. Give us a draw of the pipe, Pat."

He took the pipe from Pat's hand, and stuck it in his mouth.

"Well, Jack, I see'd your brother in Carrick; and I towld him how you'd done all you could for him, and pawned the clothes off your back to scrape the few shillings together for him; and what d'ye think he'd have me do then? why he towld me to take the money to Hyacinth Keegan, Esq., jist to stand to him and get him off. Why he couldn't do it, not av he was to give his sowl – and that's not his own to give, for the divil has it; and av he could, he wouldn't walk across Carrick to do them a good turn – though, by Jasus, he'd be quick enough pocketing the brads. Begad, Jack, and it's cowl'd you're looking without the frieze; come and warm your shins, my boy, and take a draw out of Pat's pipe."

"And Joe," said Pat, "what magisthrates war there in it?"

"Why, there war Sir Michael, and Counsellor Webb, and there war that black ruffian Jonas Brown."

"And they jist sent him back to gaol agin, Joe?"

"No, they didn't! Counsellor Webb stuck to the boys hard and fast, while he could; both his own boys and poor Tim; and that he may never sup sorrow; for he proved hisself this day the raal friend to the poor man – "

"But it war all no good in the end?"

"Divil a good. That thief of the world, old Brown, after axing Ussher a sight of questions, was sthrong for sending 'em back; and then Counsellor Webb axed Ussher how he could prove that the boys knew the stuff was in it; and he, the black-hearted viper, said, that warn't necessary, so long as they war in the same house; and then they jawed it out ever so long, and Ussher said as how the whole counthry through war worse than ever with the stills; and Counsellor Webb said that war the fault of the landlords; and Brown said, he hoped they'd take every mother's son of 'em as they could lay hands on in the counthry, and bring 'em there; and so they jawed it out a long while; and then, Sir Michael, who'd niver said a word at all, good, bad, or indifferent, said, as how Paddy Byrne and Smith war to pay each twenty pounds, and Tim ten, or else to go to gaol as long as the bloody owld barrister chose to keep 'em there."

"Jack," said one of the others, "did Paddy, d'y remimber, happen to have an odd twenty pound in his breeches pocket? becace av so, he might jist put it down genteel, and walk out afore thim all."

"Well, then, Corney," answered Jack, with Pat Brady's pipe in his mouth, "av Paddy had sich a thrifle about then, I disremember it entirely; but shure, why wouldn't he? He'd hardly be so far as Carrick, in sich good company too, without a little change in his pocket."

"But to go and put twenty pound on them boys!" observed the more earnest Joe; "the like of them to be getting twenty pounds! mightn't he as well have said twenty thousand? and tin pounds on Tim too! More power to you, Jonas Brown; tin pounds for a poor boy's warming his shins, and gagging over an owld hag's bit of turf!"

"But Joe," said Brady, "is it in Carrick they're to stop?"

"Not at all; they're to go over to the Bridewell in Ballinamore. Captain Greenough was there. A lot of his men is to take them to Ballinamore to-morrow; unless indeed, they all has the thrifle of change in their pockets, Corney was axing about."

"And supposing now, Joe," said Jack, "the boys paid the money, or some of the gentlemen put it down for 'em; who'd be getting it?"

"Sorrow a one of me rightly knows. Who would be getting the brads, Pat, av they war paid?"

"Who'd be getting 'em? why, who would have 'em but Masther Ussher? D'ye think he'd be so keen afther the stills, av he war not to make something by it? where d'ye think he'd be making out the hunters, and living there better nor the gentlemen themselves, av he didn't be getting the fines, and rewards, and things, for sazing the whiskey?"

"Choke him for fines!" said Jack; "that the gay horse he rides might break the wicked neck of him!"

"Sorrow a good is there in cursing, boys," continued Joe. "Av there war any of you really'd have the heart to be doing anything!"

"What'd we be doing, Joe? kicking our toes agin Carrick Gaol, till the police comed and spiked us? The boys is now in gaol, and there they're like to be, for anything we'll do to get 'em out again."

Joe Reynolds was now puzzled a little, so he fumbled in his pockets, and bringing out another three halfpence, halloed to Kathleen.

"Kathleen, d'ye hear, ye young divil's imp! bring me another half noggin of speerits," and he gave her the halfpence; "and here, bring a glass for Jack too."

"Sind out the rint, Joe, my darling," again bawled the widow, proving that very little said in the inner room was lost upon her.

"Oh, sink you and your rint, you owld hag!" but he paid for the glass for his friend; "and may I be d – d if they aint the very last coppers I've got."

"Long life to you, Joe," said the other, as he swallowed the raw whiskey; "may be I'll be able to stand to you, the same way, some of these days, bad as things is yet. You is all to be up at Ballycloran afther to-morrow, with the rints, eh Brady? What'll you be saying to the young Masther, Joe?"

Joe was now somewhat elated by the second glass of whiskey.

"What 'll I be saying to him, is it? well I'll tell you what I'll be saying. I'll just say this – 'I owes two years' rint, Misther Macdermot, for the thrifle of bog, and the cabin I holds up at Drumleesh, and there's what I got to pay it!' And I'll show him what he may put in his eye and see none the worse: and I'll go on, and I'll say, 'Now, Misther Macdermot, there is the bit of oats up there, as I and poor Tim broke the back of us dhrying the land for last winter; and there is the bit of pratees; and I didn't yet be cutting of the one, nor digging of the other; and if ye likes, ye may go and do both; and take them with yer for me; and ye may take the roof off the bit of a cabin I built myself over the ould mother; and ye may turn out the ould hag to die in the cowld and the bog; and ye may send me off, to get myself into the first gaol as is open to me. That's what you can do, Misther Macdermot: and when you've done all that, there'll be one, as would have stood betwixt you and all harum, will then go far enough to give you back your own in the hardships you've druv him to.' And then I'll go on, and I'll say, 'And you can do this – you can tell me to go and be d – d, as ye did many a day, and give me what bad language ye like; and you can send Pat to me next day or so, jist to tell me to sell the oats, and bring in what thrifle I can; and then, Mr. Thady, there'll be one who'll not let a foot or finger of that hell-hound Keegan go on Ballycloran; there'll be one' – and when there's me, my boys, there'll be lots more – 'as 'll keep you safe and snug in yer own father's house, though all the Keegans and Flannellys in County Leitrim come to turn you out!' And that's what I'll say to the Masther; and now, Pat – for he tells you pretty much all – what'll the Masther be saying to that?"

"What'll he be saying to it, Joe! Faix then I don't know what he'll be saying to it; it's little mind, I think, he'll have to be saying much comfort to any of you; for he'll be vexed and out with everything, jist at present. He doesn't like the way that Captain Ussher is schaming with his sister."

"Like it! no, I wonder av he did; a black-hearted Protestant like him. What business is it a Macdermot would have taking up with the likes of him?"

"That's not it neither, Joe; but he thinks the Captain don't mane fair by Miss Feemy! and by the blessed Virgin, he ain't far wrong."

"Then why don't he knock the life out of the traitor? or av there is rasons why he shouldn't do it hisself, why don't he get one of the boys as'd be glad of the job to help him. Look here, Pat – " and Reynolds went over to the fire-place, and with his arm against the back wall and leaning down over the seat where Brady was sitting, began whispering earnestly in his ear; and then Brady muttered something dissenting, in a low voice; and Reynolds went on whispering again, with gesticulations, and many signs. This continued for a long time, till Corney exclaimed.

"What the divil, boys, are ye colloquing about there; arn't we all sworn frinds, and what need ye be whispering about? Why can't ye spake what ye've got to say out like a man, instead of huggery mugging there in the corner with Brady, as though any one here wasn't thrue to ye all."

"Whist, Corney, ye born idiot, ye don't know I s'pose what long ears the old hag there has? and ye'd be wanting her to hang two or three of us, I s'pose?"

"Divil a hang, Joe; av no one towld of any but her, we'd be safe enough that way; but what is it ye're saying?"

But instead of answering him Reynolds continued urging something to Pat Brady; at last he exclaimed.

"Tear and ages! and why wouldn't he side with the boys as lives on his own land? av he don't make frinds of them, where will he find frinds? Is it among the great gintlemen of the country? By dad, they don't think no more of him nor they do of us. And is it the likes of Captain Ussher as'll be good frinds to him? He's thinking of his own schames, and taking the honest name from his sister. Is that his frind, Pat?"

"Didn't I tell ye, Joe, he hates Ussher a d – d sight worse nor you or I; there's little need to say anything to him about that."

"Why wouldn't he join us then? Who else is there to help him at all? won't he be as bad as we are, if Flannelly dhives him and the ould man out of Ballycloran; but av he'll stick to us, divil a lawyer of 'em all shall put a keeper on the lands; and I said before, and I say it agin, – and av I prove a liar, may I never see the blessed glory, – av young Macdermot 'll help the boys to right themselves, the first foot Keegan puts on Ballycloran, he shall leave there, by G – d!"

"But, Joe, s'pose now Mr. Thady agreed to join you here, what'd you have him be doing at all?"

"I'd have him lend a hand to punish the murthering ruffian as have got half the counthry dhruv into gaols, and as is playing his tricks now with his own sisther."

"But what could any of you do? You wouldn't dare knock the chap on the head?"

"Who wouldn't dare? by the 'tarnal, I'd dare it myself! Isn't there two of us here, whose brothers is now in gaol along of him? Wouldn't you dare, Jack, av he was up there again in the counthry, to tache him how to be sazing your people?"

"By dad, I'd do anything, Joe; but I don't know jist as to murthering. I'd do as bad to him as he did to Paddy: av they hung him, then I'd murther him, and wilcome; but Paddy'll be out of that some of these days – and I think therefore, Joe, av we stripped his ears, it'd do this go."

Jack Byrne's equal justice pleased the majority of his hearers; but it did not satisfy Joe. As for Pat, he continued smoking, and said nothing.

"Oh, my boys, that's nonsense," said Joe; "either do the job, or let it alone. Av you've a mind to let Captain Ussher walk into your cabins and take any of you off to Carrick, jist as he plazes – why you can; but I'm d – d if I does! I've had enough of him now; and by the 'tarnal powers, though I swing for it, putting Tim in gaol shall cost him his life!"

Joe was very much excited and half tipsy; but he only said what most of them were waiting to hear said, and what each of them expected; not one voice was raised in dissent. Pat said nothing, but smoked and gazed on the fire.

"Masther Thady'll be in at the wedding to-morrow, Pat?"

"Oh in course he will."

"Will you be axing him, thin?"

"Axing him what? is it to murther Ussher?"

"No, in course not that; but will you be thrying him, will he join wid us to rid the counthry of him?"

"I tell ye, Joe, he's willing enough to be shut of him entirely, av he knew how."

"Oh yes, Pat, I dare say he'd be willing any poor boy'd knock him on the head, and so be rid of him; and av that he who did do it, did be hung for it, what matther in life to him? That may do very well for Masther Thady, but by the powers, it'll not do for me!"

"Well, you can be spaking to him yourself to-morrow."

"Yes, but you must be getting him jist to come out, and spake to us; jist dhraw him out a bit, you know."

"Well then, boys, I've said as much to the Masther already, and he expects to meet you up there."

"That's the sort, Pat! and av he'll but join us, divil a fear at all for Captain Ussher. Come, my boys, we'll dhrink the gentleman's health, as would be only dacent and proper of us, seeing the great trouble he's at with us."

"But where'll ye get the whiskey, Joe?" said Corney; "I don't think mother Mulready 'll be too quick giving you thrust."

"That's thrue any way; which of ye's got the rint among yer? come, Pat, fork out for once."

"Is it for all of ye? I'll stand a glass for myself, and one for Joe."

"Well, Jack," said Corney, "you and I 'll have a dhrop together; you shan't say I let you go away dhry."

The rest made it up among them; and Kathleen, having duly received the price in advance, brought in a glass of spirits for each. The widow Mulready had only two glasses, and they therefore had to drink one after the other. Joe took his first, saying, "And there's more power and success to you, Captain Ussher; and it's a fine gentleman is the only name for ye; but av you're above the sod this day three months, may none of us that is in it this night ever see the blessed glory!"

And they all drank the toast which their leader gave them.

They now prepared to leave; but not so quickly but that Mrs. Mulready had to give them very forcible hints that she wanted quiet possession of her bed-room; and much animated conversation passed on the occasion.

"And now, an't ye a pretty set of boys, the whole of ye, blackguards that ye are! that ye can't dhrink yer sperrits quietly, in a lone woman's house, but you must be bringing the town on her, by yer d – d ructions; and av I niver saw the foot of any of ye agin, it's little I'd be grieving for ye."

"Quit that, you ould hag of the divil! or I'll give you more to talk about than'll plaze you."

"Is it you, Joe? by the mortal then, if ye don't quit that, you'll soon be having a stone roof over yer head. By the blessed Virgin, I'll be the hanging of you av you don't be keeping yerself to yerself."

"Is it hanging yer talking of? And where'll you be yerself? Not but hanging's twice too good for you. Come, Corney, is you coming up to Loch Sheen?"

After a few more exchanges of similar civilities between the landlady and her guests, the latter at length took their departure; and the widow having duly put away the apparatus of her trade, that is, having drank what whiskey there remained in the jug, betook herself to her couch in her usual state of intoxication.

Joe Reynolds and Pat Brady had each about three miles to go home, and the greater part of the way they walked together – talking over their plans, and discussing the probability of their success.

The two men were very different. The former was impoverished, desperate, all but houseless; he had been continually at war with the world, and the world with him. Whether, had he been more fortunate, he might have been an honest man is a question difficult to solve; most certainly he had been a hard working man, but his work had never come to good; he had long been a maker of potheen, and from the different rows in which he had been connected, had got a bad name through the country. The effect of all this was, that he was now desperate; ready not only to take part against any form of restrictive authority, but anxious to be a leader in doing so; he had somehow conceived the idea that it would be a grand thing to make a figure through the country; and, as he would have said himself, "av he were hanged, what harum?"

Pat Brady was a very different character. In a very poor country he enjoyed comparative comfort; he had never been rendered desperate by want and oppression. Poor as was the Ballycloran property, he had always, by his driving and ejecting, and by one or another art of rural law which is always sure to be paid for, managed to live decently, and certainly above want: it was difficult to conceive why he should be leagued with so desperate a set of men, sworn together to murder a government officer.

Yet in the conversation they had going home he was by far the most eager of the two; he spoke of the certainty they had of getting young Macdermot to join them the next evening; told Reynolds how he would get him, if possible, to drink, and, when excited, would bring him out to talk to the boys; in short, planned and arranged all those things about which Reynolds had been so anxious – but as to which he could get so little done at the widow's. When there, Pat had been almost silent; at any rate, he had himself proposed nothing. It had never occurred to the other, poor fellow, that Brady was making a tool of him; that though the rent-collector was now so eager in proving how easily young Macdermot might be induced to join their party, he would commit himself to nothing when they were congregated at the widow Mulready's. Had Reynolds not been so completely duped, he would have seen that Brady made him take the part of leader when others were present, who might possibly be called upon as witnesses; but that when they were alone together, he, Brady, was always the most

eager to press the necessity of some desperate measure. On the present occasion too Reynolds was half drunk, whereas Brady was quite sober.

"So," said the latter on their way home, "thim boys is fixed in gaol for the next twelve months any way. Tim warn't thinking he'd get lodgings for nothing so long, when he went up to widow Smith's there at Loch Sheen."

"Well, Pat, a year is a dreary long time for a poor boy to be locked up all for nothing; and poor Tim won't bear up well as most might; but he that put him there will soon be sent where he'll be treated even worsen than Tim at Ballinamore; – and he won't get out of it that soon. By G – d, I'd sooner be in Tim's shoes this night than in Captain Ussher's, fine gentleman as he thinks hisself!"

"But, Joe, will them boys from Loch Sheen let Tim and the others be taken quietly to Ballinamore? Won't they try a reskey on the road?"

"There arn't that sperrit left in 'em, Pat; – and how should it? what is the like of them with their shilelahs, and may be a few stones, agin them b – pailers in the daylight? Av it had been at night, we might have tried a reskey; but the sperrit ain't in 'em at all. I axed 'em to go snacks with me in doing the job, but they was afeard – and no wonder."

"Well, you'll be up at Mary's wedding to-morrow, and see what the young masther 'll be saying." And so the two friends parted to their different homes.

CHAPTER X

MR. KEEGAN

It will be remembered that the priest left Feemy after his stormy interview in a somewhat irritable mood; she was still chewing the cud of the bitter thoughts to which the events of the last few hours had given rise, and was trying to make herself believe that her brother and Father John and Pat Brady, and all the rest of them, were wrong in their detestable surmises, and that her own Myles was true to her, when another stranger called at Ballycloran; and a perfect stranger he must have been, for he absolutely raised the lion-headed, rusty knocker, and knocked at the door – a ceremony to which the customary visitors of the house never dreamed of having recourse. So unusual was this proceeding, that it frightened the sole remaining domestic, Katty, out of all her decorum. It will be remembered that Mary Brady had absconded with Biddy. Poor Katty did not well know how to act under the trying emergencies of the case; she could not get to the door of Miss Feemy's parlour, as a strange gentleman was standing in the hall, so she ran round the house, and ascertaining that the intruder was well in the hall, and could not see her, she clambered up to her mistress's window, and exclaimed.

"Hist! Miss Feemy, there's a stranger gentleman a rapping at the big knocker, and I think it's the fat lawyer from Carrick; what'll I do thin, Miss?"

"Why, you fool!" whispered Feemy through one of the broken panes of glass, "go and ask him who he wants, and tell him Thady an't at home."

So Katty dropped from the window-sill again, and went to receive the gentleman into the house by following him in at the hall door. By the time, however, that she had entered herself, old Larry Macdermot had been aroused out of his lethargy by a third knocking of the stranger; and on opening his own parlour door, was startled to see Mr. Hyacinth Keegan, the attorney from Carrick on Shannon, standing before him.

Mr. Hyacinth Keegan requires some little introduction, as he is one of the principal personages of my tale. As Father Cullen before remarked, his father was a process-server living at a small town called Drumshambo; – that is, he obtained his bread by performing the legal acts to which Irish landlords are so often obliged to have resort in obtaining their rent from their tenants. This process-server was a poor man, and a Roman Catholic, but he had managed to give his son a decent education; he had gotten him a place as an errand boy in an attorney's office, from whence he had risen to the dignity of clerk, and he was now, not only an attorney himself, but a flourishing one, and a Protestant to boot. His great step in the world had been his marriage with Sally Flannelly, – that Sally whom Macdermot had rejected, – for from the time of his wedding he had much prospered in all worldly things. He was a hardworking man, and in that consisted his only good quality; he was plausible, a good flatterer, not deficient in that sort of sharpness which made him a successful attorney in a small provincial town, and he could be a jovial companion, when called on to take that part. Principle had never stood much in his way, and he had completely taught himself to believe that what was legal was right; and he knew how to stretch legalities to the utmost. As a convert, Mr. Keegan was very enthusiastically attached to the Protestant religion and the Tory party, for which he had fought tooth and nail at the last county election.

Mr. Keegan boasted a useful kind of courage; he cared but little for the ill name he had acquired by his practice in the country among the poorer classes, and to do him justice, had shown pluck enough in the dangerous duties which he sometimes had to perform; for he acted as agent to the small properties of some absentee landlords, and for a man of his character such duties in County Leitrim were not at that time without risk. He had been shot at, had once been knocked off his horse, and had received various threatening letters; but it always turned out that he discovered the aggressor, and

prosecuted and convicted him. One man he had transported for life; in the last case, the man who had shot at him was hung; and consequently the people began to be afraid of Mr. Keegan.

Our friend was fond of popularity, and was consequently a bit of a sportsman, as most Connaught attorneys are. He had the shooting of two or three bogs, kept a good horse or two, went to all the country races, and made a small book on the events of the Curragh. These accomplishments all had their effect, and as I said before, Mr. Keegan was successful. In appearance he was a large, burly man, gradually growing corpulent, with a soft oily face, on which there was generally a smile; and well for him that there was, for though his smile was not prepossessing, and carried the genuine stamp of deceit, it concealed the malice, treachery, and selfishness which his face so plainly bore without it. His eyes were light, large, and bright, but it was that kind of brightness which belongs to an opaque, and not to a transparent body – they never sparkled; his mouth was very large, and his lip heavy, and he carried a huge pair of brick-coloured whiskers. His dress was somewhat dandified, but it usually had not a few of the characteristics of a horse jockey; in age he was about forty-five. His wife was some years his senior; he had married her when she was rather falling into the yellow leaf; and though Mr. Hyacinth Keegan was always on perfectly good and confidential terms with his respected father-in-law, report in Carrick on Shannon declared, that great battles took place beside the attorney's fireside, as to who was to have dominion in the house. The lady's temper also might be a little roused by the ill-natured reports which reached her ears, that her handsome Hyacinth lavished more of his attentions and gallantry abroad than at home. Such was the visitor who now came to call at Ballycloran.

Mr. Macdermot was very much surprised, for Mr. Keegan's business with Ballycloran was never done by personal visits. If money was received, Thady used to call and pay it at Keegan's office; if other steps were to be taken, he employed one of those messengers, so frequently unwelcome at the houses of the Connaught gentry, and this usually ended in Thady calling at Mr. Keegan's for a fresh bill for his father to sign. Old Macdermot was therefore so surprised that he knew not how to address his visitor. This, together with his hatred of the man, and his customary inability to do or say anything, made him so perplexed that he could not comprehend Mr. Keegan's first words, which were not only conciliatory and civil, but almost affectionate.

"Ah! Mr. Macdermot, how do you do – how d'ye do? I'm glad to see you – very glad to see you – looking so well too. Why, what a time it is since I last had the pleasure – but then I'm so tied by the leg – so much business, Mr. Macdermot; indeed, though I was determined to drop in this morning as a friend, still even now I've just a word to say on business. You see I must join business and pleasure; so if you are not very much engaged, and could spare a minute or two, why I have a little proposal to make to you – acting for Mr. Flannelly you know – which I think you'll not be sorry to hear."

The attorney had been obliged to begin his story thus far in the hall – as the old man had shown no inclination to ask him into the parlour: nor did Larry even now move from the door; and, indeed, he did not look as though he was a fit subject to enter on business with an attorney. He had not shaved, or rather been shaved, since Sunday last; his eyes, though wide open, looked as if they had very lately been asleep, and were not quite awake; his clothes were huddled on him, and hung about him almost in tatters; the slaver was running down from his half open mouth, and his breath smelt very strongly of whiskey.

Keegan, finding that his host did not seem bent on hospitality, was edging himself into the room, when Feemy, who had heard his address to her father, came out to the old man's relief, and told the visitor that he was not just himself that morning – that Thady was out, but that she would desire him to call at Mr. Keegan's office the next day.

"Ah! Miss Feemy, and how's your pretty self this morning? – and is it the fact what we hear down at Carrick, that we are to have a wedding soon at Ballycloran? Ah! well, of course you wouldn't be after telling me, but I was very glad to hear it; that I was, Miss Feemy. But, Mr. Macdermot – it was your father, Miss Feemy, I was wishing to see this morning, not Mr. Thady – if you could allow

me ten minutes or so – just a message from our old friend, Flannelly: " – and by this time Keegan had wedged his way into the room, out of which any one who knew him would be very sure he would not stir, until he had said what he had come to say.

Larry, hobbling back after him, sat himself down in his accustomed chair, and Feemy, as if to protect her father in her brother's absence, followed him.

"It's very hard, then, Mr. Keegan, that you should come up here; as if sending your processes, and latitats, and distraining, weren't enough, but now you must – "

"Ah! my dear Sir, it's not about such disagreeable business at all – we're done with all that. It's not about such business at all. When I've disagreeable jobs to do – of course we must have disagreeable jobs sometimes – why, I always send some of my disagreeable fellows to do it; but when I've good news, why I like to bring it myself, and that's why I rode down this morning."

Larry, stupid as he was, couldn't be talked round by the attorney so easily.

"If it's good news you have, why shouldn't Thady hear it then? I am sure, poor fellow, he hears enough of bad news from you one way or another. And I tell you I can't understand business to-day, and Flannelly's bill doesn't come round till next month – I know that; and so, if you plaze, Thady can hear what you have to say, at Carrick, on Saturday or Monday, or any day you plaze. Feemy, my darling, get something for Mr. Keegan to eat. I'll be glad to see you eat a bit, but I can't talk any more." And the old man turned himself away, and began groaning over the fire.

"You see, Mr. Keegan, my father can't go to business this morning. When shall I tell Thady to call down? – But wouldn't you take a glass of – "

Wine, Feemy was going to say, but she knew she had none to offer.

"Not a taste in life of anything, thank you, Miss Feemy; not a drop, I'm very much obliged to you: but I'm sorry to find your good father so bent on not hearing me, as I have something to propose which he couldn't but be glad to hear."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

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

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