THE RIVALS,

TRACY'S AMBITION,

BY GERALD GRIFFIN,

AUTHOR OF

"THE COLLEGIANS," "TALES OF THE MUNSTER FESTIVALS,"

ETC.

LONDON:
SIMMS AND M'INTYRE,
PATERNOSTER ROW; AND DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST.

1851.

THE RIVALS.

CHAPTER I.

"DOCTHOR, darling!"

"Docthor, I'm here since mornin'!"

"Docthor, let me go, an' the heavens bless you! I'm as wake as a piece of wet paper."

"Glory to your soul, docthor, asthore! an' gi' me something for this thremblin' I have. I do be thrembling always, like a straw upon the water."

"Docthor, I *hear* a great pain in my foot, sir. I declare I cried that bottle full to-day morning, with it."

"That was a fine physic you ga' me last night, long life to your honour! It walked me all over. It sarched me finely, long life to your honour!"

"There is'nt a bit I ate, docthor, this time back, but what I get a *conceit* again' it the minute afther."

"Docthor, I can make no hand o' my head at all, these days."

"Oh, docthor! what'll I do at all with these ears o' mine? I'm partly deaf always, an' whenever I do be, I hear great sounds an' noises, waves dashin' again' the bank, and birds whistlin' an'—boo! an' candlesticks; an' when I'm deaf entirely, it's then I hear all the bells in Ireland ringin' in my ears."

"Docthor, I have a great *express* upon my heart."

"That girl, sir, that you saw yesterday evening was very bad entirely afther you goin'. Oh! she began screechin' in a manner, that if the priest was at the doore, you'd think he would'nt overtake her; an' every bit of her so hot, that you'd imagine the clothes would light about her, an' her face the whole time as red as if you threw a bowl o' blood in it."

"Docthor, a' ra gal! Docthor, darlin', docthor, asthore! Oh, ma gra hu! Ma grein chree hu, docthor! an' let me go!"

Such were a few of the eloquent instances addressed by the throng of patients, without the rails, to Doctor Jervas, one of the attending physicians to a dispensary in a country district of Ireland. Accustomed to the din, he remained with an undisturbed countenance,

looking alternately into the haggard, robust, blooming, pale, fair, young and ancient faces that were thrust forwards through the wooden rails, and soliciting his sympathy. Three or four young disciples were hammering away at their mortars in different corners, compounding, like so many Cyclops, the thunderbolts of this great dispenser of health or of its opposite. The scene around him was one which might have waked uneasy sympathies in the heart of a novice. On one side was a stout man roaring aloud in the agonies of tooth-drawing; on another, a victim to the same "queen of a' diseases," sat woefully, with hand to jaw, contemplating the torture of the sufferer, and inly ruminating his own approaching sorrow; here lay a stripling with bandaged arm and cadaverous cheek, just recovering with a sigh from the fit of syncope which had been induced by the operation of phlebotomy; and there knelt, with sleeve upturned, a young Esculapius, wounding, with ruthless lancet, the blue vein in the pretty foot of a girl as fresh as a garland. In one corner was an infant squalling and plunging on its mother's lap, in another the leader of a faction discomfitted and head-broken, lamenting over the recollection of his broil, and groaning for the priest. But all those sounds of woe and suffering saluted the ear of the medical adept with a merely mechanical effect, and he continued to prescribe with a countenance unmoved, amid the twang of iron pestles, the squalling of children, the vociferations of the old women, and the moans of the young, sent out from beneath their hoods, calling each in order to his side, and attending to their wants in turn.

At a door in the railing was placed an able-bodied man, whose duty it was to admit the patients one by one, to see that no more should pass at a time, and to prevent them from loitering on their return.

"Mary Mulcahy!" cried the physician, reading from a ticket which had just been handed in.

An old woman hobbled on crutches to the door. Jerry Duhig (the able-bodied man before mentioned) opened to admit her. A rush was made by the mob of patients outside. The old woman was flung into the doctor's arms, and Jerry himself was staggered from his balance. But, like a second Horatius Cocles, he arose in his anger, and confronted the invaders in the breach of which they had almost possessed themselves. The physician gave himself for a lost man when he saw the counterscarp thus furiously stormed. But Jerry stood his ground. He thrust right and left with his clenched fists, until he sent the crowd screaming and jostling back again without the door, with more cause of complaint than they had brought from home. As the old woman returned, Jerry, vexed at the outrage of which she had been the innocent occasion, caught her by the back of the neck, and sent her out at the door, crutches and all, at a rate more rapid than she had travelled since she was a young woman. She stumbled and fell among the crowd, exclaiming in a tone between surprise and terror, "Oh, heaven forgive you your sins, you conthrairy man! Here's usage! Here's thratement!"

The doctor proceeded.

"What's the matter with your head, my good man?"

"A little defference I had sir with a naighbour, an' he——"

"Broke it?"

"No, sir, only he hit up to me about my brother that was thransported for night-walken', an' out o' that——"

"He broke your head?"

"No, sir, only I retorted on him, in regard of his own father that was hanged for cow stealin' an'——"

"He broke your head?"

"No, sir, only then you see, he made up to me and call't me a liar, an' with that I sthruck him, and with that he——"

"Broke your head?"

"Broke my head across."

"Ay, that's the point. One would think I was a justice of peace. What is it to me what you fought about? The broken head is all I want."

"Faix, then, I could spare it to your honour now, an' welcome."

"Here, take that prescription to the young gentleman in the blue coat that's rolling the pills in the corner. Well, my young girl, what's the matter with you, my dear? Jerry, mind the door!"

A sudden roar from without proved that Jerry took the hint.

The young patient just addressed was a timid and pretty creature of sixteen, who hesitated for a considerable time, and glanced shyly on each side, as if afraid of being overhead. Pitying her embarrassment, and interested by her figure, the doctor took her into an inner room.

"Well, my dear," he said, in a kind tone, "what's the matter? Come, don't be afraid of me, now. I'm your friend, you know." And he patted her on the shoulder.

The girl only sighed and looked down.

"Well, my love, what have you to tell me? Come, come, now, no nonsense."

"Something that's come over me, sir, I'm in dread."

"How is that?"

"A great pain I have on my heart, sir. There's a boy livin' over, near the Seven Churches, an' I'm afeerd he did'nt use me well."

"How so, my dear?"

"I don't know, sir. But ever since I met him I feel quite altered some way. I'm always lonesome, an' with a pain mostly on my heart, an' what makes me think 'tis he that done it to me is, because when I go to his mother's, an' I find him at home, from that minute the pain leaves me, an' I feel nothin' at all until I come away again."

"Oh, ho!" said the doctor. "Well, my dear, I'll order you something; but how is it you suppose that this lad did'nt use you well, as you say? Come, now, no nonsense, you know."

The girl lifted the corner of a check apron to her eyes, and began to cry a little.

"Come now, my dear, don't keep me here all day. I can't cure you, if you won't tell, you know."

"To dance with him, I did, of a night, sir," she replied in a timid voice, and with a trembling lip, "an' when he was sittin' next me he gave me an apple, an' they tell me now, that——"

Here she lifted her apron to her eyes and cried afresh.

"Well, well," said the doctor, soothingly, "what then. Don't be afraid of *me*."

"They told me he put something in the apple, sir, to—to—make a fool of a person."

And so saying, she hung her head, and drew the hood of her cloak around her face.

"Pooh! pooh!" said the doctor, "is that all! Then you might be quite at peace, my dear, for he has not made a fool of you yet, at all events. Is this boy comfortable?"

"'Tis Harry Lenigan, sir, that keeps the Latin school near the Seven Churches, an' holds his place from Mr. Damer, of Glendearg."

"And have you any fortune yourself, my dear?"

"Fifteen pounds, my uncle left me, sir."

"A very nice thing. Well, my dear, take one of these pills every second night; and I would advise you generally, since you find it relieve your pain so much, to get into company with Harry, to be near him as much as you can conveniently; and come to me again when those pills are out. If Harry should call at your house any time between this and Shrovetide, I would advise you not to be out of the way. Do you hear?"

"I do, sir, long life to your honour!"

"But, above all things, be sure you take the pills."

The girl promised to be careful, dropped a courtesy, and heaving a gentle sigh, departed.

A loud knocking at the door now startled the physician.

"You're wantin' over, sir, in all haste," cried the harsh and stormy voice of Jerry Duhig; "here's Aaron Shepherd come to call you to see Mrs. Wilderming, that's taken suddenly ill."

This startling announcement occasioned an instantaneous bustle. The doctor's horse was ordered to the door, and he hurried out of the house, leaving the crowd of patients storming at Jerry, and Jerry roaring at them like Dante's Cerberus,

> ——who, thundering, stuns
> The spirits, that they for deafness wish in vain.

CHAPTER II.

ALIGHTING at the door of a neatly finished mansion, he was ushered at once into the sleeping-chamber of the sick lady. She lay on a bed, apparently insensible. The window was raised, and the muslin curtain thrown down, so as at the same time to admit the air and to exclude or soften the light. Near the head of the bed stood a

beautiful young girl, crying bitterly, but silently. One or two attendants were preparing draughts in another part of the room, and conversing under their breath.

The young lady gave her hand in silence to the physician. "Well, Miss Wilderming, any change since my last visit?" he asked in a whisper.

"A great change, for the worse, I fear, doctor," was the reply of the young lady.

And, at the same moment, they heard the patient murmuring some words aloud. The doctor bent his head to listen.

"I'll see no more pleasant days at Roundwood," said the old lady; "my time is out. I'll be carried home to-morrow. My time is out."

The doctor softly took her hand, and began to feel her pulse.

"'Twill shortly stop," she murmured, "the number is told. Is my brother Damer come?"

"Not yet, ma'am," said the nurse.

"Then let him spare his speed, for I'll be cold before he sees me."

"You will see him soon, mamma," said Miss Wilderming, creeping to the bed's side, and laying her hand upon her mother's forehead.

"Ah, Esther, my darling!"

"Are you better, mamma?"

"Must I leave my child alone?"

"Oh, you will soon be well!"

"In heaven, I hope. Where's Richard Lacy?"

"He called to know how you were, mamma, but it was before—"

"Before the death-stroke. And he went away well satisfied. He will be surprised to hear of my death. Your uncle, Esther, will take care of you when I am gone. I wish your father had staid after me. But we'll watch you, my darling, when you cannot see us."

"Mamma!"

"Esther, I would die happy, if I had lived to see you married to Richard Lacy. He has some faults, but he loves you. Hear me, my child; I know you love him not, and I will exact no promise from you. But I leave you a mother's last injunction. Give Lacy an indulgent hearing; repress him not too harshly; be his friend, at least, for my sake, and hear me, and remember my words—The day that shall make you lastingly his will throw sunshine on my grave."

Perceiving that the young lady was unable to restrain her affliction at this speech, the doctor led her out of the room and proceeded to examine into the condition of the patient. His diagnosis was wholly unfavourable.

He hinted as much to the nurse, and left the house, without again meeting Miss Wilderming. The morning verified his prediction, and Esther was left an orphan, under the guardianship of her uncle, Mr. Damer, of Glendearg. Why the parting injunction of her mother was delivered in a manner so solemn, why Esther should have refused to afford an instantaneous assent to a suit so highly

sanctioned, why she should continue to dwell for another year beneath her orphaned roof, receiving the visits of Richard Lacy, without altering in any degree that manner which her parent had lamented, are questions which cannot be understood without some insight into the history of the parties.

Like all young Irishwomen of quick keen feelings and lively fancy, Esther Wilderming had got a strain of patriotic enthusiasm running underneath a girlish simplicity of manner. Her motives to this sympathy were not merely general. During the "troubles" of the year ninety-eight her family had suffered deeply for the sins of the rival parties, and it was no wonder that a theme to which her ears had been accustomed from her childhood should become firmly embedded in her heart. What she felt strongly she expressed with energy; and this warmth of feeling, which shows so lovely in the young and generous, gave something more of depth to a character which was at no time trifling.

A circumstance occurred, when Esther had attained her sixteenth year, to give that character a still deeper hue of earnestness.

Near her paternal mansion stood an ancient seminary, at which a young student, named Francis Riordan, was at this time a boarder and a frequent visitor at the house of Esther's parents. The manner in which their acquaintance commenced had something in it that was calculated to take hold of an imaginative and susceptible mind. Esther had been accustomed, in her morning and evening walks, to meet a handsome young man sauntering along the hedgerows, with that air of abstraction which is the characteristic either of genius or of idiotcy, and is a folly and a fault wherever it is found. On some occasions, likewise, Esther thought his countenance wore a look of tender sorrow, that gave to his physiognomy an inexpressible and a mysterious charm. A man of business would have passed him by as an idle fool that would never come to good; a man of the world would have pitied him for a sensitive mope; and any man of common sense would have recommended him to "leave his damnable faces" and go into society. But the quick fancy of the gentle Esther invested him with an interest that was more attractive than any superficial talent which he might acquire by a free and general intercourse with the mass of men. The figure pleased her eye, and she felt a pleasure in fitting it with a character. She fancied that he was, like herself, a person of talent and intense patriotism, and she was right.

They passed each other so frequently, that a degree of acquaintance imperceptibly sprung up between them. Riordan took off his hat and bowed when they met, and Esther became so accustomed to this courtesy, that the day glided by most lonelily whenever she missed the handsome student in her walk. On the other hand, if she happened to meet him as usual, she returned to her house with a heart full and happy, and spirits overflowing even to extravagance.

She observed, one morning, that he looked paler than usual, and that his eyes looked dull and heavy. She felt something like a difficulty in passing him without an inquiry, and chided, in her heart, the chilling forms of society which prevented her from reach-

ing her kind little hand to the student, and expressing in words the interest which she felt in his condition.

The next morning he looked still worse, and he seemed to feel that he was so, for he had wrapped himself in a cloak, and his step was more rapid than usual. On the following day he did not appear, and two tedious months rolled away before Esther saw him more.

A meeting had been called in a small neighbouring town, for the purpose of petitioning the legislature on one of those interminable topics of popular dissension which were unhappily too abundant in the national polity of her native island. Weary of looking at the groups who hurried through the fields and along the distant road to the town, Esther drew the music-stool to her piano, and sung the following words to a well-known air:—

Once I had a true love,
I loved him well, I loved him well;
But since he's found a new love,
Alone I dwell, alone I dwell.

How oft we've wandered lonely,
Through yon old glen, through yon old glen;
I was his treasure only,
And true love then, and true love then;
But Mary's singing brought me
To sigh all day, to sigh all day;
Oh, had my mother taught me
To sing and play, to sing and play!
Once I had, &c.

By lone Glencree at even
I passed him late, I passed him late;
A glance just sidelong given
Told all his fate, told all his fate;
His step no longer airy
His head it hung, his head it hung;
Ah, well I knew that Mary,
She had a tongue, she had a tongue!
Once I had, &c.

When spring is coming early,
And skies are blue, and skies are blue;
And trees are budding fairly,
And corn is new, and corn is new;
What clouds the sunny morrow
Of nature then, of nature then?
And turns young hope to sorrow?
Oh, fickle men! oh, fickle men!

Once I had a true love,
I loved him well, I loved him well;
But since he's found a new love,
Alone I dwell, alone I dwell.

Her song was interrupted by the entrance of some friends who came to offer her a seat to the meeting in their carriage. It was

accepted immediately, and Esther with her friends soon after occupied a place in one of the galleries.

The crowd was great. There was first a speech from a very large man, and then another from a very little man, and then the very large man proposed a vote of thanks to a certain personage* for drinking whisky punch and bowing, which was seconded by the very little man. Esther had never before been present at a meeting of this description, and she felt her forehead glow a little at the sycophantic applause with which this proposition was received by the multitude, for she thought that political questions were questions of justice and honour, and not of plain self-interest.

But was there no one to oppose the utter degradation, the servility, of such a vote as this? There was. A young man appeared upon the platform almost on the very instant when the chairman rose to put it to the meeting in the regular form. The latter immediately gave way, a hush ran through the assembly, the knot of orators upon the platform glanced at the stranger with inquiring eyes, the ladies eyed his handsome figure, and graceful, though hesitating, attitude, with that tender interest which is never refused by the female heart to the debutant untried, and there was one among them who turned pale and red, and trembled, and grew cold and faint at his appearance. It was Esther, for in this young orator she recognised her long lost solitary.

The great attention which he received from the meeting seemed to depress the spirits of the young gentleman, and he glanced with an uncertain eye and a beating heart around the circle. The very tall orator, before mentioned, rolled himself round on his chair, and gave him a good-natured encouraging look. On all such occasions the great mass of the people are certain to act with kindness, but on a person constituted like young Riordan this had the most salutary effect. It was a stimulus he required, and he found it in a happy moment. Among the many faces that surrounded him, he thought he detected on one (it was that of Richard Lacy) the semblance of a sneering expression. In an instant he was at his ease. He opposed the motion with eloquence, with fervour, with erudition, and with success. The proposition was rejected by the multitude with acclamation. Young Riordan was declared to have spoken the best speech upon the platform on that day, it was copied in all the newspapers, and even attracted the comments of London editors; it was glanced at by an Irish member in the House of Commons; the speaker became the star of —— during the season which ensued, and the loadstone and the cynosure of Esther's destiny.

She learned from her nurse the history of the young orator, and heard, with a feeling of unaccountable and almost oppressive pleasure, that the old woman Keleher had cared in like manner for the infancy of both. The connection which this circumstance established between them was slight and fanciful, and yet the idea that both had drawn from the same fountain their first draught of life, had slept in infancy on the same bosom, and shared the same at-

* George the Fourth, when in Dublin.

tentions and the same anxieties, afforded to the gentle and affectionate heart of Esther a pleasure which few could understand or sympathise with. She thought it gave a license for that tender interest which she already began to take in the fortunes of the young patriot. It established a species of relationship which Esther thought entitled him, on her part, to a kind of sisterly regard, and she longed for his friendship.

They became acquainted, and Esther's passion, for such it had already become, was met and warmly answered. Francis Riordan was still more suddenly enchanted with the beautiful enthusiast than she with him.

A more intimate acquaintance showed Esther many faults in her young hero. She found him shy, proud, and indifferent in general society, though he was all frankness and cheerfulness to her and her friends. He had fallen into that fatal mistake which is so usual in minds where diffidence is joined with power: the erroneous idea that it was not his business to fit society, but the business of society to fit him; and that instead of adapting himself to the company in which he happened to be placed, he was entitled to treat it with disrespect and inattention in case it did not suit his own tone of mind. Thus if it were not for the good sense of the lovely Esther, he would have spent his whole life in wandering through the world in search of a state of society which never did, nor ever will exist, as long as that world shall continue liable to the influence of the passions.

"Francis," said Esther to him one day, as he lay on the sofa, musing deeply, while she was painting velvet at the window, "will you tell me why you are so silent in company? Why did you not talk last night?"

"I don't know, Esther. One is not always in spirits."

"But you never talk so much to me as when you are sorrowful. I have remarked that of you long since." And while she spoke these chiding words, she disarmed them of all power of wounding even the most sensitive feeling, by bending her half shut eyes upon her lover with a sweet and piercing smile.

"I can say anything to you, my Esther. You can understand me, and feel with me. There is a line between our hearts," he continued, affecting to describe it with his finger as he lay. "Our souls think the same language. There is a sympathy in our existence."

"You know me, Francis," said Esther, shaking her head.

"Have we ever yet found a single word of explanation necessary in all our many discourses? Have my eyes ever spoken in Greek to you, or yours to me in unintelligible Celtic?"

"Francis, you know me well."

"To you I need not say, 'Esther, I spoke this in jest,' 'that speech was used in irony,' 'that allusion was political.' When I finish a story, I do not find your face turned towards me looking for more, and marring the catastrophe with a 'Well, is that all?' There is an intelligence between us which I find not in my intercourse with others."

"Well, is that all?"

"Most impertinent Esther, it is not. I love not to be fretted and disturbed, by a useless collision with people from whom I can learn nothing, and who, nevertheless, can annoy me by their forwardness and pretension."

"There you are wrong, Francis, very wrong. There is nobody from whom a man of good sense and good humour may not learn something; and as to their disturbing you, why should you shun society for them? If they be silly, laugh away your spleen at their silliness, and if they be impertinent, why you need not be taught your remedy."

"I see that even you, Esther, understand the use of the subterfuge."

"Nay, if you will say that!" cried Esther, rising hastily and threatening him with one little hand, "you shall suffer for it. I will tell you what I think of your silence. You think yourself a genius, and you despise your fellow creatures."

Francis raised himself on his elbow, and gazed on her with a look of consciousness and alarm. "If to avoid be to despise," he began, but the lively girl ran towards him, dropped on a little footstool near the sofa, and interrupted him with a warning gesture.

"Hold, hold! You must make me no speeches with that serious face. Why do you avoid them, if you hold them in no scorn?"

"I will be candid, Esther. There are many among them that I think hardly worth the pains of pleasing."

"There you are very wrong again, Francis," said Esther, with considerable warmth; "you are bound to love them all, the poor and rich, the mean and the noble, the dull, no less than the gifted, the vicious as well as the holy. The dullest man you meet does his utmost to please you, and you should do as much by him. What book is that near you with the leaf turned down?"

"A volume of Shakspere."

"And what says that stage-playing fellow? Does he not bid you use men better than they deserve, for the lesser their desert the greater is your merit in using them well?"

"On the score of Christianity, Esther, nay, on the score of morals, I plead guilty, but I never *set up* for a good Christian you know."

"That's a proper speech! And on the score of patriotism, what say you? You have set yourself up for a patriot, and you have set others down that thwarted you, and you hope to be a great man some day or another. And on the score of your own darling passion, the study of human nature, what say you? This is a kind of anatomy you cannot study without subjects. The more men you know, the more you'll know of their nature.

"But I have got one subject continually within my reach, and which I can dissect at will," said Francis, laying his finger over his heart. "Did Jean Jacques Rosseau ——"

"The wretch, the quack, the hypocrite, the knave, the coward! You make my blood tingle to my fingers' ends to hear him named."

"Well, well, he knew the heart, however," said Francis, smiling at her energy, "and did he find it necessary to expose himself to the dangers of collision with the mob of men? He laid his own heart bare, and found it a mirror of the whole species. Who knew more of the heart than Massillon? and yet everybody was surprised where a quiet priest could have found such extensive opportunities of observation. But what says D'Alembert to that? Massilon painted all his splendid gallery of sinners and of saints, his magnificent portrait of the true Christian, his appalling picture of the infidel, his lukewarm devotee, his false penitent, his Mary Magdalen, his sensualist, all from the same original, all from the close study of his own single heart, and yet so true to the life that there breathes no soul in human form that may not find itself reflected in his pages, as in a faultless mirror."

"I read none of your papistical sermons," said Esther, "but friend D'Alembert, and the other eulogists of that French priest, have overlooked one circumstance that might have lessened their wonder as to the source of his knowledge."

"And what was that, I pray you?"

"The Confessional."

"Esther," said Francis, after bending his eyes on her for a moment, in silence, "you have struck me dumb."

"You were dumb already. I had rather strike you talkative. If you hope to write a good book, or to be a great orator, you must talk with all, listen with all, and learn to please all. Put Jean Jacques out of your head. What has all his moping availed him but to win the admiration of all the morbid sentimentalists in Europe? to crown him king of the day dreamers? But that stage-playing fellow near you, used his eyes and ears as well as his imagination, and what has been his recompense? Universal empire."

"Hear! hear! hear!"

"Ay," said Esther, laughing, "you thought I had not the gift of speech? Nay, an thou'lt mouth, I'll rant as well as thou, though I am not standing on a papistical platform, with the whole jargon of Holinshed's chronicles in my head, and an ocean of frieze coats and felt hats around me. Ah! Francis, Francis, will you learn to prattle? As I love those eyes, I protest I feel my heart ache within me when I see you silent in company, and hear that snake-eyed Lacy charming the ears of the whole circle. Ha! Have I hurt you?"

"To the heart!" cried Francis, starting from the sofa, and covering his face with his hand.

"Dear Francis!—"

"Stand away! That viper!" he exclaimed, clenching his hand, and laying it against his forehead. "But we are both young yet."

"Francis, I am sure you are too wise and too generous to think of old slights, now."

"Two wise for what, Esther? Too wise to recollect that he has been through all my life my unprovoked and causeless enemy? If I were willing to forget it, he would not suffer me, for he crosses me every day with some new injury. I caught his sneering glance

fixed on me at the meeting, though then he served me well. And yet these injuries appear so slight, that I would be ashamed to tell you one, and say it moved my passion. The cold and cautious wretch! After he had stung me by one of those insults which none can understand but he and I, I have lain in wait (forgive me, heaven!) a whole evening for an opportunity to pay him back again, but he has put me to shame with his cold courtesy and feigned unconsciousness. The fellow has talent too, and sees through me as if I were a sheet of mica. If we do quarrel, and something tells me it will come to that with us some day or other, you will find that Richard Lacy will win the sympathies of all who hear of the affair, while I shall reap a world of censure and perhaps of obloquy."

The last sentence was uttered in a mournful tone, and the eye of the speaker became fixed on vacancy, as if he were looking forward into an unhappy future. He did not again recover his spirits during the interview, and he took his leave with the air of one who expected some sorrowful adventure.

About this time one of those provincial insurrections broke out, which were usual during the last few centuries, amongst the discontented peasantry. Arms were taken, contributions levied for ammunition, floggings and cardings inflicted on the part of the insurgents; while the usual preventives were adopted by the local government. The district was proclaimed, and some hundreds of the people were transported, but, strange to say, they still continued discontented.

At this time, too, young Riordan became less frequent in his visits to the Wildermings, and his manner to Esther was more absent and fitful, though not less devoted than before. She observed that he avoided all question of politics, and if the condition of the peasantry were glanced at in his presence, he grew pale and agitated, and seemed impatient of the subject.

And about this time, likewise, it was, that Richard Lacy, after the usual course of attentions, and without the least ground on which to build his pretentions, made a formal proposal of marriage to Esther Wilderming, which that lady, without ceremony, declined.

Nevertheless a woman finds it hard to hate a man merely for being sensible of her merit. The real misery which Lacy evinced at his rejection, touched her to the soul, and altered her opinion of his character in a very favourable manner. She saw that he loved her sincerely and disinterestedly, for his fortune and his birth might have entitled him to put forth his claims in circles far more brilliant than that in which they moved at ——. She wished that the Rivals might become friends, but this was a desire which it was easier to indulge than to accomplish.

On the All Saints' eve which followed, Esther Wilderming performed, for her amusement and under the instructions of her old nurse, one of those superstitious ceremonies which maidens use to discover their coming destiny in love. In her instance, this was to be decided by the aspect which her lover should wear at their

next meeting. If he met her with a smile, happiness was foreshown in their union, but if he stood before her with a mournful or an ill-tempered countenance, their lives were doomed to be clouded by many a heavy visitation.

The evening fell calm and sunny, and Esther sat in her mother's drawing-room, dressed in her demure silk habit, and expecting, not without a secret movement of superstitious anxiety, the arrival of her lover.

He had named a particular hour for his visit. It had passed away, and he came not. Another and another rolled away, before Esther heard his foot upon the stairs, and when he came at last, she turned pettishly towards the window, determined to resent a negligence that had of late become rather customary with him.

But there is a preventing intelligence in evil news that has something in it of the supernatural. Her quick ear told her that the very sound of his footstep on the landing had something strange and startling, and her heart beat fearfully when the door handle turned in his grasp. Before she moved in her seat, he was already in the centre of the room. He had entered without removing his cloak, which was gathered close round him; his face was pale and moist, his hair damp and adhering to his forehead, and his eyes filled with an expression of mingled rage, disappointment, and perplexity.

"Esther!" he exclaimed, hurrying towards her, and catching her hand in his, "my own, dear Esther! I am come—"

"For what? What ails you, Francis? Why do you tremble? What do you fear?"

"Dear Esther!"

"Speak to me, Francis! I entreat you speak! My heart will break if you continue silent. Lift up your head and speak!"

"I am ruined, Esther. I am compelled to leave you! I come to press your hand and say, 'Be true to me!' Years may roll on, and you shall not see me; the face of the world may be changed before you hear the name of Francis mentioned; oceans shall roar, and mountains rise between us, but yet be true! I leave the land that we both love so well, and I leave you Esther, whom I have loved only less than my country. I have striven to serve her, and have failed! That villain, Lacy, has betrayed my secret, and my life is already aimed at. I seek another land and another service; a land where I may yet render service to freedom without incurring the danger of universal ignominy; a land where, if her cause be dangerous, it is at least not shameful. But, Esther, my first love, my heart is with you. Trust in me as you would in the affection of your own mother. It is no praise in me to say, 'I will be true to you for ever, in life, in sorrow, in trouble, and in death.' It is no praise, for I could not be otherwise. But you—but you—" he added, trembling violently, while he pressed one hand upon his brow, and bent downwards in great agitation. "No! no! I will not fear it," said the young man, tossing his head back as if to shake off a depressing fancy. "Esther, remember my last words. Farewell; BE TRUE!"

He pressed her for one moment in his arms, kissed her forehead her lips, her hand, and was about to hurry from the room, when Esther recovered strength sufficient to detain him. Catching his cloak with both her hands, she hung upon him for some moments, panting heavily, and unable to articulate a single word. At length, gradually raising her head and looking upward into his eyes, with a pale and terrified countenance, she murmured, "Francis, what have you done?"

"Dear Esther," he replied, "do not stay me now with the question. I am safe, quite safe, if you will let me go; but an hour lost now might be a life lost ere the morning."

In an instant Esther loosed her hold and stood erect before him. "You see," she said, with a painful smile, "a woman's love can be stronger than a woman's will. Run, run! but if you can, as you pass the threshold, tell me in two words what it is you fear so deeply."

"A rebel's death," said Francis quickly, and looking firmly on her at the same time, as if to intimate that he feared not to tell her that with which he would not try the strength of any other woman.

"Two words, indeed; two fearful ones," said Esther, while her face darkened for a moment and then lit up again. "For many a day I have suspected this. And Lacy has detected and betrayed you? Ah, the cold knave!"

"Be true to me!"

"Indeed, Francis, I will. You are taking my happiness with you wherever you go, and I think my country would no longer be my country if you should leave it. Oh, heaven! oh, heaven! And you are sure that Richard has betrayed you?"

"Do you start a kind doubt for him then?" said Francis, with some little impatience.

"You know, Francis, he is now the king's officer. Does he not hold a commission of the peace?"

"War, blight, and sickness light on him! he does," exclaimed Francis, bursting out into an uncontrollable passion. "I could wish all the curses of Caliban upon him: but they are old men's weapons. Well, peace! our days are yet not numbered. We may meet yet."

"May heaven forbid it, while your hearts are thus disposed!" said Esther, in a tone of mingled reproach and tenderness. "But farewell, Francis!" she added, extending one hand towards him, while she pressed the other hard upon her eyes. "I will not stay you now; you know my heart goes with you."

"Hark!"

"What hear you?"

"I heard," said Francis, standing motionless and elevating his hand, as if in the act of listening intently, "I heard a death-bell ringing in the air. Again, again! Do you not hear it, Esther?"

Esther heard nothing, but at that moment the recollection of the prophetic rite which she had performed flashed upon her mind, and made the blood run backward upon her heart. At the same instant, likewise, a heavy cloud which overhung the disk of the

declining sun, fell downward like a veil before the dazzling orb, and caused an instantaneous twilight. To the eyes of Esther, whose imagination had been excited by the rite, and by the agitating nature of the scene which had just taken place, it seemed, at that moment, as if the face of her lover grew black, and scowled upon her. The darkness did not diminish during the remainder of their interview, which was very brief, and the weight was not removed from Esther's spirits. The circumstances just detailed, though purely accidental in themselves, took a deep hold of her imagination, and associated with the recollection of that parting a feeling of intense solemnity and gloom.

On that night, Richard Lacy was found severely wounded on a mountain side at Drumgoff, between Roundwood and Glendalough, or the Valley of the Seven Churches. He had been hurt, he said, in a duel, by Francis Riordan; but there were many who imagined that there was more generosity than rigid truth in this account of the transaction. Esther did not think so, but she pitied Lacy, and she pitied him still more, when she discovered, or received good reason to believe, that Francis was wholly in error in his suspicion of Lacy's treachery.

Francis was one of those unhappy young men who were kidnapped into the South American service by the scandalous devices of the agents of that government in these islands. His first letters to Esther showed that he had participated in the fatigues, the privations, the disappointments and the heart-sicknesses of that legion of unfortunates, whose miserable fate is still spoken of with feelings of undiminished indignation by many a childless parent in their native land. At length the tidings came that Francis had paid, within the tropics, that debt to loyalty which he had refused to render in the island of his birth.

And now years had gone by, and Esther's parents were in their grave, and Esther herself, all changed in heart and frame, was living under the guardianship of her maternal uncle Damer, in his wild and lonely residence of Glendearg. The assiduities of Richard Lacy, joined to the recollection of her mother's dying wishes, together with a feeling of gratitude for many services which he had rendered to her friends, and assisted by the importunities of the Damers, prevailed on Esther to give her consent to a marriage in which however her affections had little interest. She liked her present suitor better than before, and she endeavoured to persuade herself that it was possible she might love him, but her nature was bereaved of the power; her breast was empty; her heart was buried in the grave of her first love.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT midnight, Mr. Damer, a low-sized, sleek, smooth-featured, elderly gentleman, was seated in the dining-room of his own house, in a certain hilly and heathy county in the neighbourhood of Dublin. Before him, on a rosewood table, varnished like the surface of a mirror, stood decanters of cote roti and hermitage, the contents of which appeared to have been brought somewhat low in the course of the evening. The chair in which he sat was one of those splendid inventions by which the character of our age has been immortalized, and which will enable us to divide the admiration of posterity with the founders of the Parthenon and the constructors of the Babylonian gardens. It was one of those elastic cushions for which, not the tenants of the air, but the air itself, has been laid under tribute. The magnificently gilded covers of a quarto edition of Henry's Bible lay on his right hand, reflecting the light of four wax candles, which were supported in candlesticks of massive silver, richly carved. A solid and elegant sideboard was loaded with all the splendours of the family plate and glass. On a secretaire, at a little distance from the table, were placed a quantity of books in plain dark binding, and stamped on the covers with the impress of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian Knowledge. In a corner, less brilliantly illumined, the eye of the curious observer might detect a parcel of small pamphlets, stitched in blue covers, and bearing on their titlepages the various denominations of "The Dairyman's Daughter," "The Conversion of Timothy Delany from the Errors of the Church of Rome," "The Lough Derg Pilgrim, a Tale," "Father Clement, a Roman Catholic Story," and many other productions of a similar tendency.

There was something in the air of the whole apartment that was calculated to impress the beholder with an instantaneous conviction of the wealth, the self-contentedness, and the piety of the owner. It had little of mere fashion, but a great deal of that species of luxury which in England is denominated comfort, and in Ireland, falls little short of magnificence. The person of the proprietor was entirely in character, or, in the cant of connoisseurs, in *keeping* with his possessions. His hair was short and sleek, his head round as a bullet, his face plump and peachy, his eyes meek and sanctimonious, with a little spark of earthly fire (the result of some harmless and habitual self-indulgence), gleaming unsteadily through the pupil, like the *pœta* of the Venus Erycina. His legs, shining in black silk, were crossed, so as to expose the calf to the influence of a cheerful coal fire, and a bunch of fine gold seals reposed on an

incipient paunch. No collar, starched and impudent, obscured the blushing rotundity of his beardless jaws; a muslin cravat, of the purest white, alone encircled his short neck, for he had the good taste to sit in full dress to his wine. Thus cushioned on the zephyrs, not in the poetical, but the practical sense of the phrase, sipping his cote roti, and glancing occasionally while the conversation proceeded, at the columns of a Dublin daily paper, sat Mr. Kirwan Damer, the owner of this mansion, and of the adjoining estate of Glendearg, in the county above intimated.

To heighten the domestic picture, in a lounger, on the opposite side of the fire-place, sat Mrs. Damer, as well conditioned as her husband, dressed like him in black, with a trim cap of white muslin surrounding her fair and full and rather languid countenance. The lady too, was reading.

But that we have already suffered the names to escape us, the reader might suppose that we were describing a wealthy rector and his helpmate, in their handsome parlour at the Glebe.* He would be, however, totally in error. Mr. Damer was merely an Irish country gentleman of our own time. The Flath has vanished, the Canfinny is forgotten, the chiefs of their race are no more regarded; the duellist, the drunkard, the libertine, and the gambler, have all been exiled from the pale of Irish society, or compelled to wear their vices in a veil. A class of men has succeeded to which even those who have an interest in its vilification, must accord a preference. Those who wish to know the character of that class should know the Damers.

On the other side of the table, near Mrs. Damer, sat a gentleman of a manner and appearance very different from that of Mr. Damer. He was tall, and well proportioned, dressed very plainly, with a red, laughing countenance, and two large black eyes, which seemed to be always rambling in search of amusement.

"Well, Damer," said Mr. Leonard, the gentleman just described, "I totally disagree with you in every one of your plans. I think you will do no service whatever to the peasantry; I think you do not understand them sufficiently. [Mr. Damer smiled.] I think though they are ignorant and naked, poor fellows! and papists to boot, they have as fair a chance of going to heaven as the best of ourselves; that is my idea, poor devils! even though they do break out now and then: human nature is human nature; and my idea is, that all the funds and subscriptions in the world will not get half a dozen more souls into heaven than were on their way before. Half-a-dozen is the outside."

"And would not the salvation of one," said Mr. Damer, lifting

* Sir John Davis pleads hard for the incumbents of his own time, and urges the propriety of giving them the land of the Erenachs, when the statute of chauntries should come into force in Ireland. "Albeit," he writes to the Earl of Salisbury, "there be in every parish, a parson and vicar, yet both their livings together are not sufficient *for one honest man.*" In this particular, at least, Ireland has improved, for even a rogue might contrive to live well upon a vicarage in our own day.

the cote roti to his lips, "be worth the whole cost, and all the exertions of the society together?"

"Be worth sixty thousand a year?"

"Sixty million!"

"Besides the bickerings and heartburnings that have broken up the frame of society in our country, the division of families, the sundering of early attachments, the fomentation of civil disunion and the diffusion of all uncharitableness in private life? My idea is, that for the one soul we save by this business we lose fifty."

"For shame, Tom," said Mrs. Damer, "you are growing worse and worse every day."

"I don't pretend to any great sanctity," said Leonard. "You, my fair, and fat, and sanctimonious sister, know me a long time, and know me to be a blunt plain fellow, that thinks he does his duty when he takes care of his neighbour's body, and leaves his soul between him and his Creator. There is the difference between us. Damer is as honest a fellow as anybody, but his charity all evaporates in smoke. If I find a poor fellow starving on my estate, why (heaven forgive me!) I think I do my duty when I send him a leg of mutton, and make him an abatement, while Damer smothers him with books, and bibles, and I don't know what. Here's my idea. Give the people bread, and they'll find out piety themselves; make them prosperous and you may be sure they will grow virtuous without much labour. But hunger and cold are the sorriest Martexts in the world."

"As to want of charity," said Mr. Damer, "one circumstance may show you on what side that is to be found. You remember last Sunday, my love?"

Mrs. Damer raised her hands and eyes with an air of gentle horror.

"We were going to church," continued Damer, "in an open carriage, when we met the archbishop's family on their return from Cove, within a few perches of the Romish chapel. The people were all assembled, waiting for mass, outside the chapel door, with their eyes fixed on the two carriages. You know it is my misfortune to be very easily confused by any circumstance that places me in a conspicuous situation; and it happened, at this moment, that I was in the act of speaking to the ladies, when a young ragged scoundrel, amongst the crowd, set them all in a roar of laughter, by shouting out some Irish words. What was that expression, my dear?"

"Bawgoon thae heena, my love."

"Yes; bawgoon thae heena, meaning, 'Bacon-on-Friday;' a sobriquet which the benighted and ungrateful scoundrels have conferred on the converts whom we have withdrawn from amongst them, and in return for all my exertions for their welfare. I don't wonder you should laugh. Bacon-on-Friday, indeed! I never was more ashamed in my life. I'm not astonished you should laugh. Take your wine, sir."

"Bawgoon thae heena!" cried Leonard, in a convulsion of laughter. "Oh, the young villain!"

"Take your wine, sir."

"Bawgoon thae heena!"

"You need'nt repeat it so often, Leonard, however."

"Oh! the young scoundrel. And what did the ladies say?"

"They could'nt help laughing when they understood what the expression meant."

"The villain! Bawgoon thae heena!"

"Come, come, Leonard, take your wine, and have done with it."

"Well, I will. Poor fellows! They will have their joke to the last."

"The benighted creatures!"

"Ah, now, come, Damer, keep your cant for the preachers, and talk like a man. It is very easy for you and me to sit down by our coal fires, and groan over the sins and ignorance of the poor, starving, shivering cottagers, while we drink our champaign and hermitage; but, heaven forgive us! I'm afraid that we'll fare otherwise in the other world, for all our hypocrisy while these poor devils will be reading the Bible in Paradise."

"Fie, fie, Leonard, you grow more profane!"

"Do you know what John Wesley said?"

"Anything that escaped the lips of that saint must be comfortable."

"Very well. He said it was impossible for a Christian to expect to ride in a coach on earth, and go to heaven afterwards. Pick comfort out of that if you can."

"The road to heaven, my dear brother," said Mrs. Damer—

"Is a straight and a narrow one, my darling. No thoroughfare for coaches. Ah, what nonsense! You and I live in such houses as this, and rail at the poor peasantry in their cottages. We censure their intemperance, while we sip our maraschino; we shudder at their turbulence, while we loll in a coach on our elastic cushions. We shut the gate of heaven against those who tread their way thither amongst thorns and affliction, and we dream that it will be open to ourselves after we have sighed, and moaned, and prayed, and believed our way through all the sensual indulgences of earth, and stand on the portals of the other world, like prize-Christians, ready fattened for the celestial market."

"Profane! profane!"

"Oh, Tom!"

"Oh, Nelly! I had rather be profane than hypocritical, that's my idea. Ah! it is an easy matter to be a saint, when one has an income of four thousand a-year, with a mansion like this on one's estate. It is easy to sing psalms, when you have them sent down with the newest music from Clementi, or Goulding and D'Almaine, and can sing them to one of Broadwood's best grand pianos with all the additional keys, or a triple action pedal harp. It is easy to pray out of a pair of richly-gilt Morocco covers, in a handsome pew, with silk cushions under one's knees, and the thermometer at summer heat. It is not difficult to be punctual at church, in defiance of distance and of weather, when one can go there in a

close carriage and four; nor to meet round the fire at evening and read the Bible, and shudder at the poor deluded peasant, who is shivering, meanwhile, all alone by his cold cottage hearth, and offering up the idolatrous devotion that moves our horror. But the great Lord of nature has his eye upon us and upon that peasant at the same moment. He weighs his sufferings and his temptations against his errors. He sees his agonies, he hears his sighs, and he looks upon the tears of his children. And he sees our luxury, our self-sufficiency and our presumption. Heaven save us from the sin of the Pharisee! The poor, poor peasant, who works from dawn to dusk for eight-pence, in cold and heat, in shower and sunshine, to share that eight-pence with the whole population of his little cabin, while you and I sit here by our fireside and judge him over our wine! Well, well!" continued the speaker, elevating his hands and shaking them above his head, "I hope we'll all be saved, one time or another; come, fill your glass, and let us talk of something else."

"Talk on, talk on; you began by saying that you disapproved of all my plans," said Mr. Damer, with the calm and complacent smile of one who listens good-humouredly and half-amused to suggestions which he has no idea of condescending to adopt.

"True, true. Well, about this marriage. I think (you know I always tell my mind freely), I think you are going to sacrifice your ward."

"Oh, Tom!"

"Oh, Nelly! I do not like that Lacy; that black-browed, pale-cheeked and ambitious plotter. I think you would have done much more wisely if you had wedded her some years ago to poor young Riordan. That's my idea."

"The dissolute young villain!" exclaimed Damer, appearing for the first time to be really moved by the observation of his brother-in-law. "On this subject, only, I will take the liberty of echoing your own words. Fill your glass, and let us talk of something else."

"Poor Riordan! He was a manly, fine young fellow, and worth five hundred such after-dinner martinets as Richard Lacy. My good wishes will always follow him wherever he goes. He had all the firmness and ready thought of five-and-twenty before he was eighteen."

"And all that firmness and promptitude did but enable him to abuse the confidence of friends, to pour the poison of disobedience into the heart of a gentle and innocent girl, to quarrel with his own family, and to quit his country as an adventurer."

"As a patriot, if you please. An adventurer in the cause of Columbia, the cause of freedom."

"The cause of green feathers and epaulettes. If he be dead, as rumour tells us he is, let us say nothing more nor better of him, than that he lived for love, and died for a green jacket."

"Dead or alive, let joy be with him in his exile. Ah, Damer, Damer! you should have married him to little Esther, and kept him at home in Wicklow."

"He is better where he is," returned Damer. "He is better in his grave; he lived long enough for his friends and for himself. What good could be looked for at the hands of a baffled murderer?"

"A murderer!"

"A baffled one, I said; yes, he had the atrocity to make an attempt upon the life of Lacy with his own hand."

"Poh! I know what you allude to. And do you believe that story?"

"It did not want proof."

"I wouldn't hang a dog upon such evidence. It was a duel, man. It happened merely to be an honest one, fought in hot blood, and without waiting for seconds. Does Lacy dare to say that it was otherwise?"

"No, no; Lacy is a man of honour, and he has always acquitted Riordan; but the circumstances speak for themselves. Lacy found bleeding on the mountain side, near Drumgoff, and Riordan absconding, as soon as he had placed him in the surgeon's hands. The case was too plain. Even the very peasantry regarded that unhappy young man as one marked out for a life of unchanging woe and gloom. They said he had been overlooked in his infancy."

"How overlooked?"

"I will find you a better interpreter than myself for the phrase. Mrs. Keleher, who was Riordin's nurse, as well as Esther's, is at present living with me, in the capacity of housekeeper, and she will explain it to you in her own admirable idiom."

Mr. Damer rang for a servant, and sent him to find Mrs. Keleher. In a few minutes afterwards the jingling of keys, and the sound of a heavy foot, in carpet shoes, announced the approach of this respected functionary.

"The people are surprised," said Damer, "that we should be so bigoted, and yet continue to be pleased with a papistical housekeeper. But they know little of us. Let the hour be far from Glendearg when religion shall teach us to forget our old affections, to look cold upon a soul that heaven has made, and call it piety. If we meet a blind man, Tom, we must take him by the arm, and guide and pity, not revile nor hate him."

"There's some honesty in that speech," said Leonard, "and I would shake hands with you for it, but that it was spoken by the claret and not by you. Here's my idea. A papist ——"

"Hush! Mrs. Keleher is at the door."

CHAPTER IV.

THE old housekeeper had been heard slowly ascending the stairs, step by step, like Dante on the mountain—

the hinder foot still firmer;

and made her appearance almost before the last sentence had been concluded. She had that well-conditioned rotundity of figure, and respectable neatness of attire, which are usual in her situation. Her face, though the footprint of the raven was about her eyes, had that character of "youth in the heart" which some happy beings can preserve unaltered amid the decay of youthful passions and the loss of early friends, and yet this was blended with an expression of affectionate sadness in the old woman's eyes. The length of her countenance, the blackness of her hair and eyes, and the shade of deep olive in her complexion, showed her to be a native of the south-western coasts, where the external peculiarities of the ancient Spanish colonists are still preserved in a remarkable degree. A large rosary of horn beads, with an old shilling instead of a cross, hung conspicuously on the same string as her multitude of keys, serving at the same time as a symbol of her religious independence towards her patrons, and a testimony in the eyes of her country friends, of her honest adherence to the faith of her ancient village.

"Mrs. Keleher," said her master, "I sent for you to know whether you remember Mr. Riordan of Roundwood?"

"Mr. Francis Riordan, that went out with the paythriots?"

"The same."

The old woman shook her head with a sad smile.

"Remember Francis Riordan?" she repeated. "Is it remember the child I nurst in my own arms? You might as well ask me if I remember my own, or if I recollect Miss Esther above, herself, for sure it's the same call I have to both. Indeed I do remember him well and dearly. Soft be his rest in heaven this night, I pray. He lived and died an honour to his people."

"I know what you mean by that," said Mr. Damer. "He died with a green feather in his cap, and a green sash around his waist, and you are old enough to remember troubled days. There is the secret of your admiration, Mrs. Keleher."

Another smile of a different character, and apparently half suppressed, crossed the features of the old nurse.

"He was admired, master, by more than one; by those that were young enough to feel his merit, and too young to recollect the troubled days you talk of."

Mr. Damer would have frowned at this speech, but that his forehead was too fat, and the corrugator muscles too long unused to action. He turned away his head and sipped his wine.

"He was worthy of it, whatever love he met," continued Mrs. Kelcher. "He had a warm heart in his breast, he had the eye of a hawk, and the tongue of an angel in his head. If he burned my house, and then asked me to take him in my old arms, I'd do it. He had ever and always a kind of mournful look in his eyes, and a tone in his voice that would coax Europe. He's dead, they tell me now, and buried far away from home. It is the course of nature that the living should forget the dead, and do their duty by each other. Poor Master Francis met but little love or kindness while he was able to return it, and who can warm to him now, when his own heart is cold?"

"What was the cause of his being so unfortunate, Mrs. Kelcher?" exclaimed Leonard, who was impatient to bring the old lady to the point.

"The poor lad was overlooked when he was a child."

"Overlooked? How was that?"

"I'll tell you, sir. There are some people that have an eye in their head that it is not good for 'em to look upon anything, and if it so happened that they'd look upon a child, as it were, or a cow, or a horse, or a ha'p'orth at all, and to say, 'That's a fine child,' or 'That's a fine cow,' without saying 'God bless it!' afther, the child would be so far overlooked, and never would see a day's luck from that to his death's hour."

"And who overlooked young Riordan?"

"There's the question, sir. Who did it? I had him in my arms of an evenin' at the doore, abroad, an' I singin' for myself, an' dandlin' the little darlin' up an' down, an' he crowin' an' laughin' greatly. It was a fine calm evenin', an' the lake as smooth as a looking-glass, when I seen a woman reelin' a hank o' thread, and goin' by the doore and fixin' an eye upon Masther Francis. 'That's a fine child,' says she, 'you have in your arms.' Well, hardly she said the word, when I heard the kettle boilin' over within upon the fire, an' I run in to take it up, without even waitin' to make the woman say 'God bless it!' an' 'm sure, when I come out again to call afther her, there was no account to be had o' the lady, high or low."

"And so the child was overlooked?" said Mr. Leonard.

"The child was overlooked," returned the housekeeper; "an' I don't know was it fancy o' me, but from that hour I thought I saw the same mournful look in his eyes that he had till the day he parted me. I never seen two (an' sure I ought to know 'em, afther nursin' the both of 'em), I never seen two that were so unlike in themselves, an' loved so dearly as himself an' the young darlin' above stairs, Miss Esther."

"Come, come!" said Mr. Damer, with a warning voice.

"Oh! 'tis no thraison what I say, sure, when 'tis among ourselves," continued the old woman. "I said, before, they loved as I never seen man and woman love, an' still they were as conthrairy

in their ways as two could be. Miss Esther, though bein' of a methodish family (forgive us all our sins!), was the merriest child I think I ever laid my two eyes on, just as she was always, an' as she is this day, heart-broken as she is."

"What!"

"With the sickness, I mean; with the dint o' the delicacy, inwardly; sure, I said already it is the coorse o' nature for the living to forget the dead, an' I wish no man happier than Richard Lacy, now that the turf is green above my own poor lad. She was ever an' always laughin' and jokin' poor Masther Frank about his sorrowful ways. An' still she had great feelin's, the craither! She cried a power when she heerd of his death."

"How did she spend this evening?" asked Mrs. Damer.

"The same as the day, then, ma'am, between laughin' (though there was only a little o' that indeed), an' shiverin', an' faintin', as it were; but sure you were with her yourself, ma'am. She had no fit since you saw her. Ah! masther, take it from me, she never had the same heart from the day that Masther Francis flitted."

"An' tell me now, Mrs. Keleher," said Leonard, in a loud voice, "how came you to nurse Miss Wilderming?"

"How came I to nurse her? Why then, I'll tell you that. To be goin' I was, through the village of Roundwood of a time, very soon after I berrin' my first child, an' I called in to a friend in the place, a lone woman that kep a little shop o' medicines. 'Tis where she was when I called, was Mrs. Wilderming, the methodish lady, and she told me when she came in that there was a place for me as nurse, if I choose to take it, in the town. Faix, never say it again, says I, I'm sure I will so, an' glad to get it. So I got the child the next morning, and brought her with me to the same place where I nursed Masther Francis, where my husband's people were buried, an' where I laid his own old bones when it was the will of heaven to part us."

"Well, Mrs. Keleher, will you go up stairs, and tell Miss Esther that her uncle wishes to speak to her before she goes to rest? He wishes her to sign a little paper, while her uncle Leonard is here to witness it."

The old woman replied to this speech with a significant look and a shake of the head, after which she turned on her heel, and hobbled towards the room-door.

"And Misther Lacy, ma'am, will I send him in to you?"

"He will find out the way himself, I dare say," returned Mrs. Damer, "but you may bid Aaron go and seek him."

Mrs. Keleher departed; and Mr. Damer, throwing open a rosewood desk, displayed a document purporting to contain the articles of marriage between Richard Lacy, Esq. of Roundwood, and Esther Wilderming, of Glendearg, niece and ward of the comfortable-looking gentleman who was now so busy on her behalf.

"Don't move the candles, my love," said Mrs. Damer, "there is light enough. Let there be as little form as possible, or you will terrify the poor little timid thing out of her wits."

"Nevertheless, Nell," said her husband, with a smile, "you stood

in a very good light yourself, the day you and I set our hands and seals to the same sort of parchment."

"Ah! my love, the case was very different. You were my chosen and my only one."

Mr. Damer would have kissed his wife for this speech, but that the connubial action was prevented by the opening of the door, and the entrance of Mr. Richard Lacy.

He was a low sized man, with a lean, hard, and bloodless face, eyes full opened, and cold in their expression, hair thrown back on all sides, so as to conceal no part of a countenance whose extent could not admit of much retrenchment; hands little, yellow and bony; lips, thin and envious in their character, and a manner that, while it showed a perfect intimacy with good society, was yet too artificial to deserve the praise of elegance.

He glanced at the open desk, and his appearance, while he took his seat near Mrs. Damer, was not free from agitation. Leonard gazed at him with an unliking eye. He whispered something, in a low and broken voice, about the troubled look of the sky, and then fixing his eye upon the doorway, seemed to watch for the entrance of the fair ward with the eye of a real lover.

CHAPTER V.

This night had been appointed for the formal signing of the marriage articles. The witnesses, as we have said, were ready, the desk was thrown open, the candles were moved to a suitable distance, and every eye was bent upon the parlour door. It opened at length, and a figure entered very unlike that of the lovely sectarian for whose approach the eyes of Lacy longed as for the light. It was that of a tall, muscular, middle aged man, dressed in a brown suit, with grizzled hair brushed sleekly upon his brow, a face of a deep yellow tinge, sown thick with freckles, and eyes which had a curious mixture of active thought and of solemnity in their expression.

"Well, Aaron," said Mr. Damer, "what of your mistress?"

"She is not coming," said the servant. "She wishes to speak with you in the drawing-room."

"With me?" asked Lacy, starting from his chair.

Aaron replied to this question by a stare of calm surprise, and then stalked after Mr. Damer out of the parlour.

That gentleman found his niece standing in a niche formed by one of the lower windows, with a white veil drawn round her person, her arms folded, with one hand laid upon her throat, and her person as motionless as a statue. The window curtains were drawn back, and the thin moonlight, falling on her pale face and light gray drapery, gave something of a spiritual expression to the whole figure.

"Well, Esther, pet, why do you keep us waiting?" said Damer, patting his niece affectionately on the shoulder, "Richard is below this hour."

"Uncle," replied Esther, making an effort at her usual liveliness of manner, "you must read the Bible, and learn to bear with me. 'My valour is oozing out at my fingers' ends' as the time approaches, and I fear you will find me out to be an arrant coward before long."

"Fie, fie! you are trembling."

"Have you discovered it? Nay then, take the honest truth at once, uncle, my heart is failing me."

"What should you fear?"

"I have enough, I think, to make a maiden's heart beat rapidly, sir. I fear, first, a room full of staring guests ——"

"But there are none," said Damer, interrupting her.

"A pair of wax candles, shining in one's eyes, and lighting one up like a player; an open desk, a scroll of parchment, and the eyes of a doubting bridegroom."

"You are a strange girl."

"You have named my name, as sure as there is a moon in heaven. Adam himself could have done no better. But, indeed, indeed, uncle," she continued, suddenly assuming a deep and serious tone, and lifting her hands towards him, as if in the act of supplication, "my mind is changing on this marriage!"

"Changing, Esther?"

"Changing!" echoed the beautiful girl, with a musing look, while she tossed her head significantly several times. "Every thing around me, every sight, every sound, seems to warn me against it. My dreams are full of threats and warning terrors. I cannot tell you why, but I feel as if this marriage were to bring on some terrible misfortune."

"Oh, Esther, fie! This is trifling with us all," said Damer, with some impatience.

Esther bent down her head to hide the burst of tears which flowed from her at this speech. "Trifling!" she repeated; "may the friends of Esther never know such mirth! Uncle, I am very ill; I am growing worse and worse every hour. I don't know what is the matter; but I feel as if I had some dreadful misfortune hanging over me. I fear I have not long to live."

Mr. Damer became quite fretted at what he thought the hypochondriasm of this speech, and reproved his niece with considerable warmth. "While there was any reasonable ground for your holding back," he said "while there was any hope that your own early wishes might be realized, I never once pressed you upon this point. Did I ever for an instant put you to pain on the behalf of Lacy, while the promotion of his interests could have injured those of any other person?"

"Indeed, uncle Damer, you never did."

"And is there anything, then, so very unreasonable in my now entreating that you would no longer delay the fulfilment of a promise freely made?"

"You are always kind and good."

"Besides," continued Mr. Damer, "I hope my Esther will be generous enough to remember that there are others whose feelings are not less intimately affected by this negotiation than her own. You would not put poor Lacy to the agony of such a disappointment, after so many years of steady faith and constancy?"

Esther remained for a few moments silent, with her face buried between her hands, and then raising her person and making an effort to appear determined, she placed her arm within that of Mr. Damer. It is well, thought that gentleman within his own mind; the usual maidenly prologue is concluded, and we may shortly hope to have the play begin.

He led her, still trembling, from the room. They reached the hall, upon which the door of the dining-room opened. Here the courage of Esther once more failed her. Her uncle felt her hang more heavily upon his arm, and her breath came thick and short, as if she were threatened with some hysterical affection. At that instant, the door opened, and Mrs. Damer made her appearance. The rigid character of this lady had always impressed her niece with a certain degree of awe, and that sentiment came now most opportunely to check the deep emotion which already began to agitate her limbs, and features. Supported, at either side, by her relatives, she once more summoned resolution enough to approach the dreaded door, when some sudden and new occasion made her start and turn her head in the attitude of one who listens intently.

"Who said that?" she asked, in a hurried whisper.

"That—what, Esther?" inquired her uncle.

"Somebody spoke behind me; somebody said 'Be true!' Did you not hear? *I* did, as plainly as I hear my own voice now."

"It could not be, my love," said Mrs. Damer, "the doors are all closed, and the hall is empty."

"I heard the words," repeated Esther, panting heavily "as plainly as I heard you now. Oh, heaven, support me!"

"Fie, Esther, fie!"

"I have no choice!" continued Esther, looking upward fixedly, and seeming to address her speech to heaven. "If you hear and see and blame me, Francis, remember what I suffered for your sake. I do it for the best. O, my good guardian, look on me to-night! If, in this step I am about to take, I act at all from selfish or unworthy motives; if my heart be false; if I seek my own good in anything I do to-night, I do not ask thee to hold up thine arm! I do not shun the anger that is gathering on my destiny! But my heart is silent. My heart accuses me of nothing evil in my intention, and I fear not your displeasure since you know it is my duty and not my will that draws me to this sacrifice."

Somewhat strengthened and relieved by this appeal, Esther proceeded with her friends to the parlour, and made her appearance there with less of confusion than she had anticipated. She gave her hand, with that cordial understanding which connects good-natured hearts together, to Mr. Leonard, bent her head slightly, and with as much kindness as she could assume, to Lacy, and then

moved quickly to the desk on which the marriage articles were laid.

The agitation of the bridegroom while Esther took the pen, and prepared with a trembling hand to affix her name to the document, was scarcely less remarkable than her own. His conduct was that of one who is upon the brink of some intense and long sought happiness, and who fears that some sudden chance may yet interpose to snatch the blessing from within his reach, even when he has already opened his arms for its reception. But Esther, suffering Mr. Damer to guide her hand, had already made the dreaded sign which bound their destinies together, and his was safe from henceforth. He ceased to tremble, and Leonard, who watched him with the eye of one but little enamoured of his character, observed a flash of ecstacy, that almost approached a degree of triumph break from his eyes, when all the necessary signatures had been affixed to this legal document.

Without much conversation, the company separated, after the business for which they had assembled had been discharged. The following day was appointed for the marriage which was intended to be as private as possible. The gentlemen left the house, and, soon after their departure, Esther was borne to her room in an alarming state of weakness. Tremblings and fits of syncope succeeded, and kept the family during the remainder of the night in a state of intense anxiety and agitation.

CHAPTER VI.

Aaron, the servant already mentioned, was in the act of crossing the hall, after making an anxious inquiry into the condition of his beloved young mistress, and receiving for the first time the satisfactory intelligence that she had fallen into a deep, and apparently refreshing, sleep.

"Poor craither!" he said, "poor darlin'! the light will lave my eyes if you get no better in the mornin'! Well, friend Davy," he added, addressing a handsome countryman who just then made his appearance in the passage leading to the servants' hall, "Where are you going, now?"

"To Glendalough, Misther Aarum," returned the stranger, gathering around him the folds of his large frieze coat. "How's the missiz?"

"Thank you, finely. You must'nt stir yet?"

"Oh, that I might'nt if I can stop a minute, 'tis a'most one, an' I have a long road before me."

"You must come back, and take a little nourishment again' the way. Take off your coat and come."

With some decent persuasion, Davy Lenigan, ("for that was his name," as the old story-books have it,) was pevailed upon to return and take his seat by the blazing fire in the servants' hall. It was a comfortable apartment, floored with brick, with a deal table extending nearly the whole length, and flanked by two forms of the same material. A pair of arm-chairs, intended as seats of honour for the coachman and the cook, were placed on each side the fire. and, those respected functionaries being now absent, Davy Lenigan was invited to take possession of that position which was usually occupied by the Phæton of Glendearg.

Here he sat for some moments, while old Aaron hurried out of the room, to procure materials for whisky punch, which was what he meant to intimate by the word "nourishment."

"Ah, Mrs. Keleher," said Davy, observing the nurse making some arrangements at the end of the room, "so this is the way old times are forgotten above stairs!"

"Ah, howl your tongue now, Davy," said the old woman, "there's raison in all things."

"Ah," continued Davy, with a sad countenance, "it's little Misther Riordan, my poor young masther, ever thought she'd turn on him that way in his grave."

"E'howl your tongue, now, Davy."

"Oh, Masther Francis! they hadn't my heart in their buzzum when they forget you that way, an' the colour you wore the day you died. Only four years gone, what four? 'tisn't, nor passin' three an' a half, an' there she is goin' to put the very deçaiver in your place that was the cause o' your desthruction an' your banishment! The very deçaiver! 'm sure I hard him myself, the day he parted her, talkin', an' he havin' her hand betune the two of his, an' he sayin' his last word, 'Be thrue!' Look, Mrs. Keleher, there's no use in talkin', but it would kill the Danes to hear him sayin' that word that day! An' now to think of her marryin' another man, an' takin' to Lacy of all the world! Dear knows, my heart is broke from the thoughts of it. An' sure what hurt if it was for one of his own *profession** he suffered, but for a methodish! Ah, dear, dear, dear!"

"Howl, again Davy; Aaron will hear you."

"Ayeh, let me alone. Let 'em all rise out of it, for love, afther that. An' tis'nt that, but the talk she used to have herself, about the counthry an' the boys! Ah, Masther Frank! Masther Frank! Dear knows I would'nt wonder if he showed himself to her of a night on the 'count of it."

"Eyeh!" Mrs. Keleher exclaimed with a faint shriek.

"Dear knows, I would'nt. Three years an' a half! Sure it takes seven years to make a man dead in law, an' it seems there's only half the time wantin' to make him dead in love."

"Well, well, achree, the dead is dead, an' the livin' is livin', let us take care of ourselfs an' not to be jedgin' any one. Howl your tongue, now, here's Aaron comin'."

* Religion.

Davy complied, with a kind of groan, and in a few minutes, he and the elderly sectarian were seated alone by the fire-side, with a capacious jug of whisky punch steaming luxuriously between them.

In addition to the feeling of honest hospitality, Aaron Shepherd had a motive for detaining Davy. It had been the old methodist's misfortune, during his time of service with Esther's father, to hear one of those controversial argumentations by which the mind of Ireland, and of England also, was agitated about this period. The consequence of this circumstance was, that Aaron was presently seized with an irresistible passion for polemics, and dreamed of nothing less than making converts on his own account. He had long since cast a hungry eye upon Davy, and longed for a good opportunity of awaking him to a sense of his condition. In this, however, it was necessary to employ some skill, for Davy was as wary as a plover, and being conscious of his own want of theological information, while he was fully determined not to be convinced by anything Aaron could urge, he avoided all occasion of controversy with that person. Yet he could not altogether decline a plain challenge, for Davy had a brother who was an instructor of youth; he kept a school at Glendalough, where young people of both sexes were instructed in the arts of reading, writing, grammar, book-keeping, arithmetic, &c. at the cheap rate of half-a-crown a quarter, while those who aspired to classical information, in which also Mr. Henry Lenigan was capable of affording some rudimental information, paid the enormous sum of two guineas a year. He passed in his neighbourhood for a man of "great manners," his literary education having taught him to assume a certain suavity of bearing, and occasionally a certain euphuism of discourse which impressed his neighbours with a high idea of his erudition. Nothing astonished Aaron more than that an argument which appeared to himself as convincing as a self-evident proposition, should produce so little effect on Davy, while the latter felt no difficulty so great as that of finding reasons for not admitting those conclusions of the sectarian which he was unable to answer. His common resource, when pressed very hard, was to take the matter up in a personal light, and

> Prove his doctrine orthodox
> By apostolic blows and knocks.

But, even in this species of logic he was still no adequate match for the sectarian, whose Irish blood could be easily made to rise above the zero of his christian theory, and suggest some tremendous carnal execution.

After the hearts of both had been softened by one half hour's steady application to the punch-jug, Aaron suddenly broke, out of a conversation on general subjects, into the following speech:—

"Look you hether, David Lenigan! You are a dacent, credible youth, an' I love you. Your people and my people lived in the same town, an' dealt together for teas, an' groceries, an' things, an' I have every raison to love and like you."

"It's thrue for you, Misther Aaron, we wor ould neighbours surely."

"An' it's for that raison, Davy, I wish you well, an' I wish I had the power to put your father's child in a palace this blessed night."

"I never misdoubted your good will, indeed, Misther Aaron."

"Don't Davy, don't for the world. An' still, Davy," Aaron continued, setting down his tumbler with a solemn face, "if I *could* put you in a palace, where would be the gain? The palaces of this world, Davy, are like houses of snow."

Davy groaned internally.

"Which melt away in the first thaw, an' lave us could an' defenceless, but the palaces of light are the only palaces that's worth a christian's while to look for."

"I wont gainsay *that*," said Davy, with emphasis.

"You could'nt Davy, if you would. You could'nt gainsay the——"

He was going to say the Bible; but recollecting that Davy was not privileged to qualify himself for a controversy on this subject, he stopped short, with a smile of pity and contemptuous forbearance. Davy perceived the sneer, and found it impossible to evade the contest any longer.

"Look hether, Misther Aaron," he began. "They may say this and that of the Bible, an' of the best way to heaven, but I'll tell you what it is. I seen a man of a day that read more books than you or I ever saw in our lives, an' I heerd that man say that there was no use in talkin', but whether a man was a Roman, a Protestant, a Methodish or a Quaker, the best way in the world for gettin' into heaven was just to —— go there simply."

"Well, friend Davy, an' do you b'lieve him?"

"I does!" said Davy stoutly; "I think that there's no persuasion* goin' but a part of 'em will go to heaven, some time."

"What *all* Davy?"

"Iss, all; barrin' it was, may be, the Turks or the Arabians. Ayeh, what talk it is! Listen hether. Wor you ever at Glendalough?"

"I was," replied Aaron, with a contemptuous smile.

"And did you see the seven churches?"

"I did."

"The round tower, an' the Cathedral, an' St. Kavin's Kitchen?"

Aaron lowered his head in dignified assent.

"Well, then, if you did, listen hether. Do you mind me now, Misther Aaron? The masther abroad has the height o' that table o' Bibles of all sorts and sizes, and he thinks he's the first that's bringin' 'em into Ireland. But harken hether! Do you think the saints, an' the great people long ago, that built them churches, that stone roof, and that round tower, that all the masons in Europe could'nt do the likes now, if they were at it from this till mornin', do you think them saints did'nt know anythin' o' the scripthurs?"

* Religion.

Aaron was silent for a moment.

"Do you think," continued Davy, pressing his question, "that them saints are burnin' in hell this day?"

"I judge nobody, but ——"

"There, why!" cried Davy in triumph, "and you talk to me of Bibles and things! Ayeh, Misther Aaron, take it from me, tis'nt by readin' or writin' we'll ever get into heaven, only by doin' our duty properly."

"Hold you there!" cried Aaron; "there's the point, you know. What is your duty, Davy?"

"My duty," said David, a little puzzled, "is, as I may say, to do my duty, as it were, by all manner o' people, high an' low, gentle an' simple; that's my maxim, an' that's what I go by ever."

"Well, an' will I tell you a plain truth now, Davy, as a friend?"

"You're freely welcome."

"Why then I will. You know no more of your duty, Davy Lenigan, than that cat on the stool. You belong to a church that leads you about like poor Blind Buff, with a hankitcher on your eyes, an' a gag on your mouth, an' most commonly 'tis where it leads you is to the gallows-foot, to edify your friends with a lamentation. Did you ever see a methodist hung?"

"If I didn't" said Davy warmly, "I seen methodishes that desarved it. The pride an' the concait o' ye bates the world. Ye're just the dandy Christhens above all others! Ayeh, what talks! Ye think it is a standin' collar and a low crowned hat that 'll take ye into heaven. I don't know my duty! E' howl your tongue, you foolish man! I suppose if I axed the same question o' you, you'd tell me your duty was to comb your hair straight, an' spake through your nose, an' to keep your knees bent in walkin', an' your crubeens turned in, an' to wear a shovel of a hat upon your pole, and a round cut coat. That's the whole o' the methodishes' catechism. All the defference betune us is, that I let the priest lead me to heaven his own way, an' you give your sowl to the tailor. It's thrue for Thady Ryan, the poet westwards, what he says o' ye, in his ballad o' the Recantation of Father Hannan, an' he spakin' o' the Catholic Church:—

Through Europe (say he) did resound
The laws she did expound—
Why did you (says he) attempt to forsake her?
Her banners she displayed
In thriumph night an' day,
She's shuparior (says he) to swaddler or quaker.

Mind, I don't say anythin' again' the swaddlers for industherin'. They're strict an' credible people, surely, in that line. But as for the religion—"

Here Aaron could hold no longer.

"You poor despiseable papist!" he began, "it is like you' an' your people to be always ignorant an' presumptuous; I will prove to you—"

"Howl a minute!" cried Davy, "ignorant an' presumptuous?

Before I hear another word from you now, afther that, I must know what raison you have for sayin' it. Tell me this, he added, rising from his chair, and confronting the sectarian with an attitude of imposing majesty; "if you're such a great fellow entirely, can you calculate the aiclipse o' the moon?"

This was a thunderstroke. Aaron so far from being able to answer Davy's question in the affirmative, did not even find it intelligible. He winced, and shrunk from the learned scrutiny of Davy's glance, but his confusion betrayed him.

"You can't!" cried Davy, in great triumph: "An' you talk to me of ignorance? Poh!" And snapping his fingers in the face of his opponent, with a shrill exclamation of scorn, he turned round upon his heel and resumed his seat.

The controversy was here interrupted by strange sounds above stairs. In the room directly over their heads they heard the noise of many feet hurrying to and fro, as if some accident had taken place, and in a few minutes the old nurse was seen hobbling into the hall with symptoms of wild alarm and confusion on her countenance.

"Aaron Shepherd! Aaron Shepherd!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands with an air of grief and impatience; "run, run for the docthor, as fast as ever you can lay leg to ground! The young missiz is in a fit, an' I'm afeerd she's dyin'."

"Dying, woman?"

"Dyin'; away with you, Aaron, or he never 'ill overtake her alive! Oh, vo! there I hear 'em again above stairs! Run Aaron, run for the bare life!"

This was the signal for general consternation. In one minute Aaron and his low hat were speeding through the moonshine in one direction, while Davy Lenigan took the wild mountain road which led to Glendalough, not displeased at the opportunity of escape from his polemical opponent, and little afflicted at the condition of Esther; for her infidelity to his master had shaken considerably the interest she possessed in his affections.

CHAPTER VII.

THE most striking characteristic of the Wicklow scenery is that of intense, though not oppressive, loneliness. The road which our polemic pursued, after leaving the mansion of Glendearg, was a wild and broken track, winding amid a wilderness of mountain heath, and granite. Sometimes a stream, hurrying downward through the masses of rock that made the desert horrid, broke suddenly upon his path, foaming and glittering in the moonlight, and making a dreary sound in the midnight solitude. Sometimes the

distant barking of a dog augmented the sense of extreme loneliness which the scene occasioned, by the slight suggestion of a contrast which it afforded. Sometimes a gust of wind swept down between the fissures of the hills, and hurrying along the valley side, sunk down and whist again, with a wail that had something in it of a supernatural effect. The beautiful terrors of the scene were, however, all lost on Davy.

A cloud had stolen across the moon, when he descended that rugged part of the road which leads downward upon the lake of Luggela. He stepped out upon a rock, which overlooks the valley on the north-western side, and endeavoured, in the dim light, to gather in the outline of the scene beneath him. This enchanting little region, like all the lake scenery of Wicklow, owes its principal fascination to the effect of contrast which is produced on the beholder's mind by the dreary wildness of the barren mountain road by which it is approached. While our pedestrian stood upon the rock, the veil was suddenly withdrawn from the disk of the "full-blown" moon, and a flood of tender light was poured upon the scene, clothing the cliffs, the lake, the trees, and the whole coup d'œil in a mantle of bluish silver.

He saw beneath him, embosomed among the brown hills, a little valley full of beauty, full of varied loveliness, full of character, and of romantic interest. On his right was a deep glen, rugged with masses of granite, and intersected by a small stream which supplied the basin of the lake, the origin of which was concealed amid the windings of the barren defile. Following the course of this stream, the eye soon beheld it creeping out from among the rocks, gliding with many a snake-like winding along a green and cultivated champaign, and mingling into the lake with so gentle a current that the profound repose of its gleaming surface was unbroken by a single curl. Beneath him, on his left, in a nook of this sequestered valley, and commanding the beautiful plain before described, stood a mansion in the pointed style of architecture; and here the scene was enriched and humanized by plantations, pleasure-grounds, garden plats, and other luxurious incidents, which gave a softening character of leisure to the retreat. Farther to his left lay the calm expanse of water, from which the scene derives its name, and which occupied an area between three lofty mountains, each of which descended suddenly upon the very borders of the lake, and presented a variety of shore which was wonderful in a scene so limited. On one side appeared a tumbling cliff, composed of innumerable loose masses of granite, piled together to the height of a thousand feet, without a single trace of vegetation; farther on, the waters kissed the foot of a hill that was clothed, from the summit to the very verge of the lake, in a mantle of the freshest verdure; farther on still, the shores were shadowed by over-hanging woods of pine and beech, and before the circuit of the basin had been made, the waters were found rolling in their tiny wavelets of crystal over a level sandy beach, composed of triturated granite, and forming the border of the lawn already mentioned. The effect of the whole picture was heightened at this moment by the peculiar

light, which softened down the rougher features of the scene, and gave a gentle and sparkling brilliancy to those parts that were distinguished by their beauty and refinement. Over half the surface of the lake, the gigantic shadow of Carrigamanne mountain (the granite cliff before described) was flung by the declining moon, with a sharp distinctness of outline, veiling half the waters in the deepest shade, while the remainder mimicked the vault of the star-lit heaven above within a plain of bright and streaky silver.

The poor pedestrian remained gazing long upon this scene, for he remembered the time when his young master, Francis Riordan, and himself, were accustomed to spend whole summer days upon the lake, paddling luxuriously along the mountain sides, or standing out in the centre and looking for trout. He remembered the time when he sat resting on his oars in the bow, while the slight and beautiful boy was wont to lie back on the stern seats, for many minutes together, gazing on the glassy water, and humming over that enchanting air,* the character of which is so exquisitely adapted to the scene from which it takes its name.

On a sudden, the ears of Davy were greeted by a strain of music so singular, so novel in its character, and yet so sweet, that it bound him to the spot in an ecstasy of surprise and admiration. It seemed like a concert of many instruments, and yet it was little louder in its tones than the murmuring of a hive of summer bees. Sometimes it swelled out into a strain of wailing harmony like the moan of an Eolian harp, and sometimes faded away into

> A sound so fine that nothing lived
> 'Tween it and silence.

And then a rich masculine voice, improved into an almost magical sweetness by the loneliness of the place, took up the following melody, which was executed with a skill that told of continental accomplishment:—

I.

Hark! hark! the soft bugle sounds over the wood,
And thrills in the silence of even;
Till faint, and more faint, in the far solitude,
It dies on the portals of heaven!
But echo springs up from her home in the rock,
And seizes the perishing strain;
And sends the gay challenge with shadowy mock
From mountain to mountain again,
And again!
From mountain to mountain again.

* The air of Luggela, to which Moore has adapted that perfection of lyric melody, commencing—

"No, not more welcome the fairy numbers, &c."

II.

Oh, thus let my love, like a sound of delight,
Be around thee while shines the glad day,
And leave thee, unpain'd, in the silence of night,
And die like sweet music away.
While hope, with her warm light, thy glancing eye fills,
Oh, say, "Like that echoing strain,
Though the sound of his love has died over the hills,
It will waken in heaven again,"
And again!
It will waken in heaven again.

The song ceased, and the listener could hear the words, "Again, and again!" floating off and fainting in the bosom of the distant valleys.

In a few minutes a small boat emerged from that part of the lake which was darkened by the shadow of the mountain, and gliding rapidly over the star-spangled abyss that lay between, buried its light keel in the sandy beach above described; two men leaped on the shore, and Davy thought he saw, from the head-dress of one, a plume of coloured feathers waving in the moonlight. The night was so calm, that he could hear the voices of both with perfect distinctness. Perceiving that he of the plume was about to take the road to Roundwood, Davy hurried forward on his own track, measuring his speed so as that he might encounter the stranger as nearly as possible at the point on the heath where the two roads joined.

In this he was successful. The stranger, in answer to Davy's courteous greeting, touched his hat lightly with his finger, and folding his cloak around him, continued his journey in silence. When they had reached that turn in the road at which, by a single step, the traveller may shut out from his view the delicious valley above described, the stranger, who seemed to be well acquainted with the scenery, turned suddenly round, and gazed for a long time, without the least sound or motion, upon the moonlit scene. At length, seeming to gather his arms more closely upon his breast, and bending his head low, he strode forward at a more rapid pace, and soon overtook Davy, who was loitering a few paces in advance.

"Do you go to Roundwood, friend?" asked the stranger, in what Davy called an "Englified" accent.

This was the spell-word which, like the first speech addressed to a spirit, put an end to Davy's silence, and left him free to become as inquisitive and communicative as he pleased.

"A little beyant it, plase your honour," he said, touching his hat; "as far as Glendalough."

"Do you kve at the Seven Churches, then?"

"I do, sir; just hard by the barrack of Drumgoff, where my brother keeps a little school. I was over among the mountains a piece, at Misthur Damer's of Glendearg, getting him to put in a good word for me with the Archbishop, in regard o' the lase o' my little place, over."

He paused, as if in the expectation that the stranger might put in a word, to sustain his share of the conversation, but the latter continued silent.

"Great doings at Glendearg, sir," Davy added; "nothing but marryin', marryin', ever an' always."

Even this bait failed to awaken the stranger's curiosity, and for some minutes both were silent.

"Dear knows, then, this is a lonesome road," was Davy's next effort at opening a confidential intercourse. "I would'nt like to cross the mountains to Roundwood alone to-night; not that I ever saw anything uglier than myself, thank heaven! in all my rambles, but people says a dale about sperrits that way at night. Will you take it as an offence, sir, now, if I ask your honour one question?"

"That will depend altogether, my good friend, upon the nature of the question itself."

"Surely, sir, surely. Well, it's what I was going to say was, that I know a family from Dublin that come here last year, and of all the world, I never heard anything more like the tone o' their voice than what your honour's is. The Nortons, sir, a fine likely family, indeed, and 'tis what I thought when I heard your honour's, was that may be, says I, 'tis one o' the young Misthur Nortons I have there, and sure enough, says I, 'tis Misthur George, that went out with the pathriots, for I see the green feather flirtin' up in his hat, an' he comin' up the road?"

"My voice, then," said the stranger, "is not unfamiliar to you?"

"I declare then, no," said Davy; "I have a feelin' greatly in myself when I hear you talkin', as I may say."

"And the best conjecture you can make is that I am young Mr. Norton of Dublin?"

"I'm thinkin' so, sir."

"I hope I may not find all my old friends in Ireland so forgetful; and yet there are many there by whom I do not feel anxious to be recollected. Your name is David Lenigan?"

"It is, abo' boord!"

"Were you ever in service?"

"Never but the once't when I was coortin' Gracey Guerin."

"And would you know," said the stranger in a hollow voice, standing still himself, and causing David also to do so, by laying a finger against his shoulder, "would you know your master if you saw him again?"

At this question, David drew back with a secret misgiving at the heart, and a cold creeping of the skin, such as is occasioned by the extremest horror of which human nature is capable. He gazed fearfully on the tall figure that stood before him, and as the moonshine fell upon his worn and sallow countenance and large watery eyes, a terrific recognition began to awake within his heart. The stranger, mean while, remained standing at his full height, his head thrown back as if to invite inquiry, one foot advanced a little, and one worn hand gathering the drapery of his capacious war-cloak around his handsome person.

"Ay!" he said, after a long pause; "I have triumphed! Once

more I tread the land I trod in childhood, once more, with an unsullied name, I walk the soil that hides the ashes of my fathers! I left it poor, I return wealthy; I left it in shame for my species, in sorrow for the name of man; I stand to gaze upon it now, proud of that name, and proud that I belong to such a race of beings. I look upon these hills, the lakes, the streams, the woods, and that pale moon that lights their loveliness, and I say, Shine on, for we are worthy of your light; bloom on, for we are worthy of your beauties! I have seen, at last, that sight for which my boyish heart had yearned almost to bursting. I have seen a people rising in their anger, and challenging the rights that nature gave them. I have lifted my hand with theirs towards the free heaven, and struck with them for liberty. I have seen them prosper, I have seen tyranny struck to the dust; and now my heart is satisfied. Men now may turn their swords into ploughshares and pruning-hooks, for they have done enough to show that the old spirit still lives upon the earth, and to give a Grecian lesson to posterity."

At the close of this speech, Davy had just received sufficient presence of mind to stretch out his hands towards the stranger, and exclaim in a hoarse and broken whisper, while his teeth chattered, and his limbs shook with fear, "Oh! Masther Francis, is it you?"

"My poor fellow," said the stranger, still in the same loud and excited tone: "I am, indeed, your master, Francis Riordan."

The faithful servant remained for a considerable time without the power of speech. We thought you were dead, sir," he gasped forth at length.

"There was a time when I would have rejoiced to give occasion to such a rumour," said Riordan: "but what a brilliant fortune I would then have lost! To see the cause succeed to which I had devoted my life and labour, to come back once more in health and honour to my native land, and even before my youth had fled, to return with all my youthful hopes accomplished."

"But, Masther Francis, ar'nt you afeerd for all!"

"Afraid! of what?"

Davy cast a glance over each shoulder, alternately, as if to be assured that they stood alone in the wilderness, and then said, "Why then, nothin', sir, only of that ould business about the boys, you know."

Francis burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. "Nay, nay, said he, "I can't think there is great danger of my finding people's memories so very acute. My enemies must not have sharper recollections than my friends."

"Ayeh, then, I declare I would'nt trust Richard Lacy for forgettin'."

"Nor I, nor I, if it were his interest any longer to remember."

"Oh, then! oh, then! sure, masther, 'tis it that is his intherest, an' nothin' else. Oh, dear! oh, dear, dear! Oh, Esther Wilder-ming! the heavens look down on you this blessed night!"

The moment he had said these words, the stranger seemed on a sudden to have lost a foot of his customary stature. His proud

and soldier-like bearing was altered in an instant. He walked off the road and sat down for some moments on a rock which lay near, evidently greatly affected, but not hiding his face, nor by any avoidable action suffering his agitation to appear.

"Come hither!" he said to his attendant, after a pause of painful silence, "what do you say of Esther?"

"Oh! then, Masther Francis, I declare I don't like to say anything about it to you."

"Speak on!" said Riordan, with a portentous calmness in his accent.

"You're sick and weary now, sir, after your journey."

"Speak on, speak on!" repeated Riordan in the same tone.

"Come on to Roundwood, masther, an' I'll tell you when you're well an hearty in the mornin'. Dear knows, a sleep would be betther to you now than news like this."

"Speak, sir!" cried Francis, in a voice of sudden passion, springing to his feet, and shaking his clenched hand in the face of his servant, "speak, sir, or I will strike you to the earth! You hint a horrid ruin in my ear, and bid me wait your pleasure for the telling; you fling me on a rack, and bid me sleep! What of Miss Wilderming?"

"She is——" Davy began——

"Dead!" cried the soldier, observing him hesitate.

"Not dead, sir, no——"

"Not dead, thank heaven! But ill?"

"Wisha faix, that's not it, sir, neither."

"What then?" He looked for some moments closely into David's face, and said, with a vexed laugh: "She is not married, sure?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"No!" cried Riordan, starting back, with a burst of enthusiastic confidence, "My Esther is not false! In all my toils, in all my sufferings, in all my trials, dangers, and afflictions, that base, ungenerous doubt has never crossed my mind even for an instant. My breast is full of confidence towards her. Oh, I am as sure of Esther's love as I am of my own truth, in her regard, of your fidelity, of Lacy's hatred!"

He paused as if in expectation of Davy's speech, but the latter continued silent, looking fixedly on the ground, and giving utterance occasionally to a deep moan.

"What is it that you fear to tell me, Lenigan?" continued the young patriot; "why do you hesitate, and moan, and look downwards? Out with it, man, whatever be the event. One thing at any rate, I cannot fear, and that is Esther Wilderming's unkindness. I never will look upon her face with a sad heart, unless I should live to see her in her coffin."

"Why then, since you say 'coffin' masther," said Davy, "I declare I'd rather see her in her coffin, than where she is to be: in Misther Lacy's house."

"Than where?" said Riordan, stepping back, and speaking in a whisper between his teeth.

"Oh, then in Lacy's house!"

"What have you said?" cried Riordan, leaning with both hands on David's shoulder, and speaking in a low voice. "Nay, speak not! Do you think I can bear that?"

"Oh, Masther Frank!"

"Listen, or I will tread you into powder! Answer each question I shall ask you briefly, quickly, and most truly, sir, or I will stop your speech for ever. Where is Esther?"

"Over at Glendearg."

"And well?"

"Iss, purty well."

"Married," he paused and panted heavily, "married, or not?"

"Not married, yet."

"What then? She is contracted?"

"Yes."

"To whom?"

"To Richard Lacy."

"Torture and death!" the young man cried aloud, flinging Lenigan from him, and stamping furiously upon the road.

He stood for some minutes in an attitude of rigid agony, with both hands pressed upon his forehead, and the fingers twined in his hair, as if with the intention of tearing it up by the roots.

"Let there be," he said at last, "no error here. Is it *that* Lacy? Has she given herself away to my enemy?"

"To him, then, and to no other."

"Oh! you have said enough. My heart will burst. Stand back! Oh! what a rival! Ah! stand aside, for I am losing breath. Oh! peaceful moon, what constancy is this! Come hither, sir; let me lean on your shoulder."

"Wisha, dear knows ——"

"Stand still. Fie, fie! my heart is beating like a boy's. I never dreamed this might be possible. I am very feverish. Oh, shame! shame! shame!"

"Dear knows, sir ——"

"How she deceived me, and how I loved her! I would have staked my life upon her truth; I would have died for her, and she forgets me! Married to Lacy! Why, of all the names on earth, should she have chosen that one to curse me with? Oh! if the memories of our early love, that very bank, that stream, that quiet grove, the lonely twilight and the young fresh dawn, that had so often lighted us in our accustomed walks; if all these recollections had not power to hold her to her ancient faith, why need she, at the least, have struck the blow so deeply! I told her, at our parting, that I could not change, and I spoke the truth. I have been tempted, too. Wealthy, and beautiful, and high-born was the being that put my true affections to the trial. I was poor then, and friendless, and I went up all alone to the house top, in the calm and burning noontide, to look to the east and think of her whom I had left in our own distant island. The sky was clear and still, the woods were silent, a stream plashed at a little distance, and I thought of former times. I lifted my hands to heaven, and I said,

No! let my fate be gloomy as it may, let me die young, and in a foreign land, but never will I meditate falsehood to my country or to my love. I kept my truth, and this is my reward!"

"Oh! then, sir," said Davy, "I have that notion o' the women, that if they wished to prove thrue itself, they couldn't keep from rovin' an' to do their besht."

"But she has found her punishment even in her crime. Married to Richard Lacy! I could not curse her more deeply than to wish Lacy's heart in the breast of him who was to govern her destiny. Ah, fie upon her falsehood! I am a fool to trouble myself about it. Davy!"

"Well, masther?"

"When is the marriage to take place?"

"This week, sir, as I hear."

"Ah, shame upon her! And at Glendearg?"

"Providen' she is betther before then."

"What, is she ill, then? What's the matter? Speak, sir! Yet what is it to me? Tell me nothing of it. From this time forward I disclaim all interest in that cold, fickle creature. I have done with her for ever. What! she is not then suffered to carry it through with unruffled plumes and a heart entirely free. Well, well, though she is worthless, I am sorry to hear this."

"Ah! masther, you're too hard upon her."

"Do you think so, David? You are a faithful fellow."

"'Tis unknown, sir, what coaxin' an' arguefyin' they had at her, over at Glendearg, to make her say the word that she'd marry Lacy."

"Ha! do you know this?"

"To be sure, I do. Didn't she remain shut up in her house for as good as four years a'most, without seein' a crather hardly, until we heerd o' your death?"

"Ay, I forgot; you spoke of some such rumour. And Esther heard of this?"

"The world wide heard of it. Sure it was printed in the papers all over Ireland. 'Tis afther that, sure, Lacy came coortin' of her agin, an' she wouldn't have anything to say to him for a long while; only the death of her mother, an' Mr. Damer's arguefyin', an' everything, forced her to it at last, an' she got the sickness on the head of it."

"Forced her!" cried Riordan, in a tone of extreme surprise.

"Iss; Misther Damer."

"And does he think," the young man exclaimed, with sudden vehemence, "does he imagine that he can complete this sacrifice while she has got a friend on earth to save her? I am in error here. Her parents dead, her guardian cold and cruel, her hope of my return for ever destroyed, and her own health decayed. I have wronged, and I will save her; I will snatch her from him at the altar's foot, and when I have placed her at my side again, let me see the man who dares to come between us. Hold, Davy; stop one moment. You must return to Glendearg, and take from me a note to Esther Wilderming. To-night I sleep in Roundwood; to-morrow, some

business takes me to Enniskerry; but I will be with you at Glendalough to hear your answer in the evening, and that must guide us in our future conduct."

He wrote with a pencil a short note, which he folded and placed in the hands of his attendant, bidding him use the needful secrecy in its delivery.

"I'll give it to Mrs. Keleher," said Davy, "for dear knows, I'm in no hurry at all to have any talk with Misther Aaron!"

"What, is poor Aaron Shepherd living still?"

"Oh! then 'tis he that is, an' 'tis I that has raison to know it."

"Poor Aaron!"

"Dear knows, I think that man would bother the world, convartin' 'em. I declare to my heart what I ait an' dhrink at that house doesn't do me good, I'm so smothered from bibles, an' thracts of all kinds. Arguefyin', arguefyin' for ever. Erra, sure if a man had a head as long as my arm, 'twould set him to have an answer ready for every question they'd ax him that way. But I'm promised a copy o' the Fifty Raisons next week, an' indeed when I get it I'll give Aaron his due. Well, Masther Frank, good night, sir, an' the heavens bless an' direct you! I'll go no farther now, as I'm to return to Glendearg."

"Good night, good fellow. I will remember your honesty and your attachment, David, when I am once more at peace."

"Oh! then, don't speak of it, Masther Frank. 'Tis enough for me to see you well an' hearty, an' more than I expected to see, sure. Well, well, only to think o' this! Alive and here in Ireland afther all! That I may never die in sin, but it bates out all the fables that ever was wrote."

He turned away, and as he descended through the rocks, Francis could hear him at a long distance, in the calm moonlight, singing the following lines of a controversial ballad:—

"When woeful heresy
And infidelity
Combined for to raise disconsolation,
You forsook that holy church
That would not lave you in the lurch,
And publicly denied your ordination.
Your name it will appear
Through Ireland far and near,
In Limerick, in Cork, and Dungannon;
In Belfast and Dublin town
Your conduct will be shown,
An' they'll talk o' the revolted Father Hannan."

Young Riordan remained for several minutes gazing on the moonlit desert, by which he was surrounded, and delivering up his mind to the romantic nature of the scene, and of the circumstances under which he now beheld it, after years of suffering and of exile.

"Alive, and here in Ireland!" he exclaimed, repeating the words of his old follower. "Even so, my drooping country. I left these

hills in sorrow and in fear, and now I come again, in joy and safety, to challenge the fulfilment of my youthful dreams. Ye hills, that seemed to my infant fancy the boundaries of earth itself; ye barren wilds, that my untutored eye could find as blooming as the gardens of Armida; ye lakes and streams, into which I have so often gazed, and longed to dive into the mirrored heaven beneath; ye fresh, familiar winds, that even now waken in my mind a thousand sudden sweet remembrances; ye rocks, trees, waters, all ye shapes and hues that constitute my home, I hail you from my heart! There's not a bell blooms on the brown heath of these, my native mountains, but my heart loves with a particular fondness. There's not a rock frowns downward from those dreary summits but leaves the luxuries of all the tropics behind-hand in my estimation. Oh! and shall ye still greet me with the same young and constant smile; shall ye still offer to my sense the same unaltered sights and sounds; shall the winds blow, the waters run, the mountains and the rocks rebuke the morning with the same sad frown as in my infancy, and all remain unchanged, except my love? I will not think it. Now, from this time forward, I never will anticipate an evil. My life has been a life of fears and toils, and now I never more will cease to hope. The cloud may gather dense, as night itself, above my head, but, 'till it bursts, I never will believe that it bears thunder in its womb. I must succeed; I must be gay and happy; I toss my doubts and sorrows to the winds, and welcome joy! bright joy! with a full heart to hold it."

After this enthusiastic speech, the high-spirited young soldier threw his cloak around his glowing frame, and hurried off in the direction of his native village. Young nerves, young blood, young feelings, and young hopes, combined to keep his spirits in that buoyant state to which his fancy had excited them, and he trod along the mountain path as if it were entirely by his own free election that he preferred the earth to air.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE school-house, at Glendalough, was situated near the romantic river which flows between the wild scenery of Drumgoff and the Seven Churches. It was a low, stone building, indifferently thatched; the whole interior consisting of one oblong room, floored with clay, and lighted by two or three windows, the panes of which were patched with old copy-books, or altogether supplanted by school-slates. The walls had once been plastered and whitewashed, but now partook of that appearance of dilapidation which characterised the whole building. In many places, which yet remained uninjured, the malign spirit of Satire (a demon for whom the court is not too high, nor the cottage too humble) had developed itself in

sundry amusing and ingenious devices. Here, with the end of a burnt stick, was traced the hideous outline of a human profile, professing to be a likeness of "Tom Guerin," and here might be seen the "woeful lamentation and dying declaration of Neddy Mulcahy," while that worthy dangled in effigy from a gallows overhead. In some instances, indeed, the village Hogarth, with peculiar hardihood, seemed to have sketched in a slight hit at "the Masther," the formidable Mr. Lenigan, himself. Along each wall were placed a row of large stones, the one intended to furnish seats for the boys, the other for the girls; the decorum of Mr. Lenigan's establishment requiring that they should be kept apart on ordinary occasions, for Mr. Lenigan, it should be understood, had not been favoured with any Pestalozzian light. The only chair, in the whole establishment, was that which was usually occupied by Mr. Lenigan himself, and a table appeared to be a luxury of which they were either ignorant or wholly regardless.*

On the morning after the conversation detailed in the last chapter, Mr. Lenigan was rather later than his usual hour in taking possession of the chair above alluded to. The sun was mounting swiftly up the heavens. The rows of stones, before described, were already occupied, and the babble of a hundred voices, like the sound of a bee-hive, filled the house. Now and then, a school boy, in frieze coat and corduroy trowers, with an ink-bottle dangling at his breast, copybook, slate, Voster, and "reading-book," under one arm, and a sod of turf under the other, dropped in, and took his place upon the next unoccupied stone. A great boy, with a huge slate in his arms, stood in the centre of the apartment, making a list of all those who were guilty of any indecorum in the absence of "the Masther." Near the door, was a blazing turf fire, which the sharp autumnal winds already rendered agreeable. In a corner behind the door lay a heap of fuel, formed by the contributions of all the scholars, each being obliged to bring one sod of turf every day, and each having the privilege of sitting by the fire while his own sod was burning. Those who failed to pay their tribute of fuel sat cold and shivering the whole day long at the farther end of the room, huddling together their bare and frost-bitten toes, and casting a longing, envious eye toward the peristyle of well-marbled shins that surrounded the fire.

Full in the influence of the cherishing flame, was placed the hay-bottomed chair that supported the person of Mr. Henry Lenigan, when that great man presided in person in his rural seminary. On his right, lay a close bush of hazel, of astonishing size, the

* A traveller in Ireland who is acquainted with the ancient Chronicles of the country, must be struck by the resemblance between the manners of the ancient and modern Irish in their mode of education. In that translation of Stanihurst, which Holingshed admits into his collection, we find the following passage: "In their schools they grovel upon couches of straw, their books at their noses, themselves lie flat prostrate, and so they chant out with a loud voice their lessons by piecemeal, repeating two or three words thirty or forty times together." The system of mnemonics, described in the last sentence, is still in vigorous use.

emblem of his authority and the instrument of castigation. Near this was a wooden "sthroker," that is to say, a large rule of smooth and polished deal, used for "sthroking" lines in the copybook, and also for "sthroking" the palms of the refractory pupils. On the other side, lay a lofty heap of copybooks, which were left there by the boys and girls for the purpose of having their copies "sot" by "the Masther."

About noon, a rudden hush was produced by the appearance, at the open door, of a young man dressed in rusty black, and with something clerical in his costume and demeanour. This was Mr. Lenigan's classical assistant; for to himself the volumes of ancient literature were a fountain sealed. Five or six stout young men, all of whom were intended for learned professions, were the only portion of Mr. Lenigan's scholars that aspired to those lofty sources of information. At the sound of the word "Virgil!" from the lips of the assistant, the whole class started from their seats, and crowded round him, each brandishing a smoky volume of the great Augustan poet, who, could he have looked into this Irish academy, from that part of the infernal regions in which he had been placed by his pupil Dante, might have been tempted to exclaim in the pathetic words of his own hero—

> ———Sunt hic etiam sua præmia laudi,
> Sunt lachryma rerum et mentem mortali a tangunt.

"Who's head?" was the first question proposed by the assistant, after he had thrown open the volume at that part marked as the day's lesson.

"Jim Naughtin, sir,"

"Well, Naughtin, begin. Consther, consther,* now, an' be quick.

> At puer Ascanius mediis in vallibus acri
> Gaudet equo: jamque hos cursu, jam præterit illos:
> Spumantemque dari—

"Go on, sir, why don't you consther?"

"*At puer Ascanius*," the person so addressed began, "but the boy Ascanius; *mediis in vallibus*, in the middle o' the valleys, *gaudet*, rejoices."

"Exults, a'ra gal, exults is a betther word."

"*Gaudet*, exults; *acri equo* upon his bitther horse."

"Oh, murther alive! his bitther horse, inagh? Erra, what would make a horse be bitther, Jim? Sure tis'nt of sour beer he's talkin'? Rejoicin' upon a bitther horse! Dear knows, what a show he was, what raison he had for it! *Acri equo*, upon his mettlesome steed; that's the consthruction."

Jim proceeded.

"*Acri equo*, upon his mettlesome steed; *jamque*, and now; *præterit*, he goes beyond—"

"Outsthrips, a-chree."

* Construe, translate.

"*Præterit*, he outsthrips; *hos*, these; *jamque illos*, and now those; *cursu*, in his course; *que*, and; *optat*, he longs."

"Very good, Jim, *longs* is a very good word there; I thought you were goin' to say *wishes*. Did anybody tell you that?"

"Dickins a one, sir."

"That's a good boy. Well?"

"*Optat*, he longs; *spumantem aprum*, that a foaming boar; *dari*, shall be given; *votis*, to his desires; *aut fulvum leonem*, or that a tawny lion:—"

"That's a good word, agin. *Tawny* is a good word; betther than *yellow*."

"*Decendere*, shall decend; *monte*, from the mountain."

"Now, boys, observe the beauty o' the poet. There's great nature in the picture of the boy Ascanius. Just the same way as we see young Misther Keiley, of the Grove, at the fox-chase the other day, batin' the whole of 'em, right an' left, *jamque hos, jamque illos*, and now Misther Cleary, an now Captain Davis, he outsthripped in his coorse. A beautiful picture, boys, there is in them four lines of a fine high-blooded youth. See; people are always the same; times an' manners change, but the heart o' man is the same now as it was in the days of Augustus. But consther your task, Jim, an' then I'll give you an' the boys a little commentary upon its beauties."

The boy obeyed, and read as far as *prætexit nomine culpam*, after which the assistant proceeded to pronounce his little commentary. Unwilling to deprive the literary world of any advantage which the mighty monarch of the Roman epopée may derive from his analysis, we subjoin the speech without any abridgment:—

"Now, boys, for what I told ye. Them seventeen lines, that Jim Naughtin consthered this minute, contains as much as fifty in a modhern book. I pointed out to ye before the picture of Ascanius, an' I'll back it again' the world for nature. Then there's the incipient storm—

> Interea magno misceri murmure cœlum
> Incipit:

Erra, don't be talkin', but listen to that! There's a rumblin' in the language like the sound of comin' thundher—

> —insequitur commista grandine nimbus.

D'ye hear the change? D'ye hear all the S's? D'ye hear 'em whistlin'? D'ye hear the black squall comin' up the hill side, brushin' up the dust an' dhry leaves off the road, and hissin' through the threes an' bushes? and d'ye hear the hail dhriven' afther, an' spattherin' the laves, an' whitenin' the face of the countthry? *Commista grandine nimbus!* That I might'nt sin, but when I read them words, I gather my head down between my showldhers, as if it was hailin' a top o' me. An' then the sighth of all the huntin' party! Dido, an' the Throjans, an' all the great coort ladies, and the Tyrian companions scatthered like cracked people

about the place, lookin' for shelther, an' peltin' about right and left, hether and thether, in all directions for the bare life, an' the floods swellin' an' comin' thundherin' down in rivers from the mountains, an' all in three lines—

> Et Tyrii comites passim, et Trojana juventus,
> Dardaniusque nepos Veneris, diversa per agros
> Tecta metû petiere: ruunt de montibus amnes.

And see the beauty o' the poet, followin' up the character of Ascanius, he makes him the last to quit the field. First the Tyrian comrades, an effeminate race, that ran at the sighth of a shower, as if they were made o' salt, that they'd melt undher it, and then the Throjan youth, lads that were used to it, in the first book; and last of all the spirited boy Ascanius himself, (Silence near the doore!)

> Speluncam Dido, dux et Trojanus eandem,
> Devenlunt:

Observe, boys, he no longer calls him, as of old, the *pius Æneas*, only *dux Trojanus*, the Throjan laidher, an' 'tis he that was the laidher, an' the lad; see the taste o' the poet, not to call him the pious Æneas now, nor even mention his name, as it were he was half ashamed of him; knowin' well what a lad he had to dale with. There's where Virgil took the crust out o' Homer's mouth, in the nateness of his language, that you'd gather a part o' the feelin' from the very shape o' the line an' turn o' the prosody. As formerly, when Dido was asking Æneas concerning where he came from, an' where he was bound? He makes answer—

> Est locus, Hesperiam Grali cognomine dicunt:
> Terra antiqua, potens armis atque ubere glebæ,
> Huc cursus fuit:

And there the line stops short, as much as to say, just as I cut this line short in spakin' to you, just so our coorse was cut, in going to Italy. The same way, when Juno is vexed in talkin' o' the Throjans, he makes her spake bad Latin to show how mad she is: (Silence!)

> ——— Mene incepto desistere victam,
> Nec posse Italiâ Teucrorum avertere regem?
> Quippe vetor fatis! Pallasne exurere classem
> Argivum, atque ipsos potuit submergere ponto,

So he laves you to guess what a passion she is in, when he makes her lave an infinitive mood without anything to govern it. You can't attribute it to ignorance, for it would be a dhroll thing in airnest, if Juno, the queen of all the gods, did'nt know a common rule in syntax, so that you have nothing for it but to say that she must be in the very moral of a fury. Such, boys, is the art o' poets, an' the *janius* o' languages.

"But I kept ye long enough. Go along to ye'r Greek, now, as fast as ye can, an' reharse. An' as for ye," continued the learned commentator, turning to the mass of English scholars, "I see one

comin' over the river that'll taich ye how to behave ye'rselves, as it is a thing ye won't do for me. Put up ye'r Virgils, now, boys, an' out with the Greek, an' remember the beauties I pointed out to ye, for they're things that few can explain to ye, if ye havn't the luck to think of 'em ye'rselves."

The class separated, and a hundred anxious eyes were directed towards the open door. It afforded a glimpse of a sunny green, and babbling river, over which Mr. Lenigan, followed by his brother David, was now observed in the act of picking his cautious way. At this apparition a sudden change took place in the condition of the entire school. Stragglers flew to their places, the incipient burst of laughter was cut short, the growing fit of rage was quelled, the uplifted hand dropped harmless by the side of its owner, merry faces grew serious, and angry ones peaceable, the eyes of all seemed poring on their books, and the extravagant uproar of the last half hour was hushed on a sudden into a diligent murmur. Those who were most proficient in the study of "the Masther's" physiognomy, detected in the expression of his eyes, as he entered and greeted his assistant, something of a troubled and uneasy character. He took the list, with a severe countenance, from the hands of the boy above mentioned, sent all those whose names he found upon the fatal record, to kneel down in a corner until he should find leisure to "hoise" them, and then prepared to enter upon his daily functions.

Before taking his seat, however, he conferred, for a few moments apart with his brother David, who, with a dejected attitude and a countenance full of sorrow, stood leaning against the open door.

"Ah, 'tis'nt thinkin' of her I am at all, man alive," he said, in answer to some remonstratory observation from the schoolmaster, "for sure what more could be expected, afther what she done? or what betther luck could she hope for? But it's what kills me, Harry, is how I'll meet him or tell him of it at all. After what I seen of him the other night, what'll he do to me at all, when 'tis this news I bring him, afther he a' most killin' me before for sayin' less."

"If he was to kill any one," replied Mr. Lenigan, "it ought to be Doctor Jervas, for sure what had you to do with the business?"

"Kill Doctor Jervas?" said a sweet voice at the door of the school-house, while at the same time a female shadow fell upon the sunny floor. "Why then, that would be a pity and a loss. What is it he done?"

"Ayeh, nothin', nothin', woman," said David, impatiently.

The new-comer was a handsome young woman, who carried a fat child in her arms and held another by the hand. The sensation of pleasure which ran among the young culprits at her appearance, showed her to be their "great captain's captain;" the same, in fact, whom our readers may remember to have already met at the dispensary, and who, by a strict attention to the advise of her physician, had since then become the loved and loving helpmate of Mr. Lenigan. Casting, unperceived by her

lord, an encouraging smile towards the kneeling culprits, she took an opportunity, while engaged in a wheedling conversation with her husband, to purloin his deal rule, and to blot out the list of the proscribed from the slate, after which she stole out, calling David after her to dig the potatoes for dinner. That faithful adherent went out in deep dejection, and Mr. Lenigan, moving towards his official position near the fire, resumed the exercise of his authority.

Seated in his chair, and dropping the right leg over the left knee, he laid a copy-book upon this primitive desk, and began to set the boys and girls their head-lines; displaying his own proficiency in penmanship, through all the several gradations of "sthrokes, pothooks-an'-hangers, large-hand, round-hand, small-hand, and running-hand." The terror which his first appearance had excited, dying away by degrees, the former tumult began to be renewed, and a din arose, in the midst of which, the voice of "the Masther" and his scholar were hardly distinguishable. Occasionally, cries of "One here, sir, scroodging!"* "One here, sir, callin' names!" "One here, sir, if you plase, runnin' out his tongue undher us," and similar complaints, were heard amidst the general babble. Mr. Lenigan never took notice of those solitary offences, but when they became too numerous, when the cup of iniquity seemed filled to the brim, and the uproar was at its height, it was his wont suddenly to place the pen between his teeth, lay aside the copy-book, seize the great hazel-bush before described, and walk rapidly along the two lines of stones, lashing the bare legs and naked feet of the young miscreants, heedless of the yells, groans and shrieks of terror and of anguish, by which he was surrounded, and exclaiming, as he proceeded, in a hoarse and angry tone, "Reharse! reharse! reharse! Now will you heed me, now will ye reharse?" Then, returning to his seat, amid the dying sounds of pain and suffering, which still broke faintly from various quarters, he resumed his occupations, enjoying, like a governor-general, a peace procured by the scourge, by involving the guilty and the innocent in one common affliction. And this Lancasterian mode of castigation Mr. Lenigan was in the habit of repeating several times in the course of the day.

Frequently, while he continued his avocations, he looked with an absent and uneasy eye towards the river already mentioned, as if in the expectation of some visitor. Evening, however, approached, or (to use the school chronometer), the second lesson was over, and nobody appeared. This circumstance seemed to throw additional ill-humour into his physiognomy, and he seemed to long for some good opportunity of indulging it. The same absence of mind and depression of spirits was observed in his conversation with those neighbours who strolled in upon him in the course of the afternoon, and talked of the politics of the day, the prospects of Europe, and other trivial subjects, such as suit the understanding and information of politicians in a country village.

It was the custom at Lenigan's academy, as it is at most Irish

* Crushing.

seminaries of a similar description, that no one should be permitted to leave the precincts of the school-room without taking with them a huge bone (the femur of a horse), which lay for that purpose in the centre of the floor, and which, on account of the privilege of furlough which it conferred, was designated by the name of "the pass." There were many conveniences attending this regulation. It protected Mr. Lenigan from the annoyance of perpetual applications for leave of absence, and it prevented the absence of more than one at a time from the immediate sphere of the master's surveillance. There were, indeed, a few of the grown boys, who were already forward in their classes, who understood book-keeping, compound interest, and enough of geometry to demonstrate the ass's bridge, and who, upon the strength of their acquirements, considered themselves privileged to contemn this boyish regulation, and to use their own discretion about studying in the open air and sunshine, stretched along the river's side, or under the shelter of the school-house.

An idle red-haired boy had been absent with "the pass" for nearly a quarter of an hour, and Lenigan's countenance began to wax exceedingly wroth at his delay. Suddenly he appeared at the door-way, through which the sinking sun now darted a more slanting beam, and tossed the bone into the centre of the floor, where it produced the same effect as if he had thrown it into a kennel of hounds. While they were wrangling for "the pass," the young delinquent pleaded his excuse with Mr. Lenigan, by informing him that a gentleman was waiting for his brother David in the beech wood, at the other side of the river.

Mr. Lenigan committed the charge of the school, for some minutes, to his assistant, appointed a lad to "keep the list," breathed vengeance against all who should make an unruly use of his absence, shook his hand at the kneeling culprits in the corner, buttoned up his coat, and hopped across the threshold, with the view of finding his brother, who had little doubt that the stranger was no other than Francis Riordan.

CHAPTER IX.

In a little opening of the beech wood, strewed with dry leaves and withered branches, and chequered with dancing gleams of sunshine, the young patriot stood, awaiting the arrival of his humble friend with extreme impatience. Francis was one of those rare beings in whom fearless courage is combined with a delicate appreciation of what is right. He would himself have made any sacrifice, have endured any privation, have braved any danger, rather than do violence to his own sense of what was honourable; and his attachments, as a natural consequence, were always strong in proportion

to the sacrifices which he made on their account. Without entertaining much doubt, as to the effect which his brief note might produce upon the mind of Esther, his anxiety to learn her answer approached a degree of torture.

And, here, it is fitting that the reader should be made aware of that early cause of quarrel which existed between Richard Lacy and our hero, and which was the immediate occasion of the long exile of the latter.

About this time, it will be remembered, the south of Ireland was proclaimed to be in a state of disturbance, and a constabulary force was formed in all the baronies for the purpose of overawing the discontented peasantry. No great national good can ever be accomplished without drawing many individual afflictions in its train. So it proved on this occasion. The formation of such a body afforded to those persons (so numerous in Ireland) who turn every public work into what is vulgarly termed a *job*, a good opportunity for the exercise of their vocation.

Richard Lacy was one of those magistrates who, at the period of which we speak, sought preferment by an emulative display of zeal and activity in the discharge of their duties. He never scrupled to exercise any cruelty which might place him frequently before the eyes of the privy council in the light of a diligent and useful officer, and he succeeded fully in his design. He became an object of terror to the peasantry, and of high favour at "the Castle." He filled the jails and transport ships with victims; he patrolled the country every night from sun-set to sun-rise, and earned the applause of his patrons, by rendering himself an object of detestation in his neighbourhood.

Amongst those persons of his own rank who viewed the proceedings of Lacy with feelings of strong disapproval, was his young neighbour, Francis Riordan. Highly gifted, highly educated, patriotic even to a want of wisdom, and disinterested to a chivalrous degree, he stood forward in defence of the oppressed, and showed himself a determined and an able opponent of their oppressor. But a circumstance which occurred, at a time when their mutual hostility had reached its highest point, and which showed indeed but little prudence on the part of Riordan, placed him entirely within the power of his magisterial enemy.

A poor cottager in his neighbourhood had stolen out before daybreak, for the purpose of taking his oats to market, which was at a considerable distance from his home. He fell into the hands of Lacy's night patrol, was tried before the special sessions, and received the customary sentence passed on all who were found absent from their homes between sun-set and sun-rise; namely, seven years' transportation to one of the colonies.

Aware of his innocence, and pitying his wretched family, who were thus deprived of their only support, young Riordan was for the first, and only time in his life, betrayed into an act which could not be justified even by the generous feeling in which it originated. He encouraged the prisoner's clan to attempt a rescue, and suggested a plan for his liberation, which evinced, at least, as much of

talent as it did of disloyalty. It was carried into effect in the following manner.

On his way to the Cove of Cork, the prisoner was confined for a few days at the police barracks of———, within a few miles of his own neighbourhood. It was a fine summer morning; the police were loitering in the sunshine, while their arms were grounded inside the house. Their force was fifteen, including the serjeant and chief. The latter, seated on a chair outside the door, with a silk handkerchief thrown over his head, to moderate the fervour of the sunshine, was employed in nursing his right foot in his lap, stroking the leg down gently from the knee to the ancle, and inhaling the perfumes of a Havanna cigar.

On a sudden, a countryman presented himself before the door of the barrack, almost breathless from speed, and with a face that was flushed and glistening, as after violent exercise. He informed the chief that a number of the country people had detected a notorious disturber of the peace for whose apprehension a large reward had been held out, and for whom the police had been for a long time on the watch. They were, he said, in the act of dragging him towards the barrack for the purpose of leaving him safe in the custody of the king's servants.

At the same moment a crowd of persons were seen hastily descending a neighbouring hill and hurrying along in the direction of the barrack. When they came sufficiently near, it was observed that they had a prisoner in the midst, whom they bore along by the neck and heels with loud shouts and exclamations of triumph. Enraptured at his prize, the chief ordered them to be admitted into the barrack, while handcuffs were prepared for the culprit, and a room allotted for his confinement. The crisis of the adventure now approached. On a signal given by the prisoner, his captors loosed their hold; he sprung to his feet, struck the chief a blow that levelled him, shouted aloud to his companions, and exclaimed, "The arms! the arms! Down with the tyrants! down with the ———Peelers!"

All was confusion in an instant. The arms were seized, the police were laid on their backs, and tied neck and heels, the doors were dashed in upon their hinges, the prisoners rushed out into the air, and before five minutes the whole stratagem was successfully concluded. The police were left, bound head and foot in their own barrack, and the rebels were in the heart of the mountains.

The rage of Lacy at discovering the circumstance was extreme. The cleverness with which the feat was performed made it the subject of general conversation, and much disloyal laughter was indulged at the expense of the simple chief. After many exertions, Lacy was enabled to make the discovery that young Riordan was the contriver of this scheme, though not, as some averred, the identical prisoner who had carried it into execution.

This was the circumstance which had first compelled our hero to absent himself from home, and this was the circumstance that obliged him to use his present caution in order to avoid the risk which would attend his being generally recognised. The hatred

which Lacy bore him was, he well knew, deep, black, intense and deadly, and he paid Lacy back the full amount of his detestation, with better reason on his side, and with the addition of a world of scorn.

Riordan now stood awaiting the arrival of David Lenigan, forming a thousand conjectures as to the nature of Miss Wilderming's answer, and walking back and forward over the withered branches, with his cloak gathered close about his person, and his eyes bent on the ground. A rustling among the boughs made him start, and he beheld David approaching, with a face which had no omen of pleasing news in its expression.

"Well, Lenigan," he said, in a hasty tone, "what answer have you from Miss Wilderming? Does she forget me altogether? or have I anything to hope?"

David's first reply was a troubled look and a deep sigh.

"Speak, speak, man! if you have evil news, David, I know how to bear it. I have been used to disappointments of the kind."

"Tell me, masther Frank, what road did you take in comin' here?"

"The road from Roundwood to be sure."

"An' what sighths did you see on the way?"

"I saw," said Francis, turning pale and speaking faintly, "a carriage and servants with white favours.

"Ah, but that was comin' from the house?"

"It was."

"She was not in it, sir. I did'nt spake o' that. Did you see nothin' going the road to the lakes?"

"Not I. There was no other carriage of any kind; there was, ha! mighty justice! I met a hearse!"

"A hearse with white plumes?"

"Aye!"

"Oh! masther Frank, I have no good news to tell you. Turn your face away from me, for I would'nt like to look at you afther what I have to say."

Francis made several efforts to speak, but his voice failed him. At length, stooping down and grasping the arm of his attendant, he said in a low voice: "Go on, my good fellow, tell me the whole at once."

"Why then I will, masther Frank. I told you before that she was very ill, an' so when I went to the house afther I partin' you, I gev the paper to Mrs. Keleher, an' I told her that an answer was expected direct. Well, she went, an' if she did, it was'nt long afther, when I hard a screech that pierced through my two ears. I asked what was the matther? an' I'm sure it's too soon I got my answer. Ah! masther Frank, you never more will see that darlin', she's in a betther place than any this world could afford her; although bein' a methodish, an' all."

When he had heard this speech, Francis trembled exceedingly, and remained silent and dejected for many minutes. It seemed as if he were making an effort to man himself, and avoid betraying any emotion that would show a want of fortitude. But it was im-

possible that such a struggle could be successful. He walked a few paces, and his knees began to shake with so much violence that he was obliged to look around for a seat. Before he could find one, the weakness increased, and he fell senseless to the earth.

CHAPTER X.

With the assistance of some friends, David had his master conveyed to his brother's little dwelling in the neighbourhood. During that night, and nearly the whole of the following day, Francis spoke not a word, and seemed to be scarcely conscious of what passed around him. He rejected all food, and delivered himself up to extreme dejection of mind. Towards evening, however, he called Davy to his bedside, and made him detail all he knew of the circumstances attending Esther's death, which the poor fellow, hoping to alleviate his master's affliction by awakening something like an interest in his mind, recapitulated with great precision. The nurse, he said, had found her lifeless in her bed. The Damers were in the utmost distress at this event, and Richard Lacy had conducted himself, ever since, like a distracted person. While Francis listened to this last portion of the narrative, the speaker heard him ejaculate in a low whisper the words "Poor fellow!"

"That was what killed me!" said David, a few days afterwards, in telling the circumstance to Mrs. Keleher; "the moment I heard him showin' pity for Lacy, I knew his heart was broke! He never will hould his head up again, says I to myself, as long as ever he lives!"

Night fell, lonely and dark, upon those dreary hills, and Francis had not yet begun to take an interest in anything which passed around him. David's family were all in bed, and he sat alone by the fire-side, watching, lest some sudden illness should render his assistance necessary to his master. He was just dozing in his hay-bottomed chair, and dreamed that he was holding a controversy with Aaron Shepherd, when he felt a hand press lightly upon his shoulder, and a voice whisper in his ear some words that his fancy construed into a different meaning.

"Wake, David, wake! I want you!" said the voice.

"I don't mind that a brass farthin'," murmured David, through his sleep; "I read the Douay Testament, with note and comment, an' I take the church for my guide, not a man like Martin Luther, that was insthructed by the divil himself. Doesn't he own to it, in his books? A' howl your tongue now, Aaron. One time or another you'll know the thruth o' what I'm tellin' you, an' dhrop your convartin'."

"Hush! David, David!"

"A' dhrop your convartin', man, I tell you again. Sure you

know in your heart that if there was no thruth in it, 'twould be found out in the coorse o' fifteen hundred years."

Here he felt his shoulder shaken with a degree of force which compelled him to awake. Looking up, he beheld Francis Riordan, pale even to ghastliness, standing at his side, dressed, and with his cloak around him.

"Masther Francis, is it you, sir? Oh! what made you get up?"

"Be still, David. Are your friends in bed?"

"They are, sir."

"Hush, speak low!" whispered Francis; "do you know the cottage where we used to watch for the wild ducks?"

"At the foot of Derrybawn?"

"Ay, ay, upon the flat: is it occupied at present?"

"There's no one living there, sir, now."

"It is very well," said the young man. "Will you tell me now where they have buried Esther?"

David remained for some minutes staring on his master in great astonishment.

"My good fellow," said the latter, observing him pause, "this tale of yours has almost broken my heart. I was so sure of happiness when I was returning to Ireland, that I find it almost impossible to sustain this disappointment. I think it would be some consolation to me if I could see Esther, once again, even in her grave."

David started back in his seat, and gaped upon the young soldier in mingled awe and wonder.

"Make no noise, but answer me," said Francis. "Is she buried in the vault of the Damers?"

"'Tis there she is, sir, surely," returned David, "in the cathedhral at Glendalough."

"It is enough," said his master. "Come then, David, arise and follow me down to the Seven Churches. Alive or dead, I must see Esther Wilderming once more."

David arose, still half stupified with astonishment.

"Have you got any instrument?" said Francis, "with which we may remove the stones from the mouth of the tomb?"

This mention of an instrument placed the undertaking for the first time in all its practical horror before the eyes of David.

"Oh, masther Francis!" he said, "go into your bed, sir, an' don't be talkin' o' these things. Let the dead rest in peace! When we bury our friends, we give 'em back into the hands of the Almighty that gave 'em to us, to bless an' comfort us in this world, an' he tells us that he'll send his own angel to wake them up when his great day is come. Let us lave them, then, where they lie, silent an' cold, until that thrumpet sounds, an' not presume to lay an unholy tool upon the house of the dead!"

"Be silent," said Francis, with a tone which had something in it of peculiar and gloomy sternness. "Come not between the shade of Esther Wilderming and me. Whatever was her thought of me when living, she now must know my heart, and I am sure that her spirit will not grieve to see me as a visitor in her midnight sepul-

chre. You tell me that her face was changed by sorrow and by sickness: I wish but to behold it. It was almost the only sight on earth that could have made it worth a residence. It is gone from me, now, for ever, and unless I seek her in her tomb, I have lived and hoped in vain. Ah, shall a few feet of earth hide Esther from my gaze, after I have come o'er half the world to look upon her? Arise, and obey me!"

David dared not reply, but, taking his hat, went with his master into the open air. He brought with him a pick-axe, used by a relative who worked at the lead-mines on the neighbouring hills, and followed his master in silence.

Before they had walked many hundred yards, the valley of the Seven Churches opened upon their view in a manner as lonely and beautiful as it was impressive. The moon, unclouded by a single wandering mist, shed its pale blue light upon the wild and solemn scene. Before them, on a gently undulating plain, stood the ruins of the Churches, with the lofty round tower which flung its shadow, gnomon-like, along the grassy slope. A few trees waved slowly to and fro in the night wind. The shadows of the broken hills fell dark upon the streaked and silvery surface of the lakes, hiding half the watery expanse in gloom, while the remainder, broken up into diminutive wavelets of silver, rolled on, and died upon the shore with gentle murmurs. One side of the extensive chasm in which the lakes reposed was veiled in shade. On the other the moonlight shone over tumbling masses of granite and feldspar, and glimmered bright on countless points that sparkled with mica and hornblende. A moaning wind came downward by the ruins, and seemed like the voice of the dead, heard thus at night in their own silent region.

Far on their left, overhanging the gleamy water, appeared that precipitous cliff, beneath the brow of which the young Saint Kevin hewed out his dizzy resting place. The neighbouring legends say, that, in his early days, the saint resided at the beautiful lake of Luggela, described in a former chapter, where he was first seen and loved by the fair Cathleen, the daughter of a chieftain in that country.

Nearer, and also on the left, stood the cathedral, which was more especially the object of young Riordan's search at this moment.

"Pass on," he said to his attendant, "and see if there be any body loitering among the ruins."

Lenigan obeyed, and Francis remained gazing on the gentle acclivity on which the ivied walls of the old church were standing. The burial-ground, with its lofty granite crosses, and its white head-stones glistening in the moonshine, lay within a short distance. "O earth!" he said, within his own mind, as he looked musingly upon those slight memorials of the departed, "O earth! our mother and our nurse, you are kinder to us than our living friends! You give us life at first, and you supply us with all that can make life sweet, while we retain it. You furnish food for our support, raiment for our defence, gay scenes to please our sight, and sounds of melody to sooth our hearing. And when, after all our cares, we

droop, and pine, and die, you open your bosom to receive and hide us from the contempt and loathing of the world, at a time when the dearest and truest amongst our living friends would turn from our mouldering frames with abhorrence and dismay!"

A slight signal, given by Davy Lenigan, here interrupted the meditation of the young man, and he proceeded to the church with a rapid, but firm step. He found David standing before the monument of the Damers with the pickaxe in his hand.

"Lenigan," said he, "there is one thing that I have forgot. Return to the deserted cottage, of which we were speaking, light up a fire, and make a pallet of some kind, for I will not go back to your house to-night."

David gazed on his master for some moments in deep perplexity and awe.

"For the sake of glory, Masther Francis," he said, in a beseeching tone, "what is it you mane to do this night? I'm in dhread you're thinkin' o' doin' somethin' on this holy ground that is'nt right."

"Ask no questions," replied Francis, in a gloomy voice, "but do as you are commanded. Lose no more time, for the moon is sinking low, and the dawn may overtake us before we have done half what I intend."

David obeyed in silence, and Francis sat down on the headstone of some poor tenant of the grave-yard, expecting his return, and thinking of Esther.

A quarter of an hour had scarcely passed, when Lenigan returned, and they proceeded to remove the stones from the mouth of the sepulchre. A sudden wind, rushing through the aperture, blew chill upon the heated frame of the young lover, and made him shiver in all his limbs before he ventured to descend.

"What was that cry?" he said, suddenly starting.

"What cry, sir? I heard nothing."

"Not now?"

"Oh! now I do. 'Tis nothin', sir, only the owl in the round tower; or, may be, the eagle that's startled in Lugduff."

"It must be so," replied Riordan, "but I thought it had almost a human sorrow in its shrillness. 'Tis strange, how soon our senses become the slaves of our passion, and flatter it with strange compliances, giving its colour to the sights, and its tone to the sounds, by which we are surrounded. How dark the vault is! So; and after all, and all, 'tis here that I must visit Esther!"

"Is it anything he seen, I wondher," muttered David to himself, observing him pause and hesitate. "I hope an' thrust it is afeerd he's gettin'."

But he hoped in vain. In a few minutes Francis shook off his mood of meditation, and entered the mouth of the tomb, creeping along upon his hands and feet. Lenigan, who feared lest he might do himself a mischief, hurried after, and found him seated at the bottom of a flight of stone steps, which ascended from the floor of the vault, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, and his face buried in his hands. On hearing Lenigan's voice, he started

up, as if from a reverie, and uncovering the lantern which he had concealed beneath his cloak, the vault became illuminated on a sudden.

"Take this cloak," said Francis, unclasping it from his throat, and handing it to his bewildered companion, "take this cloak, and hang it up before the opening, lest any one should see the light from without."

The attendant complied, and Francis proceeded to examine the lids of the coffins which were piled on all sides around the gloomy apartment.

"Was it by her own desire," said the young man, in a low and reverential voice, "that Esther was buried here, in the vault of the Damers?"

"It was, sir," returned David, who almost trembled with fear. "Dear knows, Masther Frank, this is no place for us to be talkin' this time o' night. Do whatever you have to do, an' come away, an' heavens bless you, sir!"

Without returning any answer, Francis proceeded to examine the coffins with the open lantern. His attendant followed him with his eyes, as he read the inscriptions on the coffin-plates aloud, and observed him shrink and look still more ghastly when any denoted that the inhabitant was a female who had died young. One observation only David heard him make while he passed the light over the rich decorations and silver mounting of the coffins.

"I told you, I believe," said he, "that I am now wealthy. Lest I should forget to mention it in my will, take care, after my death, that I am buried in a plain coffin."

"Afther your death, Masther Frank, a' ragal!" exclaimed David, in a terrified voice.

"Yes," said Francis, "if you should survive me. Ah, heaven! what ghastly foppery is this!"

He passed on, and came at length to a plain coffin, before which he paused, and began to tremble exceedingly. On the lid was a silver plate, with the words, "ESTHER WILDERMING, AGED 21 YEARS," engraved upon it. He remained for some time motionless, like one in a fit of deep musing, and then sunk down at once, utterly bereft of consciousness, upon the coffin lid.

CHAPTER XI.

THE alarm of David, at seeing his master thus lying insensible in the vault of death, was at its height. He hurried to the side of the unhappy youth, endeavoured to arouse him into life, and manifested the utmost distress at the difficulty he found in reviving him.

"Masther Frank!" he exclaimed, "rouse yourself up, sir, an' let us come away! Masther Frank, I say! awake, stir again! Oh! that I mightn't sin but he's dead an' gone, an' I'm done for! Masther Frank, again! He's dead an' gone, an' the neighbours 'll come, and they'll catch me here, an' they'll say I murthered him, an' I'll be hung, an' kilt, an' spoilt, an' murther't, an'— Oh! Davy Lenigan, Davy Lenigan, an' warn't you the foolish man, to be said by him at all this holy night?"

A long deep moan from the unhappy young man cut short his anxious soliloquy, and occasioned David to redouble his attentions. In a few minutes Francis was again in full possession of his senses.

He took the pick-axe from the earth, and was about to deal a blow upon the fastening of the coffin lid, when Davy ventured to arrest his arm.

"Why do you hold me?" said Francis, looking on him with an eye in which sorrow strove with anger, "let go my arm, and stand aside."

"No, Masther Frank, forgive me, I can't, now; I won't let you do that."

"Let go my arm," repeated Francis, with a faint effort to free himself.

"You're not right in your mind now, Masther Francis," said the faithful fellow, "an' you'd do something that's not right by the corpse an' coffin."

"Again, stand back and free me."

"I darn't do it, sir."

"Hold off, stand away, then," cried Francis, springing up and hurling his companion back among the coffins with a strength which fury only could supply; "Hold off! or as I live and suffer, I'll dash your brains out! Impudent man! whose corse do you talk of? Hers! you are very bold to think that I would harm her! Hold back, and touch me not, nor speak, nor move, nor breathe aloud, or I will ease my agony upon you! Avoid me then, if you suppose me mad, and do not tempt the fury of a breaking heart. Mad? Ay, indeed, and drearily insane too; a burning madness; lunacy with consciousness; the madness of the heart and the affections, that makes the bosom one wild bedlam of frantic uproar and affliction, while the soul is able to look upon the tumult with all the exquisite pain of perfect consciousness! This is my torture now, though you perceive it not. Oh! that my brain would burst. Good heaven, forgive me if I sin!"

He uttered the last sentence in a tone of piercing anguish, and then sunk down as if the fit of passion had exhausted him.

"Let us cease this indecorous loudness," he said, after some time; "it becomes neither the place nor the occasion. I have wasted too much time already. Interrupt me no more."

"Indeed, Masther Frank, I meant no offence in life, only to hinder you of doing now what you might be sorry for another time."

"Good fellow! my good, faithful fellow, forgive me! I am sure of it; you are a good and honest servant, and broken-hearted as I

am, and forgetful of all earthly things, I will remember that for you before I die. But do not cross me, Davy, in these fits. I don't know how or why it is, but I feel that I have lost all government of my own nature since this dreadful accident. My brain is changing, moment after moment, and pain and passion come and go again without my intervention, or even my knowledge. Now my heart is dull as lead, my head swims, my nerves are all insensible, and I think my suffering is at an end. And presently a sudden fancy strikes upon my heart, and shoots like fire into every member of my frame, and thrills my nerves, and stabs my brain to the quick, and makes me for the time a maniac!" He pressed his clenched hand against his temples, and stamped against the earth like one in exquisite suffering. "I only wish," he continued, in a more moderate tone, "to look upon the face of Esther for once, and then we will leave the vault together."

David dared not offer even a word of remonstrance, but looked on in awe-struck silence, while his master, with some exertion, succeeded in striking up the lid from the coffin. The perfume of some balmy extracts, which were scattered in the shroud, diffused a sudden air of sweetness throughout the damp and gloomy charnel.

"It is very strange!" said Francis, in a broken whisper, while large drops of agony like those which are said to be wrung from a wretch upon the rack, glistened and rolled downward from his brow and temples. "It is very strange! How long is it now since Esther died?"

"Betther than two days, sir; very near the third night now."

"It is very strange indeed. Here is not the slightest change upon the face. Ah! death. It is as cold as iron!"

He raised the head gently between his hands, imprinted a reverential kiss upon the forehead, and then drew back a little to gaze at leisure on the face. It was extremely beautiful, and owing, perhaps, to the peculiar light, seemed almost to have retained some shade of the carnation, to which in life it owed so much of its loveliness. The sight produced at length a salutary effect upon the blasted affections of the young lover, the tears burst from his eyes, and he leaned forward over the corpse, in a mood of gentle and heart-easing grief.

After some time he rose again, and bade Davy to come nearer.

"Answer nothing now," said he, "to what I shall propose, but obey me at once, and without contradiction. I am going to take Esther from this vault, and to bury her near that cottage."

"Oh, murther! murther!"

"Peace, and do not breathe a word, but prepare directly to assist me. Replace the coffin lid when I have taken her up; be speedy and be silent."

He raised the body with tenderness, laid it across his bosom, with the head resting on his shoulder, and signified that his attendant should close the coffin. This being done, and the cloak removed from the mouth of the sepulchre, he once more clasped it on his throat, and drew it close around the lifeless form which he

bore in his arms. Stooping low with his burthen, he ascended the flight of steps already mentioned, and passed out into the air.

"Oh, vo!" murmured David to himself, "that I may be blest, but the gallows will be our portion for our doin's this night."

He followed his master, and they hurried out of the church-yard, passing beneath the ruined archway on the northern side, and down the slope which led to the common road.

His long abstinence, and the exhausting nature of the passions with which he had contended, had so far enfeebled the frame of the young soldier, that it was with difficulty he bore the corpse along. His attendant, who beheld him falter, ran hastily after, and endeavoured to prevail on him to deliver the burthen to his care, but Francis would as soon have parted with his life. An unexpected assistance, however, presented itself.

When they came to the stile which led to the road, they found a man standing near a horse and cart, which was half filled with straw.

"Is that Masther John?" he asked in a low voice.

"Have you all ready?" answered Francis, without hesitation.

"All ready, sir; pruh! tumble it in, sir, at once, an' let us be off. Faix, you worn't long. Tumble it in, sir, for I hear the police is out with Misther Lacy, the magisthrate, in these parts. It will set us to be in town before day."

Francis got into the car, still holding the corpse in his arms, and they drove up the road without speaking. When they had arrived at the turn which led to the cottage so frequently alluded to, Francis laid a strong hold upon the man, and bade him in a low voice to stop the cart.

"Go down again," said he, "and wait for Master John. Stir, speak, move, raise hand or voice to cross me, and I will shoot you through the brains."

He drew a pocket pistol from his bosom and descended from the cart. The man stood stupified, looking on, while Francis gathered the shrouded figure once more into his arms, and then cantered down the hill, apparently not displeased to be rid of so fiery a companion.

When the cart was out of sight, Francis hurried up the narrow lane which led to the cottage, and was followed by Davy, whose mind was now completely bewildered by the accumulation of terrors and mysteries which he had undergone.

"The Sack-'em-ups!" he exclaimed, gazing down the road, in the direction of the Seven Churches. "The plundherin' Sack-'em-ups! An' sure, what betther are we ourselves this holy night, afther takin' the lady from her people? Oh mother, mother! it's little you thought that any o' your children would ever turn out a Sack-'em-up, to disgrace his parentage!"

They entered the cottage, where the fire was already burning cheerfully upon the hearth. Having carefully closed the door, and made it fast behind them, they proceeded to arrange the body on a wide form, which was placed near the fire side, and the lanthorn was hung up, so as to shine full upon the lifeless features.

"There she lies, at last!" said Francis folding his arms and looking down on the dead face; "there now lies Esther Wilderming, the young, the gay, the lovely, and the virtuous! An old woman, told me once, that I had been overlooked in my infancy, and I am almost superstitious enough to credit her. Otherwise, why should it be that there, where my best affections have been centred, and my keenest hopes awakened, there I have been ever sure to undergo a disappointment? But I have snatched her out of Lacy's arms, and even this dismal meeting has a consolation compared with that appalling rumour of her falsehood. Esther! dear Esther, I forgive you, now! How beautiful she was! *Was.* Oh! that word has death in its sound for me. For your sake, Esther, I will lead an altered life from henceforth. I never will hope more, not even for the natural blessings that go and come with the revolving year, for I think, if anything could shorten the liberal hand of Nature, and cause her to withhold her ancient customary bounties, it would be the longing of a wretch like me. I never more will dress, game, play, sing, laugh, or mingle in the gaieties of earth. My dream of death is out; my plans of quiet and domestic joy entirely baffled. In war, in peace, in action, or repose, in mirth, or in musing, I never more can know a happy feeling; never indeed, oh, never! never! never!"

He sunk down, utterly exhausted by grief, fatigue, and want of food, by the side of the corpse, the fire light shining dusky red on the pale and delicate lineaments of the dead, and on the no less pale and haggard aspect of the living who lay near. David lay stretched at a distance on a heap of fresh straw and rushes, offering up many prayers, and unable to conceive what would be the result of this extraordinary vigil.

CHAPTER XII.

Let us, for the present, leave them watching, and return to Richard Lacy, whose distraction at the death of Esther has been already adverted to.

He had loved this beautiful girl as intensely as a man is capable of loving, who is likewise occupied by the two dissimilar passions of hatred and ambition. And perhaps his disappointment was now the more intolerable, as the whole three, his love for Esther, purely and honestly for her own sake, his detestation of Riordan, and his general ambition, might be all directly or indirectly gratified by the projected marriage. The expression of his grief, in consequence, partook of the desolation of thwarted love, the fury of baffled vengeance, and the agony of disappointed ambition. His own domestics feared to approach him in his chamber, in which he had shut himself up immediately after his return from the funeral.

"The plagues of Egypt on the boyish passion!" he exclaimed, "that will not let me rest! Why, curse of my heart! what is she now to me, that I should pule and grieve about her? Down with these damning pangs!" [he stamped fiercely upon the floor] "and let me think. Up! Lacy, be a man, and let her go! Look to the future. Up! what have you lost? You've drawn your bolt, and shot, and missed your mark, and must not waste your life in looking after the lost shaft. The quiver's full, and the world is young yet. Up! The stoutest wrestler may endure a fall and rise again, well-breathed, and live and conquer! Despise this weakness, and think you are born for higher things than to sit down and pine over a piece of painted earth!" He paused on the sudden, and leaned forward on the table, his temples resting between his open hands and his eyes fixed in abstraction. "Beautiful! beautiful!" he murmured more gently, as the pale sweet face came slowly forward and acquired almost the distinctness of reality in his imagination. "I could not at first avoid loving her, and I cannot now forbear to sorrow for her death. Ah, bear with me, Ambition, for a while! Beautiful, gentle, gay, kind, modest, graceful, talented, accomplished, where is her likeness to be found on earth? Well, soar at what point I will, there I am struck. One happiness, at least, I never can enjoy, the quiet bliss of a domestic life; that, and the triumph over Riordan's memory. She is gone to meet him!" Here he sprung up, and struck the table in a paroxysm of fury. "If there's another life, and sure I cannot think her all destroyed, she is now at Riordan's side!" He paused a moment, and burst into a fit of laughter at the wildness of his own fancy. "But that," he continued, "made a part of my happiness. I hated him, and I would have given half the world to take that vengeance on him even in his grave."

A timid knock at the door interrupted his passionate soliloquy.

"Who's there?" he asked, in a furious tone.

"Nobody, only Nancy Guerin, sir," replied a gentle voice.

"What do you want? Quick, tell me your business, and be gone. Who wants me?"

"Nobody, only Mr. Tobin, sir. He wishes to know would you let him up here."

"Curse, plague on him and you! what does he mean? What does he want?"

"Nothing sir, I believe, only—"

The sound of a loud, rattling voice, like that of one highly excited by strong drink, was at this moment heard upon the staircase, and cut short the projected speech of the young servant. The accent had something in it of more refinement than is usual in the humbler classes, but was yet far too broad to let it be supposed that the speaker actually filled the rank of a gentleman.

"Let me alone for finding him," said he, as he ascended, rather unsteadily; "I leave announcements to my cousins and the family. Tom Tobin's own honest face was the best letther of introduction he ever carried about him. I'll let announcements alone until I can sport a carriage. Lacy!" he continued, putting his hands to

his sides, throwing his head back and roaring out at the top of his voice. "Lacy, my boy! my lad! my hero! Lacy, my prince of papists, here's honest Tom Tobin come to see you!"

"The plague of Egypt and of all the fiends! what shall I do?" cried Lacy, in an agony of rage and suffering.

"Will I call Owen, sir, to stop him?"

"Call death! call Lucifer! call ——— Ah, good Tobin, you are welcome," he added, changing his tone, as Tobin's gaunt and ill-dressed figure came in sight. "Welcome, although you find me in a mournful hour."

He drew him in, and shut the door.

"Sorry for your throubles, misther Lacy, but those are misfortunes that all must look for in the coorse o' nature."

"Sit down; I thank you, Tobin. We must all die."

"It stands to raison we should," returned Tobin, endeavouring to look sober; "the highest and the lowest must go, they must quit, tramp, march! that's the chat! My cousins an' the family have no more a lase o' their lives than honest Tom Tobin himself. There's my comfort. They must all cut their sticks, when the rout comes; off in a pop! Well, so as one has a dacent funeral, all is one."

"Tobin," said Lacy.

"That's my name, the family name, a family I never was ashamed of yet. I wish they could say the same o' me, but that would set 'em. I was always a blackguard; good-for-nothing but idleness and vice; just a fit tool for such a knave as you, but a better descended gentleman never swung upon the gallows."

"Good Tobin, I am busy—"

"They talk of my drinking and swearing and licentiousness. Very well, I admit it. But look at poor Owen. There's a pattern of piety and good conduct! Owen never wronged a human being of a sixpence. He never was heard to utter a prophane or a licentious speech. He is as constant in his attendance at chapel as if he was coorting the minister's daughther, and he never was (to say) drunk in his life. There's my pride. I pick pride out o' that. Is there a man in the country can show me such a cousin as that."

"Tobin—"

"Shabby? Psha, I admit it, I never had any taste for dress in my life; but look at Bill! He mounts the best cut coat in Grafton Street. There's my pride. He come down here last year, and I borrowed his coat to get one made by Speirin, the tailor, on the same cut. He looked at it, folded up the coat, and gave it back into my hands: Sir, says he, there is'nt two tailors in Ireland that could make such a coat. I'm sorry to lose your custom, but there's no use in my promising what I can't do.' There's my pride. I pick pride out o' that."

"Deservedly, Tobin. Pray, hear me now."

"East or west, north or south, right, left, where will you find such a family, just putting myself out of the question?"

"Ay, ay, but hear me—"

"And for elegance; look at this. I won't boast, but my cousin Dick is no clod. That I'll say for him."

"You're drunk, sir!" said Lacy, angrily.

"Eh? well, an' what if I am. That's more than Owen would be; I never saw a cousin o' mine drunk before dinner in my life."

"You are rude."

"Ha, that's more than you could say of Dick. That's a finished gentleman."

"Hear me."

"I pick no pride out o' myself. I know what I am."

"Fool, madman, knave and drunkard!" cried Lacy, stamping in a paroxysm of rage.

"Ay, ay, go on, go on! I don't mind what you can say of me."

"Beggar that you were when I first met you, do you not owe me all that you possess?"

"*Ecce signum!*" returned Tobin, holding out his arms, and turning his person round, so as to expose his mean dress.

"Did I not find you a tall, hungry rogue, living from town to town upon the sale of policies of assurance?"

"A good trade, too, ay!"

"And with assurance enough, yourself, to stock a whole inn."

"Ha, ha, ha! that's a witty pun."

"And hear me, fool! and fear me. Can I not make you, now, the beggar, the spendthrift prodigal you were, again, at my pleasure? I have the power; do not arouse the will, or as that light shines on us, I will send you back once more to raise blood-money upon that crazy heap of bones that carries you, and think it high feeding to sit in the chimney corner, at the sign of the Shamrock, and cook a raw potatoe in the turf ashes."

"My cousins and the family——"

"Plague take your cousins! will you——"

"Softly, good friend Lacy, tread tenderly on that ground, if you please. If you want anybody to abuse, I'm your man. Here I am. Abuse me, scold me, beat me, kick me, if you please, but let my cousins alone. A passing kick, or a thump, I'll wink at as soon as another, but there's raison in all things. I'll not stand any reflections on the family."

"You rascal, I will kick you out of the house."

"You're not the size yet."

"I know why you do this. You think me in your power; but you're a fool."

"Do you defy me, then?" cried Tobin, looking earnestly on him.

"You're a fool!" said Lacy, avoiding his eye.

"Do you defy me?"

"What brought you here to-day?"

"Defy me, if you dare!"

"What do you want?"

"'Tis well you changed that word," said Tobin, relaxing his tone with a half contemptuous smile, "you were partly beginning to forget yourself. But all is one. I came here for money."

"I cannot give it, Tobin. You have drawn my wealth as a leech draws blood, already. I have none to give you now."

"I don't want to get your gold for nothing," returned the other. "I have got a piece of paper here, that is worth a few sovereigns at all events."

Lacy's eyes sparkled.

"What's that?" he said, eagerly, "information about the Hares?"

"No, nor the foxes either. If I know anything of your heart, there is a word upon this paper that will make it bound a little. Who do you think is alive?"

"Esther Wilderming!" shrieked Lacy, springing to his feet, raising his clasped hands, and shaking in every limb, while his features glowed and quivered, and his eyes shone wildly, with the sudden expectation. Before Tobin answered, however, the folly of this idea became visible to his judgment, and he sunk down into his chair in a fit of exhaustion as sudden as the excitement. "Ah, curse!" he said; "it is not possible?"

"Guess again!" said Tobin, coolly.

"My wit is out," returned Lacy, with a ghastly look. "Pray have some mercy on me. Whom do you mean?"

"Young Riordan, the paythriot."

"Riordan!"

"Francis Riordan."

Lacy shrunk back in his seat, like a snail into its shell, and remained for a short time in an attitude so contracted that his naturally diminutive stature was reduced to one half. A long deep silence ensued.

"I am still more wretched than I thought," he muttered at length, while his dark eyes flashed sullen fire upon the informer. "Esther is dead, and Riordan lives and triumphs! The spring tide of my fortunes is upon the fall. My spirits will begin to sink at last."

"But what if Riordan should return, and place himself within your power?"

Lacy's eyes gleamed gladness at the suggestion, but he did not long continue to look pleased. "No, no," he murmured, "he is far too wise to set his foot again on Irish soil. He cannot think me so forgetful."

"He has done it, for all that."

"Done what?"

"He is here in Ireland; here in the county Wicklow."

The agitation which Lacy manifested at this intelligence was excessive. His countenance changed colour, and his frame trembled with anxiety. The hurried eagerness, which was visible in all his manner, resembled, but in a far more intense degree, that of a fowler who sees his victim just hovering about the springe which he has laid for its destruction.

"Good Tobin," he said, "good trusty fellow, how do you know this? Mock me not now with any false report; say it not rashly, if you love my peace! If this be false," he stamped with fury on the floor, "if I be mocked, I'll hang you like a dog!"

"Softly, softly, sir," said Tobin, "that's a game that two could

play at. But there's no occasion for us to sit down to it at present, while there's better sport in hand for both. Do you know his writing?"

"Whose? Riordan's? Ay, as I should know his face. My desk is full of his accursed and insulting letters. I could not be deceived; what's this?"

Tobin handed him a paper which he endeavoured to read, but his agitation would not suffer him to hold it steady. He held it with both hands, sat down, stood up, and at length was compelled to place it on the table and support his temples on his hands while he read.

It was a pencilled note which contained the following words:—

"ESTHER,—I am here again in Ireland, the same in heart as when I left it, four years since. If yours have not been changed, say when and where we are to meet.

FRANCIS RIORDAN."

Lacy went to his desk, took out several letters, and compared the handwriting with that which he had just read.

"'Tis clear!" he exclaimed at length; "there is no doubt of this; how did you get it?"

"My cousin Owen——"

"Psha! hang——"

"Hold, sir! soft words, I say again. My cousin Owen was at Damer's on the night of the wake, and he got it from one of the servants, who had found it in Mrs. Keleher's apartment. You know she was Riordan's nurse?"

"She was! ay, well?"

"Well, that is all."

"And you know nothing of the time nor place in which it was written? Tell me the whole at once. Rack me not with delay. Remember how he rose against me once; remember how he crossed me, and indulge my vengeance with a speedy answer. Bring me upon him; swiftly, secretly, get him into my gripe, and you shall be my brother from that hour, and share the half of what I own."

"Give me a handsome airnest first, and I'll see what I can do."

"Here is five pounds; speak, now, where is he?"

"Pooh, pooh!" said Tobin, "you talk to me as if I was a magician or a conjuror. I cannot now tell you where he is; but I will make it out."

"Do, and I will make you rich."

"Say no more, say no more. But, do you wish, now, to prevent a shame from bein' put upon the grave of Esther Wilderming?"

"What say you?" cried Lacy, with a vacant look.

"I say the sack-'em-ups are likely to have a hoult of her before morning, if you don't look sharp."

Lacy shrunk back into an attitude of deep horror.

"Who told you this?" he asked in a low whisper; "but why do I stop to question it? Up, and away! Oh, Esther! oh, my love! my bride!"

"And as for Riordan——"

"Put him before my eyes, that I may blast him! No more till then——"

"'Tis better watch the whole night near the grave——"

"An age, an age, to keep my Esther's clay from harm, to keep the silence of her tomb inviolate. Who dares to wake an echo in the chamber where she sleeps? I'll be her sentinel, and guard her slumbers. Oh, that I could lie down and die beside her!"

"To-morrow, I'll go look——"

"For Riordan? Good! I hate him! I hate him, Tobin! I——" Here he raised himself a tip-toe, lifted his clenched hands, while his eyes seemed starting forth, his whole countenance swelled, and glowed, and quivered with the bursting passion, and he flung himself forward upon the table with extreme violence, repeating for the third time, with a hoarse terrific energy, "I hate him!"

"I take your word for it," said Tobin, "but there's no time to be lost now, if you choose that Miss Wilderming should rest in peace."

"It is true!" said Lacy, hastily, "I will go at once and make all ready in the yard. Or go you down, and get the horses ready. Ah, Tobin! I believe my heart is broken; but let my hate be gratified in the destruction of that man, and I will die in peace. I have lived these many years for those two passions, my hate and love. In one, I am for ever disappointed; but let me be successful in the first, and I am happy. I have not lived in vain if Riordan perishes—perishes in the contempt and shame which I have prepared for him. Away, and do as I have said."

Tobin left the room.

"That villain!" said Lacy, changing his manner, and shaking his clenched hand after the informer, "that villain dares to threaten. It is well the fool will let his secrets out. He has taught me caution, and I'll teach him silence! My brain is so confused by all these accidents, that I can scarcely know what I am about. First, Esther's grave (ah, torment of my soul!); then Riordan (may the airs of his native land breathe poison in his throat!); and then this insolent fool! Quit of these two, my limbs are all unfettered once again, and free for action. Well, Tobin, are you ready?"

"All is right," answered Tobin, re-entering the room. "I have told them to make the horses ready."

"Come, then, at once, put these pistols in your holster."

"But won't you hear the information about the Hares?"

"Psha! let them pass. When we are laying a trap for a lion, we must not arrange to watch for conies."

CHAPTER XIII.

It happened that, on the night on which Francis Riordan had removed the body of Esther from its grave, a number of young gentlemen had left a city not far distant on professional business. They arrived at the church-yard while Francis was in the tomb, and left their carman on the road, where, as the reader is already aware, he was met by the young soldier, and led into a natural error.

On his return down the hill he found the whole company in confusion.

"Pull up!" said one figure in a drab coat, standing on the stile. "Where have you been?"

"Is that Misther John?" asked the man in a frightened tone.

"It is. Why did you leave the place?"

"No, but is it yourself in airnest, Masther John, for I axed the same question of another a while ago, an' he made me the same answer, an' sure there was sorra word o' truth in it."

"Speak low, or you will call the country about us. Well, Tom, what now? Are they coming?"

"Oh, oh, John!" exclaimed a second figure, apparently younger and slighter than the other, "why did'nt you tell me what ye were coming here about? I thought it was only to see the ruins. Oh! it is frightful. Don't you remember the old woman of Berkeley?

> 'The fiend will fetch me now in fire,
> My witchcrafts to atone;
> And I, who have rifled the dead man's grave,
> Shall never have rest in my own.'"

"For shame, Misther Tom," said the carman, "is'nt it a sin for you to be sayin' them things? What noise is that among the graves? Oh! heaven defend us all this night!"

"Amen to that, I say. What noise do you hear?"

"I see them coming," said the figure in the drab coat. "Hold your tongue, sir, and be of some assistance, if you can."

"Oh! nothing ever horrifies me but the stripping off the shroud."

"Psha! you talk like a coward."

"Why, then, I declare, John, I am not a coward. Surely nobody can call this cowardice. I'd meet any man in the world in five minutes, provided he was a gentleman, and alive, but when once he loses the power to retaliate, I don't know how it is, but he grows awful. I believe the fact is, I have too much *pluck* to offer any indignity to a man who can't defend himself."

Several other figures now approached in the moonlight.

"We are done!" cried one, "the tomb is broke already. The nest is rifled, and the bird is flown."

Here the carman interposed, and told of his adventure.

"I told you we should have been here earlier," said one. "That rogue, Duhig, has been here before us. No matter, I'll serve him a trick some night when I catch him in Bully's Acre."

"Come away, lads, now; there is nothing to gain by stopping here."

"Hold your tongue, sir, or I'll cut the ilium out of you."

"And then," said another, "he may cry out, like the ghost of Hector,

'Troes fuimus—*Ilium* fuit.'"

This jest was honoured by a roar of laughter mingled with deep groans.

"Hush! hush! lads," said the former speaker, "we have no time to lose. Tell me, is there no other job for us to do?"

"There's an ould tythe procthor in the corner, near the cross," said one.

"I never laid scalpel on a proctor but once, and then I lost a fine one."

"How?"

"The fellow's heart was ossified. I broke the blade, making an incision into the *margo obtusus*."

"And why a proctor now?"

"They're such a set of bone grubbers, their blood grows thick with the phosphate of lime."

"You're so nice in your choice of subjects," said another, "that I suppose nothing would do you but a poet now, or a writer of romances."

"By no manner of means, good sir. I don't love blubber. *Est modus in rebus.* Those fellows are too soft by half for a young gentleman who is studying osteology. The *os frontis* is nothing but gristle, and as for the thorax, you might as well put your scalpel into a bag of oil."

"What do you say then to a Kerry papist?"

"If you take him in Easter week, it is very well. At any other time, he is no better than an exsiccated preparation of muscles and tendons."

"Yes," said a new voice, "because he has been blooded too closely by the Orange leeches."

"Come, come, no politics," said another speaker, "let us leave these things to the herds of faction, to lords, to commoners, to demagogues and tyrants. Let the fury of civil discord find her way into the camp, the church, the cabinet, the court, the bar; let her teach the cannon to roar, and make the sword blood-red upon the field, or condescend to break tea-cups at the domestic breakfast table; but let our profession, gentlemen, be superior to her insults. She has already made her way into the chancel, let it be our care to keep her out of the church-yard."

"Hear, hear, hear!"

"Hush! hush!" cried one, "I see some figures stealing down the hill. There was a long shadow flung over the lake at this moment."

A shower of stones, succeeded by a loud "Halloo!" that echoed from cliff to cliff, along the shores of the lake, confirmed the fears which were awakened by this speech. The group dispersed in an instant and fled up the road, while the carman, laying on a bastinado of strokes on the crupper of his hack, cantered away like a second Phæton. The country people followed them to a long distance up the vale, shouting aloud, hurling stones after them, and giving many occasions to regret the state of the law, which compelled the votaries of a science so indispensable to the welfare of mankind to resort to such modes of following up their investigations.

Very soon after the country people dispersed, Richard Lacy and his creature Tobin arrived in the glen. A peasant told him of the occurrence just detailed, and he hurried on to the grave-yard, where he had to encounter a terrific disappointment. His despair and rage at finding the tomb of Esther opened and the body gone, were almost maniacal, and even the burly Tobin had more than once a sensation of personal fear while he stood before him in his ecstacies of anger.

No means were left unattempted to recover the contents of the rifled sepulchre, and none were found availing. With all the bitterness of disappointment, added to his natural intensity of hatred, Lacy, at length, gave up the pursuit, and turned all his attention to the search after young Riordan.

CHAPTER XIV.

Let us return to the deserted cottage, in which we left the unhappy young patriot watching by the body of his love.

About midnight, the effect of his exertions, and long want of rest and food, began to be apparent in his frame. His sense of misery, the keenness of which had, until now, kept off the assaults of sleep, grew vague and dull, and a lulling torpor sunk upon his brain. The wind, which rose as the night advanced, moaned sullenly around the lonely building, and a sudden falling in of the burning fire made him start from his broken slumbers with a sensation of alarm. Sometimes, the disordered condition of his nerves, without any external excitement, would produce a similar effect, and he would suddenly find himself sitting erect upon the floor, with a horrid sensation, shooting like a galvanic shock from his brain, along his spine, and oppressing, for a moment, the action of his heart and lungs. His visions, when he dreamed, were likewise of a startling description. Now he met Lacy, hand

to hand in combat, and was vexed to the soul to find that, while all his enemy's blows told fiercely on his person, his own fell weak and harmless, as if on some unresisting and impassible substance. And now he occupied that dizzy resting-place in the cliff, from which the poor Cathleen was hurled into the lake; and Esther, pale in her shroud, stood trembling on the brink beside his couch. He rose to meet her; her form seemed to fade as he advanced, and her face looked terrible, he knew not wherefore. He attempted to touch her hand, but she receded from him, he followed to the brink of the cliff, she still seemed to float backward in the thin air, and the pale dead face and lurid eye assumed a slight appearance of derision. He tried to follow her; his footing failed him, and he fell headlong down the rocks, from ledge to ledge, and just awoke in time to save himself from some irrecoverable contusion.

He found Dàvid Lenigan standing over, and endeavouring to recall him to consciousness by gently pressing his arm.

"Masther Frank," said this honest fellow, "that's a quare place for you to be lying, sir. Get up, and sthretch over on the sthraw, awhile, an' I'll keep awake here by the fireside, until you have a little sleep taken."

Francis sat up, and stared upon his attendant. "I will do so, I believe, Davy," said he, "for I am tired almost to death."

They exchanged places, and Francis so disposed himself that he could, to the last moment of consciousness, retain a view of the form and features of the dead. The fire had sunk down, and a gloomier red was cast upon the white and marbly cheek of the maiden. Before many minutes had elapsed, Francis observed that his attendant's head had dropped upon his breast, and that his promise of vigilance was already broken. He strove, therefore, to prevent the access of slumber in his own person, and continued leaning on his elbow, and keeping his eyes fixed upon Esther.

It happened that the attitude of her head, and the mere position of the features, reminded him forcibly of the look she had worn at their parting, when the sound of the imaginary death-bell had thrilled him with its sudden presentiment. Whatever of resentment had been awakened, by her desertion of him in his exile, was secretly now dissolved in the recollections which this accidental circumstance revived. He thought, if Esther could be now restored to him, he would not even think of questioning her upon the subject. His heart melted, as he remembered the caresses of their early affection, he felt her sigh again at his cheek, the music of her voice upon his ear, and he sunk, all softened, down upon his couch, burying his face in his hands, and moistening them with his tears.

A low sound, like that of a deep short sigh, uttered in the house, fell suddenly upon his ear, and made him start from his incipient slumber, with a wild and tumultuous feeling of alarm. He stared confusedly all around him, but could discern nothing. He looked at the corpse, but it still lay pale and motionless in the same position in which he had, with his own hands, placed it. He gazed upon Davy, who was still fast asleep and snoring loudly. The

sound, he thought, might have been merely an intonation of Lenigan's harmonious solo; but this conjecture was rejected almost as soon as it was formed. There was something peculiar in the sound; an effect thrilling and startling, such as is said to belong properly to things of supernatural origin. He called to his attendant several times, but found much difficulty in awaking him.

"Davy," he said, "did you hear anything?"

"What would I hear, masther?"

"I thought there was a sound, just now, as if from somebody in pain."

"Oyeh!" exclaimed Davy, half starting up and staring around him, with jaw dropped and eye dilated on the sudden.

Francis remained listening attentively for a few moments. "I believe I was mistaken," he said at last; "it was the wind, splitting itself upon the corner stone, or howling down the glen."

He slept again, and Davy, returning to the fire-place, with many a knowing glance at the darkened corners of the room, likewise resumed his attitude of repose. In a very short time, Francis was once more suddenly awakened from slumber by a confused noise, and the pressure of a strong hand upon his shoulder. Looking up, he beheld his adherent thrown forward on one knee, with one hand gathering his dress about his throat, and a face full of terror, turned back over his shoulder.

"What is the matter, now?" exclaimed Francis.

"The groan, achree, the groan!"

"What of it?"

"What of it, but to hear it, I did; as plain as I hear you now. Oh! that I may be gray, masther Frank, but we're kilt an' spoilt alive, the two of us this blessed night. Listen to that!"

"To what?"

"I don't know; nothin', I b'lieve. Oh! that I may be gray, masther, but I'll rise out of you an' your doin's. 'Tisn't this world alone, but the other along with it, you brought down upon us this night. Oh! wirra, wirra, what'll I do at all, or what'll ever become of us?"

"Be silent," said Francis, "or tell me what you heard?"

"A groan, I tell you; a cry, just as a person would be gettin' aise from a hurt, and would be moanin' lyin' down. That I may be gray, but I thought it is herself was come afther us, an' I'm not misdoubtin' of it yet either."

"Psha!"

"Oh! aye, that's the way, always, when I put in a word; an' sure what hurt if I hadn't to share in what comes of it? But there's the way, always. I folly on everywhere, like a blind beggar man, an' my word won't be taken for anything, although I must tumble into the ditch, along with the laidher, when he goes."

"When you have done speaking," said Francis, "will you suffer me to rise? Come hither, Davy, and let us both watch by the fire during the next two hours. It will then be dawn, and we will bury Esther together."

"I wish to my heart she was fairly under the ground again,

returned Davy. "Oyeh, d'ye hear the rain? Well," he added, after a pause of several minutes, "she'll be in better luck this mornin' than she was when she was buried the turn before."

"Why?" Francis asked, almost involuntarily.

"Is it an' it powerin' rain? Sure the world knows, sir, that it is a finer thing to be buried of a showery day than of a dhry one."

"Why?"

"Why?" echoed Davy, puzzled at being called on to give a reason for what he had hitherto never heard called in question. "Wisha, then, I don't know, sir, only as they say, that

> 'Happy is the bride that the sun shines on,
> Happy is the corpse that the rain rains upon.'

The ould women would tell you a story as long as to-day an' to-morrow, about that very thing, if you'd listen to 'em; but you're in no humour now, sir, I b'lieve, to hear stories."

"Indeed, my good fellow, I am not," returned Francis, in a mournful voice. "It was always my ambition rather to be the subject of a story, in my own person, than to sit me down a simple auditor, and it would seem as if Fortune had taken me at my word, and rendered mine a tragic one."

They relapsed once more into silence, and Francis continued to recall the many circumstances of his life which justified the speech he had pronounced, until his recollections became altogether oppressive. He then suddenly turned round, and bade David to go on with his story. The latter, who felt something of security in the appearance of social communion, complied with great readiness, and related the following adventure, which, though not as imaginative in detail as the Divina Comedia, may yet be interesting, as an effect of the same spirit of trembling inquiry, which filled the breast of Dante with its inspiration.

"Why then I will sir, tell you that:" said David, crossing his feet at full length and lowering his head upon his breast. "A couple, sir, that was there of a time, an' they hadn't only the one son, an' plenty of everything about 'em. Well, himself was a very good man, he never sent a beggar away empty-handed from his house, he gave clothes to the naked, an' food to the hungry, an' dhrink to the dhry, an' every whole ha'p'orth, all to one thing alone, an' that was that he never allowed any poor person to sleep a night inside his doore, be they ever so tired, because his wife was a terrible woman, an' he was in dhread of her tongue. As for her, the only thing she ever gave to any one in her life was an ould tatther'd skreed of a flannel petticoat she gave to one poor woman, an' the sheep's trotters that she used to have thrown out in the doore to 'em when they'd be crowdin' about it afther dinner.

"Well, it so happened, as things will happen, that the man died; an' if he did, the day he was buried the rain keep powerin' down equal to a flood, until they had him laid in the grave. An' it isn't long afther until the woman died likewise, an' a finer day never came out o' the sky than what she had goin' to the church-yard.

Well, the son was thinkin' greatly, day an' night, about this, for he thought betther o' the father, a deal, than the mother, an' he wondhered to see she should have all the sunshine intirely, an' he to be drownded wet, an' his people after him, berrin'. 'Be this, an' be that,' says the boy, says he, sthrikin' the jamb o' the doore this way with the flat of his hand, 'I never 'll stop nor stay,' says he, 'till I find out the raison o' that, or why it should be at all,' says he. An' out he marched the doore.

"He walked a sighth that day, an' it was just about the dusk o' the evenin' when he found himself in the middle of a lonesome wood, an' the sun goin' down, an' not having a place to turn to where he'd get shelter for the night. He went in farther an' deeper into the wood, but the farther he went the more lonesome it grew, an' a quare sort of appearance was in the air, an' on the threes, an' bushes, an' the sky, an' all about him. By an' by, there was no birds singin', nor a breath o' wind stirrin', nor a laf movin' on the boughs, nor one thing showin' a sign of life, an' still it being the finest counthry ever you seen, only quare an' silent that way. He walked on farther an' farther, an' at last he seen a place among the threes that he thought was a church, only it had a little curl o' smoke comin' up through the boughs as if somebody was livin' there.

"He made towards the house, an' walked in the doore. Well, it was the finest place he ever seen in his life. There was a table laid out, an' a fine fire in the grate, an' all sorts o' cookery goin' on, an' a hale-looking old man sittin' near the table, preparin' his dinner, an' lookin' very pleasant and happy. Well, this boy, he up and told him that he wanted a night's lodgin', an' the old man made him come in, an' sit down and tell his story, what it was he was goin' lookin' for; an' afther he heerd it all, 'Well, do you know who is it you have there now?' says the old man. 'I don't,' says the boy; 'how should I know you when I never seen you before?' 'You did see me many's the time,' says the old man, 'an' why would'nt you? I'm your father,' says he. 'Oh murther!' says the boy, 'see this!'

"Well (not to make a long story of it), they sat down, an' ate their dinner. They past the evenin' talkin', an' when it was bedtime, the father got up an' walked out, biddin' the boy not to mind him, an' left him alone be the fire. The night passed away, an' he did'nt return, an' at last the boy got so sleepy, he said he'd thry about the place for a bed to sleep on. He made towards a door, an' opened it, an' if he did, what did he see within, only a fine feather bed an' curtains, and a terrible big dog sittin' down upon the floore, an' lookin' him straight in the face. Hardly he offered to go a foot into the room when the dog flew at him, an' was ready, I declare to you Master Francis, to tear him upon the spot. Well an' good, if he did, well became the boy, he moved backwards, an' left the place to the dog, an' took his seat again be the fire, as it might be this way, an' slep away till mornin'.

"When the old man came in, in the mornin', 'Oh, then, father!' says the boy, 'was'nt it a dhroll thing o' you,' says he, 'to lay me

in this way all night alone, without a bed to rest upon, or a ha'p'orth, an' I so tired?' 'Ah, my child,' says the old man, 'I could not give you what I had'nt myself!' 'Why so,' says the boy, 'I thought you were in glory, father; are'nt you happy?' 'I am happy, my child,' says the old man, 'in all but the one thing, as you may see. I can never sthretch my limbs upon a bed, nor sleep under a roof for ever during duration, and the raison is, because I never once gave a night's lodgin' to a poor man in my days on earth, and all on account of your mother,' says he. 'Oh, father, father!' says the boy, 'an' is'nt that a poor case with you?' 'It is,' says the old man.

"'An' I'll tell you now,' says he, 'what's the raison o' the different weather we had the time we were buried, the both of us. Your mother had a fine sunshiny day, for there was an awful judgment waiting for her, an' that was all the pleasure she was ever more to have; the light of the bright sun shinin' down upon her coffin until they put her in the earth. An' I, for my sins, had it rainin' heavy all that day, for that was all the ill usage I was ever to receive, besides the want of a bed.' 'An' is my mother here, father?' says the boy. 'Put on your hat,' says the father, 'an' follow me.'

"He did; he went afther him into a sort of a back-yard, an' there he saw his mother, sittin' down on the bare stones, an' gnawin' sheep's trotters, with nothin' on her, to shelter her old bones from the cold, but a little skreed o' flannel, the image o' the one she gave the poor woman. 'There's her fate for ever,' says the old man, 'an' the fate of all that has no charity on earth. But don't cry, my child, until you have more raison; come along, an' profit by what you see.'

"They walked on a piece, an' it was'nt long until they came to a gate, where the old man knocked a while before it was opened. They past in, an' there the boy seen a great field, with a fog restin' low upon the ground, an' the place all still an' quiet, except that, now an' then, they could hear the cry of young children comin' through the fog. They went on, an' came to a well that was in the middle o' the field, an' there they saw, through the fog, a great multitude o' children pressing about the well, an' dhrinkin', an' sprinklin' themselves with the wather, out o' little mugs they carried in their hands.*

"'Those,' says the old man, 'are the souls of the children that died without baptism,' says he, 'an' here they spend their time, without sufferin' pain or havin' any pleasure.

"They passed on through the field, an' came into another, where they saw a sighth of fine ladies an' gentlemen, walkin' arm in arm, under the shade of trees, an' the sun shinin', an' the place adorned with flowers an' shrubs of all sorts, an' streams, and every whole ha'p'orth, in grand houses in groves, an' music, an' laughin', an'

* Probably from some superstition, having the same origin as this portion of the curious, and in many instances beautiful, legend above given, the peasantry usually place a small vessel in the coffin with the body of an infant.

dancin', and the best of atin' an' dhrinkin'. 'Who are these, father,' says the boy, 'that seems to agree so well, an' to live so happy?' 'They are the married people,' says the father, 'that lived up to their duty in the world, that was constant an' thrue to one another in their throubles, that never changed their mind, nor looked afther other people, nor misbehaved in any one way.' 'O vo!' says the boy.

"Well and good, they passed through that place, an' they came to another, an' as they were comin' near it, they heard the greatest wrangling an' racketin' in the world, callin' of names, an' poll-talkin',* an' cursin' and swearin'. In they come, into a great field, an' there they seen a power o' people, men an' women, haggin'† at one another, and pullin' caps, an' quarrellin' most disgraceful.' 'Allilu!' says the boy, 'father, who in the world are these?' 'They are the married people,' says the father, 'that couldn't agree upon earth, an' as they were so fond of being in hot wather in the world, they'll have plenty of it here for evermore.'

"Well became 'em, they hurried through that field, an' came to another gate where——"

CHAPTER XV.

A WILD cry, a shriek, sudden, hoarse and horrid, which burst at this moment from the lips of Francis, cut short the progress of the narrative. It was echoed, even before he could perceive the cause, by his attendant, who threw himself off his seat, and rushed in a paroxysm of terror towards the door. Stumbling, however, over some loose furniture, he fell on the straw pallet, and remained trembling, groaning and crouching downward, while he glanced with a fearful eye on the picture near the fire-place.

After the first cry of wonder and affright had burst from his lips, Francis remained rigid in the attitude into which the sudden passion had surprised him. With hands thrown back, as if in search of some support, with head put forward, with eyes full of a wild and joyous terror, he continued to stare upon the body, which began to alter fast beneath his gaze. One of the hands fell downward, and the other moved upon the bosom. One moment more, and with a heavy sigh, the lips and eyes of Esther Wilderming were visibly in motion.

"She's risin'!" roared David; "that I migh'nt die in sin, but 'tis risin' she is to us."

Francis raised his hand, as if to impose silence, and continued to watch the movements of the maiden. Sigh after sigh burst from

* Slandering, back-biting.
† Scolding like old women.

her lips and bosom; and at length the fringed eye-lid rose, and the watery ball became revealed and fixed upon his own.

"She lives! She lives!" cried Francis, springing to his feet, and tossing his clenched hands above his head, while his hair stirred, his eye shone, and his whole frame shook with an ecstacy of delight. "Earth, air, and sea! she lives! O Death, I thank ye! I thank ye for this gift! My Esther, rise! Arise, my love, my life! Do you know me, Esther? Look on me, my dearest! Do you know your own Francis!"

While he spoke, he had raised her gently in his arms, and laid her head upon his shoulder. He endeavoured with caresses to awaken her to a state of perfect consciousness, but it was a long time before his efforts were in any degree successful. Some words escaped her lips, but they were either wholly unmeaning, or had reference to objects absent, and events long past: she murmured the names of her uncle, and of old Aaron.

"They are near, they are safe," said Francis, soothingly, "dear Esther, you will see them all soon."

"Is Lacy gone yet?" murmured Esther, still in a listless tone.

Poor Francis felt a little pang at this inquiry, but his affections, at the instant, were too keenly aroused to allow the entrance of so ungenerous a sentiment as that of jealousy amongst them.

"He is near you, Esther; dear Esther, you shall see him soon again," murmured Francis, at her ear, while he again caressed her cheek, and removed the heavy grave clothes from her neck.

Lenigan had now recovered his courage sufficiently to approach his master, bearing in his hand the cloak which the latter had laid by.

"Rowl this about her, masther Frank, asthore," he said, while his limbs trembled with affectionate anxiety, "rowl the cloak about her, the way she wouldn't be frightened at the grave cloths, afther she comin' to."

"My honest, thoughtful Lenigan, I thank you," returned Francis, while he wrapt the garment around the person of his love, and concealed the funereal garb, as far as it was possible.

"Masther Francis," continued the honest attendant, "I'm thinkin' it will be bether, may be, if you lave her to myself awhile now, as she's comin' to, in dhread she'd be frightened when she'd see you that way of a sudden. Go into the little room, awhile, an' when she's herself again rightly, I'll step over for the ould mother, or Harry's wife, an' bring 'em to tend her."

Francis complied in silence, and entered the little apartment, where he overheard the following conversation between the awakening Esther and his attendant:—

"Stir yourself, a-chree! Stir yourself, Miss Esther, asthore!" said David, in a tone of comfort and entreaty. "Open your eyes an' look about you. Here's the masther and the misthriss, an' Aaron, an' all of 'em. See, here they're comin' in the doore; look up, asthore, an' bid 'em welcome."

"O nurse, I am dying!" murmured the patient. "Where is the nurse?"

"Here, a'ra gal, here, at your elbow. How are you now, Miss?"

"I am very well, nurse, better. Oh, my fate!"

"What ails it a-chree? What is it happened it?"

"Ah, I remember you! I know you well. What place is this? Why I am here unattended?"

"Make you mind asy, miss, an' I'll be bail you won't be long so. Here they're all comin' to you in the doore. Stir up now, a-chree."

"I know you very well," said Esther, rising and looking fixedly in the face of the attendant. "Your voice reminds me of old times and old friends. Why are you here? What dreary house is this?"

Francis now approached from the inner room, his face concealed by his hat, and by the deep shade. He signified to David that he should hurry away for the female attendant, and assumed himself the place by the side of Esther which he had occupied before. The anxious girl stretched out her hands towards Davy when she saw him about to leave the cottage.

"Why will you go? Stay with me," she exclaimed, "where are you going? Do not leave me here alone, and in the power of a stranger."

"Oh! then, miss, if nobody ever injured you, until that sthranger would do it, I'd lay my life you'd be the happiest lady on the earth."

A deep sigh from the stranger seemed to corroborate this assurance.

"But wherefore do you leave me?" continued Esther.

"To get the ould woman over, to come to tend on you, miss. Herself, an' myself, will be back here together in less than no time."

He departed, and Esther sunk back again, with a moan of weariness and pain.

"And who are you?" she said, after a silence of some minutes, "that are left to watch me?"

"A friend," replied Francis, in a low voice.

"But what friend? Let me see your face. My brain is so confused that I can scarcely understand how or why I am here, or what is my condition. I know I have slumbered long, and some strange alteration has been effected in my sleep. I am not at home. I am not among my friends. Oh, speak to me, in mercy! Let me hear some sound of comfort. Where are my friends? Where am I? Who are you?"

"One," said Francis, still in the same deep voice, "who was once accounted a friend, although years and sorrow have changed him."

"And your name?"

"Turn this way from the door. The wind blows keenly in."

"I am very well. Pray answer me."

"Be more concerned, young lady, for your own health, at this moment. My name is almost a forgotten sound, not worth reviving now."

"Be it as you will," said Esther, "I will not press you. Nevertheless, I am anxious to hear it, for there is something in your voice that moves me like a recognition. You have called yourself my friend, and truly say you are forgotten now. And yet I never knew a friend whose name departed from my recollection. Others

have ceased to think of me, but heaven can witness that I was never forgetful of an early affection yet!"

Francis paused in deep silence, for some moments after this speech, and then said, with a deep inspiration, and in his natural voice, "Ah, Esther! Esther!"

These words were the first that recalled the heart of Esther to the recollection of its living passions. Immediately her pulses beat freely, and all her senses acquired a vividness of perception that resembled the change from sleep to waking. And with the swift transition, came a new confusion of the intellect, and a new doubt of her position. The fire seemed to burn with a brighter hue, the darkness deepened, and the strange gloom that surrounded her once more brought back the horrible idea that she had in reality changed the condition of her existence. And this impression, in itself sufficiently startling, was rendered yet more fearful by the apparition (as she believed it) of her long perished love, whose face she now beheld pale in the fire-light, and bent on hers with an expression of mingled love and reproach. While she continued to gaze upon him, gasping for breath to speak, and leaning forward on her hands, the latch of the door was raised, on the sudden, and he disappeared in the dark.

Lenigan now entered, accompanied by his brother's wife (the young mother whom the reader lately met at the school), who lifted her hands and eyes, and crossed her brow, her lips, and her bosom, at every step she made. Without any conversation worth detailing, they prevailed on Esther to suffer herself to be conveyed to the dwelling of the schoolmaster, which could afford her means of accommodation somewhat superior to that in which she lay at present. To her inquiries respecting her late companion, they returned little more than those general and evasive answers, for which people in their rank appear to have a peculiar talent. Their humane attention during the night completely recovered her from the effect of that paroxysm of her neuralgic illness which had for so long a time left her in a trance resembling death, and had maintained the latent principle of existence for so many hours even in her coffin.

By one of those inconsistencies of passion, which are so entirely unaccountable, and which to the unimpassioned, seem hardly credible, Francis Riordan found his feeling towards Esther change the more the longer he lived in the conviction of her recovery. The night was passed in recalling the history of their old affection to his mind, and with every remembrance a feeling of deep indignation arose against his forgetful love. His heart became, at length, so full of a mournful anger, that he refused to go and meet her in the morning, when David came to call him.

"No, Lenigan," he said, "take her back again to her uncle, and to her love; and let her follow the inclinations of her own heart. Why should I see her? Has she not formally deprived me of all right to take an interest in her condition? I will not see her, take her home in safety to her friends."

"Oh! then, Masther Frank, is it afther all you done, to gain a sighth of her in the dead o' the night, and in her coffin, that you

turn to now, and say you won't look at her and she livin'? 'Tis little o' that thought you had when you were goin' to knock the lid off the coffin last night with the pick-axe."

"It was. But I have changed since then. She was then past all resentment. I could not quarrel with the piece of pale and unimpassioned mould, that lay so cold in my embrace. But here she is alive, with all her fickleness and falsehood fresh upon her, with all her selfish passions at her heart, and I cannot forget my injuries."

"Ah, Masther Francis, sure it isn't in airnest you are! Erra, come away an' see her, an' the heavens bless you!"

"I will not go."

"See this! see this, again!"

"She says she never yet forgot an early friendship. Ah! let that love be never counted worth the name that lies coiled up in self so utterly, that its object is by no mark of fondness, or attention, made aware of its existence. Love only can appear in the actions which it influences and inspires. Like Faith, it dies unless we show it in our works."

"Well then, sir," said Lenigan, who listened to this speech with more attention than advantage. "Listen to me now, sir, I advise you. Miss Esther has no notion of any one but yourself, for all she bein' forced to sign to the other man, an' take it from me, the best o' your play is to go aisy with her. If I know that lady rightly, an' I think I do, all she'd want is the wind o' the word to be off, an' to lave you in the lurch for ever, if you'd say anything that way. Ayeh, though bein' a methodish, she's as captious as an officer."

Plain-spoken and rough, this homely counsellor succeeded in alarming the affections of his master, and convincing him of the expediency of seeking an interview with Esther, at the least, before he came to the decision of a final parting. Accordingly he bade Lenigan to inform her, that the stranger, who had watched by her the preceding night in the cottage, was now anxious to obtain an interview.

This message revived all Esther's anxieties in an instant. She signified an immediate assent, and prepared to meet him, alone, as he desired.

"It was then no dream," she said to herself, with a degree of agitation similar to that which one feels at the apprehension of a supernatural visitor. "There is some news of Francis. It was no visionary face that stared upon me from the darkness, no fancied sound that called upon my name. And yet, Francis!—alive! I must not think, until I see this stranger, or else my conjectures will hurry me beyond my sense."

She remained quiet in her chair, until Francis entered. He walked in carelessly and undisguised, as if not deeming it worth the pains to use any effort to practise on her feelings. But the sight of Esther, pale and anxious, in her seat, was too much for his offended pride. She looked piercingly on him for an instant, saw the blood gather beneath his yellow brow, and his eye-lids quiver with the wavering passion. With a cry of joy, she sprang from

her place, and in an instant was folded close into the bosom of her early friend.

"Francis! dear Francis!"

"Oh, Esther! my own Esther!"

They remained during some moments, speechless and motionless, in the extatic attitude of reconciled affection.

But this feeling did not continue on the part of Riordan. Esther was surprised to feel herself put away from his arms, and to see him turn aside, and walk toward the window. She looked anxiously after him, and waited for some moments, in expectation of some further movement, but he remained gazing out upon the gloomy vale in silence. She now walked slowly after, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, said:—

"Are you ill, Francis?"

"No," said he quickly, "not in the least."

"What is the matter then? You don't look well."

"I am quite well; nothing, nothing is the matter with me."

They were silent after this for some moments.

"Francis," said Esther, "there is something on your mind. Why do you not speak to me?"

"Me! Esther? Have I not spoken to you? Have I shown no joy at meeting you again?"

Esther seemed perplexed, and was silent. Francis resigned her hand, which he had taken when she made her charge, and once more turned to the window.

After some moments passed in renewed silence, Esther said, in a half mortified tone,

"I wonder why the woman does not come?"

"She will be here presently," replied Francis, in a tone of forced indifference. "I sent her to find a messenger, that I might make your friends aware of your situation."

"I thank you, Francis."

The young soldier lowered his head with coldness.

After some farther silence, Esther suddenly rose, and looking on Riordan, with an air of dignity and resolution, said:—

"Francis, when I knew you, you were accustomed to deal plainly and frankly with me. How long is it that you have learned this reserve to Esther? Come here, and tell me all your history since we have parted. I have already heard the chain of the story from your man, but the manner still seems strange. We were all long since convinced of your destruction."

A look of cold surprise preceded the answer which Francis returned to this speech. He did not know how Esther could make such a charge upon him. Reserve? That was a singular phrase. He had no affairs that could be interesting to her; and as to his history, it was of a piece with the story of his youth, in which she had borne so considerable a part, though the time was now so long past that she might possibly have forgotten it.

Deeply offended by this haughty address, Esther relapsed into silence, and did not make another effort to renew the conversation. The event showed that she might have adopted this course with

more success at the beginning, for Francis himself was now the first to speak.

He took a chair at her side, leaned his elbow for a moment on the back of that on which she was sitting, and said:—

"Esther, it may be a long time before we again have an opportunity of speaking freely together, so I will not suffer the present to go by. Do you remember our parting? Do you remember the circumstances which led to it? Do you remember the pledge you gave me on that evening? The promises you made, and the earnestness with which you gave them?"

"I do, I recollect it all well, perfectly well."

"Have you always borne it in mind, Esther, during my absence?"

"Always; I have; I have never known a feeling, Francis, of sadness, or of enjoyment, with which the recollection of that evening was not closely intertwined."

"Indeed?"

"Indeed, Francis. Why do you speak so doubtingly?"

"What; when you gave yourself again away to ——"

"Ay;" cried Esther, warmly; "even then, and never half so vividly as then."

"Unworthy girl!" exclaimed Francis, starting from his seat and trembling with rage; "it is intolerable that you should insult me with such an avowal as this. I will never speak a word with you again."

"Stay, Francis, ——"

"Wherefore, what plea can you have to offer, after such effrontery as that?"

"I have none," said Esther; "I have no gift at explanations. Where there is no confidence, Francis, there can be little love."

Francis could not contain a burst of wrath at this speech. "Why, Esther," said he, "this is the very tyranny of the passion. I hate despotism, wherever I find it, and will not abide it, even in love. I gave you all that I had in my power to bestow, when I was young and sanguine, and thought myself richly paid by the assurance of your love. My fortunes changed; I was banished from your presence and from my native land, and now I come again, and find you—what! do you speak of confidence? Oh, monstrous effrontery! I find you already half another's, my early love forgot, my long and healthy faith despised, and here you bid me to abstain from all inquiry, and rest upon my confidence alone! What confidence? That your own lips have uttered that which I am not to believe? That you have not forgotten your former promises, and that you are still free to execute all that in those days you vowed? Is this to be your plea?"

"No, Francis," said Esther, with a troubled voice; "when I spoke of confidence, I did not mean to be so strangely interpreted. I meant to say I had no plea against the truth of all your accusation. But I only needed your confidence so far as to know that nothing short of my own acknowledgment would lead you to reject me from your memory."

"And was not that avowal made this instant?"

"Far from it. An admission of deep misery is widely different from an admission of offence. Come hither, hear me patiently, and you shall be satisfied if there be any reason in your anger."

The explanation which followed this speech was so far successful in appeasing the wounded affections of the young lover, that the schoolmaster's brother, on his return home, was astonished at the warmth of devotion with which the former compensated for his passing indignation. After much debating, it was arranged that Esther's resurrection should still be kept a secret from her friends, and another week beheld the exile and his bride (for such had Esther consented to become) occupying a small residence on one of those lonely little lakes, which are found among the mountains in the interior of the county. The arguments which were urged by Francis, and which prevailed on Esther to acquiesce in this procedure, it is not necessary to detail. If nature have not already written them in the heart of the reader, it is not to be hoped that they would convince his reason, however eloquently they might be laid before him.

CHAPTER XVI.

Richard Lacy, in the mean time, pursued his schemes of hatred and ambition with unexhausted vigour. Strangely, to his own surprise and disappointment, he found that his passion for Esther Wilderming had taken far deeper root in his heart than he had at first imagined. Every new honour that he acquired, every new addition that he made to his worldly possessions, revealed to him this truth with still increasing force. He sometimes endeavoured to escape from the depressing recollection, by riotous indulgences, but the very trial was certain to disgust and to recall him. He sought relief in elegant amusement, but the lion in his heart was far too fierce to be confined within a cage of golden wire. He strove to counteract the gnawing grief, by gratifying his animosity against the people of the country, and still more, by employing every exertion to discover the lurking place of his old enemy, and bring him within the power of the laws. But his toils were vain, and his spirits sunk day after day. A gloomy and ferocious melancholy settled on his countenance, and he wandered from place to place, the victim of disappointed love and baffled hate.

His altercations with his creature Tobin now became more frequent and more passionate. The latter, however, usually succeeded in restoring himself to a show of favour, by some mysterious allusions to a certain incident in Lacy's magisterial life, the memory of which the latter did not seem willing to have revived. Frequently

their connection seemed on the point of being suddenly dissolved, when this mystical threat came in, like an all powerful mediator, to lull the awakened storm, and to restrain, if it could not remove, the excited passions of the parties.

But all Tobin's misdeeds were forgotten upon the instant, when he made his appearance in Lacy's office, upon one occasion, with an extraordinary piece of news. This was, that Francis Riordan had been seen the preceding evening, walking alone on one of the mountain roads in the interior of the county, and that there was little doubt that he might still be found within the reach of Lacy's commission, provided a little diligence were used in finding out precisely where.

This was a species of inquest upon which Lacy had no reluctance to enter. He set out, accompanied by two of his police, armed, and on horseback, and consumed that night and the succeeding day in unavailing efforts to ascertain the correctness of Tobin's information.

Wholly unconscious of the active measures that were undertaken for the disturbance of their blissful solitude, Francis and Esther were enjoying, mean while, the happiness of a full domestic contentment. They had prolonged their residence at Lough B—— beyond the term which was originally proposed, and on the very evening when Lacy was returning from that excursion which was projected for their confusion, they sat by their fire-side talking of matters indifferent and interesting, according as they arose; of their past adventures, of the state of the weather, which seemed to portend a storm, and of the state of the country, which promised little better.

At the desire of Francis, Esther threw open her piano, and sung some verses of the following song, to which he entertained a liking that had its origin in past associations of place and circumstance:—

Faded now, and slowly chilling,
Summer leaves the weeping dell,
While, forlorn and all unwilling,
Here I come, to say, Farewell.
Spring was green when first I met thee,
Autumn sees our parting pain;
Never, if my heart forget thee,
Summer shine for me again!

Fame invites! her summons only
Is a magic spell to me;
For when I was sad and lonely,
Fame it was that gave me thee.
False, she is, her slanderers sing me,
Wreathing flowers that soonest fade,
But such gifts if Fame can bring me,
Who will call the nymph a shade?

Hearts that feel not, hearts half broken,
Deem her reign no more divine;
Vain to them are praises spoken,
Vain the light that fills her shrine.
But in mine, those joys Elysian
Deeply sink and warmly breathe;
Fame to me has been no vision,
Friendship's smile embalms her wreathe.

Sunny lakes and spired mountains,
Where that friendship sweetly grew;
Ruins hoar and gleaming fountains,
Scenes of banished joys, adieu!
Oh! where'er my steps may wander,
While my home-sick bosom heaves,
On those scenes my heart will ponder,
Silent, oft, in summer eves.

Still, when calm the sun, down-shining,
Turns to gold that winding tide;
Lonely, on that couch reclining,
Bid those scenes before thee glide.
Fair Killarney's sunset splendour,
Broken crag, and mountain gray,
And Glengariff's moonlight tender,
Bosomed on the heaving bay.

Yet all pleasing rise the measure
Memory soon shall hymn to thee,
Dull for me no coming pleasure,
Lose no joy for thought of me.
Oh! I would not leave thee weeping;
But when falls our parting day,
See thee hush'd on roses sleeping,
Sigh unheard, and steal away!

This performance gave occasion to one of those delicious entertainments, which can only be enjoyed when sympathy of tastes, as well as of affections, occurs to give the highest finish to the happiness of married life. They brought down favourite authors, compared, repeated, censured, and defended, rallied each other into laughter, and argued without wilfulness, each drawing forth the other's store of talent, and talking affectionately, without the admixture of a single dose of sentiment.

In this condition they were surprised by a visit from the schoolmaster's brother, who had been a frequent guest at their cottage kitchen, since the day of their reconciliation. He had been induced to turn in, he said, as well by his anxiety to learn the condition of Mrs. Riordan's health, as by the apprehension of the ap-

proaching storm, the signs of which were every instant becoming more manifest.

Lenigan was taking a tumbler of punch by the kitchen fire-side, and expatiating on the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church, with respect to the veneration of saints, when he was summoned to the parlour, by the desire of Francis.

"David," said the latter, "do you remember having broken off your account of purgatory in the middle, on that night, in the cottage, when we were watching together by the fire-side? I have got a book here, written by an Italian gentleman of the name of Dante, and it has so curious a resemblance to your story, that I am anxious to hear the end of it."

"What religion, masther, was that Misther Dandy, if it be his name, the gentleman that wrote that book?"

"He was a catholic, Davy, and not only a catholic, but a priest."

"Oyeh! Then you may take his word for it sooner than mine, a dale, sir. That is," Davy added with a nod, "providin' it be down right in the printin'."

"Well, for the sake of that doubt, David, let us hear the conclusion of your version."

David complied, and having, at the repeated instances of his patron, taken a chair at a respectful distance, he proceeded with his narrative.

"Well, sir, afther lavin' the married people that were so happy together (may you an' the misthress have a place among them, I pray, in the latther end!) they came to another gate, an' passin' in they found themselves in a fine shrubbery with herbs, an' furze, and undherwood of all sorts in great exuberance. There was a tall rock in the middle o' the place, and on the very top of it was a goat with goolden horns, and a long beerd, and the hair sweeping down to his hoofs, an' he browzing for himself on the sweetest of herbage. 'What goat is that, father?' says the boy. 'Ask himself, child, if you wish to know.' So the boy med up to the goat, an' axed him. 'If I might make so bould,' says he, 'who are you that has them fine goolden horns upon your head?' 'Femoor-na-mown,' says the goat. 'Is it the common robber an' highwayman, that I seen prepared for death myself, in our village,' says the boy, 'an' that the priest had so poor an opinion of?' 'The very same,' says the goat; 'I'm here for ever, with plenty of provisions, and a house to sleep in,' says he. 'I never turned a poor man out of my house, while I was in the world, and the Almighty wouldn't turn me out of his house afther I left it.'

"Well, the next field they came to, there wasn't so much as a daisy or a blade o' grass upon the ground, and the place looking very lonesome, an' a fat elderly man, tied in chains in the middle of it, cryin' an' bawlin', an' dressed in the dirtiest rags, except the cravat that was about his neck, an' that was as white as the snow. 'That's a methodish preacher, that's tied there,' says the father, 'an' that's all the clothin' he'll ever get for all eternity.' 'An' tell me, father,' says the son, 'what is it makes the cravat so clean an'

nice, an' the rest of his clothes not fit to be seen?' 'Of a day,' says the old man, 'when he was out preachin', his servant maid put that cravat upon her, as a handkitcher, going to mass, an' it got a sprinklin o' the holy wather in the chapel, an' that's the only clane tack he has on him,' says he, 'for all eternity.'

"Well an' good, they passed out o' that field, an' they came all at once into a lonesome wood, with a lake as black as a cloud in the middle, an' threes as high as castles hangin' over it, an' not a sound in the place, except a poor man that was wandherin' to an' fro on the bordhers o' the lake, an' cryin' as if all belongin' to him were stretched. 'Oh, the day!' says he, 'that I sold my child! Oh! brother, give him back to me again! Oh! who will spread my bed, or sing to me, or keep me company, in this lonesome wood for ever?'

"'Do you see that man?' says the father. 'I do to be sure,' says the boy; 'what is it ails him; his cries would move the Danes?' 'That's Peter Duhig,' says the father, 'that lived a-near you formerly. He had a brother that was very rich, an' dhrove in his gig, while Pether hadn't so much as would buy *kitchen* for the piaties with his wife an' children. One evening, afther his eldest boy's death, his brother's servant was going for wather, an' he heerd some one singing most beautiful in the wood. He looked in among the threes, an' there he saw Pether's child, that was buried the week before, rovin' about, singin' and pullin' rushes. 'Erra, is that you, Johnny?' says the servant boy. 'To be sure it is,' says he. 'What are you doin', Johnny?' 'Pullin' a bed for my father, the way he'll have it to lie upon in heaven, when he dies,' says the child. So the servant went home, an' told it to his masther. 'Oh! then, what luck I had,' says the masther, 'that did'nt marry, like my poor brother, an' have childher to spread a bed for me in heaven.' Well, he went himself to learn was it fact, an' when he did, he med off at once to the brother's cottage, an' offered him a farm, an' money, if he'd only sell him the child, an' never left him pace nor quietness until he took the offer. Well, the next time the servant went out, in place o' hearin' him singin', 'tis cryin' he heerd the child. 'E' what ails you, Johnny?' says he. 'It's little admiration I should cry,' says Johnny, 'an' my father to sell me to my uncle, so that I can't do anything now for him, but the bed that was laid for him must be given to my uncle.' An' sure 'twas thrue for him, for when the father came to hear of it, he got a stitch an' died, and there's the way with him now.

"'An' now, my good boy,' says the father, 'it is betther for you to go no farther, for you'll see sights, an' hear sounds, beyond this place, that would make you a mournful man for ever. Return now to your house, do all the good you can while you live on earth, give alms to the poor, never turn away a beggar from your door, never gridge a night's lodgin' to a weary thraveller, be regular at mass every Sunday, and at your duty o' Christmas an' Easther, beware of dances and tents at the pattherns, an' jig-houses, an' benefits; say your prayers mornin' an' evenin', and hearken to your parish priest; do your duty by your family, an' those dependin' on you,

take care how you lay out the mains the Almighty gave you, an' my hand to you, the finest bed of down that was ever spread in a king's palace upon the earth is a flinty rock in comparison of the bed that'll be spread for you by the angels in heaven.'

"He said the word, an' led the boy back by another way to the gate of the house, where he entered first. He opened a door in a high wall there, and what was the surprise o' the boy to find himself in his own garden, with the birds singin', an' the sheep bleatin' in the paddock. He went into his house, sayin' nothin' to anybody, an' he led such a life afther, that the priest himself wasn't a patch upon him for piety."

While the narrative proceeded, the wind had been gradually rising, and now moaned around the solitary dwelling with fitful and uneasy violence. Gusts of light rain beat frequently against the window panes, and the deep purple clouds that during the afternoon, lay stored upon the horizon, heaved up their gloomy masses into the midst of heaven, and seemed to marshal their sullen forces for the elemental war that was expected. The oppressive closeness which was in the air began to diminish, and faint flashes of a reddish lightning, followed at long intervals by the muttering of distant thunder, were reflected on the bosom of the basined lake, which lay before the cottage windows. Davy Lenigan observed that the storm would doubtless be a great one; for he had seen the earth worms creeping out upon the dusty roads as he came along, and the smoke from the cottage chimneys ascended straight, and almost without a curl, into the rare and heated atmosphere.

The heavens made good his word. The colour of the lightning shortly changed from red to a pale and vivid blue; the flashes became more frequent and irregular, and the voice of the thunder sounded nearer, louder, and clattered above the mountain tops with short and sudden reverberations.

"There is yet enough of daylight," said Francis, to see the cascade, and the spectacle would be magnificent in such a storm as this. I will leave you here, Esther, for one hour alone."

Esther endeavoured to dissuade him, but without success. He only took the precaution of avoiding the common roads, on which he had been seen a few days before by the man who had given the information to Tobin. His apprehensions had been excited by the manner in which the man stared upon him, and he was not willing to renew the danger of such an encounter.

He entered a path, leading through a glen of pine and birch wood, in which the waterfall was situate. A broken stream, half smitten into foam by the long descent, rushed through a bed of massive granite, along the pathway, and downward, toward the lakes. The hiss and roar of the cataract was heard louder and louder among the trees, as he approached, until, at length, emerging suddenly from the leafy screen, he stood in the close area which formed the theatre of its fury. It was a drear and lonely scene. Behind him was the dense wood from which he had just escaped; on his left, a mountain, clad to the top, in rustling birch and pine: and on his

right, uprising from the bed of the torrent already alluded to, he beheld a steep, stern and precipitous, and feathered along its brow and sides with branches of the slow-waving larch, which, like the plumage on a warrior's helm, gave a softening character of grace to what would otherwise have inspired unmingled terror.

Before him, in the centre of the lonely chasm, the mighty cataract came roaring and raging downward, over the lofty ledges of rock, now flinging itself in one impetuous mass over the brow of the precipice, now split into a multitude of milky streams, now gathering its force again, and dashing its angry froth against the deep-founded masses of black rock, that seemed to shoulder its strength aside with imperturbable facility; now shooting to one side, now to the other; now, outspreading in a foamy sheet, upon a wide and sloping tablet of the everlasting granite, half-screened by hanging trees; and again, collecting its diffused volume, and falling heavily with an exhausted plash, over a low ledge of rock, into a deep and troubled basin. Here it spun round in a ceaseless whirl, and hurried onward through the craggy torrent-bed that winded among the trees. The mountains that framed in the deep retreat, and the turf on which the beholder was standing, trembled with the far driven concussion of the mass of waters, and the foliage shivered in the breathless air. The clouds that gathered overhead, uttered at intervals a stunning chorus to the eternal thunder of the cataract, and the flashes of blue lightning gleamed vivid on the sheeted fall, and blinded the decaying day-light.

It was a feat which Francis had often performed, though not without some difficulty, and even danger, to climb up from rock to rock, through the very bed of the cataract to the extreme summit, from which its waters were first precipitated into the woody glen. At times, when the river was swollen by the mountain rains, this was an adventure wholly impracticable, and even now, though the stream was far from being flooded, there was more water than there had been on any occasion when he made the essay before. Nevertheless, it seemed by no means hopeless to attempt it, and the temptation was great, to sit upon the dark block of granite at the top, and hear the waters booming downward from the woody covert.

Descending a broken bank, he passed from rock to rock, into the bed of the torrent, and soon found himself at the base of the cataract. Without much labour, he succeeded in ascending the first and second ledge. A slight effort was requisite to enable him to reach the shelter of a massy rock, which divided the waters at a little distance above, and afforded a dry standing-place at its foot, whence one might look up and down the fall, with all the thrilling sense of insecurity, and yet with real safety. The altered condition of the stream rendered this an undertaking of more difficulty than Francis had hitherto found it, and when he reached the spot already described, his limbs were warm, his pulses quick, and his nerves excited to an unusual degree. He felt the more doubtful of his strength, as he knew that the upper ledge was incomparably more arduous of ascent than that on which he had but just made

good his hold, and returning by the course he had ascended was utterly impossible. Dismissing, however, from his mind the consideration of those difficulties, he leaned against the rock, while the spray was cast upon his brow, and over his dress, and contemplated, for some moments, in silence, the awful splendour of the spectacle by which he was surrounded. The day-light was fast departing, and the extreme vividness of the electric flashes, produced at intervals an artificial gloom which made the glen look dark as Erebus.

The rain had long since begun to fall in prodigious quantity. Between the pauses of the thunder, the practised ear of Francis was startled by a sound, low, deep, and distant, which came from above, and in which he fancied that he recognized a well known portent. He bent forward, to listen more attently, but a crashing peal of thunder, which broke above him at the instant, engulphed within it every other sound, and prevented him, all anxious as he was, from ascertaining the justice of his fear. The thunder died away, and he could now distinctly hear that sound of menace with a perceptible increase of loudness, and with a noise of rushing mingled with its booming. A sudden pang of unavoidable fear first wrung his heart, and deprived him almost of the power of motion; and in the next instant, so strange an accession of life and force was in his frame, that he sprang with a light vault over the rock, and ascended very near the summit of the next ledge, by efforts far surpassing any that he could have made under an ordinary excitement. One farther bound was necessary, to enable him to secure his hold upon a horn of the rock above, but his breath failed, and he paused for a moment's rest. Looking to his feet, he saw the yellow tinge growing on the face of the torrent, and the waters seemed to swell. But the lessening light might have given the hue which he feared. He looked up to the summit: a mist steamed upward through the overhanging trees, he sprung and clasped the rock, swung up his person to the crag, and in the action caught a glimpse of the terrific mass of yellow waters, bounding with a roar of fury over the summit and down-bursting on his head. Once more upon his feet, another spring, and he twined his arms close around the trunk of a young mountain ash, just as the tawny volume thundered down the steep, and dashed its discoloured foam upon his feet and on the bank to which he clung, relieved in mind, exhausted and bewildered in heart and brain.

He closed his eyes, for a moment, in a pause of deep-felt gratitude; and when he opened them again, beheld the flood burying in its headlong depth, all traces of the path by which he had ascended, and suffering only a few black points of rock to remain uncovered by the yellow foam. Several trees had been felled by the stroke of the impetuous element, and went crashing down the glen. A rock, time-bedded in the aged cliff, was uprooted from its strong foundation, and sent thundering from ledge to ledge, showing its dark bulk at intervals above the hoary torrent, and settling, at last, with a prodigious crash, in the centre of the basin. Outchorussed on the earth, the heavens themselves seemed now to sink

their voices, and their thunders died away with a diminished echo in the abyss of distance.

Turning away from this stupendous sight, he was about to follow the uneven path, which led from the brink of the cataract to the hill-top, when the voice of David Lenigan, apparently influenced by some deep emotion, made him stop short upon his track. Presently, he saw the man hurrying towards him, and waving his hand rapidly with a cautionary action.

"Run! run! sir," he exclaimed, "or you are taken! Down! down into the wood, or Lacy has you with his Peelers!"

"Lacy!"

"He is on the hill; down, down, sir, for the love of mercy!"

Excited as he was, it was easy to change the current of Riordan's passions from that of terror into that of rage. Without returning any answer to the attendant, he hurried up the hill, and appeared upon the summit exactly in time to encounter his enemy, alone and seeming nearly as exhausted, and at the same time as excited, as himself. Each knew the other at a glance, and Lacy sprang from his horse, and abandoned the reins in his eagerness to confront his enemy on even ground.

"We are met again!" cried Riordan.

"Ay," returned his foe, "but not upon the same terms as when we encountered at Drumgoff. Villain, you are my prisoner, at length."

"Mercy forbid!" said Riordan, with bitter force; "I do not feel your fetters on my hands; I do not see your creatures at my side; I can defy you Lacy, and the woe that fortune has committed to your keeping, and that you never yet refrained from flinging on the head of a beseeching countryman. Oh, that we should have met after so many years to wreak our hate in such a spot as this! For I do hate you, Lacy, as I hate death and pain!"

"And with good reason," said his enemy, "for I would be both to you, and will, unless the devil should come between. Come with me, and offer no resistance, if you wish not to anticipate a fate, that, by my heart, I am glad to promise you! Ay, by my heart, most glad! Oh, what a curse you've always been to me! Come on, or you die suddenly. Do you remember Roundwood? Ha! Do you remember Esther Wilderming? Death strike me if I do not hate you deadly!"

"I take your simple word for it," said Francis, "without an oath."

"Do you? You shall have a deed of it, a note of hand, with fifty witnesses; but the gallows will do better than the whole. Faith I will hang you shortly!"

"I doubt not your good will."

"Oh! that this cursed law were deep in hell, and I would make that lip incapable of laughter with a brace of balls. I do not wonder at your smirking. I remember you, a cold and passionless dolt, without heart enough to relish the happiness that was designed for you, and the idle hope of which almost put me beyond my reason. Well!" he continued, suffering his trembling arms to

drop motionless by his side, gazing on Riordan with a look of wonder and contempt, and speaking as if with his own mind. "That such a keen-eyed angel should have bent her smiles upon a clod like that! Her lightest breath, heard through the garden boughs, would make my blood run back upon my heart, and shake my soul down to its foundation. I have watched for her calm cold salute at meeting and at parting, as I would have done for the tidings of my life or death, and yet I have seen this lump of common earth placed by her side, endure her smiles, her converse, her love-speaking glances, ay, even her caresses, without a change within his eye, or on his countenance. And see now here, if his hate be not as worthless as his love! Let me be cursed in your friendship," he exclaimed aloud, "if I despise you not more heartily for the indolence of your enmity, than I could hate you for the worst evil your utmost diligence could inflict upon me! I hate and I despise you!"

"I hate not you," said Francis, "more than I hate the reptile that I seek to crush for my own ease and that of my fellow men. I could not hate a thing like you, without mind or principle to restrain the animal impulse that bids it sting wherever it can do an injury. And as to scorn, I keep my scorn for those who, in some points at least, can mortify my pride. To you, I can feel nothing, as you truly said, but simple, cold, and passionless dislike."

At these words, Lacy glanced to the right and left, and then suddenly levelled a pistol at Riordan. The latter, aware of his intention, sprang at his throat, struck down the weapon, which exploded in the struggle, and then lifting his enemy quite off the earth, hurled him down the slope with great violence. He gazed for a moment upon the fallen man, as he lay stunned at the foot of an old pine, and then, hearing the tramp of horses, hurried swiftly downward through the wood.

The persons who approached were Tobin and the two policemen, who had accompanied Lacy. Directed by his moans, as he began to revive, they hastened to his assistance, and conveyed him slowly in the direction of Riordan's cottage.

CHAPTER XVII.

ESTHER was standing near the cottage window, and looking out upon the storm-lit lake, when her husband hurried into the apartment, exhausted from his late adventure, and from the speed with which he had hurried downward from the glen. He disguised the cause of his agitation from Esther, and was occupied in quiet converse with her, when they were surprised by the entrance of the servant, to say that there were three Peelers outside, bearing a wounded gentleman in a cloak, who had come to request a lodging for the night.

"Not here! not here!" said Francis, in deep agitation.

"Not here, Francis?" echoed Esther, in surprise.

"He is ravin' mad, sir," said the servant; "and the men say his head is touched some way."

"Masther Frank," said Lenigan, thrusting his head into the room, "he's abroad, an' a'most dead. If its a bleedher he wants, I have a lancet here in my pocket, an' I'll do the business in a minute."

Francis paused for a moment in deep thought, and then, suddenly turning to the servant, he bade the strange gentleman be carried into the little room which lay on the far end of the cottage, and desired that Davy should instantly attend with his lancet, while one of the horsemen rode off for a more experienced medical attendant.

"And now, Esther," said Francis, closing the door after the servants, "what's to be done? This gentleman is an old friend of yours."

"Of mine, Frank!"

"Ay, of yours. And not the least esteemed, nor the least successful amongst them, neither. This man is Lacy."

"Oh, Francis!" exclaimed Esther, suddenly clasping his shoulder, and looking in his face with an expression of mingled pity and alarm; "I hope he is not hurt to danger."

"I hope so too; heaven knows, I hope so too!" said her husband, with sincere emphasis. "He received the injury from me, in an effort which I made to save myself from an assault that was made by him upon my life."

Very soon after, Davy re-entered, to say that the magistrate had received but a very slight injury, and that he would, if it were not for the urgency of his attendants, have got on horseback once more with the view of returning to his own abode. Strangely enough, this intelligence of Lacy's safety seemed to restore all his abated hostility to the heart of Riordan. He gave Esther a detailed account of the occurrence which had taken place at the fall.

"He is beneath my roof!" he exclaimed, as he concluded, standing erect, and lifting his hand into the air—"He is beneath my roof, and therefore let him take his rest in peace! He is helpless and a stranger, and therefore let his million crimes be covered while he stays. For this, I think not of his causeless hate, his unremitting wiles against my fame and life, his bloody practices upon my poor dependants, my own long exile from my native soil, the agony of my return, the loss of the best years of my existence; all these, and this last treacherous effort at my life, must be forgiven for this night. To-night he is your guest, Esther; for I will never couch my head beneath the roof that shelters that bad man!"

"How, Francis?"

"Esther, dear Esther, I have not sufficient confidence in my own self-command to stay. If you will have me strive against this feeling, I will remain to please you, but bind me hard, I warn you! I have an animal dislike to Lacy, a detestation that will acknowledge no influence of reason, and nothing short of physical coercion could render me secure of my self-government. Ah, that this beast should be let forth again to waste the nation of the poor with fire and famine!"

He left the house, after cautioning Esther to avoid the eyes of the strangers, and hurried off to a neighbouring cottage, inhabited by the family of one of the servants. Esther, in the mean time, remained in the cottage in deep perplexity of mind.

Two or three times before midnight, Francis returned on some pretext or another, and Esther thought that at each time there was something paler and sterner in his aspect than before. She questioned him on many subjects, but his answers were vague and absent, and his lip had turned outward, with that hue of lived blue which it wore whenever the heart of the man was wound up to some enterprise of danger. He asked hastily some questions concerning Lacy, paced gloomily up and down the little apartment, and at length turning hastily to Esther, said—

"Is it not hard that one should be forced to play the cony about one's own house to avoid the tooth of such a venomed weasel as this Lacy?"

"Well, but for one night, Francis?"

"How the wind howls yet! 'Tis a horrid night!"

"His attendants say that he will by no means consent to remain longer than the night."

"Indeed!"

"And it was with difficulty they prevented his sudden departure on the instant."

"I would they had let him go;" said Francis, in a deep tone, and as if unconscious of being heard.

"And wherefore, Francis?"

He did not answer the question, but continued for a long time to gaze in deep abstraction on the window. His face, like that of a person struggling to subdue the expression of an intense agony, changed colour several times, and when he spoke again, his voice was harsh and altered, as if passion could exercise upon the organs the influence of time or of disease.

"Esther," said he, "I have changed my mind. I will not sleep out to night."

From some undefinable cause, Esther felt a sudden alarm at this new resolution. She imagined that her husband had formed the intention of visiting Lacy, in his chamber, and she could form no idea of any other termination to such a meeting that one of violence and cruelty. After vainly endeavouring to sound her husband's purpose, she resolved to baffle it at all events, by a course of action which had something in it scarcely less hazardous than the rencontre which she feared.

Returning fully to the consciousness of his condition, Richard Lacy passed the night in an agony of disappointed hate, of wild impatience, and of mental torture, in the comparison with which the physical suffering that he endured was trivial. Stretched upon the rack of passion, and stung by the assaults of the direst species of remorse, the sense of guilt intended and attempted, not enjoyed, his imagination magnified the miseries of his condition and awoke within his heart the first thought of fear which he had entertained for many a day.

He believed that his hurt was likely to be productive of more serious effects than were anticipated by his attendants, and many hours were consumed in gloomy meditation on the nature of the change which death might bring to him. That delirious extravagance of passion which made him on one occasion reflect with agony on the possible re-union of Esther and Francis in another world, now moved him with strong terror on his own account. He pictured to himself the spirit of Esther Wilderming reposing in that paradise, in the existence of which, the course of his early education and the movements of his reason taught him to believe, and he referred, with a wild uneasiness, to the character of his own life, and its probable retribution.

While he thought of these things, sitting dressed in an arm-chair, he heard one of the servants, an old woman, sing, in a low voice, an Irish song, of which the following is a translation. It struck him forcibly, at the time, as it represented a kind of sorrow for which he had often given occasion: the grief of a mother for a perished son:—

> My darling, my darling, when silence is on the moor,
> And, lone in the sunshine, I sit by our cabin door;
> When evening falls quiet and calm over land and sea,
> My darling, my darling, I think of past times and thee!

Here, while on this cold shore I wear out my lonely hours,
My child in the heavens is spreading my bed with flowers.
All weary my bosom is grown of this friendless clime:
But I long not to leave it, for that were a shame and crime.

They bear to the church-yard the young in their health away,
I know where a fruit hangs more ripe for the grave than they:
But I wish not for death, for my spirit is all resigned,
And the hope that stays with me gives peace to my aged mind.

My darling, my darling, God gave to my feeble age
A prop for my faint heart, a stay in my pilgrimage.
My darling, my darling, God takes back his gift again;
And my heart may be broken, but ne'er shall my will complain.

When the song had ended, and while Lacy lay indulging the reflections to which it gave occasion, a slight noise, on one side of the room, made him turn round and gaze in that direction. His attendants were sleeping on pallets in the kitchen, after having been plentifully supplied with drink from the parlour, and a deep silence fell on all the house.

Some person had pushed in the door, but seemed unwilling to enter. After waiting for a moment in suspense, Lacy demanded to know who was there, but received no reply. He waited for a little time and repeated his question, still without effect. A third time, after a long pause, he renewed the query with some little anxiety of mind, and a third time it remained unanswered. He turned away, rather annoyed, and in the action thought he could discern the flitting of a white dress across the threshold of the door. He turned again, and saw, indeed, a figure completely attired in white, and with a head-dress which fell down so far over the forehead as to conceal every feature except the chin from observation, and that was paler than the drapery through which it appeared. Even this single indication was sufficient to freeze the blood of Lacy with a terrific recognition, and he started up in an access of sudden horror. It needed not the approach of that slow-moving figure; it needed not the lifting of the rigid hand; it needed not the removal of that heavy veil; and the sight of the long pale features, and the glassy eyes that were beneath, to convince the frighted invalid that he was in the presence of the shade of Esther Wilderming.

For a time his terror swallowed up every other feeling, and he could do nothing but pant, and gape, and stare upon the figure, while he leaned forward on both his hands, his eye dilated, and his parted lips drawn downward at the corners with an expression of deep-seated horror. His brow became in one minute white, red, moist, and glistening, now cold as earth, and now burning with a sudden fever. A swift convulsion shook every member of his frame, and then it rested stiff and motionless, as if it were struck

by a sympathetic death. The light seemed to change its colour, the objects in the room dilated and grew indistinct, the sounds that were before so gentle that the silence of midnight scarcely served to make them audible, seemed now to have acquired a strange and preternatural loudness, and the sense of feeling became so painfully acute, that the floating atoms in the air were felt distinctly as they settled on his brow.

"Esther," he hoarsely murmured, after several vain efforts to articulate the word, "what is it troubles you?"

She raised a hand, as if with a cautionary action.

"Speak to me!" said Lacy, still in deep agitation; "speak to me, though you loved me not in life. Oh, Esther! speak at once if you are ill at ease, and if there be anything in Lacy's power to give you peace, ah! make him blessed by telling it."

As he raised his voice, in the vehemency of his adjuration, the figure slowly repeated the former action. Lacy started back in sudden terror at every movement of the spectre, and felt a difficulty in mustering his spirits again to address it.

"The innocent," he said at length, in a low and earnest voice, "the innocent, it is said, fear ye not. I have not that security. The blood of many victims, the sufferings of youth, the tears of age, the groans of severed hearts, and homes bereaved of joy, the memory of passions long indulged, and feasted upon crime and human woe, all these surround me in this fell extremity, and tear away my trust in days gone by. I have not the security of innocence, and yet behold, my Esther, I fear not you! All terrible as you are, wrapt in the pomp of death, and clothed in all the horrors of the grave, I fear not you, my love! Though my limbs tremble, and my nerves are dragged to agony, though my eyes wander, though my speech grows hoarse, and though the blood is thickening at my heart, I fear you not: I love you through my fears! Oh! by these trembling limbs, this scared and terrified, yet doting heart, these eyes that you have long bereft of light, I pray you, Esther, speak to me! Come nearer, though it be to blast me! Come! I will not believe that you would injure me, for you were ever gentle and forbearing, and where is the hand that could inflict a pain upon the heart that loves it? But whether you be come in anger or in love, in mercy or in vengeance, yet welcome to my presence, Esther Wilderming. In hate or in affection, in life or death, I have still a horrid rapture in your company!"

He paused suddenly, as the figure again elevated one hand and seemed about to speak. Still as a statue, he remained with his eyes rivetted upon the parted lips of the appearance, while the words came forth, distinct and low, and almost without a motion of the feature.

"Hear me!" said Esther.

The first accents of her voice made Lacy shrink quickly down, like one who is startled by a sudden and terrific sound.

"I am your friend, and come to warn you," continued the figure. "Arise, and leave this house."

"Wherefore?"

"You are in danger. Wait not one other hour. Depart in silence and with speed."

"Who is my enemy?"

"That must not be revealed. But you have many. I would not leave you in the danger of any one's revenge."

"I am guarded, Esther."

"Do not trust to that. Silence and the night are fearful accessories against you. Revenge can use the noiseless pace of murder. It grows in secret, it walks in silence, it glides to its design as rapidly, it strikes as deadly and as deep."

"And you are come then, kind and gentle shade, to save a life so worthless as my own?"

"I never wished you ill, and do not now. Richard, if ever you have valued my entreaties, refuse not to comply with this. Arise with secrecy and diligence, and leave this house at once."

"Behold, I obey you on the instant, Esther. Yet stay——"

"Hark! some one stirs."

"The house is silent."

"Speak quickly then, and low."

"Tell me if you are happy."

Esther sighed.

"Oh! hide not from me anything of your condition, Esther. Tell me by what strange toils, what prayers, what sufferings, I yet may hope to meet you in a happier world. Tell me, and though you bid me to surrender all my earthly schemes of glory, though you should bid me shake ambition off, and cease to dream of power, and wealth, and honour, though you should make my path in life a waste, teach me to curb my fiery impulses; nay, though you charge me to surrender that first passion of my life since you were lost, my hate of him who was my rival in your love, I will cast all away upon the second, and be an humble, pale, poor, passionless and self-tormenting penitent, wasting my noons and nights in prayer and agony, and only living on the hope of meeting you in peace and happiness. Where dwell you, in what land: for there must be the limit of my wanderings?"

"Vain man!" said Esther, after contemplating the enthusiast for some moments with an expression of mingled pity and severity; "Mistaken man! how passion has eaten up your understanding. It is not by a motive such as this, so earth-born, so self-interested, that you can ever hope with justice to influence your fate in the hands of Him who is to judge you. Dismiss from your remembrance all thought of these intemperate passions, to which you have sacrificed so much of your own and of others' happiness, repair the wrongs you have inflicted, redress the misery you have occasioned, dry up the tears that you have caused to flow, light up the hearths you have made dark and lonely, and do all this, not for the love of earth and earthly passions, but for the sake of virtue and its Author."

"You speak to one," said Lacy, "insensible to such a motive; insensible to all, except that one absorbing passion which has diffused itself throughout his whole existence, and become indeed

himself. The time has long gone by when I could think so anxiously of death. Its terrors have grown stale upon my fancy, and now my conscience seldom hurts me that way. If I cannot be virtuous for your sake, I never can be for my own."

Here the figure started slightly as if in alarm, and assumed for a moment the attitude of close attention.

"I must depart;" were the next words of Esther. "Farewell! delay not long beneath this roof; and oh! remember my injunctions!"

"Hold!" cried Lacy aloud, and springing suddenly to his feet, "you have not answered yet my single question."

"I cannot now."

"Ah! Esther, leave me not unsatisfied. You shall not pass!" he added, with a rapid wildness of manner, as the figure glided toward the door.

She raised her hands, and laid one finger close upon her lips as if enjoining silence. Lacy obeyed the signal, but would not abandon his place between her and the door. At that moment a sudden noise in the next room made him start and look around. When he again assumed his former attitude, the apparition had fled. He saw only the shimmer of a white dress through the darkness, and in the next instant was alone.

Exhausted by the exquisite degree of excitement to which his feelings had been just wound up, he sunk down powerless into a chair, his arms hanging drearily to the ground, and his head depending on his shoulder. In this condition he was once more startled by the entrance of one of his men, who had occasioned the noise already mentioned. In so feverish a state the slightest appeal to an external sense acted on his frame with an electric violence. He leaped up once more from his seat, confronted the intruder, who was no other than his creature Tobin, and finding his terror vain, burst suddenly into a passion of rage.

"Ruffian!" he said, "how dare you break so rudely on my presence? Who are you? What's your business?"

"Ha!" said the intruder; "ruffian, Mr. Lacy? That's a strange word to apply to a person of respectable connexions."

"Ah! Tobin, I knew you not."

"What is the matter, sir?"

"This house!" said Lacy, abstractedly. "What danger? from what hand?"

"I heard a noise in the room, and I thought I'd just step in to see whether you wanted anything."

"Tobin, come hither."

"Here's Tom Tobin, ever ready at a call. What's your will?"

"Who is the owner of this house?"

"A Mr. Johnston, I think; some fellow of low English extraction, I suspect. A fellow of no family. And yet 'tis such fellows that live in such little Elysiums as this, while the Blakes, the O'Donnells, the Fitzgerald's, the Butler's, the O'Shaughnessy's, the O'Toole's, the O'Lone's, the O'Donoghue's, the M'Carthy's, the M'Gillicuddy's, and all the cream and top of the old Irish nobility are scattered

over the country, hedging, and ditching, and tilling, as hired labourers, the lands which their ancestors won in fight, and held from father to son at the point of the sword. But so it is:—

> 'Since every Jack became a gentleman,
> There's many a gentle person made a Jack.'"

"Tobin, I did not know you when you entered."

"Enough said: gentle blood is quickly up, but gentle speech will soon allay it, sir."

"I must leave this place to-night."

"To-night!"

"This very instant."

"And your hurt?"

"It is almost well. It need be no obstruction. Let us come silently and with secrecy, for there is danger in the place. Away!"

Silencing the remonstrances of Tobin, Lacy pressed forward into the room where his attendants were sleeping in chairs around the fire, and waked them up with caution. Signifying his wishes rather by actions than by words, he made them comprehend his intention of departing instantly. The servant, who had received directions as to his conduct from some sufficient quarter, appeared among them at the moment, and assisted in getting their horses ready, and making all preparations for their departure. A few minutes only elapsed before the echoing of their horses' hoofs had ceased to clatter along the lake and against the opposite mountain.

In returning to the house, the servant encountered his master, standing on the kitchen floor, and apparently in stifled agitation.

"Where are the strangers?" he said, in a low and subdued voice, while his eye was fixed with an expression of sternness upon that of his servant.

"They are gone, sir," said the latter.

"Who bade them go?"

"Themselves, sir, to come an' call for their horses an' be off."

Francis paused for a considerable time, as if undergoing a passionate mental struggle.

"Where's your mistress?" he asked at length.

"She is within, sir, readin' in the parlour."

"What did that gentleman say at parting?"

"Nothin' to me, sir."

"Go, go to your bed."

The servant left the place.

"It is better as it is," Francis muttered to himself, after a long pause. "I wished to have some conversation with him in his mood of suffering, but I am glad that it has happened otherwise. I could not answer for my heart when I beheld him lying in my power with all his guilt, committed and intended, hot upon him. It is better we did not meet."

CHAPTER XVIII.

About a fortnight after this event, Francis was returning late in the evening through the village of Roundwood, when a sudden and heavy descent of rain compelled him to take shelter at an inn on the right hand. There had been a fair in the neighbourhood, and the house was full of guests. The light from the windows and the open door streamed across the street, making the rain drops sparkle as they fell into its beams. The sound of mirth was loud within the house, and the uproar was but slightly diminished when Francis made his appearance. Wrapped in a white great coat, and with his hat drawn low upon his brow, he passed unrecognized among the crowd, and gained a distant corner, shadowed by the projecting porch of the fire-place, whence he might contemplate all the company, without incurring the observation of any.

The landlord was busy in his shop. A large fire sent light and heat through the room, and shone on many a merry countenance. On one side of the fire-place were a number of young men and girls, laughing loudly, while on the other sat a number of middle aged men, who were carrying on a graver conversation, in which, nevertheless, many appeared highly interested. The usual centre of attraction in such scenes, a table and vessels for drink, was not forgotten here, though many preferred to sit apart, each with his own brown fount of inspiration, and worship Bacchus in Montmellic ale.

"No Saint Pathrick!" exclaimed one old man, in a tone of surprise, while he gently moved the liquor in his pewter drinking vessel; "that's a dhroll thing."

"Why then it is," said another, "an' I heerd it, for all. I heerd Mr. Damer, over, prove it out of a book, that there wasn't such a man at all there, nor no talk of him, at the time."

"What's that you're sayin', Phil?" asked a hoarse voice from the corner.

"That Saint Pathrick was never there at all, he's sayin'," replied the old man, turning round with a smile, as if in hope of finding some successful counter-argument.

"Saint Pathrick, eroo?"

"Iss, then."

"Erra, howl."

"Faix, I'm in airnest."

"An' what's more, I believed him too," continued the retailer of the paradox, "until I was talking of it, afther, to Misther Lenigan, the Latin taicher, an' he made light of it in a minute; for sure, says he, if there was no Saint Pathrick, what did they build the ould ruins for? an' if they were built by any body, mightn't it as well be Saint Pathrick as any body else? Eh, now, Jerry?"

"It stands to raison, what you say."

"Erra, I wouldn't mind a word one o' them convarthers would be sayin to me," said a young man, who had got his arm round his sweetheart's waist; "they have arguments that would bother the Danes, an' you'd think the world couldn't gainsay what they'd tell you, an' when you'd be listenin' to the priest afther, before two minutes, he wouldn't lave 'em worth a button. I'd rather be talkin' to Mary here, be 'r two selves, a-near the fire-side, than to hear all the convarthers in Europe."

"Ayeh;" said Mary, tossing her head incredulously.

"'Tis thrue, I tell you."

"Ayeh; talkin' is aisy, Jim."

"M' asthora, you wor—

> 'Your eyes, 'tis true, are a sweet sky blue,
> Your cheeks the hue of the crimson rose;
> Your hair, behold, does shine like gold,
> In flowing rolls, it so nicely grows.
> Your skin is white as the snow by night,
> Straight and upright is your portly frame;
> The chaste Diana an' the fair Susanna,
> Are eclipsed in grandeur by my lovely dame.'"

"Well, it's all one," said an old flax-dresser, in a corner, "these converts ——"

"Perverts, you should call 'em," interrupted a new voice, which was no other than that of Lenigan; "'tisn't converted they are, but perverted; the heavens look down upon 'em!"

"Perverts, then, if it be perverts. I say there isn't one o' them but what comes round again in the latter end. When the world is slippin' away from undher us, heaven save us! it is then the truth will break out for all."

"It's true for you," observed a smith, taking a pipe from his mouth, and knocking off the ashes with the tip of his little finger; "there's that Tobin, that turned to plase Lacy, the magisthrate, he's for turnin' again now to plase himself. He came to me, a couple o' days ago, down to the forge, to get a nail dhriv in a loose shoe, an' I never heerd but how he talked o' Lacy. Some argument they had about money, that Tobin said was owin' to him, an' Lacy wouldn't pay it."

"Shasthone!" said the first speaker, "it's a good sign for the counthry to have 'em breakin'!"

"Indeed," ejaculated the smith, "that same Misther Lacy will be in a place yet where the tip of his finger will light his pipe for him, if he doesn't change his behaviour."

"He couldn't do worse himself than to judge you, Tom," said Lænigan, whose eye had just began to twinkle in the corner, "not if he was a Turk."

"Why, then, of all men, Davy, it doesn't become you to take his part, that knows well the way he dealt with a gentleman that was good to you once: Masther Frank Riordan."

"Don't speak of it, don't speak o' that at all, Tom, I beg o' you."

"An' sure there's the poor Hares, that are lodged in the bridewell this very day for night-walkin', an' that'll never get out of his hands again until they are hung."

"The Hares in bridewell!" exclaimed Davy, in strong surprise.

And Francis started too, and listened in awakened interest; for in this name he recognised that of two poor fellows whom he had formerly rescued from the tyranny of Lacy. He felt a double interest in their fate, as he knew that it was his success in their cause which contributed to confirm the hatred that Lacy had conceived against him upon other grounds. That circumstance was now nearly five years past, and he wondered at the inveteracy of spite which could seize an opportunity of vengeance after the lapse of many years.

"They were taken this morning," continued the smith, "makin' an attack upon Tobin in his house. The whole world wondhers, for there wasn't quieter people goin' than the Hares, an' they tenants of Tobin, an' wantin' an abatement of him this time back. They're to be examined to-morrow at the petty sessions before Mr. Damer and Mr. Leonard, two gentlemen that'll show 'em fair play, for all bein' Protestants."

"He's a terrible little man," said the flax-dresser. "They say he had a dale to do with this new Vesthry Bill Act that's come out lately."

"Ay, an' the Sub-lettin' Act," observed the old man already alluded to as the first speaker.

"Them two acts," said Davy, "are nothing less than, as I may say, the two jaws of a demon that are to grind away the good of Ireland into nothing betwcen 'em."

This vigorous sentiment set on foot a stormy debate upon those two famous pieces of legislation, which proceeded to an extreme degree of violence. Davy, as he had struck the spear into the dwelling of the tempests, so he used every exertion now to pacify the tumult he had raised. He stood up, waved his hands, looked round him with an imploring eye, but all his gestures were unheeded amid the zeal of political discussion. At length, finding that nothing in a colloquial way had the slightest chance of producing an impression, he threw himself on a sudden into an oratorical attitude, and shouted out an astounding—"Gentlemen! ——"

A dead silence immediately fell upon the circle, for the voice

and the sight of an orator exercise upon such people an influence as powerful as that which the great patron of the art was accustomed to use on the shores of the ancient Eurotas. All eyes were turned on the speaker. All tongues were hushed, all passions quelled upon the instant; the uplifted pewter hung suspended in mid-air; the frolic swain, forgetting the kiss for which he had been struggling, looked backward over his shoulder and relaxed his hold around the person of his screaming love; the landlord hobbled, smiling, from behind his counter, the pot-boy forgot his vocation, the very dogs and cats relinquished their altercations, the expectation of that treat so precious to Irish ears, an oration, lulled every heart to silence, and mute attention sunk suddenly upon the scene.

"Gentlemen!" continued Davy, preserving the lofty oratorical key, "will ye hear a word from me upon those bloody and inhuman statues?"

Continued silence, only interrupted by a murmur of something like assent, seemed to inform the speaker that the company were willing he should be heard.

"I am glad, gentlemen," resumed the orator, "to see by the zale ye show in your discourse that ye are roused at last from that sleepin' *liturgy* in which ye were lulled so long. Although it is nearly impossible for me to add anything to what many other gentlemen have already said, to-night, round the table, I, for all, cannot with silence pass over the late achievements of our countrymen, without making some remarks an' observations of my own [here there was a murmur of something like approbation, in which all joined, except the smith and the other great man, the seneschal of the parish]. We surmounted the times, gentlemen, when the priest was hunted with more diligence than the ravenous wolf, an' as for the schoolmasther—[there was some tittering among the girls]—an' as for the schoolmasther, he was searched for as a vigorous sportsman, on the banks of the Nore, would search for his game; an' they would be as happy, when those would have the misfortune to fall into their hands, as the dejected traveller on the deserts of Africa when ready to expire with thirst, and would just meet a pool o' wather. [Some applause]. But, friends, for what purpose did they so diligently seek them? I will tell you! To wreak their vengeance on those necessary members of society. [Applause more decided]. The time is now past when the poor bewildered Catholic, in his state of starvation, would not be allowed to keep a horse worth more than five pounds, and when he would not be allowed to keep one foot of the land of his forefathers undher a lase, an' even spakin' the language of his country was a crime. [Applause]. Now, speakin' in truth, they repealed these dismal, unpolitical laws, not for any feelin' o' friendship or humanity towards us, but merely to secure the pace o' the empire, an' to remove the disgrace they reçaved in all the polished coorts o' the known world they visited, as they looked upon them as base, savage, and unpolished people. [Energetic applause]. But, gentlemen, I have now a word or two to offer upon a subject in which

every Irishman must feel an interest, I mane the state of our population. Our enemies lately enacted two statues, just intended for our destruction, the one called the Vestry Bill Act, the other the Sub-letting Act; the former intended to impoverish us, the latther to stop our growing population. [Cheers]. But, friends," continued the orator, warming with his success, "will you hear to my opinion of this statue? I conçave it to be worse than that enacted by Pharoah when he commanded that the male children of the Israelites would be desthroyed, for this act, of which I speak, destroys them both male and female [tremendous cheering], by preventing the honest husbandman from sharing his spot of ground with his industrious children, and that it is well known that the more the ground is cultivated the more fertile it becomes. But let them remember, the more they decrease our population, their own empire becomes more defenceless; for, let it be inquired of his Excellency the Commander-in-chief, whether the Irish fought as brave as any English or Scotch throops ever undher his command in all his expeditions? [Cheers]. Let them, on that footing then, continue the Sub-letting Act, if they like to become a prey to some Napoleon, or some other haro of his kind. [Cheers]. Then they will feel the fruits of their own doin's, when we will be too old to wield the swoord, an' they will have no youngsthers to enter the service. [Great cheering]. It is, then, that the sovereign of England will have to say, as his Majesty George the Second once said, when he expressed, 'Cursed be the laws,' says he, '*that* prevents my own subjects from fighting in my own service, an' secures victhory to my enemies.' With this difference, that *we* will have no youngsthers to fight in any service whatever. [Immense cheering]. As for the Vesthry Bill Act, the people that made that statue did not consider that if the ministhers o' the church would be so base as to put it in execution, their own rents would be unpaid, an' they would in the end fall by their own doin's. But, friends, I have said enough upon the subject, as I am thresspassin' too much upon your time; ['No! no!' tremendous cheering], for to recite our wrongs would cost an author, let alone me, a long life. Therefore, I will conclude by tellin' you, that the surest and most expeditious way to break all those chains, is to live paceable with those savages that daily want to raise us to rebellion, to observe the laws in the sthrictest manner, to avoid night-walkin' as the root of all our misfortunes, and, of all the world, to beware of any secret societies; for I can assure you, with truth, that all who belong to any such community are of little consequence in any concerns, unless in violating the laws, an' going headlong to the gallows."

And, with this pointed peroration, Lenigan sat down, amid loud and long continued applause.

Soon after, as the company became more mirthful, Apollo was invoked to give additional grace to an evening which had been already brightened by Mercury and cheered by Bacchus and Cytherea. In humbler phrase, several songs were sung, the greater number of which owed their principal fascination to a political or controversial meaning hidden beneath the apparent sense. Some-

times a fellow sung the adventures of a mouse, which was sent off from Ireland to the British senate, where

> The nobles all, both great and small, did wonder much to see
> A mouse so small from Ireland, seeking for liberty.
> There was a cat within that house, an' to the mouse did say,
> 'I doubt you are a stranger; I believe you're goin' asthray.
> 'I think you are a Paddy mouse, an' when did you come o'er?'
> 'This mornin', sir,' replied the mouse, 'I landed on your shore.
> 'An' if I am a Paddy mouse,' the mouse to him did say,
> 'I doubt you are a buckish cat, an' I'm not goin' asthray.
> 'For I'm a son to Graunia, that sore laments for grief,
> 'An' she sent me to his Majesty, to grant her some relief.

And then the company were favoured with "The lamentation and jail groans of Jeremiah Hayes, for the murder of Ann M'Loughlin;" "A new and much admired song on this present Parliament, and rising prosperity of Ireland;" "Shauna Grien's meeting with Graunia;" and other melodies equally significant in their apprehension.

"Come, Misther Davy," said the young foe to all 'convarthers,' "give us somethin' sportin' now. 'Tis you that can sing a good song, you know, when you have a mind."

"Erra, howl."

"Faix you can."

"Do, Misther Davy," said the smith, "if it is'nt makin' too bould to throuble you."

"No offence; oh, no offence in life! Tom; but I declare I'm smothered from a great cold in my throat this time back."

"Ayeh, that's the way always with the fine songsthers."

"Faix, it is'nt o' purpose I speak; but I'm sure I'll do my best, an' what can I do more?"

"'T would be hard to ax you."

"Were obleast to you, Misther Davy."

"I'll sing you a song, then," said Davy, suddenly throwing off his reluctance, "about a set o' people that's very desarvin' for industhry, an' that's the Peelers. For what would the counthry do at all, if it was'nt for 'em? 'Tis they that airn their money well. There isn't a mouse can squeak; there isn't a calf can blate; there isn't a hen can clock a-near 'em, but they must know what raison! I'll engage there's few pigs unring'd, or goats unspancelled, since they come into the counthry; an' I'm sure there's nobody that saw the state o' the high roads but will allow that there was no ho with the pigs until the Peelers come into the barony."

And with this encomiastic prelude, Lenigan launched out into his song:—

> A Banshee Peeler went one day, on duty an' pathrollin', O,
> He met a Goat upon the road, who seem'd to be a sthrollin', O;
> Bayonet fixed, he sallied forth, an' caught him by the weasand, O,
> An' thundered out an oath that he would send him to New Zealand, O.

Mercy, sir, exclaimed the Goat, pray let me tell my story, O,
I'm not a thief, a ribbon-man, a croppy, whig, or tory, O;
Banshee is my dwelling place, where I was bred an' born, O,
Descended from an honest race, its all the thrades I larned, O.

It is in vain for to complain, or give your tongue such bridle, O.
You're absent from your dwelling place, disordherly an' idle, O;
Your hoary locks will not prevail, nor your sublime oration, O,
You'll be thransported by Peel's Act, upon my information, O.

Let the consequence be what it will, a Peeler's power I'll let you know.
I'll handcuff you at all events, an' march you off to prison, O.
You villain, you cannot deny, before the judge or jury, O,
On you I found two pointed spears a threat'nin' me with fury, O.

I'm certain, if you were not drunk from whisky, rum, or brandy, O,
You would not have such gallant spunk, to be so bold an' manly, O.
Ah! says the Goat, you'd let me pass, if I had got the brandy, O;
To thrate you to a sportin' glass, it's then I'd be the dandy O.

This satire, extravagant as it was, upon a hated race, was received by the hearers with a degree of enthusiasm which it is difficult to represent in language. Shouts of bitter laughter, and execrations sent forth between the clenched teeth, showed plainly what a popular subject the satirist had chosen for his target, and how well the singer knew his audience.

Love-songs there were, the eternal burthen of which was inconstancy and woe. The gay and light-winged Cupid, who laughs and waves his pinions with such a joyous levity around the lyre of the national lyrist, was here the very same in sentiment, but floating on a coarser plumage, and with the evil-spirit not so well concealed.

The rain however had now abated, and Francis had left the house, with the intention of adopting some mode of rescue for his ancient clients, though none as yet appeared consistent with his own safety. As he put his horse to a gentle trot, the bursts of wild applause came frequent after, and between, the voice of a young girl who had been prevailed upon, all bashful and unwilling as she was, to delight the company with the song of the "Green Bushes":—

I'll buy you fine beavers, a fine silken gownd,
I'll buy you fine petticoats flounc'd to the ground,
If you will prove loyal and constant to me,
An' forsake your own true-love an' marry with me.

I want none of your beavers, nor silken hose
For I ne'er was so poor as to marry for clothes,
But if you'll prove loyal and constant to me
I'll forsake my own true love an' marry with thee.

Come, let us be going, kind sir, if you please,
Come, let us be going from undher these threes,
For yonder he's coming, my true-love I see,
Down by the green bushes, where he thinks to meet me.

When her true-love come there, an' he seen she was flown,
Oh! he stood like some lambkin, that bleats all alone:
She is flown with another, and forsaken me!
Oh! adieu the green bushes for ever, said he.

CHAPTER XIX.

As he rode homeward in the dark, within a few miles of his own residence, he was hailed by a figure on the road side, which, on nearer approach, he distinguished to be that of a young woman. She waved her hand anxiously several times, and seemed impatient for his approach.

"Is that you, docthor?" she said, as he came nearer; "Hurry in, hurry in, an' the heavens bless you! You never will overtake him alive."

"Whom, woman?"

"Did'nt James tell you, sir? A man of Misther Lacy's, that was servin' a process in the mountains, an' a poor man that was in the place had the misfortune of killing him."

"A man of Lacy's?" exclaimed Riordan; "bring me into the house immediately. I am no doctor, my good woman, so lose no time in sending for one, if you think it necessary."

He dismounted, and led his horse along a narrow bridle road, following the steps of the woman, who trudged along with the tail of her gown turned up over her shoulders, giving him at the same time an account of the accident which had taken place.

"He was a very foolish man," said she; "it was only this morning he took up two boys o' the Hares for night-walkin', an' nothin' could do him afther but to go into the mountain to serve a process upon one Naughtin, a first cousin of their own. 'M sure what could he expect? They gathered about him, and one of 'em knocked him down, and another made him go upon his knees, and ate the process, an' swally it, an' take a dhrink o' wather afther, to wash it down; an' afther that he got a blow of a stone from somebody or another, that destroyed his head, an' indeed I'm afeerd he never 'll do. Ah, sir, 'tis a frightful thing to see a man in that state when he isn't aizy in his mind! I wished he had the priest, poor creature, for he's one o' them that *turned*, an' I declare I feel for him."

They reached the cottage, which was crowded with the country people. The wounded man was lying in an inner room, which, likewise, was thronged as full as it could hold. Looking over the shoulders of the crowd, Francis could just discern the bed on which the unfortunate wretch was laid, and around which a number of

faces were gathered, some wearing an expression of compassion, but by far the greater number evincing either simple curiosity or a grim satisfaction. The light of a small candle, the end of which was crushed against the wall for the want of a better candlestick, threw a dead and perplexing light upon the group.

"Is the doctor come?" said the wounded man, in a tone of deep suffering: "is there no compassionate soul here that would get me a docthor, to see am I to die or to live?"

"He's sent for," said an old woman, "he'll be here immediately."

"The Lord forgive you!" said another, "many's the time you made work for the docthors yourself, before now, an' the surgeons, an' the undhertakers too."

"The Lord forgive you!" said a third, "the second year is'nt gone by since you swore away the life of my poor husband for nothing, and left me this way in rags, an' my children fatherless, an' houseless, an' apprenticed in their youth to beggary!"

"Oh, let the Lord forgive you, if he can!" exclaimed a fourth. "I had two brothers, as strong and handsome as were ever seen at fair or market place. One of them is lying in the Croppy-hole this year, and another is in the wilds of New South Wales; and it is you I have to thank for that, and for my misery."

The wounded man regarded each of his accusers, as they came forward and retired, with a smile of grim and calm defiance, nor did he appear in the slightest degree affected by the charges which they launched against him in his agony.

"I do not ask the Almighty to forgive him," screamed a withered creature on the right of Francis: "I had but the one: I had but the one alone, an' that villain came across him an' desthroyed me! He left me childless; may the Lord remember it to him in his own time! He left the widow's hearth-stone cold; may the Lord make a widow of his wife, and orphans of his own this night."

Again a grim smile of defiance crossed the pale face of the sufferer, and showed that even this imprecation had fallen harmless on his sleeping conscience.

"Shame! shame!" said Francis; "if anything could move you to forgiveness, it ought to be the condition of the poor man who is suffering before you."

"Don't speak to me, sir," exclaimed the woman; "I know you well, Masther Francis, I know you are our friend, but I know, likewise, what I had, an' how I lost it. I can't forgive him for my child's destruction! I tell you, it is an ease to me to see his blood, an' a joy to my heart to hear him groanin' with the anguish. An' see, if there isn't another come to ask for blood of her own at his hands. The mother of the Hares is come to see you in your trouble," she added, turning her face towards the bed.

At the same time, the crowd separated without, so as to allow the entrance of a stranger, who presented an appearance somewhat superior to the people by whom she was surrounded. She was dressed in deep mourning stuff, with a widow's cap on her head, and a cloth scapulary of the order of the Blessed Virgin around her neck. Although her countenance bore the traces of recent

affliction, yet there was a habitual calmness in her eyes, and around her mouth, which gave an appearance of serenity and even sweetness to the figure.

She walked to the bedside of the patient, and after pausing for a few moments in the attitude of one who endeavours to outweary rather than wrestle with a deep and agitating passion, she said to the bye-standers in her native tongue:—

"This man, who lies here, once professed the same faith, and knelt at the same altar that we do ourselves. He deserted his creed, and to those who asked him wherefore he had done so, he replied, that he had discovered many errors in our doctrine, and that the worship which he offered up in his present creed was of a purer and loftier nature than he had ever used in ours. I appeal to you, my friends and neighbours, whether the course of his apparent life, since the day of his change, has been such as to justify the supposition of an improvement in his principles? Ah, say not that I judge him, when I answer, No! The blood of our fair, our young, our virtuous, and our noble-hearted, give back the judgment, and not I. This morning, he made me feel for myself as I had often felt for others who had fallen into his power; he robbed me of my two children, and I tremble for their blood, for innocence is not a safe-guard in the grasp of Lacy. Yet let this deserter of our faith behold the influence of that doctrine which he has cast from him and reviled. Behold!" she continued, untying the strings of her widow's cap, and uncovering a head of hair half silvered over by the touch of age; "I make my head bare, in the presence of Him who is to judge us both, but do not tremble, murderer though you be, for I come to give you, not the mother's and the widow's curse, but the mother's pardon in your dying hour. I forgive you for my lonely hearth, for the fearful days that I have passed, for the heart-aches and the pangs I feel this moment. Go to your Maker, if he call upon you, and tell him that Mary Hare has washed the blood of her children from your hands, and oh! may he deal lightly with you, for the stains that many a broken heart beside has left there! I know not how these guiltless men may thrive, the times have taught me to expect the worst, but let their fate be what it may, I say again, their mother pardons you, their mother gives you her forgiveness and her prayers."

Without waiting any reply, the woman at these words glided out of the room, leaving the company impressed with a strange and solemn feeling, such as the novelty of such a scene was calculated to excite. It was difficult to observe whether it produced any effect upon the wounded man, for his countenance scarcely changed, and his position remained unaltered, but he did not receive it in the same spirit of calm and steady hate which he had evinced amid the execrations which preceded it.

"I heard a voice while ago," said the sick man, "that I would wish to hear again. If there be a gentleman in this room who will receive a dying man's last wishes, I will thank him to draw near me."

With some difficulty Francis succeeded in getting the apartment cleared, and after closing the door, and throwing in the bolt, he

took a chair near the bed. The sick man turned on him a ghastly and wandering eye, and then sunk back, as if his suspicions had been fully justified.

"You seem to know me?" said Francis.

"I do," replied the other, faintly; "and I think it a sign of grace from heaven that you have come to me at this moment, for that woman's *shanachus* was troubling my mind, and I longed to ease my soul of one offence at least before I die. I wouldn't have minded to the last the barking of those cabin curs that snarled where they dared not bite, but bloody as my hands have been, there's something of the gentleman about my heart, and the forbearance of that widowed wretch struck through it. I should not like to meet the Hares before a different court from that which I intended."

"You may make some reparation," said Francis, "by revealing all you know of them to me, and doing what you can to further the ends of justice before you go."

The patient smiled at this, as at a very simple speech. "They call you bright," he said, but I think you ought to know more of human nature than to think that any persuasions of yours could induce me to say more than this;" he pointed with his finger to the wound. "I hope," he added, after a pause, "I hope my cousins will take care that I have a decent funeral. My father's covered a mile o' the road. I am not so well liked in the counthry, but maybe when I'm dead they'd forget that for me, in compliment to the family."

"Were you not rash," said Riordan, "to venture unguarded into the mountains?"

"Ay!" said the other, quickly, "there's the point. I have been sacrificed. Lacy took home the police as soon as I had lodged the Hares in jail, and would not lend a man on any account. He knew that they were bent on my destruction, for so my very murderer told me, and he was glad of it, for he was done with me, and he wished to be quit of the reward he promised me. And so he sent me, like Uriah, to the battle, and so I fell. Ah, Owen! cousin Owen! I wonder if your death-bed will be like mine. Bid Owen pray for me, when you shall see him."

"And Lacy, then, betrayed you?"

"And seeks your life, too; look to it, I warn you. This doctor will never see me alive. The Hares are innocent. Have you a pencil here?"

"I have," said Francis, taking out a pocket-book.

"Then take my declaration while I am able to speak it."

He revealed the entire of an atrocious conspiracy formed upon the lives of the men in question, which Francis copied carefully, and treasured up against the examination on the following morning.

"If this be not my death-wound, as I fear it is," said the sick man, "I will make an effort to be upon the spot myself. But if it should be otherwise, remember what I have told you, look to yourself! I heard you take my part against that vengeful hag, and even though you had not, I owe a deep revenge to Lacy, and

you are so far lucky, that I save your life to spite him. Ah! I am very weak. You saved the Hares once, do not neglect them now. I hope my cousins will not grudge a little expense upon my funeral; I could wish that Dick were there, but I suppose he is too great a man to think of it. If Bill could take it in hand, I'm sure it would be tasty, but where's the use o' talking?"

Doctor Jervas now arrived, to make an examination, and Francis departed, promising to call again in the morning, on his way to the sessions-house; and leaving Tobin to the mercy of the country people, some of whom exerted themselves to draw from him some intimation of the probable fate of the Hares; while others exhorted him to look into the state of his unhappy soul, and to make a last reparation for the scandal he had occasioned by returning to the bosom of the faith he had forsaken. Otherwise, the plainest hints were thrown out, with respect to his approaching destiny, and the most cogent arguments adduced in support of the doctrines of that ancient church, which in the words of a rural bard:—

> For fifteen hundred years,
> As plainly doth appear,
> Continued quite free from molestation,
> Till woful heresy
> And infidelity
> Prevailed for to raise disconsolation.

But the medical attendant cut short the controversy, and turned all the polemics out of the room, leaving the renegade to his own reflections, and entrusting the task of his conversion to the less boisterous, but more persuasive reasoner within his bosom.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE fate of the brothers had excited a strong interest throughout the district. Accordingly, at an early hour the following morning, a considerable number of the country people had collected around the neighbouring court of petty sessions. Davy was there, and had the satisfaction, while they waited the arrival of the magistrates, of overwhelming Aaron Shepherd with a host of arguments partly original, partly deduced from the Professions of Faith made by Pope Pius the Fourth, the Fifty Reason of the Duke of Brunswick for embracing the Catholic faith, and various other sources.

Francis Riordan left his home, on this morning, with feelings of no common pain. Uncertain what the issue might be of his publicly appearing in defence of those suspected persons, with the recollection of his own imputed trespasses still hanging out against him, he paused a moment ere he left his home. He stole back again into Esther's chamber, stooped down and kissed her, sleeping, and then departed without farther hesitation.

"It may be," he said, "that this vindictive wretch may make

his menace good against my life: but what of that? I was taught in childhood to place my country foremost amongst my affections, and I hope a few months' rest and quiet happiness have not unfitted me for practising the lesson."

Richard Lacy expected the arrival of this important morning with very different sensations. After returning on the previous evening, from one of his daily excursions, he was seen pacing up and down before the hall-door of his house, as if in anxious expectation of some messenger. The rain began to descend, and he was compelled, after having endured the shower for many minutes in increasing anxiety, to continue his vigil in the parlour.

He rang the bell many times, and inquired for different members of his household, who were absent on business. At length, a horseman rode into the yard, and hurried up the stairs, like one acquainted with the impatient disposition of his master. Lacy, while his lips quivered with eagerness, made an effort to appear tranquil and indifferent while he asked the question—

"Well, Switzer, where is Tobin?"

"Dead, sir," answered the policeman, closing his lips hard.

"Dead!" echoed Lacy, starting back with a look and action of feigned concern and ill concealed delight. "Is it certain, Switzer?"

"I saw him down myself," replied the man, "I saw him in the hands of bitter enemies."

"Those murderous dogs!" said Lacy; "thus do we lose our most valuable friends, day after day, amongst them. We must be early at the court to-morrow, and see those ruffians done for. Get down and eat. Poor Tobin! I will speak with you, before I go to bed, again. At present, I am not easy in my mind; I have much to think of."

The man bowed, and left the room without speaking. Lacy remained pacing up and down rapidly for some moments, unwilling to acknowledge, even to his own mind, the murderous ecstacy he felt at being rid of so dangerous and insecure a counsellor as Tobin.

"Let him rest in peace!" he said at length aloud, "and let me think of him no more. I have the Hares to deal with. I hate them, for the shadow of that fiend has been upon them and hid them from the search of my revenge. Alive or dead, their fate will spite him sorely, and I have now the means to make it certain."

Having completed all his arrangements for the approaching morn, he flung himself upon his bed, and took such rest as usually haunts the pillows of the impassioned and the guilty.

The interior of the petty sessions house, at an early hour on the following morning, was occupied by nearly the same actors as those who appeared upon the scene in the first chapter of our tale. On a bench at one end of a deal table, sat Mr. Damer and his friend Mr. Leonard, nothing altered in appearance or condition by the lapse of the intervening months. The door was still closed, and a clerk sat at the end of the table, busy in preparing his books,

and too far apart to hear the conversation which was passing between the two magistrates.

"Well," said Mr. Leonard, "now that I have asked after the condition of your other stock, your horses and your kine, will you tell me how you find your neophytes? Has the murrain of popery got amongst them once again?"

"I don't know how it is," replied his friend, with an embarrassed smile, "there is less gratitude, or less sincerity, amongst them than I believed."

"I know it well," returned Mr. Leonard; "the priest has coaxed them all back again, has he not?"

"And people so convinced, so thoroughly convinced, as they appeared to be!"

"Convinced of what?"

"Why, of the errors of their creed. They saw, as plainly as I could desire, the excessive folly of many of their ecclesiastical ceremonies, and the profaneness of their subordinate articles of faith."

"Ay, but you know that was in spring, and it is autumn now."

"Well, why should a man's eyes be more open before summer than after?"

"Because potatoes were thirty shillings a barrel in spring, whereas now they may be had for five."

Some other magistrates, dropping in at this moment, cut short the dialogue, and the conversation became more general.

"Well, Dickson," said Mr. Leonard, "so you won't allow me to make that little road to the village?"

"I cannot consent to it, sir," returned the gentleman so addressed, with a grave look; "I think the road is not wanted, and besides, Mr. Leonard, I thought you knew my principles. I am a tory, sir."

"Well, Mr. Evans, *you're* a whig. May I count on *your* voice?"

"Oh! certainly, Leonard, you may. But then I must have yours in another matter of the kind that I shall speak to you about another time."

"You may count upon it, Evans; provided you fling no job upon my hands."

"Job! oh, fie! fie!"

The crowd were now admitted, and several cases were dispatched, while they awaited the arrival of Lacy, as the accuser of the Hares. Some processes were issued, to recover for a smith the price of a new spade; for a weaver, the worth of a piece of bandle linen; or for a village carpenter, the cost of some repairs in instruments of husbandry. Then came the dire account of trespasses and offences. A policeman, with a long paper in his hand, containing a list of parochial grievances, appeared at the right hand side of the clerk, prepared with law and evidence

> —t' impeach a broken hedge,
> And pigs unring'd at *vis franc* pledge;
> Tell who did play at games unlawful,
> And who filled pots of ale but half full.

Complaints were made of, and fines inflicted on, the barefooted proprietors of goats and pigs found trespassing upon the highway, notwithstanding all that human eloquence and ingenuity could do on their behalf. Penalties were imposed on publicans, for vending whisky at illegal times, and sundry other nibblers of justice were reproved for their audacity.

But in the midst of those affairs of lesser interest, a general murmur of dislike, and hatred ill subdued, announced the arrival of some unpopular individual. The people in the sessions-house judged that it was Lacy, and so it was. The village Sejanus entered, pale and cadaverous with anxiety, while his round, full, sparkling eyes, glanced rapidly in all directions, to ascertain what difficulties he might have to encounter in the approaching effort. They alighted with some appearance of dissatisfaction upon the form of Mr. Leonard, but yet the concern of Lacy at his presence was not considerable, for his talent was not sufficient to render him a very formidable opponent.

The Hares, two decent looking countrymen, with a remarkable family likeness of each other, were then summoned to the end of the table, and Lacy stood up to make his charge against them, and to produce his informations. The accusation which he made was briefly as follows:—

These two brothers were, he said, his own tenants. They had been long applying to him for an abatement in their rent, which he had constantly refused. At length, he received an intimation, from a person in his employment, named Tobin, that these two men, in company with several others, meditated an attack upon his house, with the view of compelling him to enter into the terms which they desired. Their rendezvous was at a ruined castle within a few hundred paces of his residence, and he was also made aware of the night on which the project was to be put in execution. Accordingly, he took care to be upon his guard, and lay hid within the ruin until the party should appear. The two prisoners now before the magistrates were the two who first appeared, and they were instantly secured, and without much eclat. Some unknown circumstance, however, had occasioned the remainder of the party to take alarm, and they did not appear at the place of appointment. Tobin was now dead, fallen a victim, doubtless, to his zeal upon this very occasion, but Lacy had still enough of evidence to make his allegations good. He had the policemen who assisted in their apprehension, and he had a threatening notice in the hand-writing of the elder Hare, which was nailed upon his gate, and the purport of which was, that he must either make up his mind to comply with the reasonable demands of his tenants, or else prepare his coffin.

These facts were proved by the policemen and others, and the threatening notice was handed in, and examined by the magistrates. The identity of the hand-writing was proved by several witnesses.

When the Hares were called upon for their defence, a very fat and short-armed little man arose. His dress was rather thread-

bare; his eye affectedly subtle, and his mouth had got a habitual twist to one side, from the custom of speaking apart, inside his palm, to counsel and others, in presence of the court. He affected some smart attitudes, in mimicry of lawyers at the bar, darted his eyes knowingly on both sides, and whispered a moment with the elder Hare. He then stood up, nodded significantly two or three times, and prepared to address the magistrates.

"I ask pardon," said Lacy rising, with a smile, "but I think this gentleman is an attorney?"

"Yes, I am *concerned** for the prisoners," replied the legal minnow.

"Then," rejoined Lacy, "it behoves the magistrates to stay a proceeding so much out of course. It is already decided, by many precedents, that a prisoner cannot be heard by attorney on his examination before a magistrate."

The attorney replied, quoted, looked angry, railed and bullied; but Lacy overwhelmed him with precedents, and he was compelled to retire, uttering a storm of censures and menaces.

"Oh, murther!" said the younger Hare; "arn't we to have the law, either? Well, Mr. O'Twist, you won't keep our three and ninepence,† sir, as you can't be of any use to us?"

He was answered by a storm of abuse; the fat lawyer protesting that he had sacrificed three other clients to his anxiety on behalf of this pair of ingrates. And saying this, and brushing his hat furiously round with the cuff of his coat, he clapped it down upon his head, and left the court, looking like a man who had been very ill used.

The elder Hare was then called on by Mr. Leonard, to deliver, in his own manner, an account of the transaction. The man, who was an intelligent looking person, approached the table with some anxiety of manner, and yet with an apparent consciousness of right, which excited a considerable degree of interest in his favour.

"Please your worship," he said, "Mr. Lacy, I know, is a well-spoken gentleman, and 'tis little use it will be for me, now that my attorney is gone, to take it in hand to gainsay what he advanced; but still I'll thry my endayvours. It was I wrote that notice, surely, an' it was I, an' no one else, that nailed it on the gate; an' I'll tell you why I done so. This Tobin, that they say is dead now, come to me one day, and asked me if I'd like to have my rent of my little farm abated? I told him I would, why not? for it was that I was asking Mr. Lacy for, ever an' always. Because, says Tobin, Mr. Lacy wants to get an abatement himself from the head landlord, an' all he requires is just an excuse for lowering the rent to you. So, says he, it would be a good plan if you an' your brother (manin' this boy here a near me), an' one or two more, would get together some night, an' post a threatenin' notice upon the gate, an' afther that, to come some night an' make an attack, by way of a feint, upon the house, an' give him an excuse for saying his life was in danger on account o' the rent. We did his biddin', an' we

* Employed on their behalf.

† The customary fee of those attornies who practice at courts.

fell into the snare they laid. Tobin set the crib to catch us, and now Mr. Lacy comes to put the *goulogue** upon our necks."

A murmur of suppressed indignation passed among the listeners, as the man concluded, but Lacy regarded him with a smile of calm reproof and pity.

"It is very well," said he, "the case is stated with very great precision. It only remains to be seen in evidence that all this is not a fabrication."

"Have you the necessary proofs of this, Hare?" asked Mr. Leonard.

"Sure here's my brother that was by the whole time, while Tobin was talking to me."

"I'll take the vestment of it," said the brother.

"My good fellow," said Damer, while they were smiling at the man's simplicity, "your brother lies implicated in the same accusation that lies against yourself, and his testimony can avail you nothing. Have you no other evidence?"

"Have you no person to produce who was present at those conversations with Tobin, besides your brother?"

"There was nobody by, exceptin' myself an' Thade," replied the prisoner.

"You have no witness, then?" asked Leonard, in a tone of commiseration.

"No witness," said the man, falling into a desponding attitude.

"No witness!" cried Lacy, starting up with the rapid action of one who is hurried on by sudden passion. "No witness!" and behold him standing there with the black libel yet upon his lips, baffled in the vilest calumny that hate and disappointment ever hatched. He has no witness! not even among his gang of perjured accomplices can he find one so impudent as to support him in that shameless falsehood. This is the fate of loyal gentlemen in times like these. I have wrenched the dagger from the assassin's hand, and he strives to stab me with his tongue. He has no witness ——"

"Yes," cried a voice from the crowd, "he has one."

Lacy paused, his hand still clenched, outstretched, and his forehead gathered into the frown of denunciation, while an individual made his way through the throng, and came forward on the table. The stranger was wrapt in a travelling cloak, and his hat, whether by accident or affectation, was brought low upon his brow.

"I can give evidence," he said in a low voice, "in favour of the prisoners."

"And your name, sir?" asked Mr. Leonard.

The stranger paused a moment, lowered his face, pressed his hand upon his brow, and seemed to be debating with himself a point of vital consequence. At length he raised his person, and said, in the same subdued voice—

"My name is Riordan, Francis Riordan."

"It is! I knew it!" cried Lacy, now for the first time springing from that attitude in which he had been interrupted, into one of

* A forked stick, used to secure birds taken in a crib in winter.

more ecstatic energy. "I knew the rebel under his disguise. 'Tis his accomplice and his old protector! Up, gentlemen, if you are loyal men, and see that traitor handcuffed."

"Hold!" cried Riordan, gently raising one hand, and putting back with the other the hat which had in part concealed his features. "It is true; my name is Riordan, as I said, and I am this man's friend. I have proved it well this morning. But there is no occasion for the violence which Mr. Lacy recommends. I am come here to deliver myself into the hands of these gentlemen, who will no doubt see justice fully done, without that stormy zeal which he deems necessary."

"It shall be done!" said Lacy, fiercely.

"It shall!" echoed Francis, "to your perfect satisfaction. Ay, Lacy, you shall have it brimming full. You have laid treason at my door, and I will point it out lurking behind your own. You have called me rebel, falsely called me so, but I will make the same charge good against yourself by evidence as palpable as matter. A double rebel, false to your king, and darkly, covertly false to the hand that makes you what you are. That man's defence is true and liberal," he added, handing over a paper to the magistrates. "I have it from the lips of Lacy's own accomplice, the betrayed, the deserted Tobin. There is his declaration."

It was read aloud, and Lacy employed the respite thus afforded him in spinning a new clue to free himself from the labyrinth in which he became so unexpectedly entangled.

"The calumny," he said, "is strongly built, and shows fairly on the face; but there is still a flaw in the foundation. What proof is there that this is Tobin's writing?"

"My oath. A hundred oaths."

"Ay, oaths enough! They are now as plentiful as western winds. The word of heaven is now sent far and wide throughout this kingdom, but it is only used to multiply the opportunities of perjury. For this, good men have met and holy men have prayed; for this the wealth of Britain melts down before the feet of her apostles, that they may be reviled and mocked, and that falsehood and treason may need no means to give assurance to their calumnies. Such are the oaths that you can tender us, and such are the oaths against which the whole course of a life of undeviating loyalty gives feeble and unavailing testimony."

"One oath, at least, I have," replied the witness, calmly, "which even you cannot impeach."

"Even there, even with that precious gem of perjury to decorate your falsehood, you still are foiled and baffled. This is not Tobin's dying declaration."

"How?"

"The law declares that documental testimony is only admissible when the witness has supplied it under the firm belief that life was on the wing. What proof have we of this?"

"Is the law so merciful?" said Francis, turning to the magistrates with an appealing look, and a smile of mingled satisfaction and surprise.

"Consult the statutes, consult Philips, consult Macnally, gentlemen," cried Lacy, with a triumph flashing in the eyes.

"The document is worthless," murmured Riordan; "I have no proof; I do not know myself that Tobin had resigned all hope of life."

"And this, then," exclaimed Lacy, with a satisfaction ill concealed by the show of indignation he thought it useful to assume, "this is the sum of all that mass of evidence which was meant to overwhelm my character, and sink the brand of treason into my door!"

"Not all," said Riordan, "I have yet one witness left. Tobin," he cried, "come forward!"

The crowd was again in motion, and Lacy shrunk back as if a lightning-flash had crossed him. Supported by a countryman, pale-faced and feeble, with a kerchief bound about his battered head, Tobin came forward trembling to the table. Had he been visibly summoned from the grave, with all its funeral suits and trappings wrapt around him, he could not have appalled the heart of Lacy with a shock of deeper terror and despair. He remained set in the attitude of sudden fear, and stared hard, as if in presence of a supernatural appearance.

"Yes!" exclaimed Riordan, pointing to the wounded man, and gazing fixedly on his persecutor; "there is the witness whose testimony I said even you could not impeach, for his was the evidence which you have most employed against the lives and fortunes of your fellow-countrymen. His oath will make that declaration good, and the cloak shall be torn from your raw designs, and you shall be unmasked to the world for the subtle rebel and the double traitor that you are."

"For one who boasts of right upon his side," muttered Lacy, with a ghastly sneer, "you are vehement enough."

"I am! I love to lay the blow home on such a back as yours," said Riordan warmly. "Were you only foolish, I could be content to laugh at you; were you only malicious, I might be satisfied to despise you; were you only ignorant of good, it might content me to avoid you; but when I see that ignorance, that folly, and that malice united in one dark and subtle heart, its owner becomes a subject for the lash, and that lash I will never spare to such as you, while I have a hand to lay it on."

"You say well," said Lacy, seizing the advantage which Riordan's vehemence afforded him, "and I might fear you too, if rant could strengthen falsehood."

"Liar and hangman as you are!" cried the young soldier, wholly abandoning his self-command, "leave law to those who love it. Come out, and give me the satisfaction of a gentlemen with the weapon of a soldier. Come out, and meet me on the level field, if old defeats have not made a coward of you! I say, come out, and make that saying good upon me if ye dare!"

The grim and eager smile with which his enemy regarded him, showed him with what a horrid rapture he would have answered the summons if deeper interests had not prevented him. The

energy of voice, and look, and action, on both sides, was so terrific that it was some time before even the magistrates, armed with all the influence of authority, would venture to interfere between the hostile spirits. But they did at length interpose, and were obeyed.

"Another time," said Lacy.

"Another time, then," echoed Riordan. "Meanwhile, the witness waits."

"Pardon me," said Lacy, addressing himself to the magistrates, "I have a word or two to offer. It was told me last night that Tobin was murdered in the hills, and I was so convinced of his death, that I have seldom felt a more singular astonishment than his sudden re-appearance at that table excited. I regretted his loss extremely, for he was a useful friend, and I owed him much which I longed to repay; I grieved that I had not sooner acquitted myself of obligations which he had long before laid on me. [These words were accompanied by a covert glance at the witness, which was withdrawn the instant the speaker saw that it was understood.] I have now to solicit that these prisoners be remanded, and that the examination be deferred for one night; a request which I think cannot appear extraordinary, considering the new turn that affairs have taken."

To this request, apparently so reasonable, Francis could offer no objection without incurring the reproach of virulence, and it was acceded to without farther question. The prisoners were remanded, and Lacy was then asked what he had to adduce against Riordan that might touch his personal liberty. So downcast was he by the resurrection of his victim, and perplexed by his own embarrassed situation, that he could offer no accusation whatever.

"At present," said he, "I have not my evidence prepared. I will say more hereafter."

"Then you have no objection," said Leonard, "to his being abroad to-night upon his own recognizances?"

"None," muttered Lacy, in a sullen tone. And his only relief was in the look of disappointed hate and malice which he sent after his successful enemy as he left the sessions house.

CHAPTER XX.

THE next morning, when Francis arrived at the sessions house, he found that the affair had taken a still stranger turn than before. Lacy did not appear: he was confined to his house by illness, and Tobin seemed to have undergone the influence of some magician in the night. He had lost all recollection of the document which he had furnished to Francis Riordan, and he was unable to supply any evidence whatever respecting the conspiracy which was yesterday alleged with so much perseverance. No reason could be discovered for this change of sentiment and no remedy was to be found.

Neither was there any effort made to renew the ancient charge against young Riordan. He remained at liberty, and received one or two significant hints from Mr. Leonard that there was little fear of any attempt being made to place it under any restriction.

The conduct of the prisoners, his protegés, likewise seemed extraordinary in the eyes of Francis. They seemed perfectly contented with their situation and not in the least dismayed when fully committed for trial. One of them, who saw him look uneasy and surprised, told him that he need not feel the least alarm upon their account, though he could not at that moment let him know the cause of the security he felt. The mystery was cleared however, at the following assizes, where both the brothers were discharged for want of a prosecutor.

The reader may, without any effort at detail on the part of the historian, imagine all the consternation and delight with which Esther was once more received amongst her friends. It consoled her uncle for the failure of his cherished schemes of religious amelioration in the cabins, and old Aaron for the defeat which he had sustained at the hands of Davy Lenigan.

From that time forward, the habits, the character, and the health of Lacy, seemed to have undergone a singular alteration. His enmity, his love, and his ambition, appeared to have been altogether blasted. He appeared but little in public, and the virulence of his animosity against his humble neighbours was observed to soften and abate by slow degrees. In a few months, his name was seldom heard in courts of justice, was seldom seen at the head of committals in the public prints, and at length sounded in the ears of those who heard it, like that of one departed from the world. There was a mixture of kindliness and pity in the tone with which his name was mentioned among cottage circles, which, more than all besides, demonstrated the alteration which had taken place in Lacy's character.

It was with a feeling of sincere concern and pity, likewise, that Esther learned, in some months after, that her disappointed admirer was dangerously ill, and supposed, indeed, to have already reached a hopeless stage in his disease. She was seated at table, when the account arrived, and it affected her deeply and visibly; for she well knew that, whatever Lacy had been to others, he had always loved her with a deeper and a truer passion than men so evil-minded generally feel.

From day to day the accounts become more alarming, and at length, a messenger, sent specially by Francis, for the purpose of inquiring into the condition of the sufferer, returned with astonishment upon his countenance, to say that Mr. Lacy, though unable to leave his room for two days before, had suddenly disappeared from amongst his attendants, and fled, no one knew whither.

Disturbed by this intelligence, Esther arose and walked out into the air, while Francis mounted his horse, and rode across the mountains to offer whatever assistance lay within his power.

The evening was calm, and Esther sat to enjoy it in a rustic seat, placed in a corner of the solitary mountain recess in which Lough

B——— was situated. Before her lay the lake, a still and dark expanse, crossed by a few broad gleams of light from the western extremity. On the opposite side, a solemn precipice sunk suddenly upon the level water, its sides rugged with granite, intertangled with stunted shrubs, its forehead bald and frowning, and its foot slippered in a moss of the tenderest green, which the vassal waters kissed in silent veneration. On the right hand, a small cascade just served to deepen the sense of solitude on the mind of the beholder. On the left, the shore scarce rose above the surface of the lake, and the summits of some distant hills, which appeared above the undulating heath, suggested the idea of an interminable extension of the vale which here commenced. Around the shores of the craggy side, the shrubs were silvered with a dripping moisture, occasioned by the oozing from another lake, which lay at a loftier elevation on the other side of the mountain.

In a boat, on the lake, was a servant of the house, who was employed in angling for some gray trout. Esther watched him pulling gently to the land, drawing in his skiff, and carrying his net well loaded to the house, without stirring from her attitude of contemplation.

In this situation, she was surprised by the appearance of several peasant children, who were advancing by the winding road that led out of the valley. They were all attired in white, and one, a peachy-cheeked boy, of five or six years of age, held in his arms a kind of effigy, dressed up in female habiliments, and having the breast bone of a goose as a succedaneum for the human countenance. When they came in sight of the lady, they suddenly halted, and a whispering consultation ensued, which from the stooping position of many of the figures, seemed to consist of certain words of encouragement and counsel, addressed to the bearer of the effigy. Advancing then within a few paces of the seat on which Esther lay expecting them, they separated, and fell back on either side, suffering the little fellow to advance alone, and speak for them to the lady. Esther watched his demeanour in this awful crisis with a natural interest. Looking up in her face, with a bold smile, and a blush, which was the only mark of conscious hardihood in his appearance, he said with great distinctness—

"Good morrow, ma'am."

"Good morrow, sir," replied Esther, smiling, but relaxing nothing of her stateliness, nor in any way assisting him.

"Somethin', ma'am, for Miss Biddy, if you please."

"And who is Miss Biddy, sir?"

This was not in the little fellow's lesson, and he looked sidelong over his shoulder for assistance from the prompter. A girl somewhat older, and with a sisterly resemblance in the face, advanced a step or two, and said, with a downcast eye and a timid accent—

"Saint Bridget, ma'am, if you please."

"And who is Saint Bridget, love?"

This again was a question too deeply theological for any head in the little assembly, and they all looked at one another with puzzled and inquiring eyes. But as Esther, although a conscientious pro-

testant, was not, in the language of the cottagers, a "convarther," she did not think it necessary to press it any farther. Recollecting that the following day was the anniversary of the saint above named, and remembering also the village customs, which used to afford her so much delight in her infancy, she placed a liberal donation in the hand of "Miss Biddy's" youthful advocate, and had the pleasure of seeing the whole party hurry off, whispering together and conversing in suppressed exultation.

"I hardly know what my uncle might say," she murmured to herself, "if he knew that I encouraged so profane a ceremony. But whatever claims the great virgin of Kildare might lay upon me in a religious point of view, I cannot avoid feeling some interest in the name, when I recollect that it has suggested one of the Irish melodies."

Scarcely had she uttered these words, when a low hoarse voice, at her ear, said, in a tone of deep anxiety and earnestness—

"Be not alarmed, Esther! Let me entreat you, Esther, not to feel any alarm!"

She sprung to her feet at the sound of this startling voice, and looking back with great rapidity, beheld a figure that sent a shivering through every nerve within her frame. Richard Lacy was standing underneath a fading laburnum; his attire of a meaner appearance than had ever been usual with him; his face—to use a powerful and untranslateable French expression, utterly *decharné;* his eyes sending out a wild and sickly fire, and his whole figure wearing the plain and visible marks of diminished fortunes, of ruined hopes, and faded energies of mind and person.

"I, too," he said, perceiving the irrepressible emotion and surprise with which Esther gazed upon him; "I, too, you see, can play the spectre when I please." And he pointed with a horrid smile to his ghastly countenance, and then to his attenuated frame.

"Mr. Lacy!" Esther said, in a low voice, and panting with agitation.

"And yet," he continued, with the same ghastly calmness in his utterance, "it is but the rehearsal of a part that I must soon be called to enact in gloomy truth. They are calling for me fast, but I am come here first to finish my last scene before your eyes, for I have loved your praise, once, far too well. I could not die, Esther, without bidding you farewell; not that I fear it yet for many a day. But it is possible."

"Oh! do not say it."

"Wherefore should I not?" he exclaimed, with sudden passion; "why do you bid me not? I could tell you who has brought me to that point. I know, and you know, who it is that made this world look worthless in my eyes, and crossed my life with torture, disappointment, woe, and want; and yet you bid me to remain among the miseries which that one has spread about me; you bid me hug the rack to which that one has bound me! I could tell you who it is, but I will not; for I love you, deeply; to the death, I love you. Ah! shrink not from the declaration of a dying man."

"Dying!"

"Ay, dying, though it be by morsels. Dying a fearful and despairing death; dying all full of blood; all hopeless; all dismayed; ay, for the first time, all dismayed with my forebodings!"

"Oh! do not, do not speak so shockingly."

"What should I do?"

"Repent——!"

"Of what? Count me up, first, the sum of that which I have laid upon my soul, and number, then, the years which this worn frame is fitted to outlive, and see if I have time to wash the mass away. The fiends have got the better of my courage. I could not bear the horrors of my bed at night. Such shapes, such shrieks, such menaces, such dreams of horror and of anguish. They told me that I had no chance of life, and yet they wished to tie me down to all the horrors of solitude and recollection. But I could not bear the fever in my mind, and I hurried from that troubled host of thoughts, to look for peace and pity and refreshment in your presence."

"Oh! would I could afford it!" exclaimed Esther, with great earnestness and warmth.

"But you cannot," cried Lacy, bitterly. "They tell me, at my house that I am changed; they think, because my looks and actions are no longer what they were, that I am altered too in mind and in affection. Because they see not the fever of ambition burning in my eye, they think I am content; because they mark not the working of hate upon my brow and lip, they think I am appeased; because they see not the turmoil of love in all my conduct and my speech, they think I am resigned. But they deceive themselves. The evil spirits have not left my bosom, but they have done their work, and they are slumbering within their house. I am still disgusted with the thing I am, although I make no effort to become what I would be. I still detest, abhor my enemy, although it be with an inactive hatred; I love you still, though with a hopeless passion."

"Believe me, believe me," said Esther, "I feel for you."

"And is that much?" the half delirious man exclaimed, standing erect, and knitting his brows upon her; "is that so wonderful? For you, Esther, I would have been the glorious thing that I have failed to become; and for you have I become the miserable thing I am! Great Justice!" he exclaimed, throwing up his arms and remaining in an attitude of despairing wonder, "is this the end of all my early projects, of all my hope, of all my love? The innocent have died; the sinless wept; my hands have become clammy with gore. I am loaded with the curses of bereaved thousands, the world labours to heave me from its breast, and the dreaded deep roars for me like a hungry monster; and this is all my ease, that Esther feels for me!"

"Oh, Richard! Richard!"

Not before, in this interview, had Esther ventured to address him thus familiarly by his Christian name. The suggestion of intimacy which it conveyed struck through his bosom with a softening influence; he clasped his hands, bent gradually forward, and

every limb appeared to feel the quickening agitation. Esther, feeling her power, resolved to use it for his benefit.

"Richard," she said, "if you have loved me, as you say, grant me this one request ——"

Perceiving that he did not move, she laid her hand upon his arm, and repeated, in a softened voice, "Richard!"

He looked on her with an expression of the most intense pleasure, and said, "What would you, Esther? What must I do for you?"

"Return to your home," said Esther, bursting into tears, and extending her hands towards him in deep pity; "Repress those horrid fancies; live, and be Esther's friend. Oh! do not yield that strong and gifted mind to false and destructive imaginations. Whatever may have been your faults, you have much to hope, for you have been strongly, terribly tempted. A single one of those many passions, which have consumed your youth, might have sufficed for the endangering of many a soul. Despair not then, for your own sake—for mine. Return to your home, employ your days in offices of benevolence and kindness, deserve all that you can; and believe me, I know, I feel, that there is much within your power."

The unfortunate Lacy listened to her with motionless attention and seemed, when she had made an end, to feel regret that he could not continue to enjoy the happiness he felt in hearing her. He then folded his arms, and remained some moments with his eyes dilated, and fixed in mournful meditation on the earth.

"Esther," he said at last, "that one support, at least, is left for me; whether I succeed or fail, at least remember that I obeyed you at the instant. Whatever be the colour of the repute that may remain after me, remember that to you, at least, I was not guilty of any error; whether I die detested or forgiven, forget not that to you, at least, I lived sincere, unchanging, and devoted."

He took her hand in his, shook it twice with great force, regarding her at the same time with the air of despairing resolution which one feels at resigning for ever a sole and ruling hope. He then walked up the pathway, continuing to turn upon her the same heart-shattered gaze, until he was hid by the interposing shrubs. When she could no longer behold him, Esther sunk down upon the seat which she had left, and relieved herself by crying bitterly.

He kept his word with Esther, in adopting the course of life which she recommended; but the shock which his health had undergone was too severe, and he died before the year was ended. This event was regarded by some with pity, and by the greater number with indifference. Whether the change in his conduct were effected by the influence of true repentance, or merely a new direction given to the ruling passion; whether it was found available or otherwise, are questions not to be solved on earth; but, as we know that the just Author of human nature always proportions his mysterious aids to the violence of those passions which he has implanted in the heart, it may be hoped that Lacy's exertions were not made in vain.

TRACY'S AMBITION.

TRACY'S AMBITION.

CHAPTER I.

Few persons in this world, I believe, ever led a life of more equable prosperity than mine, until my years approached that period when the fortunes of most men cease to be stormy, and the passion for adventure has died away, or given place to a longing for domestic peace and comfort. I was one of a race who may be considered the only tenants of land in my native island. Our castle owners above us, and our cabin holders below, are both men of estate; while we occupy the generous position of honorary agents to the former, serving to collect their rents in a troublesome country, and of scapegoats on whom the latter are enabled to repose the burthen of rent, tythes, and county charges.

I was, for anything I could ever learn to the contrary, a happy man. My wife, Mary, though superior to me in birth and education, was gentle and affectionate, and my daughter Ellen was not only a beauty, but an excellent house-keeper. But let me here inform you how I was fortunate enough to conclude a matrimonial engagement, in which the advantage in rank and almost every other circumstance was on my side.

It was, ladies, an elopement. I was standing on a sultry day in autumn amongst a crowd of persons who were witnessing the races of a well-known city in our neighbourhood. The course occupied a space of some miles around a gentle acclivity, on the summit of which was a stunted obelisk of modern architecture, which on this occasion displayed a flag of gay device. The whole side of another hill, which arose on the farther side of the course, between me and the city, seemed to be one fluctuating mass of life. It was covered with a black multitude, over which the bright sunshine shed its heavy autumnal splendour, glittering occasionally with a more gay and marked effect on the white kerchiefs and scarlet mantles which enlivened the darker ground-work of the scene. It resembled a

moving lake of black hats and brisk caps and bonnets, intermingling its contents in a hundred eddies, and receiving tributary streams from the many pathways which led over the fields and hedges from the city. The tents, as tattered as the robe of Julius Cæsar, the casks of liquor, the shining drinking vessels set forth at the entrance of each, the grotesque signs, the stand-house, the band, the equipages filled with flaunting silks and muslins, and the mass of equestrian spectators who made the field shake under them from time to time contributed to render the scene not a little exhilirating.

I leaned against a stunted tree after the *heats* were ended, listening to the conversation of some country people who were seated on the short sun-burnt grass, eating gingerbread and slily passing round under cover of the women's blue cloaks a bulky substance, which, from the use made of it, I judged to be a quart bottle. The people were descending from the various eminences which they had occupied for the advantage of seeing the course, and the tents became too narrow and scanty for the numbers who were anxious to obtain refreshment within. The carriages and horsemen, surrounded by clouds of dust, were rapidly whirling off in the direction of the city, and in a little time, most of the respectable spectators had taken the way homeward.

Suddenly a low, harsh sound, resembling that occasioned by the inundation of a great mass of waters, arose from the multitude, and made me turn my eyes quickly towards the hill before mentioned. I saw the crowd thickening in the centre, while the groups, which before were scattered at a distance over the landscape, now hurried rapidly towards the main throng. The dull indistinct sound which I at first heard soon broke out into shrieks and yells, and I beheld female figures flying in terror towards the highway leading to the city. The condensed multitude seemed to be borne backward and forward in an agitated and tumultuous manner, while sticks were brandished and stones thickened in the air. At the same time, as if the discord on earth had communicated itself to the heavens, the face of the sky was overspread, and a deluge of rain was poured upon the combatants which continued without intermission throughout the evening.

While I hastened to the shelter of a close thorn (the only one that was left unoccupied near me), my attention was caught by a lady and gentleman on horseback, who were galloping away from the scene of action, and followed by a servant in plain livery. On a sudden, I perceived the lady stretching away from her companion, who presently pulled up his horse, as if fearful of alarming the flying animal by the appearance of pursuit. I saw the latter take a path which passed close by the spot on which I stood. In a little time I perceived, by the expanded nostrils, staring eyes, and levelled ears of the animal, that, although the rider kept her seat with great firmness, still the excursion was not undertaken at her own suggestion. The extreme rapidity of its motion, however, seemed to produce that effect on her mind which fear alone could not accomplish. A short, faint scream, which pierced my very

heart with pity, broke from the poor young lady; her head, which until then had been bent forward in an attitude of steady resolution, now hung helplessly back, her small round hat was carried away, and a mass of bright tresses streamed upon the wind. Onward still the animal pressed, making the condition of the rider still more perilous. Her frame grew momentarily more feeble, and swung from side to side, while the reins slackened in her grasp, and she seemed, at every fresh bound of the steed, in the imminent danger of reeling from the saddle.

The manner in which I was enabled to arrest the progress of the steed, to restore the dear equestrian to her feet, and in fine, to leave her in perfect security, it is not needful to detail. Let it be sufficient to relate, that this adventure led to an acquaintance with the lovely fugitive, and this acquaintance ended in the elopement above alluded to. Fearful that we could not obtain the consent of her brother, who was her only living relative, and on whom she was entirely dependent, we formed the unwise resolution of first placing it beyond his power to oppose our wishes, if they happened to jar against his own. This was, indeed, a thoughtless act of mine, considering that they were orphans, had lived together from their childhood, and ever, until then, had kept a single counsel. It was doubly criminal and inconsiderate, as her brother had been very kind to her, and though his fortune was not brilliant, afforded her even more of elegant accomplishment than was usual in her rank.

We had found an accommodating clergyman, and the ceremony was nearly concluded, when the young gentleman, whose pursuit we were prepared to expect, (though we scarcely imagined it could be so rapid) was added to our wedding party. To our great astonishment there were no marks of displeasure on his countenance, and he remained, with much equanimity of manner to witness the completion of the ceremony. I saw that he avoided looking towards his sister, who seemed on the point of sinking to the earth, and that his lip trembled for a moment when he heard her speak the last necessary words of assent. The instant the clergyman had ceased to speak, and while the few who were in the room awaited, with embarrassed silence, the first movement of one so deeply interested, he walked up to the bride, took her hand, kissed her, and looking in her face for a few seconds, with a smile in which the bitterness of reproach was tempered by the deepest pity and affection, he said—

"Since it is beyond recall, I will be one of those to congratulate you. You have found a way, at length, to rid yourself of a disagreeable restraint. Why did you not tell me of this, Mary? What had I ever done to make you distrust my affection for you? If you think I could have been selfish enough to prefer my own satisfaction to your happiness, you mistake my character altogether, and you ought to have known it, Mary, before now. I hoped you would, at least, have allowed me to act the part of a brother to you, when this occasion should arrive. But you have rejected me from your confidence, and I will never seek to acquire it again. Good-bye!" Here he pressed her hand, closed his lips hard, and looked

long into her eyes. "I am sorry you should have thought this necessary."

He then shook her hand again, and letting it fall, as suddenly as if his touch had paralyzed its energies, turned round, and left the house with a step and look of forced ease and indifference

To me he said not a word, nor cast a single glance either of indignation or forgiveness. I expected rage and reproaches, and for those I was prepared, but this perfect and unimpassioned contempt (if indeed so positive a feeling at all entered into his thoughts), this total forgetfulness of my very presence, had something in it so annoying, that the recollection of that moment, whenever it occured at any subsequent period of my life, made the blood tingle in my very ears and fingers.

In a short time after, Ulick Regan (the brother) left the country, without making any one acquainted with the place of his destination. Previous to his departure, he invested the sum which he originally intended for her dowry in the hands of a common friend, with whom it still remained, for the benefit of her eldest daughters.

The calm generosity and forbearance, with which he treated her, made an impression on the young mind of Mary Tracy which never after was removed. Even during the first months of our married life, although every day convinced me more and more of the depth and sincerity of her affection, I had frequently the mortification to detect the traces of weeping in her eyes, and to observe, by her repeated and involuntary fits of abstraction, that her thoughts were still occupied with the remembrance of her ingratitude. I believe the first time I heard her volunteer the mention of his name, after our marriage, was on the birth of our second child, when, after gazing on it with great fondness for some moments, she asked me, in a low voice, "If it was not like Ulick, in the eyes?" To which I replied, as if struck on a sudden with the force of the remark, that it was an exact fac-simile; although, to say the truth, excepting the general resemblance which the great human family bear one to another, there was not much to be said on the similitude.

With the exception of this little melancholy on Mary's part, we passed our time with sufficient comfort at Cushlanebeg, the name of my little residence. I kept a couple of stout riding horses, an outside jaunting car, to give the ladies an airing on Sundays, and a small turf boat, which was moored in a creek of the neighbouring river, and by means of which I maintained a little export trade with the capital of the country in corn, pork, freeholders, and other commodities which I raised on my farm.

I endeavoured, with all the good-will in my power, to sustain the character for hospitality which had been transmitted to me by my father. I did so, nevertheless, with a laudable share of prudence. It was my principle never to give entertainments, and seldom to be wholly without society. I seldom gave "parties," for I thought it no part of the virtue of hospitality to summon a number of quiet families from their comfortable fire-sides to my own, to

keep them tossing their heels into the air to the sound of a small current of wind forced through a number of curiously varied apertures, or plying them with a frightful excess of stimulant at an hour when nature yearned for the sedatives of slumber and quiescence, leaving them, moreover, to answer for many a *nien-she-sthig** that was given in the interim, to the weary wayfarer who might call at their houses. Let every man make his house merry, while he holds it, was my sentiment. A cheerful gentleman, whose chimneys may be discerned from the king's highway, will never be in want of society, though he should never stir abroad to look for it. This is a fact which I have learned from experience.

Such was the course of life up to the period when that horrid passion, the ravages of which so swiftly overthrew my peace, and tore up all my earthly hopes, first shed its darkening soil upon a heart that, until then, was light and comparatively guiltless. The monotony of the events, which filled up my time of youth and manhood, had left my nature untempted and my passions unexcited. I was not prosperous enough to become intoxicated, nor poor enough to grow moody and dark-hearted, nor sufficiently at ease in my circumstances to sit idle and invent sin. I had so many objects to accomplish from year to year, that my mind was never free from a certain degree of care, but they never were singly of sufficient magnitude to occasion solicitude, nor to arouse ambition.

CHAPTER II.

My daughter, ladies, I have already said, was beautiful; and where Beauty is, there Love will surely find his time to enter. The articles of marriage were concluded on a Christmas Eve, between Rowan Clancy, the son of a neighbouring gentleman, and my blushing child; and indeed (if the testimony of trembling hands and blushes might be taken) to the delight of each party.

After the necessary documents had been all duly signed and sealed, my friend Clancy (the bridegroom's father) and I went to take a snack of collared head and cider, while the young people, who were not so hungry, nor so curious, remained chatting together in the room which we had left.

"Well, Clancy," said I, "so this great croppy-gardener, this weeder-out of disaffection is come, with his hoes, and rakes, and nippers to make the ground clear in our neighbourhood?"

"You mean Dalton?"

"I do."

"He will be welcome to you at all events. He is always polite

* Not at home.

and courteous to you, though we, useless beings, come in for the drumsticks and knuckle-bones of his good will. I never in my life saw one man get so fond of another at first sight, as he did of you the other day at the inquest. It would almost appear as if he had some appointment in his head for you."

"Pho!" said I, "what appointment do you talk of? Except he made me a process-server or a clerk of petty sessions, what could he do for me?"

"Don't you know that he has great influence at the Castle? How would you like the post of vice-regal secretary? or a chief magistracy? or a coronership? or even a simple commission of the peace? This is a fine money-making, litigious, head-breaking, house-breaking country."

"Poh!" I exclaimed, "I never had, nor ever desire to have, any ambitious projects. I have an affectionate wife [I heard Mary just turning the handle of the door as she entered], a dutiful and sensible, yet lively, daughter. I am contented with my condition, and I think if I were tempted by any offer that could bring increase of care with increase of honour, I would have no hesitation in declin—— Well, Willy, what's the matter?"

The interruption was occasioned by the sudden entrance of my second boy, who dashed into the room with shoes covered by a composition of snow and puddle, eyes staring and eager, and cheeks flushed with exercise, his dark cord jacket and trowsers whitened in sundry places with the fragments of well aimed snowballs, and his shirt-frill lying wrinkled, moist, and plaitless, about his neck. He pulled off his little leathern cap (which was shockingly abused, considering the time he had it), and said very loudly—

"Two men, papa, are waiting to spake to you."

"*Spake*, Willy!" cried his mother; "I often told you *speak* was the word."

"Weeting to speek to you, sir," the boy repeated.

"You have a shocking brogue, child," said his mother.

Without tarrying to chide him for the unnecessary length to which he carried the improvement, I went to give audience to the strangers in the kitchen.

One of these fellows was a city bailiff, who brought me a summons to attend as petit juror at the next assizes.

"Poh," said I, "you must not give it me."

"Oh! fait, sir—"

"I can't go. There, throw it into the fire, and here's a sixpence. You shall have a glass of spirits, if you please. Now mind, you lost my summons; that's an honest fellow."

"Long life to your honour!"

And the summons was burned accordingly.

The other man, a little ferret in the pay of Dalton, brought me a letter from that gentleman, which I had been expecting for some days, which I received with no little anxiety. Notwithstanding the tone of indifference which I assumed to Clancy, I had, in point of fact, become more closely connected with Dalton, during the previous month, than I cared to let him understand. A magistrate

himself, and toiling hard for preferment, he had expressed a wish for my co-operation, and opened to my view prospects of personal advantage which I found it difficult to regard with that indifference of which I boasted. The influence which a little exertion, such as he recommended, would procure me among the people of the neighbourhood; the emoluments, trifling indeed in appearance, but yet capable of being improved into a return worthy of consideration; the rank to which it would lift me among the gentry of the country; the post which perhaps would become my right to occupy among the representatives of ancient families, at sessions and assizes; no insolent bailiff nor Peeler to slap the court-house doors in my face; no impertinent crier to pick me out of a crowd with his long white wand, and bid me "Lave that, an' make room for the gentlemen o' the Bar." I figured to myself all these flattering circumstances, while I passed up and down our flagged hall, with the letter still unopened in my hand, under such an agitation of spirits as I had seldom before experienced. Those who have been accustomed to read of the influence of ambition on those characters only who have fixed their desires on some object so dignified and important, as to command an instant and general sympathy, may perhaps smile at my petty aspirings, and refuse to admit the sufficiency of my motives; but the lesson, in all instances, is the same, and the impulse equally violent and tempestuous. Ambition is said to be the passion of advanced years. I found it so. But when it does awake, it acts upon the soul like the waters of the fabled fountain of Bimini, rekindling faded energies and aspirations, and renewing the old man's youth like the eagle's.

Suddenly I heard a stir in the inner room, and Clancy presently opened the door, in order to depart. I started, as if I had been conscious of some act, and hastily concealed the letter, while I advanced to do him the parting honours. Rowan, too, departed for a distant part of the country on some business; after it had been settled that the marriage should take place early in the ensuing month, about which time his return was expected. But fortune laughed in secret at our arrangements.

The letter contained matter of a more startling nature than I had anticipated. It ran as follows:—

"If you regard either my interest, or your own, come hither instantly. My wretched son, after a week's absence, is just returned to ruin me for ever. Come—come at once; and take—for your reward, a father's gratitude, and all a friend's endeavours for your benefit."

I ordered a horse, upon the instant, and galloped in the direction of Dalton's house.

CHAPTER III.

A PARTY of police were exercising on the lawn before the hall-door. I passed them by, and entering hastily, found Dalton in his drawing-room, seated at a table, leaning on his elbows, and with his temples resting on his clenched hands. In a chair, at a little distance, sat his son, a youth about eighteen years of age, of excelling beauty, and fashionably dressed, without the slightest appearance of foppery. Soon after I entered, he left the room, a politeness which afforded a considerable relief to his father and myself.

"Is he gone?" Dalton asked, raising his head and gazing round, in anger. "Oh, Tracy, he will send me to my grave!"

"How is this, Dalton?"

"A week he has been away, and now he comes to tell me he has gone in debt five hundred pounds, which must be paid before to-morrow, or my poor boy's character is lost amongst his respectable acquaintances. He is my joy and my ruin, my delight and my despair. I had rather think of perishing, than let him want the money, for I know his principles of honour to be so quick and fine that it would be consigning him to misery. And yet, where should I get it before night?"

He paused, but I was silent.

"Tracy, could you assist me?"

"With what?" said I.

"Lend me this sum."

"Five hundred pounds!" I cried aloud, in consternation.

"Ay, for one day!"

"If but for an hour," said I—

"What interest you will."

"How could you think," said I, "that it was possible I could have so much——" I paused, for at that instant I recollected that I had got six hundred pounds, (my daughter's wedding portion) into my possession the preceding day. My hesitation did not escape the piercing eye of Dalton.

"If you can serve me, Tracy," he said, "do not refuse to reach out your hand. I am certain of receiving double the sum within a week, and you will bind me to your services for ever."

"Is it not strange," said I, "that so good and talented a young man as Mr. Henry Dalton would place you in so arduous a difficulty?"

"This is a trifle," said Dalton, in great distress, "to what he has done before. He will destroy me utterly. He gambles, races, fights, and sports away all that I gain by toil, and peril to my life."

"I would not listen to his requests."

"Requests! He make me a request for money! Nor would I neither, if he did. But that is never done. He is far too sensitive to ask for it. But when I see him sitting silent there, with the longing in his heart, even while he strives to appear cheerful and indifferent to his necessities, I cannot bear to leave him in restraint."

"Necessities!"

"To him they are become so. Ah! Tracy, youth at best is but a fleeting season, and it is cruelty in age to abridge it of those manly sports which are its pride and pleasure. I see my early days reflected through my boy, and I cannot endure the idea of restricting him in his amusements, any more than I could, at his age, have endured restraint myself."

"But that his own filial affection should not suggest——"

"It would, it would, if he were only aware of the ruin he is bringing on me, but that he knows not, nor must ever know. A great part of my pain on those occasions is in concealing from him the inconvenience he occasions."

"You astonish me!" I exclaimed. "And if your gold flows thus away from you, where do you think of getting riches?"

"The world is full of them," said Dalton, "but where could I find such another son?"

A pause now ensued, during which I felt not a little perplexity. I felt sincerely for the father's anguish, peculiar as I considered the cause to be, and yet I could not tell in what way I might assist him. But wherefore need I dwell upon the means he used to prevail with me? Enough is said when I mention that he did prevail; and that I placed my daughter's wedding portion in his hands, under the full conviction that it would be refunded before the ensuing month, and with his note of hand to that effect.

As I descended the stairs, young Dalton opened the parlour door, and inquired, with great appearance of interest, after the health of my family, and in particular, but with some appearance of hesitation, after Ellen. I answered all his questions without making any allusion to the intended marriage, for it had been agreed on both sides to keep the circumstance private until it approached the eve of celebration.

I then remounted, and rode home. The house appeared more than usually lonely on that evening. The sky was clear, sunny, and breathless, and the wide prospect around our door was wrapped in a bright winter calm. The reigning silence was so profound, that I heard the trampling of the horses on the hard and echoing high-road at the distance of several miles; while the voices of those within doors sounded through the open house like the waking noises which a sick man hears through the dullness of his morning lethargy. The snow still remained in the garden ridges and along the hedges, and a few light fragments of mist, that hung

suspended and motionless in mid air, seemed to have caught the reflection of the general whiteness from the earth. I entered our parlour slowly, and taking a chair before the fire, began to contemplate the burning turf sods, with that air of grave deliberation so exquisitely painted by Cowper, while Ellen returned to her chamber to indulge her feelings of loneliness in solitude, and Mary sung to the piano.

Towards night, the sky began to blacken, a sullen raw wind drove through the naked trees that intermingled their aged boughs over our thatch, and thick showers of snow were soon after drifting along the soil. The dreariness of the evening was favourable to the moody and feverish influences that were every moment gaining ground within my heart. I felt no desire to mingle in the conversation of my family, and looked on, in musing and troubled silence, while (in compliance with an ancient custom), they lighted a large candle which was suffered to burn in a corner of the room throughout the night. They sat down to tea, apparently a little perplexed at my continued silence; and while I joined them in observing the abstinences of the vigil (more strictly than I had done at noon), by forbearing to qualify the acerbity of the narcotic with a spoonful of cream, or to increase the pinguifying influence of the bread by the addition of butter, our meal resembled, by its silence at least, the meditative and mortified after-sunset repast of the primitive Christians.

On a sudden we were all startled by the report of fire-arms at an alarming proximity, and by the sound of several voices, speaking aloud in those squeaking gibbering tones by which the insurgents of those times were accustomed to disguise their real tones. I sprung from my chair, with a feeling of fiery eagerness, and zeal for action, which I had never before experienced. My wife and daughter looked pale, panting and terrified, uncertain whether to prevent my intention of going out, or suffer me to choose my part in silence. While I snatched my carbine from a corner, little Willy, catching up his cap, was about to run to the hall door before me, when his mother commanded him to remain in the room. Ulick, our eldest and our spoilt, let fall his book, and stared on us in silence.

I hurried out on the lawn, after throwing the ramrod into the barrel to ascertain that it was loaded. The snow had ceased to fall, and the general whiteness of the fields aided the effect of the misty and imperfect moonlight so effectually, that a brightness almost as distinct as that of twilight reigned over the country. I heard a voice, which I recognised as that of Dalton's, at the farther extremity of an extensive sheepwalk, calling to his men aloud, in a tone of anger and impatience. At the same instant three or four fellows, dressed in women's clothes, and with their faces blackened, galloped swiftly across the lawn on rough working horses, returning a wild hurra! to the scattered volley which was discharged after them. I ran towards the spot from which Dalton's voice proceeded, and was in the centre of the large plain before alluded to, when I saw another "handmaid" of Lady Rock, galloping in

the direction which his comrades had already taken, and flinging the snow backwards on his track as he sped rapidly along. On a sudden, he espied me, and turning the horse's head, while he pointed forward with the blade of a scythe, in the manner of one leading a charge, he galloped straight towards me. Not entertaining a doubt of his intention, yet feeling a perfect confidence in my weapon, I lowered myself on one knee, and covering him with entire steadiness and composure, withheld my fire until he came completely within shot. As the trampling of the animal sounded nearer, a slight anxiety made my heart thrill, but it did not disturb my aim. A few bounds more would have brought him upon me: I fired, and the next instant beheld him dashing through the cloud of smoke, with revenge and triumph in his look and gesture. He raised the scythe, against which I could only uplift my faithless empty carbine, but at that instant his horse, terrified by the struggle, reared and wheeled directly round, so that he spent his rage and strength in a back-handed stroke, which took me with the point of the rough weapon over the brow, and made a hideous and painful rent to the cheekbone. He did not attempt to renew the blow, for the police were now within a few yards of the spot on which he stood. He galloped forward while they severally lifted their pieces to bring him down. Stung by the pain of my wound and burning for revenge, I remained kneeling erect, supporting myself on one side, and gazing intently, to watch the issue, on my flying foe. A first shot missed, a second—I bit my tongue in an agony of rage; a third, and I saw the horse plunge forward, and redouble its speed, but the rider lay upon the plain. A thrill of wicked delight shot through my frame, and I sunk down on the snow with all the satiety of joy that gratified vengeance can bestow on an ill-regulated mind.

The pain of my wound, slight though it was in reality, enfeebled me so much, that I could with difficulty acknowledge the civilities of Dalton, while he assisted me to rise, and ordered two of the police to convey me towards the house. When we came near our dwelling he stopped, and with a thoughtful delicacy, for which I felt sincerely grateful to him, suggested that it would be prudent to go to a tenant's house and there dress the cut in some manner, so as to enable me to go home alone, and thus prevent the shock which my family might receive from seeing me brought to them in this helpless condition.

"Abel Thracy shot!" exclaimed the poor woman at whose door we knocked for admission. "Oh, millia gloria! an' the Peelers and all! Nora, a chree, run an' light the rish."

"And get a cup of cold water," said Dalton. "Where's your husband?" he added, after we had entered.

"E' where would he be but in bed, sir, this time o' night?"

"Bring me his shoes."

They brought a pair of heavy brogues covered with mud.

"How came these brogues so dirty?" asked Dalton, in a stern tone.

"E' then, because he was workin' in the garden 'till sunset."

"Hag that you are, and croppy that he is, I'll hang him for these brogues! He was one of the ruffians on the field."

"Faix, an' troth, and as I hope for glory, sir, ——"

"Hold your peace! Search the house," he said to his police.

They obeyed, while the woman assisted in dressing the wound. But they soon returned to say that their search was ineffectual.

As I lay back in my chair, while the woman went in the next room for some bandage, I perceived an action of Dalton's which perplexed me considerably. Imagining himself to be unobserved, and covered by the partial gloom thrown around him by my own shadow, I saw him take some large substance from his breast, and place two paper parcels along with it. He thrust them all, far in, under the low thatch, after which, hearing the woman's footstep returning along the earthen floor, he came forward into the light, and superintended the washing and dressing of my cut with an officious care.

When this act of mercy was performed, and we prepared to depart, Dalton suddenly turned to the woman and said:—

"Yesterday, upon the race course of N——— your husband was one of a large mob, that crossed my son's horse and prevented him from winning a large stake. Your husband was heard to say, that while he was able to lift a cudgel no Orange horse should win upon that course."

"He never said it, not belyin' you, sir."

"I have it from those that heard, and saw him too. He said they'd keep the course Catholic, at any rate, if they lost every thing else; and that no Orange horse should ever carry a sweepstakes in that county."

"Not belying your honour, he never said it," repeated the woman.

"I never had *sech* a word in my mouth," said the man himself, speaking from the inner room.

"And a week before that, when my son fought that duel with Mr. O'Sullivan, your husband was with the mob on the ground. They gathered about my son, as soon as they saw that O'Sullivan was wounded," he added, turning to me, "they dragged him from his horse, and but for his own resolution he would never have left the ground alive, for daring to shoot a Catholic, though in his own defence. And this fellow here was the ringleader of that gang."

"Them that told you that," cried Shanahan (the owner of the house), springing out of bed, and appearing suddenly amongst us in his *camicio*—them that told you that, sir, told you what was not the fact. It was I that saved your son; it was I thrun myself a-top of him when the blows were comin' down like hail; and boys, says I, roarin, 'dont ye murther Masther Harry, for he's a gentleman, an a good man, says I, whatever ——"

He paused on the sudden.

"Whatever his father is," added Dalton, "was not that the word?"

"It was! I'll not gainsay you," cried the man with vehemence.

"Very well," said Dalton, "you have begun, and have flung down the challenge; let it now be seen who is to be the victor."

At this moment, a faint shriek outside made the speakers start upon the sudden. It was repeated nearer, and Shanahan sprung to the door.

"It is my mother's voice!" he exclaimed. Flinging back the bolt, and throwing the door wide, he gave admittance to an aged woman. She hurried in, striking her bosom with her clenched hands, her nerveless frame shaking with years and terror, and a short shrill cry of anguish breaking at intervals from her thin and bloodless lips. Looking round for her son, she cast herself upon his arm, muttering short prayers, intermingled with bursts of feeble grief, and shrieks that seemed to come from half exhausted lungs.

"What is the matther, mother?" exclaimed Shanahan; "what brings you from your house at such a time o' night?"

She stared ghastlily on him, and pointed out into the dark with one shrivelled hand and arm.

"What have you seen? What's there? Speak, mother!"

She did not answer him, but moaned and shivered, and continued pointing out into the dark.

"Hold up the light. This poor woman, sir," he added, to me, "is nearly ninety years of age, an' the senses is lavin' her, poor thing! Where's l'haudrig, mother?"

She shrieked more loudly than before, and repeated the action before described. The man looked now exceedingly alarmed.

"She means something!" he said. "She does'nt screech that way for nothing. Stop, isn't that the sound of a step? Who's there?"

Snatching the light from the little girl Nora, he raised it high above his head, so as to shed its beams upon a group who were entering at that moment. It consisted of some of the police who had remained upon the field, and who now bore between them the body of the man who had been shot. The aged mother sprung from the arms of her son, and pointed to the corpse, when they had laid it on the ground, with both her bony hands extended and her face turned back with an appealing look to her son. She then pointed to Dalton, to me, and to the police, and sunk down upon the body.

"It is my brother!" said Shanahan. "Here, take the candle, Nora, and don't be lookin' at me!"

The girl took the light, and he let his head sink upon his breast, while a wild cry of funereal grief broke from the females of the house.

"Shanahan," said I, "I am sorry to see any friend of yours implicated in such a hopeless business as that on which those people were engaged to-night. What had I ever done to your brother that he should lift his weapon against my life?"

And, so saying, I pointed to my wound.

"Mr. Tracy," the man exclaimed, lifting his head and regarding me with a sternness of expression that had something terrific in it. "I have a word to say to you. You see that corpse that is lying there, warm with the life. I give no blame to that tiger for his death [pointing to Dalton], for what could be expected from an open enemy but blows and blood? But you that were our neigh-

bour, and had nothing to gain by our blood nor to lose by our comfort, you that we never injured, you that we often served, you had no reason to turn upon us this way. There's my brother's blood upon my floor, an' you shed it without reason. Now by this cross I swear," and he crossed the fore-fingers of each hand, while he knitted his brows in fury and stared upon me, "I swear this year won't pass till I have revenge of you for this night's work. You dhrew his blood without being any way provoked, take care how soon and suddenly you may yourself be called before the same coort! And you," he added, turning his brawny person round upon Dalton, and uplifting his clenched hand in the energy of desperate menace, "You say right, that the battle is begun. Now I tell you this, and hear me! I never yet was one of those that broke the peace and brought your life in danger; I saved the life of your son, but that, indeed, was for his own sake an' not yours. I had a sister here, an' she was fool enough to be seen talkin' to you be ye'r two selves, an' 'tis unknown now where she's gone; but well *you* know it, as I fear, an' sure I am that if the truth was known, it would bring shame upon her and us and you. Now, hear what I tell you. By this blood that's on my hand this night [he stopped and dabbled his fingers in the reeking neck and shoulder of the corpse] by this warm blood I swear, I never will rest in pace until I have you brought as low as we are here this night, and there's something tells me that will not be long."

"You are all witnesses of that threat," said Dalton, turning to his men.

"They are," cried Shanahan, "and they will be witnesses of more than that if they live six months. Howld!" he exclaimed, bending his fierce brows upon his wife, who was clapping her hands and bawling aloud in all the distraction of vulgar grief; "don't shame yourself an' us before 'em, by showin' 'em that we can be cowed down by any thing their spite can do. We defy them all; ay, Dalton, I defy you, though you look so sure o' me, an' you will find me a fox to catch for all! I don't threaten you, but look at that! ——"

He expanded his bloody hand, and bent forward, staring on the unmoved figure of Dalton, while the corpse lay stark between. The mother gathered low, and gibbering upon her heels, the wife still venting her agony in broken moans, the remainder of the family pressing round with faces of grief or terror, and the police on the other side leaning on their carbines, and regarding the half naked desperado with stern looks. To me the picture had an appalling effect, but it was not so with Dalton; he returned the menace with a hard and eager smile, and then departed without speaking.

"Tracy!" the man called after me, as I prepared to follow, "remember what I say to you this night, and look to yourself. If I am to start up through the floore, or come in through the stone wall to you, I will be with you when you're laste thinkin' o'me an' my revenge. I have sworn by the holy cross, and I swear it now again, to have revenge for that poor fellow's blood."

"You are very conscientious," said the voice of Dalton, in the dark, outside, "for the child of a parricide."

The man stared as if he had been struck by a galvanic shock, and then seizing a pitchfork, was darting out at the doorway, when his wife sprung up, and with a wild cry of entreaty, flung both her arms around his neck.

"Hurry out! hurry out!" she exclaimed, waving her hand rapidly to me. "Oh, Morty! oh, machree, m' asthore!"

I followed her advice, closing the door rapidly behind me, and leaving the man still struggling furiously within. The oath he had taken was one which at this period an Irish peasant seldom swore in vain, and I confess, though not naturally of a fearful disposition, my nerves were somewhat unsettled by the manner in which it was pronounced.

CHAPTER IV.

I HURRIED after Dalton, the threat still ringing in my ear, and the scene of woe and blood still present to my sight. I found him on the public road which lay between the cabin of the Shanahans and my house, engaged in conversation with his son, who had joined him just before. With little persuasion I was able to prevail on both to spend the remainder of the evening at my house.

While Henry Dalton amused himself with the ladies, I took an opportunity of expressing to his father my apprehension lest the brother of the man we had shot should find it possible to put his menaces in execution.

"You would tremble more," said Dalton, "if you knew the circumstances of this man's story, or rather of his father's story, for he only inherits the gloomy spirit which his parent's act originated."

"Was it in allusion, then, to such an act that you called him the SON OF A PARRICIDE?"

"You shall hear the tale. It is worth hearing, as a proof of the deadly violence to which those people are sometimes apt to be carried in their fits of momentary excitation. You know the Coom Collee, or the Hag's Valley, near Killarney?"

"No," said I, "I never was at Killarney.

"Well, there is such a place in the neighbourhood of the lakes: a vast, gloomy, shrubless, silent, rocky region, looking the very theatre of witchery and romance. Piles of enormous mountains, with lakes embosomed among their peaks and sides at various elevations, form the entrance to this stupendous recess. As you advance you find yourself in the centre of an extensive chasm,

scooped out of the heapt-up hills, with a lonely river brattling among the fallen crags, and a dreary waste of stone and heath and bog separating the precipitous and time-splintered Reeks of Macgillicuddy from the less rugged mountains of the Gap. In the centre of this waste were two cottages, or rather cabins, held by two families of different names, one of them O'Sheas, from the ancient clan in the Esk mountain near Glengariff, the other consisting of the father and grandfather of this Shanahan. Both families supported themselves by feeding sheep and goats on the sides of the neighbouring mountains, and one might have supposed that, even with all the national blood flowing pure in their veins, they might have forgotten in such a solitude the national predilection for combat. But this was not the case; for the inhabitants of the two cabins constituted two opposite factions: the O'Sheas taunting the Shanahans with the meanness of their origin,- and the latter grounding an equal quantity of vituperation upon the negligence and roguery of the O'Sheas.

"What fomented this disunion to the height was the marriage of the younger Shanahan with the eldest daughter of the other house, a circumstance which one would have supposed more likely to reconcile the opposite interests of both parties. Until that time the father and son had lived in perfect harmony, the latter, indeed, interfering little in the family feud, which the former sustained with the vigour of a Capulet. You may suppose that the astonishment of the old man was not little, when he beheld his son, whom he had been educating in a scrupulous detestation of the rival house, appear upon his floor with his Dalilah, fresh from the abode of the Philistines, linked to his side. That fair one was the aged woman whose impotent grief appeared to affect you so forcibly to-night, and she came beneath his roof bringing for her dowry all the ancestral pride of the generations which had preceded her, and all the extreme dishonesty of that in which she had grown up and flourished.

"The wings of peace did not overshadow this union. War was kindled upon the hearth of the Shanahans, and the ties which had from early childhood bound the affections of the young man to his aged parent were gradually unbound by the fingers of his daughter-in-law. Instead of the domestic paradise which young Shanahan, in common with all husbands of whatever rank or education, promised himself in his married life, the scenes of altercation which continually arose made it resemble one of Dante's Tartarian gyres. Many vain attempts were made by the unhappy husband to reconcile these dissensions, and his continual disappointments began to throw a shade of gloom and menace over his own brow.

"Things had continued in this state for several months, when on a cold November evening, the keeper of a little hunting lodge, at the end of the valley, was surprised by a visit from the old man. He appeared uneasy and dejected, and told without reserve, when questioned, the occasion of his anxiety. 'For the last three or four days,' he said, 'I have seen my son and his wife whispering together in secret, and my mind misgives me that they are plotting

something against my life. May heaven forgive them if they injure me, but I'm sure I never did anything to deserve their hatred.' The keeper, perceiving his uneasiness, pressed him to remain that night, for the better security, with him and his family. But this the old man declined, saying, that if any unfairness were meant, the time would be found as easily on any future day as at present. He departed, a gloomy presentiment appearing to lurk between his brows.

"Although the keeper imagined it probable that his apprehensions were rather the result of a hypochondriac habit than of any real cause for dread, yet he could not himself resist the unaccountable spirit of curiosity which impelled him early the next morning to walk up the Hag's Valley, and inquire after the old man. Arrived at the cottage, the first unusual sensation which he received, was an extraordinary smell which seemed to proceed from the interior. Deeming it possible, however, that in his excited state of feeling his sense might have deceived him in this particular (you know Rousseau calls smell the sense of imagination), he disregarded this circumstance, and lifted the latch, without thinking much upon the matter. Within was Shanahan's wife seated at a table on which was spread their breakfast of potatoes and goat's milk, while her husband sat apart, his arms hanging downward over the back of his chair, and his eyes fixed gloomily upon the ground. He took no notice of the keeper's entrance, nor did he at all appear to be aware of the nature of anything that passed around him. The most remarkable circumstance (and that *was* a very singular one) in the appearance of the little kitchen was, that the fire, instead of occupying as usual a modest portion of the hearth, seemed to have been enlarged during the night to an extraordinary extent, and spread its black and ashy circle over half the cabin floor. Perplexed as he was, however, by this new appearance, he refrained from making any observation, and contented himself with executing the purpose for which he came, that of inquiring for the aged father.

"'He is in Limerick,' said the wife, in a sullen tone; 'he is gone there with a few of the sheep.'

"'And when do you expect his return?'

"'I don't know. He did'nt tell me his mind when he was going."

"'One would think, Shanahan, to look at the fire you had last night, that you were dressing one of them sheep yourself. What had you in that fire?'

"The man sprung to his feet with a sudden, wild, and uncontrollable fit of laughter, and cried aloud, while he flung himself into an attitude of maniac horror —

"'Ha, ha, ha! Vauria, do you hear? Do you hear that? What had we in the fire? Ha, ha, ha! What had we in that fire?'

"And clasping his temples between his hands, he rushed out of the cottage.

"More collected than her husband, the woman simply answered, that they had been employed on the previous evening in dying

wool for frieze, and had found it necessary to spread the fire considerably. Obliged to rest satisfied for the present with this answer, the keeper soon after took his leave, and departed, though still in much alarm for the poor old man.

"A week passed over, and the father did not appear. The Shanahans still continuing to declare their ignorance of his situation, the honest keeper privately made known to a magistrate what he had observed, and search was made in all directions for the father, but he was never found, nor heard of, dead or living. The words of the younger Shahahan now occurred more frequently to the recollection of the keeper, and a horrid, ghastly doubt begun to associate itself with the remembrance of 'that fire.'

"But nothing could be proved against the children, although the demeanour of the son (which was all in accordance with his conduct on the first morning), served to deepen the suspicion of foul play which had already been awakened. His look was haggard, gloomy, and timorous; his manner hurried and passionate, and (which appeared the most singular alteration of the entire) he now took up and asserted with the most angry pertinacity those topics of feudal disunion on which his lost parent had insisted without meeting any support from his son. If thwarted on one of those points, his eye sent out a fire, and a fury rioted in all his demeanour which soon reduced his opponents to silence. His wife, in particular, was now compelled to hear submissively from him, in open unreserved abuse, those taunts which she could not endure to hear even faintly insinuated by his father. He still pursued his usual occupation of herding the sheep and goats upon the mountain tops, and haunted the crags and precipices from morning to night, avoiding all who approached, and seeming to find more peace among the terrors of the mountain solitude, than when he sat by his domestic hearth.

"The keeper had occasion, one chill December noon, to look after some of his sheep which were grazing near the summit of Carrawn Tual, or the Inverted Reaping Hook, the very highest mountain of the stupendous range called Macgillicuddy's Reeks. Passing into the Esk Collee, a deep glen which reaches half way up the mountain, he beheld a figure up the steep, which from the rapidity of its gestures, and its hurried and irregular gait, he judged to be no other than the orphan Shanahan. He was pleased at the opportunity of meeting him thus alone, in order that he might question him apart from his wife, and collate his answers with what he could recollect of hers.

"This investigation, however, should have been undertaken by a more able-bodied man, or in a scene less calculated for the suggestion and concealment of evil. Although a cold wind drove the clouds rapidly across the summit of the mountain, there reigned throughout the rocky vale the stillness of a wintry calm. Two frozen lakes lay dark and shining on either side of the gigantic recess. On the right, a pile of broken rock, called the Hag's Teeth, spired up into the frosty air to the height of some hundred feet. Crag upon crag, tossed one upon the other to the very mountain

peak, overhung the lonely chasm, and impressed a mighty sternness upon the character of the scene. Passing through the channelled glen before described, and ascending along the marge of a small cascade to the height of half the mountain, he found himself on a narrow isthmus, connecting the ranges of the Gap and Reek mountains, and separating the Hag's Valley which he had left from the Coom Dhuv, on the Black Valley on the other side. From this point of view he beheld a succession of stooping mountains, lonely valleys, and sequestered lakes, thrown together to the very extreme line of distance, and suggesting fancies of an irresistible and gloomy grandeur. Ascending the mountain on his right—"

"You may omit," said I, "my dear Dalton, any unnecessary description of the place, however graphical, for I have but a slender taste for the picturesque, and I am anxious to know what became of the worthy keeper."

"Something is necessary," answered Dalton, "to make you understand his situation, but I will be brief. Ascending to the summit of Carrawn Tual, you pass a third valley of a still lonlier and far more terrific character than either of those you have left beneath. A semicircular chasm, precipitous on all its sides and yawning upward from a depth of some thousand feet, suddenly breaks away from the feet of the traveller, and startles him with an instant and oppressive sense of insecurity. On the brink of this deep riven scar upon the breast of earth, the keeper found the solitary herdsman staring in stolid gloom upon the dismal void beneath. Sometimes the west wind brought the mists along from the distant ocean, and then they filled the dreary hollow, and steamed upward from the centre, as if it had been a gigantic caldron, investing the long and rugged mountain peak in a sea of vapour. Sometimes the wreaths rolled off, and the eye might gather in, at various depths beneath, through rents in the misty veil, the outline of a sunlit crag, or a momentary gleaming on the surface of the lake, which lay more than a mile directly underneath, its waters prisoned in by mountain barriers, and fettered in chains of ice.

"The herdsman sullenly and slightly returned the greeting of his father's friend. He seemed impatient of the keeper's attempt to continue a conversation, and expressed this impatience by the churlish shortness of his manner, and the brevity of his replies.

"'Well Morty,' said the keeper, 'so you had no account o' the ould father yet, had ye?'

"The man returned a sulky 'No.'

"'It's as dhroll a business as ever I hear since I was born,' said the keeper. 'Do you think was your father ever given to takin' a drhop at all?'

"He never was in all his life,' replied the son rapidly. His enemies could not say that for him.'

"'And who were his enemies, Morty?'

"The man started.

"'Who should they be, why?' he exclaimed with great vehemence: 'do you think I'd be an enemy of his? his own son? Did you ever hear of our having any disputes or quarrels that you'd

talk that way? Did you ever see me rise a hand to him in all my life, that you'd say that?'

"'Say what, ayeh, Morty?'

"'Call me my father's enemy.'

"'Long from me be it so to call you, Morty. I never did. I only axed you who they were, for I thought it a dhroll business to say a man like him, that usen't to be in liquor, nor to fight, nor one whole ha'p'orth, should be spirited away in that manner. 'Tis'nt to yourself I was evenin' at all, dear knows. But tell me, will you, Morty, what is it made ye put down so big a fire the night before I was over with ye that time?'

"The man wrapped his hands tight across his breast, and fixed upon the speaker a gaze of stern and dark inquiry. The latter, feeling that he had gone too far, and shrinking from the gloomy menace which he saw in the other's glance, looked aside as if preparing for flight. But the action should have preceeded the indication, for it only confirmed the awakened suspicions of the herdsman. He rushed upon the keeper, before he had time to move a single muscle in obedience to the desire of flight, and lifted him from the earth with a strength, which passion, acting on a frame naturally vigorous, rendered almost gigantic. Extending his arms, he was about to drop him over the precipice before described, when a shriek (the harrowing appeal of Nature in her agony of fear,) broke from the throat of the victim. The herdsman started back aghast, and dragged him from the brink, laying him down upon a tuft of heath and sea-pink, and using gestures of maniac tenderness and deprecation, as if in the effort to soothe one whom he had dangerously offended, while he murmured rapidly. 'Again, Vauria! again! Do you hear that? I thought that noise was over. I thought you said we worn't to hear that again.'

"Then starting once more, and looking back over his shoulder, he sprang to his feet and ran howling down the hill, his hands outstretched as if for succour, and his eye glancing now and then in terror over either shoulder, as if he were pursued by some terrific creature.

"Since that time he has not appeared among his old neighbours. The miserable widow, unable to endure the solitude which her conscience filled with terrors far more appalling than those which the hand of Nature had carved upon the scene, abandoned the gloomy valley, and settled in this neighbourhood, where, in the course of a few months she became the mother of twins. One of them was the insurgent who was shot to-night upon the sheep-walk; and you have deep cause to shudder at the menace of that ruffian Shanahan, for he is the other, and he inherits all the dark intensity of feeling and fire which were so remarkable in his parent. A close family affection existed between him and his brother, who, being of a lighter, gayer, and not less spirited character, was the darling of his mother, and of his brother also. But you have nothing to apprehend from the resentment of that ruffian, for I have him on the hip beyond all power of escape already."

"How is that?" I asked, observing Dalton pause.

"You will know," said he, "in a few days."

"And what do they suppose to have been the fate of this Shanahan's father, the parricide, as you have called him?"

"Self-destruction was for many years the general supposition, but within the last four, a letter arrived at the next post town, directed to Mortimer Shanahan, late of the — Regiment, and franked from the War Office, on his Majesty's Service. This circumstance, though it has furnished no clue to the discovery of the missing herdsman, gave rise to the supposition that he had not in reality perished at the time, but taken a musket and continued to serve his country perhaps until this day. Nothing farther, however, has been ascertained respecting the matter since that time."

CHAPTER V.

Our conversation was at this instant interrupted by a gentle "Hush!" from Mary, who smiled and laid her finger on her lip, glancing aside at young Dalton. We perceived by his position in his chair, and the smiling look which he cast at the ceiling, that he had been prevailed on to sing a song, which he was at this moment endeavouring to recall to his recollection. This was a tax which Henry was obliged to pay in almost every company in which he mingled, for he possessed a sweet voice, and frequently, as in the present instance, used it to grace verses of his own composition. I found the song the other day among my poor daughter's papers:—

A gray shifting eye, like the swift ray of light
The first May morning shoots o'er the brow of the night,
That is veiled up in mist like that eye in its lid,
Yet is loved for the promise of light that is hid.
Ah! trust not that eye! for though gentle it seems,
It is but the will that has shrouded its beams;
It has fire, it has love, it has smiles, it has tears,
For the world and its passions, its sorrows and fears.

A voice, like a sound heard in deep solitude;
Like the song of the night-bird alone in the wood;
A melody, struck by the finger of Art
From the small strings that tremble round Nature's own heart.
Ah! hear not that voice! for though softly it breathe,
Its tones round the trusting heart cunningly wreathe,
When chain'd through its pulses, and bound for a spoil,
It may throb at the cheat, but must pine in the toil.

A brow that is built for the throne of the mind,
And curtain'd by dark ringlets gracefully twined,
The glance of the falcon, the gaze of the dove,
The smile that is blended of mirth and of love;
A shape, soft and gliding, like those which arise,
Through the shadows of Time on the young poet's eyes,
When the cloud of the future he toils to remove,
And fancy the maiden who shall be his love.

Ah! the days of her youth are for ever gone by,
Yet the spring-tide of genius is young in her eye.
Fast over her beauties the parting years roll,
Still they bloom with the evergreen hue of the soul.
The rose leaves fall silently down from her cheek,
Still it hath the dear meaning Time never can break;
And each act of her motion an impulse reveals
Of a spirit that thinks, and a bosom that feels.

Even such was my love, and in merrier hours,
I filled my bright vase with Hope's loveliest flowers,
Young Fancy flew over my bower of peace,
And soar'd in the golden clouds, singing of bliss.
But vain was my dream! for these hours are fled,
That song, it is silent, that bower is dead,
The gold coloured mists of life's morning are flown,
My vase it is broken, my flowers are gone!

Yet blame me not, lady, if thus, while I dwell
On a form that my memory has treasured too well,
An idol, my faith would make all but divine,
I should breathe out one heart-broken sigh at its shrine.
I look on thy state, and I think on mine own,
And I laugh at the hope that would bid me love on;
Yet my reason asks "Why do I love thee? in vain,"
While my heart can but echo "I love thee!" again.

In the course of the evening, the liveliness and bonhommie of Dalton's conversation, his free, open, unconstrained, yet gentlemanly manner, and his intimate knowledge of the world—rather indicated, than displayed, in his general demeanour—completely fastened him on my esteem. He gained more rapidly on my admiration, likewise, as I conceived his manner to be a somewhat broad copy of that which distinguished the most elegant man I had ever known: my offended brother-in-law, and which almost satisfied me of the truth of an observation I had heard made by many men of the world, that "an Irish gentleman is the first gentleman on earth." The reason, supposing it any more than a national boast, might perhaps be found in that habitual frankness and gaiety which gives them all the air, step, and port of elder brothers; and in the abject condition of their peasantry which leaves them more of the lordly feeling and consciousness of feudal authority than is found in other and happier countries.

The same resemblance that struck me was considered still more striking by my wife, whose extreme youth at her marriage had not occasioned her to forget any circumstance of her brother's disposition or manner. She was the more pleased with the society of Dalton on discovering that he possessed a somewhat cultivated taste, and talked without affectation, and with a freedom and easy decision which showed him to be a perfect master of the subject, on most of her favourite authors. But his son Henry fascinated us all. Handsome, gay, and tender in his demeanour, he seemed an Apollo to the ladies, while his politeness and docility were no less agreeable to his superiors in years. A vulgar observer might have called him proud, for the consciousness of much talent, joined with a noble figure and fine accomplishments, had given him a lofty air from which mean-spirited persons recoiled in fear and anxiety. But his was not pride. It was not that paltry and contemptible passion, if it may be elevated to the dignity of passion, which manifests itself in a tone of ridiculous haughtiness towards others, and which is always conjoined with a private sense of inferiority of one kind or another. It was a frank and generous expression, the result of a cordial fullness of soul, of mounting spirits, of natural rectitude of feeling, and of an inspiring consciousness of the grandeur of his own nature that shone in all his language and demeanour.

For our greater security, as well against the violence of Shanahan, as against the machinations of the gang to which the perished youth belonged, Dalton proposed that I should keep in my house a number of police sufficient to withstand any attack that might be made. I might, at the same time, he said, make use of these men for the purpose of patrolling the country, and distinguishing myself in the eyes of government; no vain endeavour, at a time when place and pension were scattered with a liberal hand on all who made their loyalty conspicuous. He pledged himself at the same time, to use all his influence for the promotion of my interests, and promised, in the zeal of his gratitude, that they should ever supersede his own. I sighed, while I gave my assent to his arrangement, and he asked me "wherefore?"

"I will confess to you my weakness," answered I. "I feel a peculiar reluctance to take this new character upon me. I have hitherto lived a quiet and popular life amongst my tenants, and like not the idea of appearing before them now under a harsher and less parental character. Besides, my wife, my wife's family, and my daughter, are all Roman Catholics, and I feel a dislike, which my affections forbid my casting off, to do anything that might seem to indicate a want of respect for their opinions. The poor cottagers on my ground look up to my gentle Mary as their protector. The want of connection between our church and the people who are compelled to support it, has left no room for confidence in the mercy of protestant masters, and I have frequently overheard a poor man, while I sat in the parlour, and the door has been standing open, overwhelming my wife with blessings, and thanking heaven for 'sending her to reign over them, when they thought they'd be lost without one to speak for them to the masther.'

Mary, too, is fond of the influence which she has thus obtained, and mild and uncomplaining as she is, would, I think, be deeply pained by any attempt to take it out of her hands. I may say, indeed, as the Greek statesman said of Athens, that my wife governs me, and I govern Cushlanebeg."

"Well," said Dalton, "if you choose to retain an ideal popularity, among a set of ruffians who would cut your throat or shoot you from behind a hedge, after they have fawned upon you and flattered you, rather than secure your family in affluence, and place yourself above the reach of their malice, why, I have not another word to say, except that you and Themistocles are two very admirable people. But if you wish to do yourself a service, I repeat it, I am at hand, and I am your friend. I, who neither love nor fear the people. I make no secret of it. I think them a base, fawning, servile, treacherous, smooth-tongued, and black-hearted race of men; bloody in their inclinations, debauched and sensual in their pleasures, beasts in their cunning, and beasts in their appetites. They are a disgusting horde, from first to last. I inquire not into causes and effects; I weigh not the common cant of misrule and ignorance; I look not into historical influences; I speak of the men as I find them, and act by them as such. It is nothing to me that Orson, the beast, was once Orson, my brother. I treat him as a beast while he continues so, and as my brother when he resumes the form and manner of a man. I hate the people. I hate their fair professions and shameless hypocrisy, their affected simplicity and real cunning, their disgusting protestations of forgiveness, and their deep and long cherished schemes of murder and revenge. I hate the whole race as heartily as they hate me, and have no popularity to acquire or to pursue. If you would have a favourable specimen of this abominable caste, take him, whose career of crime and midnight murder was brought this evening to a close. He was one of those unhappy characters whom a bad education, poverty, and a fierce and ignorant enthusiasm, consign, in countless numbers, to an untimely and ignominious grave, in Ireland. So pitiable is the blindness, so vain and chimerical the schemes of those wretched men, that I heard, only a few days since, that this young man had endeavoured to qualify his actual and present poverty, in the eyes of his 'sweetheart,' by informing her that after the country was in their own hands, Cushlanebeg and Abel Tracy's farm was to be given to him for his share of the conquest, and that she'd then be as great a lady as Mary Regan herself; for they feel a pleasure in thus distinguishing Mrs. Tracy, by her popish and maiden appellation. Whether, as is frequently the case in higher classes, the lady might have lent a favourable ear to her suitor in consideration of his 'great expectations,' is a question which his untimely fate must leave for ever undecided."

Here, as if wishing to terminate the conversation, he suddenly turned round to his son and said:—

"Henry, was that long song you gave us while ago of your own composition?"

"It was, sir," said Henry, with a blush and smile.

"Then I am sorry," said the father, "that for once I am unable to congratulate you on your taste."

"Why so, sir?"

"Ellen and I have just been telling him," said Mary, "that we thought it very sweet."

"Particularly," added Ellen, "that fanciful verse about his lost delights:—

> That song it is silent, that bower is dead,
> The gold coloured mists of life's morning are flown,
> My vase, it is broken, my flowers are gone.

I think that very pretty."

"I think, sir," said Henry, "that I have a strong party against you. If Monti had carried the suffrages of the ladies with him into Lombardy, I don't think the Della Cruscans would have held out so long. But what is your criticism, sir?"

"Why," answered Dalton, "I think both the sentiment and language a great deal too fine for the simple Irish melody to which you have adapted them. If you write for Irish music, Harry, you must accommodate your poetry to the genius of the composer. The poor whisky drinking harper, who first sung that heart-broken gush of simple melody, would have blushed to see the modest daughter of his rustic clarsech in company so very fine and grand as your verse. If you wish to do any thing good, Harry, you must gather your inspirations from the life and scenery that surrounds you, and give Ireland, what she yet wants, a national song writer: a Burns of the sheelings and pellices."

"What she *yet* wants!" Mary exclaimed, in surprise, holding up a volume of music, which is absent from the collection of few fair performers in the British Islands.

"What she yet wants!" reiterated Mr. Dalton, with an emphasis smilingly resolute. "No one that ever heard those sweet and sparkling verses which you uphold, can feel their elegance, their wit, their fineness of sentiment, and of expression, more truly than I do. But I am hardly ready to grant them the title of national songs, at least, according to my own idea of what national songs should be. The best and happiest of them, moreover, are too cultivated in style, too purely fanciful, to give real pleasure out of the precincts of educated life. They have not enough of the *boy*, enough of plain and vigorous nature, I mean, in their composition, to find a sympathy among people whose sentiment springs warm and unrectified (to use a truly Irish metaphor), from the heart, and has nothing in common with refinement of fancy or ingenious delicacies of conceit. What Irish songs have we that may be felt and relished in all classes so warmly as "Roy's wife," or "My ain fireside," among our Scottish neighbours; the great charm of which is that they have all the air of improvisation, and glide into the hearts of the hearers with as little effort of reflection as the vocalists employ in their enunciation? My Irish Burns, Mrs. Tracy, should not be ashamed of the occupations of rustic life in his country; he should

neither set a metaphysical paradox to the air of "The Red-haired Man's Wife," as Byron might do, nor take his illustrations from Greek history, like his great contemporary. He should be spontaneous and national; and above all, he should not devote his genius exclusively to the gratification of circles who stand so little in need of new modes of amusement. And even if he should fail in becoming fashionable (which I doubt, for novelty in the affairs of genius seldom does), he will still have achieved a high—a higher glory. He will have invested the occupations of humble industry with gentle and softening associations; he will have thrown an illusive, perhaps, but yet an effectual and alleviating charm over the toils of the poor labourer, and the cares of the struggling cottager; he will have induced a feeling of gentle and virtuous contentment among the people; and more than all, he will have banished from their lips and their memories, those vile, vulgar, and profligate ballads, which, from the days of Edmund Spenser to our own, have been the blot and bane of Irish cottage morals."

"And these are the people whom you hate!" said I, addressing the speaker in an under tone.

"I hate them for what they are," he replied, "but I cannot avoid seeing what would make them better. I told you I took them as I found them. But, indeed, it is in the merest Machiavellian spirit that I speak of this improvement, for I look to its influence in furthering the ends of government. It is impossible not to see the impolicy of neglecting the amusements of the people. It is the most obvious support of a deceptive mode of rule that can be imagined. If you wish to fool a child, you fling him a toy. The Cæsars (you see, Mrs. Tracy, what a fine scholar I am), practised it amid all their tyrannies; and by it all the usurpers and despots on the earth have been able to exercise a power, with which no influence, upon the reason of their subjects, could have invested them. But here it is not thought of at any time. Our landlords give no rural fete, to reward and encourage the industry of their tenants and promote a virtuous spirit of emulation, as some good men do in England. The poor are not thought of here; they are taxed for work and money, and then turned off to find their own amusements, if they wish for them. And this they do in good earnest: witness their jig-houses, their shebeens, their benefits and balls, their drunkenness, their factious spirit, their night-walking, and all the turbulent and improvident vices of their character."

"Talking of ballads," said young Dalton, turning round in his chair, "I think a more amusing or more perfect illustration could not be presented, of the disposition and manners of this people, than a judicious selection from their own fire-side melodies. It would be worth the report of a whole board of commissioners."

Soon after Dalton rose to depart, and Willy, who was a favourite with him, ran to order the horses, which he had left, he said, "ating, no, eating, his oats in the steeble, no, stable, and," finding himself only getting deeper, he scampered off, throwing back his curly head and exclaiming, "Oh, I'm tired of it for English!"

Henry Dalton rode off, and we heard him, from the hall door, singing as he went along, that stanza which Ellen had commended:

> But vain was my dream, for those hours are fled,
> That song it is silent, that bower is dead,
> The gold coloured mists of life's morning are flown,
> My vase it is broken, my flowers are gone!

As the father stood on the steps, with one foot in his stirrup, while little Ulick shrunk behind the open door from the damp cold wind, and sheltered the candle with his hand, he said to me, "Remember our conversation and exert yourself. Omit no opportunity: learn to subdue your inclinations to your interests, and leave the rest to me."

I shook his hand warmly and remained wrapt in pleasing dreams upon the threshold, until the sound of his horse's steps died away, and Ulick, our pet, asked me, in a shivering, plaintive voice, "Wouldn't I come in and let him shut the door, it was so cold?"

I returned to our drawing-room in silence, persuaded, in an evil hour, to rend away those bonds of attachment which had secured to me, during a long course of years, the affections of my poor dependants, and to become their enemy instead of their guardian. Thus was the keystone of my tranquil happiness removed. I felt a little uneasiness, indeed, at the idea of entertaining a number of policemen in my house, as my domestic expenses were already as considerable as the most economical dilatation of my income could afford, but it would have been mean and unlike an Irishman to have spoken of this embarrassment to Dalton, and besides, the loss was nothing when I considered the object in view. Dreams of golden happiness and splendour floated through my brain, and I pressed the hand of my daughter, still mourning for the absence of her betrothed, while my fancy anticipated the happiness the youthful pair would enjoy in the participation of my coming prosperity.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ghastly family of the Hag's Valley haunted my imagination, in despite of all the assurances of Dalton, and made my life more anxious and feverish than it had ever been. Scarcely a night passed on which I did not look with a candle under all the beds, and frequently did I expect to meet the gloomy stare of the surviving orphan bent on me from the darkness underneath. A circumstance soon occurred to heighten that anxiety to a degree that was almost painful.

I was returning alone in the evening of the New Year's Day following, after having spent the forenoon at a neighbouring fair, and

entertained myself by observing the holiday groups that were dispersed in various parts of the high road, and the improved and tastefully cultivated appearance of the young and fair cottagers, as the sun went down on the last evening of the expiring year. I turned aside into a pathway which led through an ancient abbey and burying-ground, to my own lawn; and stopped for a few minutes to admire the effect of the red and level light upon the ruins. It had been an Augustine Friary in the days of the famous John of Kildare, and the choir and stalls, with various other parts of its massive architecture were still in tolerable preservation. A row of Gothic windows, of elaborate sculpture, on which were escutcheons with the English and Saltire crosses ranged alternately, fronted the declining sun, veiled from the direct influence of his rays by a screen of wandering ivy. The massive pillars and ogives, which once supported the arch and tower, were protected by a mantle of the same ruin-haunting shrub.

The low murmur of a female voice, speaking in the Irish tongue, and with a strong and guttural accentuation, attracted my attention to the grave-yard. I beheld, at a few paces distant, a palsied old woman kneeling near one of the plain grass mounds or tumuli which contained the ashes of the lowly dead, and which were only distinguished by an unhewn, undecorated headstone. She was wrapped in an old blue rug cloak and hood, having the skirts turned over her shoulders, and displaying underneath a gown of a coarse brown stuff much rent and much patched. I was shocked to discover, on a nearer approach, that she was preparing, according to the superstitious custom of the uninformed portion of the people, to bestow her curse on some individual by whom she had suffered injury. She threw her hood back from her head, unpinned with trembling fingers the white kerchief beneath which her grey hair was rolled into a mass, and suffered those long, dry, straight, and lifeless locks to fall down suddenly over her face and shoulders: a common custom in uttering maledictions of peculiar solemnity and bitterness. Extending through this unseemly veil, her thin, yellow, and skinny hands, clasped feebly together, she had already faltered out some words of her impious prayer, when I interrupted its progress by coming suddenly forward.

"Unhappy wretch!" said I, "do you dare to break the law of the Almighty in his own temple? Have you no respect for the graves of the dead, or for the holy ground where you are standing, that you choose it as a proper place for the indulgence of your abominable passions?"

Here I stopped short, and my anger was qualified by a mingling of pity and self-reproach, when the woman, turning on me with difficulty her ghastly and blood-shot eyes, discovered the countenance of the mother of Shanahan. She arose, with a laborious effort, from her knees, and supported herself on a long ashen pole (resembling the *bowlthaun** or striker of a flail) which she grasped

* From which the ancient Greeks derived the verb Βουλομαι, without any acknowledgment.

with both hands, and which yet shook pitiably under the influence of her distemper. She looked on my face with an expression of bitter hate and rage, while her cheeks, wrinkled and dragged by age and pain, acquired a flushing and a quivering redness, and her black and wind-scorched lips were drawn back with a malignant grin, so as to discover a pair of gums in which three or four discoloured and tobacco-stained dog-teeth hung loose like the prongs in an old and broken hay rake.

"Ay, Abel Thracy," she said, speaking in a feeble and faltering voice, and interrupting her most angry sentences by long pauses of exhaustion, "how easy 'tis—for you to come here an'—preach to me, over—my child's grave after—taking my last comfort in life—away from me. You preach forgiveness to me that showed none to mine! This very evening Shanahan, my son, was to be married to the best girl in the three parishes. I heard him often wishing for it to come, and sure it is come, an' he's lying there within an arm's length o' me in that grave, an' I talkin' to the man that murthered him. You did this for me, Abel Thracy, an' the prayer I was goin' to offer, 'till you hindhered me, was that the Almighty might do as much for you. If I had the arms or the sthrength of a man, I would'nt be talkin' to you this way. But though I'm weak, I have strong friends, an' they have you marked. You can't sthrike a bush in the country from this day, but a friend of Shanahan will start from it against you. Ah! Abel Thracy, there is no law for the poor in Ireland, but what they make themselves, and by that law my child will have blood for blood before the year is out."

"Hag that you are!" I exclaimed, in strong passion; "you upbraid me, but you are yourself the murderer of your son. I know you. When he was an infant on your lap, you filled his mind with thoughts of revenge and discord. You sung him to sleep with songs of guilt and passion, you taught him to fight out his own will among his own brothers and playfellows. From you, his mother, who should have softened and brought down the fierceness of his disposition by words of peace and gentleness, from you it was that he learned to foster and indulge it. From you he learned that riot and revenge were glory and honour, and that blind rebellion was patriotism. You made him a bad child, a worse man, a factious neighbour, a rebel, a blood-spiller, and thus, having bound his soul to perdition, you became his murderer. If he could speak to you from his grave, he would address you by no other name."

"Folly on!" said the hag, speaking in a shrill voice of anger; "you destroyed him for this world, and now you judge him for the next. I'll answer to heaven, and not to you, for how I reared my boy; but my prayer is in my heart, and it is little matter whether I say it or not."

She then tore her head-dress, and scattered it upon the ground,* muttering at the same time the curse which I had prevented her from pronouncing aloud. After this she turned away with the sul-

* A customary form of imprecation.

len and vengeful air of one discomfited and conscience-struck, but fortified against conviction, and tottered out of the church-yard in so feeble a manner that one might have said it was hardly worth her while to leave a place to which she must so soon return.

The threat, however, which she had thrown out was sufficient to alarm and startle me. I knew the temper of the people, and this intimation of their intentions rendered me somewhat feverish and dyspeptical during the ensuing weeks. I was careful never to go from home without arms, and as seldom as possible without my police. This anxiety of mind preyed upon my spirits and rendered me peevish, silent, oppressive, and impatient to all around me. I began to feel some portion of Dalton's hatred of the people. My wife, indeed, was miserable. Dalton had not yet repaid my daughter's portion; he seemed on the contrary to be growing poorer every day, and as I knew that poor young Rowan Clancy would not be permitted to espouse a wife entirely dowerless, the agony of my apprehension was intolerable. To have it known that I had robbed my own child! the plunderer of my sweet, gentle girl! It was too horrible. When I thought of it, I started from my seat, and hurrying into the open air, ran all over my now half-ruined farm in a torture of suspense and terror.

Still, amid all my agonies and my solicitudes, the brilliant phantoms of ambition would flit before my imagination and make my heart drunk with unreal ecstacies.

Would to heaven that I had never dreamed of this! that I had remained still ignorant of the thirst for wealth and influence! that I were still contented to let my desires keep pace with the even course of nature herself! that they had, like her, year after year their spring of reasonable hope, their summer of certain promise, their autumn of calm fruition, and their winter of cold and unsolicitous repose! That I were still content to receive money for the mere purpose of counting and paying it away! That I were again the happy man I had been, above want, below luxury, without a hoard, and without a debt, cheerful at my fire-side, free-hearted in my chamber, and even-tempered in society; beloved by my friends and dependants; not feared, but liked; not envied, but esteemed!

Such were the thoughts that in moments of musing and forgetfulness would steal through my heart, and shed a gentle sorrow over it. But they never found their way to my tongue, and were even treated as feeble and foolish dreams which my waking consciousness repelled. The only sentence with which I closed my meditations was usually this involuntary one—

"I wonder when will Dalton pay me back the money?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE week after that on which I met the wicked widow, comprised the quarterly review day of a corps of yeomanry to which I belonged. It was to be held near the village of A——, one of the most romantic spots in the south of Ireland, which lay within an easy morning's ride of my house. This village is of an older date than Dublin; it had the honour of being laid waste by the Danes, the Spaniards, the English, and others, at various periods; and it is one of the few districts which continued to maintain a regular corps of yeomanry down to a later date. In this respectable and warlike legion I had the honour of holding the commission of lieutenant: a station which I maintained with unblemished reputation for the space of twelve years. It is true that, during that time, the exigencies of the state were not sufficiently alarming to afford us an opportunity of distinguishing ourselves in action, in such a manner as the ardour of our patriotism would lead us to desire; but if we never achieved conquests, we could, at least, affirm with truth that we never sustained the ignominy of defeat. After the introduction of the police, indeed, we merely took the field on stated review days, occurring four times within the year, when we went through our manœuvres, received a day's pay each, which we drank to the king's health in the evening, interweaving our moderate libations with tales of our past achievements, and lamentations on our present state of inaction. Still, however, on these four days, we endeavoured to sustain our ancient credit. It is true that, previous to the firing of the first volley, a recollection of the ill condition of our muskets, the rusty state of the barrels from long disuse, and the consequent danger of their bursting in our hands, would flash upon our minds, and make the stoutest heart grow cold. But this was only the depression of a moment; the bending of the bow for the spring, the gathering of the breath for the onset, and all our valour returned after the first discharge.

This, our first quarterly review day, after the proclamation of the Insurrection Act, fell in the midst of winter, at a time when the disturbances of the country had reached an alarming height. The morning rose bright with sunshine, and clear and biting with frost. We met, indeed, not under the most pleasing circumstances that we could wish. It was found that scarcely two dozen serviceable stand of musketry could be numbered amongst our whole corps, the remainder being deficient either in locks, stocks, or bar-

rels. Resolved, however, to make up in discipline what was wanted in equipments, our men assembled with spirit, and proceeded to the ground, an open space in the demesne of A———, by a road which ran in front of the police barracks. Taking care to suffer the best appointed of our heroes to constitute that file which was most exposed to the observation of their rivals, we rattled up Lord Hardwick's march with fife and drum, and strutted away, determined, at all events, not to furnish a temptation to ridicule by sneaking along as if we had anticipated and deserved it. Notwithstanding our brave bearing, nevertheless, the police (a party newly arrived, who knew nothing of us or of the neighbourhood) were at little pains to suppress their sneers; and their jibes and laughter, as they stood scattered in the sunshine in front of their barracks, was loud enough to be heard by the whole corps.

But our annoyances did not rest here. The little ragged rabble who accompanied us, caught up the spirit of the jest, and being less restrained by considerations of self-respect, gave a loose to their malice, and followed us to the ground with loud shouts of laughter and shrill hallooings of derision. When the corps formed into line, and thus exposed the total inefficiency of their warlike stores, I do not think a young comic writer would be displeased if his first piece gave so much entertainment. In vain did we endeavour to complete the effect of the scanty volley, by drowning it in the reiterations of the immeasurable huzza; the spectacle was too ludicrous to pass with impunity, and we left the ground (receiving one day's pay) covered with ridicule and filled with a just indignation.

But I should relate an incident which perplexed me in an unaccountable manner. While our men were firing at the sign-board of a neighbouring public-house, put up as a target, I observed an old man leaning over the bridge, dressed in a ragged military uniform, wearing a long beard, "a sable silvered," looking singularly haggard in the eyes and mouth, and lonesome and dreary in his whole appearance. Observing him smile as the men fired and missed in succession, and more annoyed at his still contempt than at the vulgar hooting of the populace, I asked him whether he thought he could do better himself if he were among them? Without making any reply, he instantly came down upon the field, as if I had invited him to try his hand. I bade Serjeant Swan hand him a carbine.

The old soldier, untying his knapsack, laid it carefully upon the grass, and then taking the carbine in his hand, paused a moment, and gazed upon the piece with a fond eye and a hard but expressive smile.

"This is an innocent piece," he said, speaking in an accent which had the querulous Kerry accent, modified by the shortness of the barrack emphasis. He said so, pointing to the word "Tower," and the date of the preceding year, which were engraved on the barrel.

Lifting the piece to his eye, he fired. The man near the target raised his hand and cried out with astonishment—

"In the bull's-eye, that I mightn't!"

A loud shout of applause burst from the populace. The old soldier smiled with satisfaction; but quickly relapsing into his habitually lonesome stare, took up his knapsack again, and throwing it over his shoulder, left the field without speaking to anybody.

When we were assembled in the small inn where we proposed concluding the exploits of the day, by expending each man his quota "for the good of the house," I inquired privately of McGawyl, the landlord, if he knew anything of the old man?

"Nothing," said this person, who piqued himself on being a very precise and grammatical speaker, "only this; that he landed out of a West Indiaman that dropped anchor over yonder, a few days since, and come ashore with a tall yellow gentleman that nobody knows. They both of 'em came here one night, an' the place being crowded, I was obliged to lodge the old sodger in a chair be the kitchen fire, while the yellow gentleman slep in the room overhead.

"He is gone off now," continued McGawyl, "to spend the night in some ould fabric of a ruin or another. There's something or another lying on his mind. The night I gave him a lodgin' here, I came down late at night to look afther everything, an' he was sitting this way with his head restin' back again' the wall, an' every now and then he'd start out of his sleep as if there was fifty people callin' to him to get up, an' then seeing nobody, he'd give a great groan, an' spread his hands over the fire, an' look back shiverin' over his shouldther, an' setfle himself to sleep again. But hardly ever I hear him talk to anybody. Sometimes, too, when he'd start out of his sleep, you'd hear him sayin' this way, in a great flusther —I didn't! it wasn't I! I didn't!"

Old Clancy, our captain, Mr. Lorenzo Doody, our second lieutenant, (a great disciplinarian, who used to brush his eyebrows against the grain, in order to make them stand out, and give a military fierceness to his countenance), Mr. Paul Hifle, our ensign, a great drinker and story-teller, and possessed of a fine talent in describing an entertainment, remained, with one or two others to see the sun down with the men. Serjeant Swan arranged a small deal table across the fire-place somewhat in the fashion of a dais, at which we took our places, Captain Clancy planting himself under a brightly-coloured print of Moses in the bull-rushes, which hung immediately over the chimney-piece.

The evening passed away unfelt, until the clear moonlight was shining through the window of the room in which we sat, so brightly as almost to eclipse the lustre of our landlord's candles. The greater number of the company had long since left the house, empty chairs stood awry at the table, the candles seemed about to expire for want of snuffing, and the few persons that remained were conversing with red dull eyes in a drowsy tone over their glasses. The street of the village was still and empty, and we could only occasionally hear the lonely echo of some footstep upon the frosty road, and the sulky challenge of the police sentinels, as it approached their posts. Doody had fallen asleep with his hand thrust into the

pockets of his nether garment, and his chin reposing among the involutions of his shirt frills; McGawyl had gradually insinuated himself into one of the deserted chairs, and possessed himself of a tumbler, which he at first laid hold of as an illustration in speaking of the conduct of the police, and presently appropriated to a less figurative use.

Suddenly we were all startled by a loud noise at the street door, which was more like a pounding, or a malletting, than a knocking.

McGawyl, in compliance with my desire, threw up the window, and was immediately accosted by a voice without, which we all recognised as that of the chief constable of the obnoxious police.

"Are you an inmate of this house?" he asked in a loud tone.

"An inmate!" echoed McGawyl; "mind that though! I'm standin' frontin' him in the window here, an' he asks me if I'm an inmate of the house? Is it lookin' for powdther you're goin' again, that you keep me here answerin' in the cowld?"

Here he puckered up the epidermis of his nose, as a half frozen drop fell on the rosy and jocund apex of that feature.

"Hold your tongue, fellow," said the chief, "and answer my questions."

"An' with submission to you," replied McGawyl, holding up the sash of the window, with both hands, while he looked over his shoulder and twisted his countenance significantly at us, "how *will* I answer to your kusthins, if I'm to hold my tongue?"

A fresh battery of musket butts upon the outside of the door was the retort of the policemen, and our host suddenly bursting into anger, uttered a vehement remonstrance against this uncouth procedure.

"What do you want at all with us, or what are we doin' to ye? Can't ye speak at wonst?"

"Are your family at home?"

"No."

"Where are they?"

"There's one of 'em missin'."

"Has he a pass?"

"Faix, I didn't ax him; nor he wouldn't tell me if I did, for the rogue knew he was goin' thresspassin'. But if you want to find the thief step up to the pound to-morrow morning, an' you'll find him grunting on the stones."

"Is it a pig you 're talking of?"

"Oh, murther! murther! what a guess he has."

"Scoundrel, open the door!"

"Himself an' the ould gandher that went out rovin' afther sunset this evenin'; if you'd make a prisoner o' the gandher for me, I'd say you were doin' some good, an' I don't know whose bidden the gander would mind if not the goose's; well, no matther; it's all one."

Thunder again at the door.

"What ails ye, death-an-ownkadeers!" shouted the incensed publican, "isn't there the list pasted up upon the doore before ye'r eyes, an' the moon shinin', an' I'm sure ye're all fine scholars, every

man, though I b'lieve ye've more letthers than manners, indeed, if the truth was known."

The chief accordingly applied his attention to the written list of names, which, while the Insurrection Act was in force, was pasted up on the door of every house.

"Thade M'Gawyl!" he shouted aloud.

"Here! above you in the windy!" was the instant response.

"Mary Delahunty!" continued the chief.

"Here!" shrilled out a cracked female voice from a hurdle loft at the far end of the house.

"Dick McGawyl! Nanny McGawyl! Thade Preston! &c. &c."

"Here! here! here!" were responded from different quarters of the house in voices sharp, high, and low, reminding the hearer of the muster-roll of Hecate in Macbeth.

"Very well! Now put out your lights!" said the chief.

"Put out our lights!"

"Put them out, or we'll save you the trouble. We have orders to see all lights out, and if you don't comply, I shall beat in the door."

"And what would ye say, now, if there was a parcel of gentlemen yeomen, the king's servants, here, drinkin' the king's health with me?"

"So ho! the secret 's out at last!" cried the chief; "you have strangers with you. I thought so. Come, open the door, and let me have the pleasure of seeing their loyal faces. I'm not to be gulled with a story of the A—— yeomanry stopping to get drunk at your house at a time when all good subjects should be in their beds."

To save the pannels of the slender door they were admitted. I perceived, at once, by the leering twinkle of the chief's eye as he perused the faces and persons of the company, that he had resolved upon some piece of insolence or waggery, or both.

"Yeomanry, hum! They have got the sheep's clothing, indeed," [the word sheep was accented with a peculiar emphasis,] but that is a jacket, Master McGawyl, that will fit a wolf as well. Better be sure than sorry, is an old saying that's not the worse for wear. If these gentlemen, [another emphasis] be the yeomanry in fact and truth, they know the new law, I suppose, and have got their passes about them."

"What pass would you be axin' beyont the ridgimentals?" said McGawyl.

"Don't you think," answered the chief, casting an insolently inquisitive eye on an envious rent which time had made in the elbow of Serjeant Fizzel's coat," that a croppy could fit himself at half price off the pegs of the Parade* with as handsome a suit of raggedmentals as this gentleman's?"

Here he applied his fore-finger and thumb to the fissure just hinted at, and pulled through it part of an intimate garment, which, to the shame of our corps be it spoken, was not the whitest nor

* The Monmouth Street of a neighbouring city.

finest that we could wish. There was something so delicate and poignant in the witticism, that the policemen could hardly keep their gravity, and I even saw McGawyl himself smothering a laugh in the hollow of his hand.

Serjeant Fizzel, though placed nearly in the same circumstances as Papirius, seemed not inclined however to risk the fate of that famous legislator, by imitating his ineffectual gallantry. At first, indeed, he looked very big, then glanced at the insulter, then at his sleeve, then at the horse pistol which his foe held in his hand—and then he drew a very long breath, and pulled in the garment.

We all now remonstrated, but without effect. "I have orders," said the chief, "to take up everybody I find out after sunset, without a magistrate's pass. I know nothing of you, or of this neighbourhood, and I must see your passes, or you shan't pass me."

"We have no passes," said Clancy, "and depend upon it your insolence shan't pass us."

"I understand you. Come along, my clever fellows, I'll find you a lodging until morning. March down stairs before us if you please."

"If we had our arms," said Doody, buttoning up his coat with an expedition indicative of deep indignation.

"If you had, what of it?" said the chief, sternly.

"If we had," replied the latter, in a softer tone, "it would, I hope, demonstrate the truth of what we allege."

"I don't know that," replied the other, sulkily, "unless you could show me how you came by them. Go along down before me or by—" he swore a horrid oath, "I'll put a button under your belt, my young fugleman."

By this epithet, I perceived, the man knew Doody, and was bent upon executing his freak. I accordingly took Clancy's arm, and walked forward, resolving, in my own mind, to make the young gentleman pay for his amusement as dearly as ever sport was purchased.

"Come!" he repeated, tapping the table and looking impatiently at Purtill, who still kept his seat.

"I'm no pippin squeezer," returned Purtill coolly, and I'll not leave my glass unfinished." So saying he drained it with a scrupulous exactness.

"Most loyal chief!" he then added, while he entwined his fingers closely round the neck of a quart bottle, containing a portion of McGawyl's best proof spirits; "Since this has been the cause of our delinquency, I trust you will think it only fair that it should share our imprisonment. Take my word for it, that however fiery the fellow is now," he added, shaking the bottle gently and tenderly as he deposited it in his great coat pocket, "his *spirits* will be brought low enough before morning."

"You are a pleasant fellow," said the policeman; "come along."

"The yeomen taken up undher the Act!" I heard McGawyl ejaculate as he stood at the open door-way, gazing after us. "O murther! murther! what'll the Peelers do next, I wondher? If the

parliament itself was there, I b'lieve it wouldn't escape ye afther that. Hallo! Misther Skerrit!"

"Well, what do you want?" said the chief, turning his head, after we had gone half way up the street.

"There's Jim Flanagan's head out apast his dooreway, above sthreet, after sunset an' all. Cut it off, an' carry it to Bridewell with ye, an' I'll swear again' it at the sessions; an' ye may do it with a safe conscience, too, for his head would be no loss to his family, whatever the legs an' hands might be."

We marched on, and were lodged in the cold bridewell, the key was turned in the door, and we were left to look into one another's faces and long for the dawn.

Purtill endeavoured to keep us alive by singing the following song, while we took a part in the chorus, rather in order to show that we would not be depressed by Skerrit's malice, than from any actual gaiety of spirits:—

Would you choose a friend? Attend! attend!
I'll teach you how to attain your end.
He, on whose lean and bloodless cheek
The red grape leaves no laughing streak,
On whose dull white brow and clouded eye,
Cold thought and care sit heavily,
Him you must flee,
'Tween you and me,
That man is very bad company.

And he around whose jewelled nose
The blood of the red grape freely flows,
Whose pursy frame, as he fronts the board,
Shakes like a wine-sack newly stored,
In whose half-shut, moist, and sparkling eye,
The wine-god revels cloudily,
Him you must flee,
'Tween you and me,
That man is very bad company.

But he who takes his wine in measure,

Here Purtill quaffed off his own glass, without adding half a second to the time.

Mingling wit and sense with pleasure,
Who likes good wine for the joy it brings,
And merrily laughs and gaily sings;
With heart and bumper always full,
Never maudlin, never dull,
Your friend let him be,
'Tween you and me,
That man is excellent company.

But we would have sung with a better heart if they had not caged us.

CHAPTER VIII.

It appeared soon after that Skerrit had discovered his mistake, for a serjeant of police arrived to open the doors, and to inform us that we were at liberty. The insult offered, however, was too glaring to be so easily forgotten, and we sent back the man to say, that he must come himself and make a formal apology for his conduct. "As loyal men they had gone in, and as loyal men they should come out," said Doody.

The man went back, and soon after we heard a horseman slowly pacing up to the bridewell door. He dismounted, and we heard him soon after humming a song, as he paced to and fro in the moonlight, and seemed to pay no more attention to the cold than if he were an Esquimaux, or had been to the Pole at least. We listened attentively, and could distinguish the following words, sung with much taste and sweetness:—

Let others breathe in glowing words
The secret of their bosom-pain,
And bid the loud harp's speaking chords
Tell o'er the weary tale again.
From me no burning strain shall rise,
A cold heart's answering sigh to move,
But I will gaze upon those eyes,
And waste away in silent love.

He then stamped two or three times on the road, whistled hummed a little, and commenced a second verse:—

I cannot find in art a strain
To echo forth mine inward moan,
If sighs and looks can't tell my pain,
Oh! never shall my love be known.
Safe is the flame, whose wavering wreath
A tear may quench, a sigh can move,
But full of danger and of death
Is the pent fire of silent love.

"A charming night he has chosen for a serenade," said Purtill.
"Hush!" said another, "he's going to give us another verse."
"No, he's only humming over the last; his wit is run aground."
"That's strange," said Purtill, "for, to judge by his melody, and

the time he chose for singing it, he had no more than would have floated in any shallow."

"Speak to him, Tom," said Clancy; "you are safe here."

Purtill went to the barred window and threw up the sash.

"A fine night for vocal music, sir," he said aloud.

"You are very good, sir," replied the stranger.

"I hope you don't find your voice at all affected by the frost, sir?"

"By no means, sir."

"Perhaps, sir, you would take something to clear it, and favour us with an additional stanza. *Da capo*, if you please. I have got a balsam here that I call the 'pippin squeezer's best friend," or the 'sick lover's walking-stick.' Now your silent love is a great deal too washy an affair for me, it is just punch without spirits, the sweet and the weak. The strong is here in my hand, and if you will accept a little, I think it will give you some spirit. Here's some whisky, sir. You can make grog of it, as they do in the county Clare."

"How is that?"

"Why, by drinking all the whisky now, and the water to-morrow, or after."

"You are very good again," said the other; "I'll take a little, if you please."

Purtill handed him a glass through the bars. He took it, and at the same time drawing Purtill's arm through with a sudden force, and bringing his face close to the bars, dealt him a great blow on the nose, exclaiming, "Upon my word, sir, you are right, for (another blow) I begin to find myself getting a little spirit already."

"The deuce you are!" cried Purtill, endeavouring to return the blow, but without success, for his eyes were both bewildered, and he only broke his fingers against the bars; "you scoundrel, I wish I knew your name."

"You will find it on this card," said the other, "as soon as you are able to read, for, indeed, I think without a little of the 'sick lover's walking-stick' they can't bear the light for some time. I wish you a good night, sir, and pray apply to me when you want to make grog again."

He rode off, leaving Purtill in a rage, which our general laughter did not tend to diminish. The name which he found upon the card, and which I had already anticipated from the tone of the voice, was that of Mr. Henry Dalton. He instantly determined upon sending him a message, and bespoke Lorenzo Doody as his second.

"Well, Purtill," said I, "that gentleman is able to do something besides singing silent love."

He was about to answer this speech with great passion, when the serjeant of police returned, to say that his chief would see us all hanged (he used a worse word), rather than make us any apology. He then departed, leaving the door open, and calling the bridewell-keeper to witness that there was no restriction, left upon us.

We maintained our resolution, however, with a firmness worthy

of the most famous martyrs to public principle. But it was a cold night, and there was no fire in the house. As the first paroxysms of our zeal subsided, and the disagreeableness of our situation began to press more sharply upon our feelings, a ludicrous degree of indecision manifested itself in our demeanour. Some cast bashful and sidelong glances at the open door, thought of the blazing turf that burned on their hearths at home, and strove to call the blood into their frost-bitten toes and fingers by breathing into the hollow of their hands, squeezing them under their arms, and between their knees, beating, "Go to bed, Tom," with their feet, and various other artifices. They began at last to hang their heads with a secret suspicion that their conduct was rather ludicrous than heroic.

"Well," said Doody, "let him do as he pleases. Even at common law we have our redress by laying an action for false imprisonment."

"False imprisonment, sir!" ejaculated Serjeant Swan, who was thrashing himself fiercely with both arms in another corner, "why then, with submission, sir, this is what I call rale imprisonment, unless indeed it be made out false imprisonment in regard o' lavin' the doore open."

"I wisht we had a lighted pipe itself," said one of the men.

"Could'nt you get a sod or two, an' the seed o' the fire over at Jim Flanagan's?" asked another; "dear knows, we'll be perished here before mornin'."

"I think I'll just step out and stamp my feet a little on the road abroad," said Purtill, who had been gradually enlarging the circuit of his perambulations in the little room, and now suiting the action to the word, stepped across the threshold and into the free and glorious moonshine. And we heard him stamp and stamp, until he stamped himself home to bed and out of our hearing.

The man who was despatched for the "seed o' the fire," found a happier resting-place, for he returned not to his companions in duresse. Serjeant Swan went after him; but the event made us think "our swan a crow," likewise. Clancy went home to let his family know where he was. Doody himself muttered a sentence or two about the duty of a soldier, and insinuated that he had a few stacks of white lammas to thresh in the morning, which would oblige him to be up at the "first light." In a word, on the strength of some sudden recollection which occurred to all of us, the bride-well was as empty as a drunkard's pocket when the police returned.

"Tell me," said Clancy, after I had overtaken him on the road (for he walked on foot), "do you think this duel will take place between Purtill and young Dalton?"

"I am certain of it," said I, "for Dalton is jealous of his reputation, although indeed, it would suffer little by his declining a meeting with Purtill."

"Why so?"

"He is somewhat of a fire-eater."

"Pooh!"

"And not the very pink of respectability neither. He is a true

wild Irishman; drinks for the mere enjoyment of the headlong state of mind it causes, and lives upon the excitement of continual danger. He is in debt with everybody that he could ever get to trust him. His breast is like a riddle from bullet-scars received in single combat; he has been tried for assaults innumerable, and is as familiarly known in the wards of the county jail as on his own farm. He has got a relative in the Indies, of great wealth, whose property he expects to inherit, and to whose speedy demise he drinks a bumper every night of his existence."

"I heard it said that he once proposed for Miss Tracy?"

"And so he did."

"Assurance!"

"It was met as such, and the poor fellow stormed a little, for I believe he really loved her. But we made him merry for a few nights, and sent him home in good humour."

Our roads divided here, and I proceeded home alone. I had not gone far, when I perceived our family piper, Phil Fogarty, riding towards me in evident perturbation. It was the first time I had seen him since my change of life, for he had taken alarm one evening at Dalton's asking him to play "Croppies lie down;" and the nasal squeal of his chaunter was no longer heard from his modest recess behind the parlour door.

"Well Phil," said I, "what's the matter with you?"

"Is that the masther that's there?"

"It is."

"Oh, masther! a 'ra gal, I'm spoilt entirely with the fright?"

"From what, Phil?"

"There's somethin' that's not good in the ould church, beyond. I seen a light an' I passin'!"

"A light in the church?"

"Oh! that I may be gray if I did'nt, with my two eyes, as plain as I see that moon above us."

"Did you go to the church to look in?"

"Me! Eyeh! Faix, I'm sure that I did'nt. I thought every foot o' the road was a mile 'till I was at this side o' the hill. But I'd go back with your honour, if you're for goin' that way, for I'm not a bit afeerd when I have company."

We turned back, and tying our horses at the road side, took our way softly through the fields to the same old ruin in which I had met the aged and vindictive mother of the Shanahans.

I saw a light shooting in wiry streams through one of the apertures in the wall of what was once the wine-cellar of the abbey. It was now a damp and dismal vault, dimly lighted and strewed with planks of mouldering coffins, and remains of a still ghastlier description. I crept softly to an end window, and beheld within, a picture that stimulated my curiosity in an extraordinary degree.

An old man was seated at the far end on a pile made up of the broken coffin boards, covered with straw and arranged in the manner of a bed. Two mouldering lids, placed crosswise, served for the head and foot boards. A fire burned close to the wall at a little distance. On a projecting stone in the wall, fastened by a

lump of clay instead of a a candlestick, burned a small candle, and near it hung a vial, which I supposed to contain holy water, and a rosary of rude beads, made from the vertebræ of fishes. It is so common a circumstance in the country parts of Ireland to find pilgrims thus taking up their abode in the mouldering testimonials of the monastic greatness of our island, that I should not have paid more attention to the scene than its picturesque effect might challenge, if it had not been for another circumstance. The dress and countenance of the old man were those of the soldier who had put us to shame at the review.

He was fast asleep; his head resting against the wall, and his hands clasped upon his lap. I was about to creep from my hiding-place, with the view of entering the vault, and getting into conversation with the stranger, when the sound of a footstep falling near arrested my attention. A tall figure, muffled closely up, passed us in the moonlight. By his manner of peeping in, and his surprise at seeing what we had seen before, I judged him to be a stranger, attracted, as we had been, by the light from the vault.

The first movement of the new comer, on entering the wine-cellar, was to move with languid steps towards the fire, and stoop over it with a look of extreme chilliness. He was a tall, wiry figure, dressed with a richness that betokened rank and wealth, slightly made, and standing feebly on his limbs. A handsome surtout, with cuffs and collar of rich sable, gloves well furred and lined, lambs'-wool wrists, and a seal-skin travelling cap, carefully brought down over the ears, constituted the principal articles of his costume.

After he had warmed himself at the fire, he walked towards the old man, and stooped downward to look into his face. That face appeared to me, even at the distance at which I stood, to have undergone a singular alteration since I first beheld it. It was gathered at the lips with an expression of ghastly fear, and the grisly hair was thrown back with a disturbed appearance from his brow. When the stranger touched his shoulder in order to wake him, he started on a sudden wide awake, and spoke in hurried whispers some incoherent sentences.

"Do not fear," said the stranger, in a languid voice. "I am not your enemy. Are not you the old soldier who made the voyage from the Indies with me?"

The old soldier, still much confused, looked on him with face upturned and terrified.

"I remember you, sir," he said at last; "you were good to me on board the ship."

"Why are you here at this hour?"

"I have no other lodging."

"Is it possible you cannot afford the price of a bed?"

"The Almighty forgive me, sir, it is not that! But I am well lodged here; too well for what I deserve. I have prayers to say, and penance to do for a bad life, an' I had rather do it here by myself, where my mind would'nt be taken away from it, than in a dwelling-house."

"But 'tis a gloomy life. What can you have to wash away, that would require so dreary a mode of atonement?"

"Phil Fogarty," whispered I to the piper, who lay near me on the ground, "it is not fitting you should hear this discourse. Go over to my house, and I will follow you."

"Oh! that the sight may never leave me, masther, but I dare'nt stir a foot without you, sir."

"Well, don't listen, then. If they are plotting anything, it is fitter I should hear it than you."

"I'll lie down here an' cover my two ears with my hands, so that I can't hear as much as a breath if they were talkin' thundher."

He did so.

"The best of us, and those that go laste in the way of temptation," continued the old soldier, "have something to repent of, and what could be expected from a man of my kind, that spent all his life in bloodshed? All, beginning airly!"

Phil, hearing the word *bloodshed*, as I suppose, and imagining that the speakers in the vault were some of the insurgents, his neighbours, was unwilling that I should gather any information by which their safety might be endangered. Accordingly he gave a slight cough, just sufficiently loud to be heard by those inside. I saw them start, and hurried off along the church-yard path, in order to avoid the mortification of being detected in the act of eve's-dropping. I found a horse, which I took to be that of the stranger, fastened on the road side, at a little distance from our own, with holsters and rich furniture. I mounted my own animal and rode home, where I found my poor Mary (unlike the naughty lady of Breifni, who had not even a rush lighted in the house on her husband's return) watching anxiously by our parlour fire, and chiding the rough necessities of the time which called up peaceful men from their domestic hearths to scenes of bustling danger and despatch.

My house was safe enough, for I found my garrison of police in the kitchen, keeping up their courage with rashers of bacon and draughts of cider of my best manufacture. I said nothing to any one of my adventure at the abbey, but secretly resolved to learn something more, if possible, of the persons who had excited my curiosity so strongly. And in the mean time, I applied myself to the furthering of my interests in the manner which Dalton recommended.

CHAPTER IX.

My "Peelers," indeed, were "huge feeders," and as I passed, day after day, through my capacious kitchen, and cast an eye toward the bacon hooks, where I beheld the flitches vanishing one after another, I felt a sensation very like anxiety begin to stir within my heart. A complete revolution had taken place in the politics and economy of Cushlanebeg. My train of hereditary dependants disappeared at sight of the police, as fairies use to do at sight of a priest, and began to look on their old master as an altered man. My tenants became more reserved and more respectful; and when I walked into the fields, to superintend my workmen, I perceived that the conversation was hushed, or the subject changed on my approach, and that every word spoken in my presence was well weighed and guarded with a suspicious deliberation. My attempts at cordial jocularity and good humour were not received as of yore; and the more familiar and condescending I became, the more distant and distrustful did the men appear. When I spoke in anger, I was not met, as formerly, with bold and open remonstrance and warm self-justification. They heard me now in silence, with dark and solemn countenances, and without any symptom either of dissent or acquiescence.

In my own immediate family, likewise, my new course of life had produced an influence that was not calculated to increase our happiness. The female part of the household, who did not enter into Dalton's ideas of papistical extermination so readily as I had done, were hurt at the extreme rigour with which I exerted myself to second his views. My uneasiness, moreover, occasioned by my expenses, and by Dalton's delaying to refund the large sum I had lent him, rendered me less cheerful and good-humoured than usual. A gradual degree of embarrassed reserve diffused itself over the family circle. Neither my wife, nor daughter, ventured a remonstrance on any occasion, and this circumstance joined to the consciousness that they disapproved my conduct, rendered me doubly impatient and ill-humoured.

A poor man, who owed me some arrears of rent, applied to Mary to procure him some farther time, as the whole support of his family, during the ensuing spring, depended on the stock of potatoes which I had seized for the money due. I wanted the sum, and refused, for the first time in my life, to admit her intercession. The

next day I went to superintend the *cant*, or auction of the potatoes, in person.

"Folly* on, Misther Thracy! folly on!" I heard the owner (a white-headed, calm-eyed, patient old man) say, as I approached. "The days are altered with us, masther. I'm ould enough to remember a gentleman, a rale gentleman, that kep house in Cushlanebeg, an' that wouldn't see my little piatez canted on me this mornin'; an' that gentleman was your own father. But folly on! An' I second cousin to your own fostherer, too! But what hurt? Folly on! We had nothing to look to, the four of us, but that little pit o' piatez, till the new ones come in, while you an' the Peelers can have what ye like best, at the great house. I seen the day, masther, when the doores o' that house were open to the poor man, an' the smoke o' the chimney was a pleasant token to the thraveller goin' the road, an' the night comin' on, an' he hungry, an' the inns dear, an' his pocket empty; but the times are changed. Folly on! Ah! sir, there's One above that's lookin' down on you an' me this day, an' that sees how hard you're dhrivin' on the poor man. You have children, masther, as well as I have; take care would the time come when ——— but indeed, I won't say that, for I'd be sorry it should, for their own sakes. You put your trust in Dalton, an' forsake your people. Take care, I advise you. Dalton proved a deçaiver to others, an' he may to you. Folly on, sir, folly on! The time was, formerly, when the gentlemen used to open their doores to take the poor into their kitchens an' cherish 'em; but now, in place o' takin' 'em in, they go to find the poor man in his own cabin to take the food from betwixt his lips. There's my piatez, the price of my hard labour; take 'em with you; sure 'tis you has the best call to 'em."

He turned away with a flushed cheek, and the smile of one who, feeling himself hardly used, would not stoop to any violent expression either of distress or indignation. Fortifying my resolution by recollecting the commonness of the occurrence, I affected an indifference which I was very far from feeling, and made some customary answer about the length of time already given, my own calls, and the impossibility of paying rent without receiving the value of my land (to each of which he replied by a smile and toss of his head). The sale proceeded, and I put the money in my pocket.

Some further instances of a similar rigour completely unfixed the slight hold which I yet retained on the affections of my tenants. Their mild and benevolent protectress, in my own family, had lost her influence, and as she seemed as affectionate as ever, and always admitted the justice of my reasons, I took it for granted that she felt nothing more than she expressed on the subject. They were, however, the first favours that I had ever refused her, and as she perceived how painful to me, as well as to herself, was the continued failure in her applications, she soon discontinued them altogether, and found her resource in patience and the care of her children.

I was walking down our avenue, a few mornings after these

* Follow.

circumstances above mentioned, when I met Dalton and his son, followed by a number of police, riding towards me. Young Henry had his arm bound in a sling, and whether from that, or from some other cause, looked, as I thought, a little pale and anxious. I observed him make an effort to remove his arm from the sling as I approached, but his father, with an angry look, prevented him.

"Pshaw!" I heard Henry say, as I came up, "it appears so effeminate to go about bandaged in this manner, on account of a little scratch."

"No accident, I hope, Mr. Dalton?" I said, as we met.

"Look at him, Tracy!" cried his father, his eyes sparkling at the same time with affection, fatherly pride, anxiety and grief. "Did you ever see such an atrocious young scoundrel? This is the second duel he has fought within the last fortnight, and shed blood on both occasions."

"A duel, Henry!"

"They went out last night after dusk, and fired two cases of pistols in the dark. And not content with that, sir, this young villain insists upon adjourning it to this morning—"

"Upon my word, sir—"

"Hold your tongue, sir, I say! This young desperado insists upon going out again this morning—"

"But, sir, upon my word you mistake. That was Mr. Purtil's own arrangement. He acknowledged it himself upon the ground, and I could not in honour have avoided it, for it was I, you know, who received the challenge."

"Ay, you be d——, you and your honour! to go out and shoot an honest man through the leg in a morning, and get your arm well nigh shot away, and then come here prating of your honour, you atrocious monster!"

And at the same time you might see the father's eyes sparkling with delight.

"And Mr. Purtil is wounded then?" said I.

"Severely, severely wounded, sir," the father continued, "the young scoundrel shot him through the leg. The young villain! He has no more feeling than a stone. Not a single tremor; no remorse. The fellow always brings down his man. He shot O'Sullivan at the first fire."

I invited both the gentlemen into my house, but was only successful with the son. Dalton informed me that he was about to search some houses in the neighbourhood, and hinted at the probability, that before evening, he should be able to rid me for ever of all my apprehensions with regard to the surviving Shanahan and his oath of vengeance.

I could not avoid smiling to see that Dalton acted and spoke as if I were the sole or principal object of Shanahan's resentment, when I knew that in point of fact he was himself many degrees more obnoxious to that person and his friends.

He rode away with his police, and I returned with Henry to the house. The latter took an opportunity, when unobserved, to slip the sling from off his neck, and put it into his pocket.

"Is your arm so strong," said I, "that you can venture to take such a liberty as that?"

"My hurt is nothing," he replied, "and it looks like a piece of nonsensical foppery to go into the ladies with a disabled limb, as if I were after doing some great things."

It was a little touch of manliness of this nature in his character that made me like Henry, as I did, through all the changes of our family. I left him alone with the ladies, who seemed both delighted to see him, and went out upon my grounds to do some necessary business.

I was standing about noon in a part of my farm, where I had men laying out sea-weed, when the sound of an affray, intermingled with the shrill and reiterated screams of a female, broke on the mid-day stillness. Accustomed as I had now become to harden my heart against the pleadings of distress, I paid but a momentary attention to this occurrence. I rebuked the men for their looks of pity and curiosity, and bade them continue their labour. The anxieties, the remorses, the resentments, the ambitious restlessness, and dreams of aggrandizement which had preyed upon my heart in turn, throughout the two preceding months, had altered my nature, and called out a sternness and violence of character which I knew not that I possessed.

Suddenly a poor countrywoman appeared in the neighbouring gap, and perceiving me in the field, hurried across the ridges of stubble with a speed that indicated deep alarm. She threw herself on her knees before me, and remained for a few moments endeavouring to recover breath to speak.

"Oh, masther, speak for him! Forget, forgive all, and speak for him!"

"Mary Shanahan!"

"My husband, sir! The father of my childer that they're tairin' from me, this way. Come, and good luck to you, and spake a word for him to the Peelers. Dalton has laid his hand upon him, and the man that Dalton takes from his family never again darkens his own threshold. Oh, masther, have mercy upon us all! They say you're changed to the poor, and that we can't look for the same pity now as before, but I would'nt b'lieve the world that you'd lave us in this sthraight. Come and make 'em *lay** the father to his poor children, an I'll go down on my two knees to heaven every day I live to pray that you may be left long over your own!"

The agony of her tones pierced my heart. "For what has he been arrested?" I asked. "Mr. Dalton does not often do these things without reason."

"For conçailed arms. An' sure the Lord of all, that's looking down on us this day, knows that the child unborn knew more of em than we did. Without raison? Oh! Mr. Thracy, you ought to know that Jem and I always drew a line between ourselves an' them people."

A murmur of assent and pity passed among the workmen.

* Leave.

"Concealed arms!" I repeated: a doubtful and misty recollection of a former incident arising on my mind, and making my heart thrill with terror, at the insight it seemed to afford into Dalton's real character. I paused and strove to call the circumstance perfectly to mind before I asked "where the arms had been found?"

"In under the *tatch*. Just where you were lying yourself the night Dan Moran was shot on the sheepwalk."

The sudden suspicion, the alarm, were dreadful. I started in real fear, and bidding the woman hurry after me, I ran across the wheat-garden towards Shanahan's house, while she, following, loaded me with blessings.

When I arrived, I found that they had been expecting me. Dalton professing his unwillingness to take a tenant off my land without making me aware of the charge against him. He and Skerrit were conversing together on the road before the humble tenement of their victim. The latter, with an air of mingled grief, dejection, and indignation, on his gloomy countenance, leaned against the threshold in silence, and stared hardly upon Dalton. A party of the all-formidable police stood near him, laughing, and enjoying, amid this scene of distress, the delicious consciousness of power. A girl about nine years of age stood crying near her father, and a fine boy apparently about four years younger, stood in the door way eating a roasted potato and gazing around him with a face of innocent wonder and unconsciousness, which was still more touching than the tears and moanings of his sister. At some distance from the scene a number of men, women, and children, inhabitants of the adjoining hamlet, stood looking on, huddled together like a flock of terrified sheep. Even the domestic animals seemed to retain some memory of the scenes of strife which usually followed the appearance of those awful protectors of the peace. The pigs kept within their styes. as if aware of the Insurrection Act, and the dogs slunk away, growling seditiously, with their tails between their legs.

Dalton, to gratify a petty malice against this poor man (the cause of which I had learned from his conversation with the woman already related) had secreted those arms in the place where they were found, and now was about to found a charge of treason against the innocent man, on this diabolical contrivance. *This was my first thought, but I compelled myself to reject it, as I looked upon the scene. It was too black, too demoniacal a proceeding. I suspended my judgment altogether, until I should have heard the particulars of the case.

"Where did you find the arms?" said I to Dalton.

* Notwithstanding my respect for Mr. Tracy's veracity, I felt it my duty, ere I suffered this transaction to appear before the public, to ascertain whether it were without precedent, but my inquiries determined me not to alter the manuscript. I have been assured that expedients as frightfully devoid of principle as that above-mentioned were put in operation in some instances in the South of Ireland.

He took me into the house and pointed out the very spot into which I had seen him thrust his hand on the night of my wound.

All was now out. My doubts were ended. Dalton was a fiend, and I was his dupe. I felt a warm perspiration creeping over my frame, when the discovery broke upon my understanding, and all its fearful consequences to my own welfare rushed with a swift and lucid violence upon my heart. My first feeling was that of burning and almost uncontrollable indignation. Had it been the first time of our meeting, sinner that I was, I would have taken the ruffian by the throat, and shaken the demon spirit out of him. May heaven forgive me for this guilty language! It is a long time before the embers of passions dark and long indulged can be extinguished.

But a cautious, selfish thought sprung up in time sufficient to arrest the open burst of rage. Though Dalton was a villain, I was in his power. He owed me a large sum of money, for which I had but a slight acknowledgment, and he was on the point of procuring for me a lucrative situation. Besides, (this saving possibility suggested itself after my prudential considerations) besides, it was possible that Dalton might be the victim of appearances, strong indeed, but yet not absolute and demonstrative.

Still my nature remained violently aroused and excited. My feelings must have been vividly depicted on my features, for Dalton, on turning round, after pointing out the recess in which he had found the arms, and looking on my face, started, like a detected thief.

"Dalton," said I, "I have the best reason in the world to suppose that this unfortunate man is innocent of any ill intent whatsoever. I am certain he knew nothing of that weapon."

Dalton, taken by surprise, turned pale as a corpse. "If you have good reason to believe that," said he, "it would alter the case."

"I have," I continued, endeavouring to repress the disgust and anger which I felt, and which made my voice tremble. "I have good reason to think that they were secreted in that place by some enemy of the poor man, for the purpose of ruining him. I am sure of it," I added, fixing my eye upon him, and closing my lips hard. "There are men in this world, Dalton, passionless, heartless, lawless, selfish and cold-blooded men, who have so little feeling of the pains or pleasures of their fellow creatures, whose ears are so dull to the cry of anguish and of entreaty, whose eyes are so dim to the sights of sorrow and affliction that pass before them, whose breasts are so hard to the instincts of generosity and compassion, that, to save a single hair of their own heads, they would suffer all the interests of humanity to sink in one general ruin. I am almost disgusted with my office. Most miserable land! Despoiled, degraded, wretched, unhappy people! Which of your enemies need wish for the possession of absolute power in order to crush and torture you, when all the purposes of tyranny can be effected so secretly and so securely?"

"I can understand the meaning, but not the occasion of your

words," said Dalton, who had now perfectly recovered his impenetrability of aspect. "This is new language from you, Tracy. Are you thinking of becoming a patriot?"

"I am calculating within my own mind the number of persons whom I have dragged from their families on circumstances no more suspicious than this, and who may have been as innocent as this poor Shanahan. I hear at this moment the voices of our victims vibrating through the swell of the Atlantic, and asking me what share had justice in the motives which led me to destroy their hopes and prospects, and the light comfort of their families for ever! We were poor, they say, but we had our affections as strong and deeply seated as the wealthy, and you have snatched away from us the consolations of our poverty. We were innocent of the crimes for which we suffer a privation of the few earthly enjoyments the Almighty left us; but believing us guilty, you are only answerable for our wrongs, so far as you acted on selfish and interested motives. For these, it will one day be your fate to tremble, where we shall smile."

"You are too scrupulous a politician," said Dalton, with a horrid laugh; "it is easy to satisfy your doubts on that head. Be assured that all of that rank at present in the south of Ireland are equally guilty, and if your prisoner happened to be innocent of the charge on which you arrested him, he was yet conscious of some similar and equally grievous transgression."

"I know," said I, "that such has been the horrid principle on which our juries often bring in their verdicts of extirpation, but woe on their hard hearts and unreasoning heads! That will not justify to heaven the direct perjury and injustice which they commit. The exigencies of the time, they say, call for a less scrupulous observance of facts, where the object is to lessen the number of *possible* offenders. But conscience and nature cry, No! The makers and not the executors of the law must decide how far its rigid dicta may be violated, and they have yet given no discretionary power to our juries to condemn for a suspected and unalledged offence, while they acquit on that which is declared. The law may decimate, but not the petit juror. I have furnished victims to a self-constituted inquisition!"

"Well, well! You can enjoy your opinion. Mine is for decimation, and I avow it. I am a loyal man, and my principle is to uphold the ruling power, at whatever expense. When peace returns, let mercy and humanity return with her, and they shall be welcome, but until then, the best mercy of a good subject should be severity."

"When you and I, Dalton, are lying on our death-beds, I hope the remembrance of our loyalty will shed as sweet and quieting an influence upon our souls, as others feel at the recollection of mercy indulged, of human suffering alleviated, of days spent in relieving the wants and drying the tears of orphanage and widowhood, and of nights consumed in allaying the pains and dissipating the anxieties of sickness. But I see you are impatient."

I rose, and taking a wooden cup which lay on the painted table

near me, helped myself from a can of spring water. While I drank, the fever and tumult of my thoughts subsided, and the realities of my situation came back with a greater clearness upon my mind.

Yes, I thought, I will first withdraw myself from his power, and secure a compensation for my losses, and then I will denounce and cast him off. Until then, until I am secure from the effects of his resentment, beware, my temper, how you suffer your vulgar prejudices to appear!

I listened, mean while, to a long dissertation of Dalton's on the state of the island, on the weakness of my nature, on the gain to be acquired by activity and firmness, and other stimulating subjects. But his pains were superfluous, for I had already determined to sacrifice my consciousness of right, and enter into a compromise with treachery.

"Let our conversation for the present end with this, Dalton," I said, rising, and laying aside the hay-bottomed chair, "liberate Shanahan at once. I am answerable for his loyalty."

"It is more than enough," said Dalton, with assumed frankness and pleasure. "I shall not ask another question about the case."

We went out, and the magistrate ordered the prisoner to be set at liberty, saying that Mr. Tracy had satisfied him of Shanahan's innocence. As he turned to depart, I perceived him look on me with one of those smiles which were the usual indications of wrath and forerunners of ruin to the person on whom they fell. I understood not their meaning then, however, and troubled not my mind about it.

I was now overwhelmed with a tumult of gratulation and applause from the friends of the rescued prisoner. The people crowded round me with demonstrations of old esteem and affection revived in an instant. I was their own master once again. I had a heart after all. They knew all along it was that thief Dalton was leading me astray. Was there anything now in the wide world they could do for me? Let me only speak my mind.

The poor woman, who saw herself thus suddenly and unexpectedly restored to the enjoyment of her domestic happiness, was still more passionate in the expression of her gratitude. She embraced her husband and her children, clasped her hands, and wrung them hard, while she looked up to heaven, and then turning to me, with tears in her eyes, "May the Lord fasten the life in you!" said she, "and may this deed stand before you at the gate of heaven on another day! You were *a great mains** of bringing comfort to our house again, this mornin'." Here she raised her arms as if impelled to throw them round me, but with a rapid and modest self-recollection, she sunk to the earth and suffered them to fall round my feet. The husband, perhaps, unwilling to add to the embarrassment which I felt, contented himself with drawing his children to his side, and laying his rough hand over the silky ringlets of the youngest

* This pious distinction between the first cause and His mortal instrument is carefully observed by the peasantry.

boy, who continued to eat his way through the roast potato with an air of philosophic satisfaction and equability.

As I turned away to depart, a *hack* carriage, (a vehicle equivalent to the London Glass Coach, but having the owner's name and residence painted on the doors, and a simple cross-stick with a handful of straw substituted for a coach-box) drove rapidly by the hamlet. A yellow, languid face looked out upon me through the window, and was drawn back in an instant. The single encounter of our eyes, however, had startled me with a sudden and unaccountable feeling of recognition, and the action of the stranger would have led me to suspect that this sensation was mutual at the moment.

I felt, also, an emotion of deep shame and humiliation, which was still more mysterious than our apparently reciprocal mistake of identity. The latter, indeed, is a frequent occurrence in society. But it was its strong and singular effect upon my own mind that prevented my dismissing the circumstance altogether from my memory.

Rising early the next morning, and walking out to visit the few cultivated portions of my farm, I found that a change had taken place, in the night, which deserved to be celebrated by the flowery and fanciful pen of the renowned Johnson* himself. The whole face of the farm had been altered. My potatoes were trenched as if by magic, my turf was moulded, and cut, and footed, my broken-down hedges or *ditches*, were repaired, and all done that could be done to repair the evil which neglect and malice had occasioned. On one of the large elms,

> Whose boughs were mossed with age,
> And high top bald with dry antiquity,

the hand of the midnight enchanter had affixed the following notice, by the unworthy instrumentality of a round stone, and a few pavers or hob nails. "This is from them that knows how to reward good behavor as well as to make tyrants feel the smart. You will hear more as you desarve from Lieutenant Skin'em Alive. United office."

* Not, I apprehend, the fat and famous moralist and biographer of that name, but a man whose biography is in much greater request among the school-boy readers of the day—Richard Johnson, author of that admirable piece of history entitled, "The Seven Champions of Christendom,"

CHAPTER X.

STILL my Peelers ate on, my bacon vanished, my potato-pits were emptied, my tenants were estranged, my life threatened, Dalton's debt unpaid, my peace lost, my temper broken, my heart consumed with fear and vain expectation.

I was doubly unhappy in the indulgence of my premature calculations, as I had been vain enough to assume, in advance, all the importance to which the accomplishment of my wishes might have entitled me. The consequence was that my neighbours of my own rank were deeply offended by my arrogance. I knew enough of human nature to be aware that, on the first rumour of a disappointment, this folly would be well avenged. I had, therefore, the apprehension of approaching ruin to terrify me, without the allaying consciousness that my fall would be attended with the pity of those who knew me in better days.

Late voyagers inform us that the dreaded regions of the north, which give birth to those black tempests that fill the rest of the world with confusion, are themselves wrapt in an everlasting stillness and repose. There are human tempers in which this natural phenomenon might find its own analogy. The "sadness of the countenance" by which the heart of the offender is reproved, and all the demonstrations of that unsinning anger which virtue itself must often use for the preservation of its peace, may be found in such a one to originate in a heart that, even amid those indications of displeasure, is still calm, quiet and confiding.

Such was the unreal anger which my repeated unkindness at length drew forth from my unhappy and enduring Mary. I had refused her some moderate request to allow some poor *protégé* to fill a *cleave* [basket] of turf from our rick. She remonstrated gently on the whole train of conduct which I had pursued since my acquaintance with Dalton commenced. I spoke passionately and roughly. Satisfied with having done what she considered her duty, she was silent.

In a few days after, rather with the view of showing me that she retained no ill feeling, than with any anxiety to obtain what she asked, she made me a new and somewhat similar request. This I also refused, and with unnecessary rudeness. But her affection and her strong sense stood the trial, and she was still as cheerful and even-minded as before. Those who knew how much one single

act of intentional rudeness, one slight hurt in the affection, can do to shake the happiness of a domestic circle, will perhaps be astonished at her forbearance. But hers was something higher, better, and more disinterested than an unregulated natural affection. I thought, because she expressed nothing, that she did not feel her loss of influence, but I was soon undeceived.

We were sitting together about noon, after having spent the morning in unsocial, and on my part, churlish silence. Happening to lift my eyes suddenly to hers, I found they had been fixed on me for some time with an eager and deeply expressive meaning. It was one of those looks in which whole volumes of language are comprised. Regret, tenderness, pity, gentle upbraiding, and the heart-suffering of kindnesses unappreciated and affection unreturned, were as clearly visible in the single glance as whole hours of complaint and reproaches could have made them. It pierced at once to my heart, and filled me with shame and remorse. Our early happiness, her sacrifice of rank and wealth, her unrepining love, her care, her tenderness, were all present in a moment to my imagination. I saw all she felt, and all my own ingratitude as in a mirror. My first impulse, old as I was, would have led me to throw myself at her feet, but I feared it, and left the room.

I walked for a short time along the flagged hall, clenching my hand hard, and pressing it against my forehead in a strong feeling of pain and self-reproach, while I muttered repeatedly, "the gentle, gentle creature! What an unmannered ruffian I have been!"

Anxious to lose no time in making reparation, I re-entered the apartment, at the window of which she still maintained her musing position. I walked up and down the room, endeavouring to find some mode of breaking the subject.

"Mary," I said, at length, "you must have observed a great change in me of late."

The unusual tone of voice in which I spoke startled and made her look on me for a moment with an expression of inquiry and surprise. She even blushed, as if fearful that she had suffered her feeling of that change to become too apparent.

"Why should you think so, Abel?" said she; "what change do you speak of?"

"Ah! you must have felt that I did not treat you as you deserve. I am sensible myself that my society must have been anything but a pleasure to you; but if you knew my distractions and my anxieties I am sure you would pity me."

"I have considered them, and do pity you," she said, passionately, reaching me her hand, which I grasped and shook with warmth, while the tears streamed from her eyes. "I only wish that you could be made to pity yourself. But what peace can remain with us while you continue to expose yourself to so many dangers by provoking the anger of these people, or what wealth or distinction can repay us for anxieties like these?"

"Come," said I, "my dear monitor, the evening is beautiful. We will walk over as far as our friend Clancy's, and talk of our affairs and prospects by the way."

She rose with a gaiety of spirits which she had not displayed for a long time, and made herself ready for the promenade. As we were walking down the lawn, we heard Willy's voice calling after me. Looking round, we beheld him galloping over the grass with a pair of pistols in his hands.

"Won't you take your pistols, sir? you left them after you on the sate in the hall."

"*Seat*, I have often told you, Willy, was the word.

"*Seet*, sir. Won't you take 'em?"

"No. There is no occasion. Take them in and don't meddle with them. If Phil Fogarty were here, he would tell you that it was unlucky to call after a person who is setting out on a journey."

"Better take 'em so, sir."

"No, my lad. I'm not superstitious; and if any ill luck should happen, you may be assured that your calling after us shall be no part of its cause."

He ran home, and we continued our journey. A few minutes spent in frank and mutual interchange of confidence, completely restored our minds to that calm understanding, that perfect communion of interests and feelings in which the happiness of married life alone consists. Mary had, early on this morning, while I was still repairing the exhaustion of the previous night patrol, complied with the ancient duties of her religion, and the peace and serenity which the holy rite inspired were so visible, as almost to supply the place of the vanished bloom and freshness of her youth. I disclosed to her all my plans, prospects, and anxieties, and felt her advice and consolations falling on the fevered and restless pulses of my heart, with a healing and allaying influence. Difficulties which I had considered insurmountable were made plain and easy, Hope made to spring and flourish where Despair seemed to have established her empire, and perplexities at once unravelled by the first slight efforts of an upright and disembarrassed mind, which I thought it would be impossible ever to disentangle.

"Well! it is now at an end, and I hope for ever," said Mary; "but I will confess to you that I have had, during the last few months, moments of dreadful apprehension. I had heard much of the misery of old age, in the married life of those who entered on that season without the necessary concordance of mind and temper, and my heart sunk within me, when in faithless and selfish moments, I thought it just possible that such a lot might be our own. They were but the doubts of a moment, for I knew you too well to think that any harshness, the effect of passing circumstances, could become habitual. But all is now passed, and my breast feels as light as if a dreary and stifling nightmare had suddenly left it. I am now happy. My fears, my griefs have fled, more swiftly than the wind, before the few kind words you have spoken. My heart is free, my mind is at ease. I am now happy. The dream of the young wife may now be realised: a cheerful house, affectionate and grateful children, the unfading and minute attention of the same heart that ministered to my own the happiness of its youth; all

may now be accomplished: I have everything to hope and nothing to regret. Abel," she continued, after a sudden pause, "I have one request to make, that I have been longing to mention to you for some time. Something tells me that you will see my brother Ulick before long. I have left a small parcel directed for an old friend, in a drawer of the low-boy. If I should die before you, remember to deliver it safe on the first opportunity you may obtain."

I promised, and we continued our walk in silence.

We had now entered a narrow path, leading through a low, level field, which was covered with a species of tall reed, reaching high above our heads. We stood a moment on the earthen stile leading into this plain, to observe the effect of the declining sunlight on the undulating surface of the reeds.

On a sudden, my eye was attracted by a singular motion in the tops of the reeds, as if several living animals were traversing the field among their stems in the direction of our path. While I fixed my eyes on this circumstance, a loud scream broke from my wife, and an exclamation of—

"Fly! Abel! Abel! fly! or we are murdered!"

"Stand! Hold fast! Halt!" was pronounced by several voices as a number of men, dressed in coats of mud-coloured frieze, and variously armed, started up from the screen of the close reeds, and stood like sudden spectres upon our path.

"I am lost," I muttered. "Mary, keep close to me, my love!" I gathered her, half-fainting, to my arms. "Well, friends," I asked with an ill-feigned composure, "what is your will with us?"

"Put the lady from you," said the foremost, "and go down upon your knees."

"Mary," said I, "they do not want to hurt you. Leave me, my own saint, leave me to appease them; go aside, and pray for me. I know they will not injure you."

"You're betther hear to what he says ma'am," said one of the ruffians, "we wish you no evil. Go o' one side, and pray for him, as he bids you, for your prayer is worth more than his, either to man or heaven."

"Go," I repeated, pressing her hand and kissing it; "think of our children and leave me. Kiss them all for me; go. My poor daughter! Oh! you will curse me, if you know the form, when you learn all. But leave me. It is my only chance."

"I will never stir from this spot without you," she replied with firmness, "and if they are murderers, they may wreck their hate on both."

One of the men stepped forward, as if for the purpose of forcing her away.

"Stand back!" I exclaimed, with a sternness which made him start and grasp a rusty bayonet, that was stuck into a hay rope which bound his waist. "Stand back, if you are a man; lay not your hand upon her!" My voice grew fainter and my knees weak and trembling. "She is your friend, your constant, unchanging friend. Her voice was always uplifted for you; you are base ingrates, if you touch her; base, thankless, worthless, ingrates," I

continued, the sudden and tumultuous vacillation of my spirits hurrying me into a degree of passionate invective beyond what the occasion required. "If you lay a finger on her, you are dogs, tigers, hounds of Satan, ruffians without the capability either of revenge or of gratitude, undistinguishing cut-throats, motiveless, bloody-thirsty slaves, and no Irishmen."

"Poh, what rhamaush it is!" exclaimed the foremost, "sure we toult you we mane her no hurt. Stand o' one side ma'am, a' you plase."

"I mistook you, then," said I, gently, again, relapsing into weakness, while my eyes were almost blinded by the perspiration that flowed into and about them. "If your intentions are good, let us go our way in peace, and peace and comfort lie on yours. Good night, good fellows! If I have wronged you by any unjust suspicion, I am sorry for it, very sorry, and will be ready to make you better amends when I see you at Cushlanebeg."

"An' that's just the very place where you never 'll see us nor any body else in this world any more," said the former speaker. "Better amends! The stone jug, may be, or a walk up Ladder-lane, or a hempen cravat. Or a seven year's voyage out over the salt ocean. Good fellows! says he. Oh, you double-tongued and shameless deçaver! I know the name that you have for us in your heart: the name that Dalton taught you, an' that you larned from him ready enough. Pace be on our ways! That's the wish you wished us? Neither pace, nor plenty, nor quietness, nor comfort was in our ways or houses, since you an' the likes of you came amongst us. Come! ma'am, let go your hoult!" he added in a tremendous voice.

"What then do you intend for me?" I asked in strong fear.

"The same fate," said he, with eyes inflamed with hate, and brows knit hard above them, "the fate that poor young Shanahan met from you."

"I never harmed a hair of Shanahan's head. Do you take me thus suddenly for a crime which I never shared in?"

"You shall have the time," he said, sternly, "which you gave Shanahan."

Here a tall, huge-limbed, and flat-nosed man, armed with a heavy oak stick, and with his face and hair bathed in perspiration, sprang from the reeds, and swearing an oath at the last speaker, rushed fiercely on us. Using a strong effort, I put Mary aside, and confronted the ruffian's blow, which was broken upon my arm. Mary, in the next instant, sprang to his neck, and exerted all her feeble strength to drag him back. I saw the former speaker uplift his rusty bayonet, and was about to plunge forward and arrest its descent, when a hard and ringing blow upon my own head seemed to have set my brain on fire. My eyes flashed, my ears jingled, the whole scene vanished from my sight, and my senses became inert and lifeless.

I woke, as from a dreamless slumber, when the sun had just gone down, with a sense of stiffness and pain, which were almost insupportable. I lay among the tall reeds, on my back, and heard

the lowing of some cattle, which, attracted by the scent of blood, came snuffing inquisitively about the scene of violence. It was not without an effort that I called to mind the occasion of the position in which I lay.

"They have murdered her," was my first surmise; "or I should not have lain here until now."

The sound of several voices (among which I recognised those of McGawyl, the impetuous landlord of A——, of Doody, Clancy, and Dalton,) soon after broke upon my ear. I closed my eyes and lay still, expecting to learn the issue of our misfortune from their conversation.

"Where can they have conveyed him?" asked one; "can he have been *spirited away?*"

"Flung among the reeds somewhere, I'll go bail," replied McGawyl. "'Tis only in harvest, when the corn and the hay will be cutting, that we'll find out how many people are murther'd, these times."

"Where did you leave her?" asked Dalton. "Did you carry her to their own house?"

Her.—Who? I listened with a beating heart.

"We wor goin' there with her, sir," was the reply, "but we met young Mr. Clancy, over near the church in the fields."

"That church!" I echoed to myself; "the curse is coming down."

"And he bid us take her over to old Moran's, 'till he'd go and prepare the family about it. But there's neither tale nor tidings of the masther yet."

I held my breath to hear more, but it was not spoken. "She lives," I thought; "she has then escaped!"

"It was shocking! It was a dreadful murder!" said my poor, good friend, Clancy.

"And of a woman, too! so unmanly!" said another of the party.

I sunk back and groaned aloud. In a moment after I was discovered, and conveyed amid many vain demonstrations of condolence, to the house were the corpse of my wife was laid.

My heart beat with a fierce and vengeful delight when Dalton informed me that he had a man in custody for the deed.

"Let me see him! I shall know him among ten thousand!" I exclaimed, raising my person up from the bed with a strength which was before unknown to me.

They brought him in, and my breast sickened with disappointment. It was Moran, the poor man whose potatoes I had sold a short time before under such circumstances of hardship. Innocent as he was, the suspicious nature of the circumstances against him, and the mode of administering justice which was usual at the time, oppressed the poor old man with a thousand fears. Any common observer would, from his manner alone, have pronounced him guilty.

"Take him away!" said I, "my heart is burthened at the sight of him. He is innocent. Old man, forgive me, from your heart, the wrong that I did you. I will repair it if I live."

The virtuous and honest creature flung himself on his knees at the bed-side, and loaded me with blessings.

"What wrong could I charge again' your honour," said he, "if I was'nt light at the time? Was'nt it all your own, an' sure now I see that it was'nt without wanting it you took 'em from me. But a hungry man will say a dale that he does'nt mane."

I did not yet see my dead wife. But late at night, when the house was quiet, and I heard only the breathing of the visiters who slept on the sugan chairs around the spacious fire-place, and the occasional fall and crackling of the embers, I rose, wrapped the blue woollen quilt about my shoulders, and taking the small candle in my hand, went softly into the room where they had laid her. I closed the door, and walked towards the bedside. It was hung with white, and decorated with wreaths of primrose and damask roses. Two large mould candles burned at the foot of the bed, and as many on each side. The poor old woman, who had undertaken to watch by the corpse, overpowered with fatigue, had fallen asleep on her knees near a window, while her large horn rosary hung over the back of the chair.

All the signs of violence had been removed from the face of the corpse. I went on, perusing the details of the scene, my breast filled almost to bursting with a thousand strange and undistinguishable sensations, among which remorse, doubt, and wonder, were the principal. The face was calm, white, and even, I thought, half smiling. Encouraged by the sweetness of its expression, which made the blankness of death less terrible, I stooped over it to bestow a parting kiss on the forehead. But as I held the candle forward, the expression altered. The lips, I now saw, were chipped and dragged downward at the corners with a hideous look of pain and scorn. I started from the frightful rebuke of the dead, and hurried out of the chamber like one who fears some supernatural encounter.

CHAPTER XI.

Months rolled away. My health was quite restored. Rowan Clancy had again become a constant visitor of Ellen's, and pressed me to name the day of their union. I could not do so, for Dalton had not yet replaced the dowry of my child within my hands. I bore with him, for there was a situation of high emolument and influence about to become vacant in our county, and Dalton promised me his interest in the procuring of it. His interest was believed to be "all in all sufficient," and I did not wish to endanger my prospects for a comparative trifle.

I was seated one morning in my room, and looking out with a gaze of mournful recollection upon that field on which my first encounter with the peasantry had taken place. The consequences of that unhappy night all hurried through my memory, and the scene acquired a deep and affecting interest. It was now gay with sunshine, and fresh with the verdure of the season. The lark soared and sang, the winds blew soft, the clouds moved slowly overhead, the whole face of nature was animated by an easy and cheerful life, that stirred in every feature.

In this situation I was surprised by a visit from old Clancy, who entered, holding an open newspaper in his hand.

"Well, what think you, now," said he, "of this post that Dalton has promised to procure you?"

My ambition was all alive and active in an instant.

"I think," said I, "there is some recompence due to me, now. I have made some sacrifices for the state." And I smiled ghastlily.

Clancy took a chair, drew out his pocket handkerchief, and blew his nose with a deliberation which foreboded some important communication.

"The holder of it, an old man, was murdered a fortnight since," said he; "has anybody told you?"

"Not one. More helpless blood! What a base and cowardly crew, my friend, are those who undertake to redress the oppressions of the people! Who are the tyrants that they destroy? the oppressors they remove?—the old, the gentle, the timid, the infirm. The Daltons and Skerrits, the daring and fearless scourges of the people, may ride in safety through the land, but their helpless grandsires, or unoffending wives—forgive me, my friend, I am troublesome to you."

"Did not Dalton make you aware of it?"

"I take it much unkindly that Dalton has never once visited me since the beginning of the month."

"Well, of all men in the world," said Clancy, "or of all things in the world—and sure 'tis full of queer men and queer things enough—but I say of all men or all things in this world, the last thing that I'd suspect is that Dalton could ever think of doing anything unhandsome by you."

"Poh! neither do I. I suppose he was advancing my interest in other quarters, but he might have found a moment to see me. Ah! my dear friend Clancy, between you and me, that man has brought many a heavy hour upon my heart. He meant all well, I know, and therefore it is not easy for me to entertain ill feeling against him, but oh, I have suffered deeply, deeply to his acquaintance! Ah, Clancy, he never can make amends for what has been done. He will put me in possession of wealth and influence, but what is that? It will, indeed, enable me to make my children happy, to enlarge my poor daughter's dowry, and relieve your noble Rowan of some embarrassments that might otherwise encumber him. But for myself there is little positive enjoyment remaining in the world."

Clancy remained for a moment leaning forward in his chair, and

gently striking with the end of his cane a *creerawn* [small piece] of turf which lay on the floor.

"Are you sure," said he, "that Dalton gave you distinctly to understand that he was soliciting this office for you, and not himself?"

"Himself!" I exclaimed, pausing in a stupor of amazement, and endeavouring to account for this strange question by some circumstance in the manner of my visitor. "What, my good friend, can be your opinion of my common sense, when you ask such a question as that? Do you suppose that I would have sacrificed my time, my property, my health, my comfort, everything that I possessed, to forward the interest of Dalton, on a vague and uncertain prospect of advantage to my own family? Would I have given up the enjoyment of a self-approving heart? Look hither, Clancy! In wealth or in poverty, my fate is fixed for the future. I have become one of the scourges and oppressors of my countrymen. Other, and distant tyrants, may say they saw not the evil which they made: they struck blindly and in the dark, they knew not what they did. But I had full knowledge of all the woe that I inflicted. The groans of the oppressed were in my ears, the sight of their misery was before my eyes, the wronged, the houseless, the naked, the starving, the unprotected and defenceless, were passing continually before and around me, but I shut the doors of my better nature against them, and sacrificed everything to my own selfish views. I have seen fathers torn from their families, innocent hearths made desolate, the judgments of the law inflicted on the unoffending, and punishments appointed only for extremity, used as preventives; and I said not a word, nor made an effort to arrest the evil, lest my own interests should suffer. I put a curb upon my heart and resolved to hack and hew my way to office through the oppressions of my fellow-beings. The corruption of grand juries, their shameless unblushing, open-eyed plunder of the poor; their mean and despicable jobbing; their low, and cowardly, and sharper-like cross-play into each others hands; the oppression of all, from the legislature which frames a law, to the vilest constable who puts its provisions in effect against the people, all have shocked my observation, and yet have stirred no availing sympathy within my heart. I fixed the eye of my ambition upon this single object, and have suffered, sacrificed, and sinned more deeply to obtain it, than those perhaps have done who strove for the dominion of the world. It is not the greatness of the thing desired, but the inordinacy of the desire itself that makes the interval between the first impulse of ambition, and its accomplishment or failure, one hideous dream of agony, fear, meanness, guilt, suspicion, and impatience. There has been more human happiness sacrificed to procure me this office which I expect, that I could ever restore in a situation of far more extensive influence."

The good man lifted his hands with an expression of pity and terror.

"And what," said he, "if you had made all those sacrifices in vain?"

"In vain?"

"Yes, in vain."

"I already intimated to you, that I had some security for my hopes."

"And what was that? Dalton's honesty, perhaps?"

"No, something more certain."

"What?"

"His cowardice. Dalton knows me. He has had frequent experience how much I can dare, when my soul is roused. He knows that I would put no consequence whatever in the balance when I meditated a fearful vengeance. He knows that I would as soon take him by the throat and strangle him in the public daylight street, if he wronged me in this, as I would strike a cur out of my way. There is not a man on earth who knows me, who would venture on so mad a trick."

"Heaven forbid that you should ever dream of such revenge, and forgive you for this shocking language! You are greatly altered, Abel."

"So I am."

"But what would be your course, supposing that you were disappointed after all?"

"I don't know. Go mad and hang myself, I suppose."

"Heaven forbid!"

"Heaven, I fear, would do nothing in the case. I could not even hope for that aid for which I have ceased to pray or even to wish."

"Yet the Almighty hand is not always closed to those who do not ask. You did not solicit the blessing of your creation and of your immortality."

"Ay, but neither had I then made myself unworthy of the benefit."

"If the worthy alone were to be made the objects of divine bounty, how very seldom would it descend upon this bad world! You can lose nothing by hoping, even to the last."

"Well, I pray you, friend Clancy, let me hope in silence. What is the end of all this?"

"You may have been mistaken in Dalton."

"Speak out, man!" I exclaimed, bursting into a fit of loud anger, which I was no longer able to controul. "Speak out at once, and let me hear this secret, whatever it is, which is now oppressing you. What has he done? What am I yet to learn? Am I to be hanged, or transported, or burned at a stake, or what? Tell me your news at once."

"I will, I will, friend, if you'll allow me to open my mouth. Dalton himself is appointed to that office which he promised to you. There it is for you, in print, on the second column, under the Dublin head. They mention, too, his having arrived yesterday at the Hibernia Hotel, in Waterford."

His words, as he uttered them, seemed to transform me into stone. The muscles of my face relaxed, my limbs stiffened, my breast, tightened almost to a sense of suffocation, and for a long time I remained gaping on the speaker, attempting to repeat the

substance of his intelligence aloud, but only moving my jaws with a vain effort like one who strives to speak in a terrified slumber.

Clancy appeared alarmed by the strong effect which he saw my disappointment produce. While he went on, endeavouring to find some motive for fortitude in my situation, all its circumstances rushed powerfully and clearly upon my mind, now somewhat recovered from the stunning and stupifying influence of its first shock.

"My daughter!" I exclaimed, in a low, thick whisper, unconscious of a listener; "my poor, lost daughter!"

"If you suppose that any change of fortune can alter our wishes with respect to Ellen," said the generous Clancy, "you neither know Rowan nor me." But I heard or heeded him not, then. It was long afterwards I remembered that he had said so.

"My miserable children!"

"They shall live with me until you are more at ease."

"My murdered Mary!"

"Be comforted, Tracy. She has escaped the sight of your sorrows, and is happy. Her prayers will restore your peace and happiness before long."

"Oh, my burthened soul! my lost peace! my wretched, ruined friends! What! had he no feeling? He saw as plainly as I did the misery that overhung our threshold: a threshold that care never entered, until he pointed the way. Has he no gratitude? The black villain! He shared the hospitalities of our hearth and board night after night, day after day; we denied him nothing that was ours to give; he enjoyed with us the confidence of a brother. The black villain! I knew him to be a selfish and vindictive wretch, but I could not think that he would sacrifice a whole family to a transitory convenience; that he would seem to be our friend, and destroy us without motive or provocation. Had he no fear? Fear! He shall have, if he has not yet. He shall have cause for fear."

Clancy's horse, which he had fastened at the hall door, here gave an impatient neigh, as if weary of the long conference in which his master was indulging.

"Clancy," said I hastily, "lend me your horse."

"For what purpose?"

"No matter; will you oblige me?"

"Certainly, he is at your service, but you must not leave me in ignorance of your movements."

"I am going to find Dalton, and ask him for a sum of money which he owes me."

"Not in your present mood. You must not go now," He caught my arm.

"Stand back, old man, or I will strike you down and trample on you! Am I a child, a fool, or a pet lap dog, that I cannot act upon my own will?— Forgive me, good Clancy, but my temper is grown quite infirm and feeble, and you should not cross it. I am going to dun a bad debtor, that is all."

"If I could think so—"

"Now, in the sight of our Creator, friend, I declare to you I have no worse intent. I may, perhaps, unburthen to him the bitterness of my broken heart. I may, perhaps, ask him why he sought me out in my happy and untempted solitude, to ruin me for this world, and put me in peril for the next; I may show him the evil he has done, and expose to him the agony to which he has given birth, but I have no purpose of laying a violent hand upon him; I may speak daggers to this domestic traitor, but I will use none."

"How can you answer for what the sudden temptation may bring to pass? Remember the intemperate menace which you flung out even before you thought that it was possible Dalton could have acted as he has done."

"I find it is the same in anger as in grief. Injuries as well as misfortunes, which in prospect would appear to be wholly insupportable, become light and easy on experience, and fail to produce the extremity of excitement which we apprehended. I am calmer, much calmer now, than I thought it possible I could have been under such a provocation. I am not a liar, nor a hypocrite. If I wished to go with a bad intent, you could not hinder me."

"It is enough," said Clancy, tossing his head back, as if giving up the contest, "I can do no more. Heaven, I hope, will restrain you, for I do not think it is in the power of man to do so."

Let it not be supposed from what followed that I was really so mean as intentionally to deceive the good old man. I did then believe as I said, that my resentment was moderate, and that I held the reins of my temper firmly in my grasp, but the hour of passion is not the most favourable for self-examination. The storm was gathering its strength, and I mistook it for a calm.

CHAPTER XII.

As I placed my foot in my stirrup, old Moran, in whose house I had passed the first fortnight after my wound, passed by our house, returning from work, with his spade upon his shoulder, and his aged brow pale and moist with the labour of the morning.

"I wish you joy, masther," he said, "that you're able to take the air o' the mornin' again."

"Thank you, Moran. Come hither. I never made you any recompence yet for the care you took of me when I was ill. I am going from you for a short while (as I intend); but, in times like these, when a man passes his threshold it is impossible to say whether his returning shadow will ever darken it again."

"Heaven is good, sir; heaven is good! Sure enough, a man's life is not in his own hands, and when his hour is come, an' heaven pleases to call him, all the wayp'ns, or guns, or soords, or pistols, or doctors, or muddecines, or precautions, on airth, won't keep him from it, an' he'll be just as safe in the thick o' the fair as by his own fire-side; witness meself, that was all as one as transported for seven years, without stirring from my own harth-stone to desarve it, and laving a small family afther me, and a gale's rent due, were it not for your honour that saved us all, for which we will always pray, an' ever did, night an' mornin', for all manner of blessings upon you an' yours, for evermore, during duration."

"I thank you, my honest friend, but I neither doubt the goodness nor the power of heaven. I only doubt my own worthiness of its favour, and lest, in its wisdom, a heavy punishment should be awarded to myself, I wish to prevent those to whom I owe gratitude from sharing in my evil day. Here is a sovereign, it is the last I have in the world, or I should be ashamed to offer you so little. If I live, Moran, I will remember you more effectually than that."

I put my foot in the stirrup, and was about to raise the other leg from the ground, when I suddenly felt it grasped with a prodigious force, which presently brought me again to earth, and nearly endangered my equilibrium. Looking around, in much surprise, I observed my host standing close behind, with a flushed and offended cheek, an eye in which grief was mingled with anger, and lips pressed hard together, (as though he feared some extraordinary force was necessary to prevent some passionate expression.) He caught my hand, pressed the sovereign into the palm, shut my fingers down upon it, squeezed my clenched hand between both his, as one would shut a box hard, and then turning round in silence, and throwing his spade on his shoulder, walked from the house.

"Stay, Moran," said I, "what's the matter?"

He turned round, and struck his spade with vehemence into the earth.

"Oh, matther! fie, for shame! I didn't think you'd do that at all."

"Why so?"

"If there was a poor man goen' the road, an' his enemy met him there abroad, an' bet him, an' left him kilt upon the place, an' I took him in, an' looked afther him, an' hailed him, an' cured him for the love o' the Almighty only, do you think I'd deprive my soul o' the benefit o' that good deed another day, by taking payment after? If that man was my own landlord, an' I an' ould follyer, 'm sure a Turk wouldn't take his money, let alone a Christian and an Irishman."

"You are a good man, Moran, but do not talk to me of Irishmen, I am an Irishman myself, but I have ceased to take a pride in the name."

"An' why so, Mr. Abel, a-chree? Oh! don't say that at all. There's enough talken again' the poor counthry, without you an' I

that was born an' bred in the heart of it, unitin' with 'em. Bad is the name we bear among them that judge without knowen us, an' why would we make it worse?"

"They were Irishmen," said I, with more warmth than I at first intended, "they were Irishmen that murdered Mary Tracy!"

"I deny it, begging your honour's pardon!" the old man exclaimed, with a zealous flush upon his fine countenance. "I deny it, out o' the face, bodily, and for ever! A set o' poor boys are distressed an' sazed, an' driven out o' house an' home, without either country, or carakter, or religion, an' they grow desparate, an' go fairly astray, an' their doings are to be charged upon the country after! There's no people under the sun, sir, that could stand that. They were no Irishmen that murdered the mistress, (heaven rest her happy soul this day!) an' kilt yourself. They had no stake in the country. But it was an Irishman, a credible responsible Irishman, though I say it, that tuk you in, an' refused your purse. Fair play all the world over. When you tell one story, don't forget the other."

I rode on, leaving my patriotic host to enjoy the proud consciousness of having successfully vindicated the good name of his native island, while I turned my thoughts to a more engrossing subject.

"He has destroyed me!" I exclaimed, uncovering my head, and looking upward into the blue immensity of space above me. "He has left no room for exertion, no limit, no point of probable expectance; no resting place upon which the eye of hope may repose, in the far-stretching prospect of the future, more than my sight finds in that cloudless space above me; he has taken away the motive for my industry, and the consolation of my toil; he has made enemies of many who were indifferent to me; he has made those indifferent who were my friends; he has made my name accursed in the mouths of the people; he has robbed, he has duped, he has mocked, he has destroyed me! But I will cherish no revenge for that. It was his infirmity, and my folly and avarice, that wrought my ruin. My credulity was my own sin, and it is just that I suffer for it. Behold and judge me now, Almighty and offended Being! that there is no violent design in my heart against him. I seek him only for the purpose of recovering from him that which is my own, for the sake of those who are dearer to me than I am to myself. Protect, and aid, and govern me, therefore, that I may be hurried by no circumstance into the violation of laws which I desire not to transgress."

Even while I prayed, I felt a secret consciousness that my motives were not so reasonable and general as I declared them to be, and conscience, or the answering inspiration of heaven, whispered to me that I was tempting the danger; that I ought to wait a calmer hour, and appoint a less perilous medium of communication with my enemy than a personal interview. But I repressed the counsel, and pressing my hat down on my temples, soon lost the voice of the monitor in the tramp of my horse-hoofs.

Fathers! injured and ruined fathers! to you alone, among men,

it belongs to judge me! Children, read on, and be warned, but judge me not until you are fathers, and ruined! I wish not to justify a procedure that cannot be justified by the truth, but waste not all the forces of your mind in simple detestation. Be terrified for yourselves, and charitable and compassionate to me!

CHAPTER XXIII.

HEATHS, mountains, bogs; cities, towns, villages; lakes, rivers, castles; round towers, and mud cabins, now flew by me in a varied and rapidly evolving panorama. I passed those lakes in which the peasant can discern, in clear summer days, when the heat has lowered the surface of the waters, in indistinct and perplexing glimpses, the shadows of towers, palaces, and gardens; the dwelling places of those happy beings who enjoy the delights of an unfading health and vigour, among the ever blooming regions of the country of youth. I passed the wilds of Tipperary, where the clouds descended almost close upon my path, and a dreary wind whistled through the fields of vapour, while vast tracts of gray crag, and heath and brushwood, extended on either side. I changed horses at Clonmel, and after a few hours' sleep in my clothes, continued my journey. I rode along the banks of the narrow and winding Suir, which I thought as interminable as a Connemara avenue. I crossed the wooden bridge of Waterford. I trotted along the spacious quay, passed its magnificent chapel: a vast building, which, as I have heard of some fine pieces of architecture in London, is lost and buried among a conflux of miserable lanes and alleys.

The sight of the words "Hibernia Hotel," emblazoned on the front of a handsome house, soon caught my eye, and made my heart bound with a fierce expectation. I galloped up to the door, threw myself off the horse, and ascended the steps. A smart waiter met me in the hall with a napkin in his hand, bowing and retiring as if to marshal me in."

"Stay, friend," said I; "is there a Mr. Dalton in your house?"

"A low, fat man, sir?"

"No; a tall, thin man, red faced, with a wicked smile about his mouth, dressed in a white coat, and russet spatterdashes."

"No, there is not, sir," said the man.

"Yes, it is false! there is," was my rejoinder.

He stared at me with a look of sudden anger, and then of caution and distrust. "There was such a person here yesterday, sir," he resumed, "but he set off this morning for Limerick."

"That's false again!" I said, greatly exasperated, "and if I find him here, I will fling you headlong into the street."

I passed him, and hurried through the various apartments like a hungry bear, while the bewildered Ganymede went to inform his master, "that there was a cracked gentleman rampaiging the house from top to bottom, seeing would he get a tall thin man to murder."

My search was vain, and I remounted and left the city without a moment's delay. The disappointment, the heavy consciousness that I had wearied myself to no purpose, made the journey homeward one continued occasion of anger and vexation.

The dusk of the following evening beheld me with stiffening limbs, and an aching head, riding slowly into the city of Limerick, where I accidentally met with an old acquaintance. I passed through one of the narrow streets of the old town, in order to find out the house of a former tenant of mine, who kept a feather and skin shop in that part of the city. It was on market day, and the scene was equally remarkable for bustle and dinginess. The street, badly paved, and ancle deep in black mire, was covered with small wooden tables, extending nearly the whole length, on which were exposed for sale pig's pettitoes, ears, knees, tongues of beef, iron and brass nails, huge cakes of coarse griddle bread, heads of cabbage, scissors and smoothing irons, locks, onions, sickles, gingerbread, Saint Patrick's brogues, and other articles of humble luxury as well as use. Booths were hung with shawls and handkerchiefs, striped heavy woollen waistcoats, and beads of glass and horn. In one corner was an old woman herding a basket of withered apples, in another was a half starved, ragged family, endeavouring to procure a few pence to pay for a night's lodging, by singing, in grand chorus a satirical effusion on the new ambition which had possessed the cottage belles, of figuring in "drab mantles and cassimer shawls." The space left between the booths and tables was crowded with country people, habited in various, and some in grotesque, costumes. A woman was seen with her husband's new felt hat, thrust, for the sake of convenience, down upon her own cap and ribbons. A man who had made a similar purchase, with a ludicrous economy, forbore to strip the article of the paper in which it was made up, and walked through the street unconscious of his comical appearance, and unheeded by those around him.

As I passed onward, an eccentric yet shocking spectacle attracted my attention. Two hags, both of them palsied, ragged, and apparently needing only a moderate breeze to puff them into dust, were walking together near the channel of the street. They were conversing, but in so low and feeble a tone, that I could not gather the meaning of a single word, until I had drawn perfectly close to them. I then discovered, with astonishment, that they were not only deeply engaged in reciprocal invective, but that the cause of controversy between them was some question of the comparative attractions of both in their youthful days. It mattered little, one would have thought, which of the two possessed a superiority which had long ceased to be distinguishable. But they were not of this

mind, and the contest of malice and envy between them could not have been more bitter if they had been still in full possession of their youth and all its charms.

"Where! ye tawny-faced hag!" said one, "where would you get a white skin, that hadn't the price of a ha'p'orth o' soap to wash the black o' ye'r yellow cheeks on a Saturday night, afther wiping your withered paws on them, for want of a rubber, the whole week before?"

"I washed them," said the other woman, who was supporting herself on a staff as she walked, and spoke with much difficulty, though with heartful bitterness and spleen, "I washed them in potato-wather and a grain o' male, a thing that was far wholesomer than soap suds, as them will tell you that has a right to know. Tawny-face, inagh? My face then or now is fairer than yours, leather-browed hound; if I had a setting-stick, I might stick* *skil-lanes* [seed-potatoes] in the ridges o' your face, an' ax no manure to make 'em grow aither."

"Gid out," replied the other (I forbear to transcribe the hand-some epithets which with their discourse was interwoven and en-riched), "gid out o' my sight! You may remember well the day when there was a wager laid and won betune two gentlemen at the fair o' Killarney, that I had the whitest skin of air a girl in the fair, and you were sitting opposite 'em, on the shaft of a cart, with your two crooked eyes, as if you wor born in the middle o' the week, looking both ways for Sunday."

"I look," retorted the other, aroused from her exhaustion by this sneeringly fanciful allusion to a certain cast in the eyes, of which she was not innocent, "I look as straight as you did the day in Brian Doherty's barn when we were both winnowing his corn, an' he bid me lay the dildorn by, an' give him my hand, an' that I need never walk a-foot again, but that I'd have a horse fit for a lady to ride upon, if it was only to trot round the fire to look for the tongs; an' you standen by, ready to burst, when you hard me refuse his offer, because I gave my hand an' word to Dan Shanahan long before."

"And what did you do with Shanahan when you got him?" cried the beldame, who appeared to be losing ground in the argument, and therefore became the more exasperated. "You never stopt at him till you made him a murtherer, till he riz a hand against his own father; an' for fear that wasn't enough, you took his son an' brought him up to the gallows, where you'll folly him yourself be-fore your doings are at an end, an' there 'tis for you, as flat as a tinker's bib."

While she was making this speech her antagonist moved closer, and laying her withered and trembling hand upon her shoulder, gave her a push, feeble indeed, but yet sufficient to overset the balance of the last speaker, and leave her sprawling on her back in the mire like a captured turtle. A crowd of boys and men who were passing, joined in one shout of exulting admiration at this ex-

* Plant.

ploit. Cries of "Fair play! fair play!" passed round. The fair unfortunate was uplifted, and a ring made for the combatants, who, with eyes flashing a vain and useless fire, hands feebly clenched, lips panting from exhaustion, and limbs every instant threatening to prove false to their charge, commenced a disgusting manual combat. Age and weakness, rather than any positive injury either could inflict, rendered the contest brief, and at the same time dangerous. Before I could descend from my horse and penetrate the crowd, a second shout announced the discomfiture and fall of one of the parties.

I pressed my way through the crowd, continuing to hold my horse by the rein. A confused murmur of a deeper and more startling nature succeeded the bursts of brutal laughter, which those persons uttered who were proceeding a second time to raise the vanquished fair one from her ignoble position. As I looked upon the poor wretch, the cause of their sudden alteration of manner became apparent. The woman was dying. Her yellow and blood-shot eye-balls turned in their sockets with an expression of strong agony; her wasted fingers were clenched, as if in pain, and with a short groan, she expired in the arms of the populace, a martyr in her old age to a question of female vanity.

Vacillating and variable as the inclinations of an infant, the approbation and encouragement of the people were now turned into rage against the perpetrator of an outrage which they, more than she, had contributed to render fatal. She was struck, dragged to and fro, cursed and abused, and in spite of my efforts, would, I believe, have shared a worse fate than had befallen her unhappy rival, if at that instant one of the satellites of his worship, the mayor, in all the awful authority of his cocked hat, blue civic livery, and shining yellow velveteen under garment, had not made his way through the mob, and striking back with his stick a country fellow who was in the act of throttling the old woman, took her into his own custody.

"I wisht I had you at the fair of Ballingerry," said the smitten man; "I'd put a bulge in your dandy Caroline for you."

The man in office looked terrible, and shook the tassel of his cocked hat at the audacious speaker.

As he conducted his prisoner away, her eye met mine, and an instant recognition was the consequence. The disgraceful situation in which she was placed appeared for a moment to oppress her with shame and a consciousness of the justice of my former recrimination on the subject of her son's death. Hatred, however, speedily recovered its habitual mastery over the temper of this unfortunate, and she said, with a smile of bitter satisfaction—

"Has the ould woman's curse any virtue in it, Abel Tracey? I'm tould you proved it, since I was talking to you last."

I would not answer, but I looked steadfastly in her eyes, then back towards the corpse, and then to heaven. She understood the rebuke, and grew wild with fear and anger.

"'Twas all your doing," said she, "yours and Dalton's, pah!"

She stooped down, unable to find words to express all the violence of her dislike, and caught up, in her skinny fingers, a handful of the black mire at her feet. I was sufficiently prudent to decline any farther altercation with a person who was capable of employing so practical a species of invective. The inelegant missile, however, had already been discharged into the air, with all the feeble force which the hag was capable of using. Finding the spot evacuated where I should have been, it dispersed itself, and passing onwards, greeted, with an unwelcome violence, no less an object than the person of the Right Worshipful Monarch of the Corporation himself, who, attracted by the noise and crowd, was at that instant picking his steps over the pavement with a delicate and dignified precision, dressed in an irreproachable suit of black, with a magnificent gold chain and wand of state. The populace could not suppress a shout of laughter at this untoward quid pro quo, though many were of opinion that it would go hard with the prisoner in consequence.

While I stood holding the rein of my steed, and preparing to mount, I heard a mournful voice, close behind, repeat the last word of the murderess in an accent of deep and piercing anguish. "Dalton!" she exclaimed, "ah! then, may heaven remember you, Dalton, and your behaviour to me, when your last friend is forsaking you in your day of sorrow!"

"Another victim?" I said, turning round with an emotion of horror and of pity. I perceived by the light of a dim oil lamp, which had been just visited by the torch of the nimble-footed distributor of light, a poor woman seated in a corner, to which the diminished daylight could not penetrate. Her costume, a gray cloak, with the hood thrown over her head, showed that she belonged to that degraded and abandoned class of persons, who, in the provincial towns of Ireland, are accustomed to carry on in shame and in darkness, a traffic that, in London, walks as openly as innocence itself upon the noonday street.

"Do you know anything of Mr. Dalton, then?" I asked.

The woman raised her head and discovered a face which was emaciated from disease and famine. Her features had some traces of regularity, and even of a coarse beauty in their outline, but her eyes were dull and red, and her whole frame exhaled a strong odour of whisky.

"Anything of him?" she repeated, gazing on me. "I know he promised to send one to me here to-night, with the price of something that would keep the breath in my body, but he deceived me," she added with a heavy sigh, "as he often done before."

"Where did you see him?" said I, more anxious to obtain the information on my own account, than on hers.

"Convenient to the bridge of Annacotty, at nightfall, yesterday evening, an' he coming on the Watherford road. I'll tell you where he is now, if it be a thing you want to know, so as you give me one tuppence for a glass o' whisky. I'm ready to drop with the drooth."

"Poor creature!" said I, "poor lost wretch! would not a little

substantial nourishment be more acceptable and needful to you than whisky!"

"'Tis'nt so chape," was her reply, "an' the benefit of it is longer coming round, an' besides I'm used to the other, now. Who'd gi' me the price of a loaf when I find so few to lay out one tuppence itself with me?"

"Have you no friends?"

"Ask Dalton that," she replied, with a painful laugh. "I had friends once, an' not so long ago naither. I left them one morning to go to the races again' their bidding, an' I met Dalton there, and I never seen 'em afther. See 'em? Oh! what am I saying? I did to be sure. Look at this penny-piece. Who gave me that, do you think? My brother! Just while ago (an' I did'nt see him for seven years before), he walked up there, an' I axed him a charity before I knew who he was. Little he thought who he was talking to. Oh! Dalton, you have a dale to answer for! Quiet an' happy I was once by my brother's hearth-stone. There you found me, an' here I am!"

"Why do you not make an effort to return to your people?"

"Ah! sir, the shame of it is too great. There is'nt one in our parish was ever guilty of the like except myself, an' if I went back now I should have to stand in a white sheet oppozzite the chapel doore, before all the girls that knew me in former times, an' wouldn't spare me, may be, when my neck would be under their feet."

"You have just witnessed," said I, "a frightful instance of the effects of that foolish vanity; so that if you really feel your heart moved with so salutary an impulse, I caution you not to resist it from any selfish consideration, for it is a grace that should be treasured like gold by one in your condition. Poor mistaken girl! you are tender of your good name after a strange fashion. There may be shame in guilt, but believe me, there is nothing but glory, and honour, and profit, and peace, in penitence."

She paused for some moments. "I believe it's true for you, sir," she replied, "but supposing I wished it, how am I to make my way out?"

I deliberated a moment, and then suddenly turning, hailed a a countryman, who was driving an empty *truckle* (or car supported on a wooden axle-tree,) over the rough pavement. He sat sidewise on the horse's crupper, with his legs on the shaft, a cord whip in one hand, and the hair collar (or halter) in the other. He touched his hat, which was chalked all over with the account of the price, weight, beamage, &c. of the corn bags which he had disposed of that day at market, and pulled up his home-sick steed with a prolonged and forcible "Pruh—ru—h!"

"Hallo, honest man!"

"Here, sir, by your lave!"

"Do you go to-night through ——?" (Sweet village! I will not name your name until I can interweave it with some more amiable association.)

"Go through it? No, I don't. But I go to it, an' I come from

it, and I live in the heart of it, and I never will deny it. Have you anything to say to itself or to me?" Here he flourished his whip about my head, and broke into the popular chorus—

"Oh! I never will deny,
Till the day I die,
That I was reared an Irish town boy,
And a rovin' sportin' hero!"

"I have nothing to say to you," said I; "but here is a poor woman who wishes to take a seat in your empty car as far as that place. She will pay you any reasonable price for your care of her, and I am sure you're an honest man by your face."

"Not a rap, now. Indeed she won't, as much as one rap. But I'll take her out there for nothing, an' welcome, if she's agreeable, and I'll break that man's head that says a word again' her, or any of *her people*, while she's under my care, an' what more can I say if she was my own sisther.

And Johnny Connell is tall and sthraight,
And in his limbs he is complate,
He'd fire a gun of any weight
From Garryowen to Thomond gate.

See there's the bags between her and the bottom o' the truckle, where she can sit as comfortable as if she was in a coach and six, without a pin difference."

"May you be blessed for this!" the poor woman exclaimed, after I had placed a few tenpennies in her hand, before the car drove away, "and if you want Dalton, as you were talking of him, you'll find him this night in A——."

I had already conjectured this, and was not sorry to hear my anticipations confirmed. Wearied as I was, and pained in mind and frame, the near prospect of an interview with my destroyer was sufficient to give new fire to my purpose. I remounted my steed, rode rapidly through the half ruined outlets of the city, and after less than two hours' moderate riding, beheld the black and ivy-clad ruins, and lonely river of the village, at a short distance. Overpowered by the host of mournful recollections that crowded on my mind, as I approached this familiar scene, I drew up my horse for a moment on the echoing bridge, to contemplate its features at leisure.

They were revealed by a strong yet thin and mellowing glow of moonlight. On either side of the bridge, an old and ivied structure, the river swept beneath a handsome wood. A little further down, a considerable number of trees, standing on the level bank which was overflowed by the spring tide, had their trunks washed by the waveless flood, and seemed to grow out of the stream. The faithful reflection of their foliage in the element, and of a few "reed-girt" islets, which broke the view at a greater distance, the solemn majesty of an extensive ruin, which was contrasted on one bank to a modern edifice and neatly-disposed garden on the other, the broken silver of the moonlight which was scattered over the scene, and the sudden and forcible contrasts of light and shade, completed

on this side a picture which had an air of fairy elegance and splendour. A nearly similar landscape presented itself on the upper side of the bridge, with a distant plain (our ancient field of exercise) and ruminating cattle. The number of agitating events which had crowded the brief interval, made it appear almost as long as that between age and youth.

The numerous lights which still burned in the windows of the village, furnished a sufficient intimation that I had arrived in good time for my purpose. I rode along the same street which I had passed in company with my now despised and forsaken corps of yeomanry a few months before. A few minutes brought me to the door of McGawyl's public-house, where I determined to make some inquiries before I should proceed further in my search.

Before the door, a number of cars, on their way home from market, were thrown back on their shafts, while the horses were untackled and suffered to replenish their vigour by groping in bags tied about their heads, for a mouthful of corn at the bottom. Their masters, in the mean time, as I could make a sharp guess, from the sounds of mirth and jollity which proceeded from the interior, did not neglect themselves while they provided for the wants of their cattle. The sound of the bagpipe, sorely maimed in its execution, indeed, but yet sufficiently audible, caught my ear and awakened a startling association. A few quavers and nasal squeals were sufficient to enable me to recognise the favourite Alexander's March of our discarded piper, poor Fogarty. I dismounted, with an aching heart, for though I never relished Phil Fogarty's music very highly, the associations it brought to my recollection at this moment rendered it more deeply impressive than the sound of the Ranz des Vaches in the dreaming ear of a long exiled Swiss.

Flinging the rein of my horse over the latch of the door, I entered the house, and approached the kitchen, in which the greater portion of the company were assembled. The vehement and expostulatory voice of the good host was heard, loud above the din, commanding, but yet far from maintaining, that decorous order which he deemed most creditable to his house.

"Not a drop more, now, Brian," I heard him say to one countryman, who, with both arms laid lovingly over his shoulders, and a most engaging smile, was using his most convincing rhetoric to obtain an additional potation from his host. This, however, was contrary to the principle of McGawyl, who used to take a pride in saying that, although he had "kep house in the village for as good an' better than eight years, there never was a man drunk, that is to *say* drunk, inside his doore, excepting he got the mains of it somewhere else." The person who at this moment endeavoured to prevail on him to infringe his settled principle, was in that aërial state of mind which McGawyl considered as the utmost possible limit to which sobriety could be extended. He was still, however, "not to say drunk."

"Not a drop more, Brian, now, an' don't ax me. You have enough already, an' more than you want."

"But, listen here!" he drew McGawyl close, as if with the intention of communicating to him some important secret ——"whisper hether, I tell you! I want to be talking to you. 'Tis'nt the liquor at all; but—but you see, I have something to talk to you about. Look now, Thady McGawyl, I love you! See now; take it from me, I'm your friend. Where's the man, gentle or simple, that 'll say a word against you behind your back, an' I looking on?"

"I don't doubt it, Brian; I'm sure you're a good friend."

"Ah, putt, what! man, you don't know half. I declare, Thade, I love you; I declare now I'm fond o' you. Look, in my very heart within." As he said this, in order to testify the reality of his esteem, the wheedling Brian threw his arms about the neck of his friend, and their unshaven cheeks were joined in brotherly salutation.

"Come, get the drop o' drink now, and let us come here near the fire and talk a while," said the persevering customer.

"Now, Brian, I tell you, don't speak o' that at all, for it is a thing I can't do, and that's once for all."

"Murder an' ages, man!" roared out Brian, now quite exasperated. "Is it to beg, borrow, or stale it from you I want? Hav'nt I the money here to pay for that I take, like a gentleman?"

"It's all one. That's the very reason; you're *hearty* now, an' you don't care what you lay out, but you'd think defferent of me in the morning, when you'd put your hand in your pocket an' find your money gone, an' your landlord, Mr. Dan Danaher, calling on you for your rent."

"That's my business, and not your's."

"'Tis mine, too, Brian, for I'm your friend."

"Will you give the whisky?"

"Take it for nothing any other time, but I won't rob you, now!"

"Isn't this a poor case? I tell you, you shall an' must give it, now!"

"I tell you I won't, again."

"You won't!"

"I won't."

"Is that the way of it? Very well, why! Look at this, now, Thade; I won't curse or swear, but if ever I darken the thrashold o' your doore again, you may call me an honest man!"

As he said these words, he turned round in deep anger, struck his hat down upon his head, gathered his huge frieze great coat about him, tucked the tail of it up under his left arm, and strode out of the house with such an air of offence that a stranger might suppose the friendship, so warmly insisted on a few moments before, to be now for ever broken. But the honest host, who had frequently experienced the brevity of those mortal enmities, and knew that he never yet lost a friend through his care of their interests, contented himself with saying, while he smiled and tossed his head—

"Wisha, then, joy be with you, but you're a foolish boy, and that's your name this night."

He then proceeded to procure some degree of quiescence among his guests, reminded them to take care of their passes, not to be

caught in the lurch like the yeomanry, when the "pathrowl" would be coming round. The "pathrowl," he said, should do their duty, and if a man got a pass and lost it, and was brought to a pass about it, he had nobody to blame but himself. He concluded a most loyal speech with a high eulogium on the police, which contrasted in a very singular manner with the language he had used to us a few months previous. But it was part of his character, on which he piqued himself, to exercise a continual kind of independent and undisguised treason of this nature towards all parties.

Turning round, and walking to the door of the shop (or bar, as it is called in England), he suddenly encountered me in the passage, and started back with as lively an expression of terror and astonishment as if he had bolted upon a ghost. I beckoned him aside, and laying my hand firmly on his arm to intimate caution, I asked:—

"Is Mr. Dalton at present in the village? Make no noise, but answer me quietly."

"Oh, murder in Irish! Mr. Tracy, is that yourself in airnest? Well, well! see this!"

"Is he in the village?"

"He is; and in the house here this minute, above stairs in the parlour. That is to say, he is not in the house now, for he was called to Matty O'Decimum, the tithe proctor, a while ago, but his things are above, an he'll be back in a jiffy."

"That is the very thing. Lead me to the room in which he was sitting, and for your life don't say a word of my being there."

He looked at me during several moments with his mouth open, as if endeavouring to form a conjecture on my intentions.

"I'm thinking, Mr. Tracy," he said, assuming an air of sudden and smiling frankness, "that yourself and Mr. Dalton are but poor friends now, and that may be 'tis some harm you'd have in your mind again' him; the Lord save us!"

"Be assured it is no such thing. Let us not be disturbed, McGawyl. You will be near enough in the kitchen to prevent evil, if you should hear any thing from the room to excite a suspicion of danger."

"Oh! very well, sir, very well. I'll do your bidding. Mary Delahunty!" he called, in a rough, loud voice.

"Going,"* said a shrill female voice from the kitchen.

Presently there appeared at the kitchen door a thin-faced, unwashed girl, just waked up from a chimney-corner slumber, with a brown stuff gown, having the tail fastened up about the waist, bare feet, in the balls and ankles of which nature had been liberal, and even lavish of material, and with her uncombed and straggling hair confined, with a careless but by no means becoming negligence, in a black leathern thong.

"Go up stairs an' show this gentleman into Mr. Dalton's room; an' as soon as you do, go to bed at once, for I'll want you to be up at the first light in the morning, to send to Rathkeale for a keg o' whisky."

* That is to say, "*coming*."

"Are you sure he'll return?" I asked in a whisper, as I followed my drowsy conductress up the single flight of stairs.

"Oh! I'll be bound he will," said McGawyl, "as sure as day. Friends or foes," I heard him mutter to himself as I passed on, "friends or foes, pace or war, whatever way the battle runs, there's no fear the country will lose a good member in either o' ye. Indeed, I wouldn't begridge just such a little difference between ye as would enable some honest people to come by their own again."

I entered the room alone, and took my place in a dark corner where a recess had been made in the wall for a cupboard which was not yet completed. A large coat of McGawyl's hung from a rack above, so as to conceal my person as perfectly from the view of any one sitting at the table as if I occupied a place in another room. At the same time, not a sound nor movement could escape my own observation in this.

Here, while I stood awaiting in silence and in the agony of a deep suspense, the arrival of my destroyer, and the departure of all whose presence might interfere with my design, a scene of atrocity was laid open to my view, in comparison with which all that I either had learned or suspected of Dalton's magisterial profligacy was venial, and worthy rather of pity than reproof.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE apartment was the same in which our heroic corps of yeomanry had consumed so merry an evening on the night of the review. The print of Moses in the bulrushes still hung above the wooden chimney-piece, and a tattered, leather-bottomed chair was thrown away at the end of the table where I supposed that bad man had been sitting. A pair of candles burned on the table; the snuffs, for want of trimming, gathering to a pall above the flame, and throwing a flickering gloom through the apartment. On the table were laid a valise, some loose papers, and a pair of pistols. These last I took the precaution to remove, and had scarcely done so when I heard the voice of their owner at the foot of the stairs. The sound of mirth and music were hushed at his entrance, as the tumult of a village school is suddenly sunk on the approach of the stern-browed holder of the rod.

Those only who have been basely ruined, and whom the demon of revenge has tempted with an opportunity, can imagine what I felt at this moment. The revulsion of strong anger, which passed through my mind and frame, and which in an instant effected a complete alteration in my wishes and intentions, completely

proved the rashness of entrusting my unregulated passions with so perilous an occasion.

"Hound of destruction!" I said, in a thick and half-suppressed whisper, "I have kennelled you at last! Let it be said that my veins were filled with the blood of a coward; that I had no more sense of wrong than you of honesty; that I was a tame and cringing dupe, as void of feeling as of principle, a proper butt for schooling the wit of a knave, if you escape me this night, without learning the full measure of your injustice and making me the reparation I shall require!"

I was interrupted by the entrance of two persons. One was Dalton, dressed as I had first met him, in a white coat, with spatter-dashes covered with mud, and an open book and pencil in his hand. That settled, blasting smile, which I had before remarked as a distinguishing characteristic of his countenance, was still shedding a bale-fire light over his features.

"Come in, come in, and shut the door," he said, addressing a tall man in a frieze riding coat and standing collar. He then threw himself into the chair, and glanced his eye over his note book, while his companion took his place modestly at the end of the table, where he stood, with his hat in his hand, awaiting the pleasure of his patron.

"Five and ninepence a week they have allowed you, Mihil," said the latter, commencing from the day of the information against the Hennessys."

"Five an' ninepence, sir? Why then, it's little enough, is'nt it, Mr. Dalton?"

"It all depends upon your own diligence, Mihil. Stir yourself and look about you, and you may double it, maybe, before long. Are you sure none of the lads below stairs recognised you?"

"Oh, not one of 'em, sir! I kep the collar up about my ears, so that they could'nt tell from Adam who is it was there."

"So much the better, for there should not be the slightest appearance of any understanding between you and our people, or the whole scheme would be destroyed at once. Well, did ye swear many these two last weeks?"

"A power. The whole country is running into it with their mouths open, like ducks to a grain of oats."

The magistrate listened like a sportsman receiving a description of a good *cover*, while he touched his lip with the tip of his Bramah pencil, and prepared to write.

"Well, come, give me the names of your recruits."

"I heard one of 'em spake of a place where they had as good as fifteen stand of arms together one night last week."

"Who was that?"

"Anything for the liquor! That's the way with the Gutyraggct boys. Distress and hardship, and the want of meat and drink, drives a deal of 'em into the business. But the whisky finishes the job for 'em, when once they're in. The whisky destroys more souls in Ireland than either rope or gun."

"Come, you scoundrel," said Dalton, "do you think I am to sit

here listening to you moralizing on the state of the country? What are the names of the men who took the croppie oaths, I ask you again?"

"I ax your worship's pardon if I done anything contrary, but I was only saying that if it was a thing a man had a trifle to throw away on 'em by way of a treat, as it were, what a sight he could get out of them!"

"I understand. You want money from me before you will condescend to reveal. For a ruffian who knows that his life depends upon the breath of my lips, you are a daring fellow. But I like your audacity. It gives me some promise that you will not flinch when your fear clashes with your interest on some future possible occasion. There is a sovereign for you."

"Long may your honour live! I'd sooner take a sovereign o' your money any day than five pound of another man's."

"That's a confounded falsehood, and you know it is, you rascal. But let me hear your names."

The spy accordingly furnished, with much precision, a list of names and residences, which were copied with various accompanying circumstances of identification, by the chief magistrate.

"Shanahan!" he suddenly exclaimed, starting with a look of strong interest, as he repeated one of the names. "Was *he* sworn? Did *he* join ye?"

"As fast bound as a spancelled goat. Oh! that's a wild, tearing boy, that won't be long without getting himself a lodging free of expense."

"I am glad of it. I'll plague the dog! Shanahan! Morty Shanahan of Abel Tracy's farm you mean, don't you?"

"No, I don't, but Tom Shanahan, of Rath-Danahar, in the mountains, above."

"Psha!" Dalton exclaimed, flinging down his book in disappointment, "you are a blockhead. You knew that I only cared about *one* Shanahan."

"Oh! then, I'm afeerd it is in vain for us to hope to make anything of him. He is too regular, too watchful. Unless it were a thing one would carry a point, by dropping an old pistol or a thing o' the kind behind his doore."

Dalton here fixed upon the speaker one of those piercing looks by which he was frequently apt to betray himself, and to put others out of countenance. Apparently, however, he found the leathern physiognomy of the informer to be composed of no penetrable stuff, for he returned to the contemplation of his pocket-book without making any reply.

"And this is all?" he said, after the spy had concluded his information. "Did you hear nothing since about that strange tall yellow man?"

I listened here with a strong interest.

"He's rather out o' my line," said the ruffian, "being a gentleman, and never mixing with any o' the lower order. No one could tell me anything about him; nor was there one in the place that knew any more of him than I did myself."

"'Tis very strange. A person of his singular appearance coming suddenly into the country, at so suspicious a conjuncture, without a single respectable acquaintance, and without, as you say, any apparent want of money."

"Want? He rowls upon it. He's as off hand with a guinea or a pound note as another would be with a sixpence."

"Does he exercise any remarkable liberality amongst the people?"

"He laves his token afther him, wherever he goes, and them that meet are sorry to part him. He doesn't, to say, fling his money away, as a gentleman should, but he gives it in plenty, and where he sees 'tis wanting."

Dalton here wrote for a moment in his note-book, while this disinterested observer of human character followed up his communications.

"The nearest guess I could make at the business was this. You know Mr. Purtill of the mountains, behind?"

"Well? I do. He owes me money."

"That Purtill, I'm tould, had a brother here in the country before he went abroad; an' having a difference with him about some part o' the farm, I hear the brother went off greatly vexed, to the paythriots in South America, where they said after that he made a power o' money. Well, sir, you see, I'm thinking 'tis like enough this tall yellow man is neither more nor less than Purtill's brother come home again; and having the spleen in still again' this man, he doesn't like to show himself at the house, but prefers going roving about the country, to see what changes would be in the place since he left it."

"Your conjecture is a bold one, and shows genius," said Dalton, after musing for a moment.

I was tempted, for my own part, to accord it the additional praise of strong probability, as I doubted not the subject of their conversation was the same individual whom I had seen in the Abbey, and in the *hack*, near Shanahan's cottage, and the feeling of recognition, which then startled me, might be accounted for by some family resemblance to my brother yeoman.

"Besides, he goes to mass," continued the spy.

"Indeed?"

"Regular. Although the priest himself, nor any body else in the parish, can't tell you his name."

"If your conjecture should be correct," said Dalton, "that goose Abel Tracy will be worth a second plucking before long. I can foresee the whole train of events which the acquisition of this unexpected acquaintance must occasion. His wealth will be shared with his brother, and the brother will propose for, and be accepted by Ellen Tracy, or rather by her mercenary father. I should be glad of it, for now that I have done with that gull and day-dreamer, the father of the girl, some piece of good fortune would be necessary to prevent his becoming troublesome. Hark! Did you not hear a noise?"

"There's a great draught in the chimney to-night, sir. May be that's it."

"No. I believe it came from those fellows below stairs. How dim these candles burn! I suppose I might look in vain for such a luxury as a pair of snuffers in McGawyl's house. Come, use the tips of your horny fingers, and take off that thief in the wick. Set a thief to catch a thief, you know, is an old proverb."

"But I was saying, sir," said the spy, after a sycophantic laugh, while he snuffed the candle, as he was directed, with his finger and thumb, threw the burning particle on the floor, and rubbed it out with his huge brogue, "if the foreign gentleman have a spleen in again' his brother, how is it possible that he should ever be the better by him?"

Dalton smiled for some moments on the speaker, considering, with that curiosity and interest which his natural talent made him capable of feeling, the causes which made forgiveness a virtue so incomprehensible to this ruffian.

"You know not, fool that you are," he said, "accustomed to seize with an appetite, as rapacious as hunger itself, on all possible opportunities of satiating your evil feelings, educated from your infancy in the belief that revenge and outrage are as honourable as delicious, and beholding all persons of your own class impressed with the same conviction, you know not that there are spirits in the higher places of the world, to whom the forgiveness of injury, and the conquest of their own selfish and violent passions, affords a pleasure more exquisite and more delicate than any which you can find in the indulgence of your coarse and brutal antipathies. A spirit of this order would no sooner forego the heavenly, sweet, and heroic glory of a religious forgiveness for the fleshly satisfaction of a common revenge, than a glutton would lay aside a turtle of Blanco, and gorge himself with the carrion garbage of a vulture. But I waste my words on air. You do not understand me, nor am I anxious that you should."

"Wisha, then, you tell no lie in that, sir, any way," said the spy, who was listening to this speculation of his patron's with open mouth and eyes. "Except a man was made of English he couldn't well understand that. But if it be charging revenge again' me, your honour is, I have nothing to say to it. If a man lets me alone, I let him alone; but if it be a thing he'll be conthrairy to me, take it from me I'll be conthrairy to him in my turn, if I can."

"That is the spirit I would have you preserve," said Dalton. "Begone, and act upon it. You have done this week's business indifferently well. Improve upon it, and you will improve your own fortunes in proportion. Wheedle, *blarney*, coax, gull, protest, swear, leave no means untried, let no opportunity escape, keep your eyes open, your ears cocked, justify the character I have given of you, and prove that you are active, loyal, and intelligent."

The informer made a short, but deep bow to every component part of the above sentence, and left the room with many protestations of diligence and devotion; while Dalton cautioned him to elevate the collar of his riding coat as he descended, so as that he should not be recognised by McGawyl's guests. The length of this knave's interview made me fear that Dalton's levee might be

prolonged to an inconvenient hour. My long ride, and the almost entire abstinence of two days from either food or slumber, made this reflection an unwelcome one, and the more especially so as my standing position had begun to weary me. I would have waited, however, until my limbs had stiffened into marble, and McGawyl's niche had been graced with a statue, rather than forego the opportunity for which I thirsted. Besides, I felt my interest divided and yet deepened by my accidental initiation into the mysteries of the atrocious policy of this person.

He resumed his writing, and was so completely absorbed in the occupation that he did not perceive for several minutes that a second courtier had entered the room and was awaiting his leisure. This person was of an appearance and manner very dissimilar to the former. He was of a low and stunted figure, with a cocked nose, eyes set far apart in his head, a greasy white frock coat with huge bone buttons, black leggings on his feet, and a chequered straw hat in his hand. There was in his look and manner a certain degree of cringing meanness and servility that was very hurtful to the pride of the spectator. I recognised him as the same scoundrel whom I had bribed with a few pence to burn his summons some months before at Cushlanebeg. He had become notorious shortly after in the country as a common informer, but of a flight somewhat lower than the person who had just preceded him, and who, indeed, was a genius in his line, distinguished alike by craft and diligence. He earned a moderate livelihood by his exertions to preserve his majesty's game laws from violation, which he did by a peculiarly ingenious expedient. This was no other than swearing informations against all persons who could afford, but yet forbore, from economy or any other motive, to take out a game license. By convicting all, the innocent as well as the guilty, this prudent person not only put a handsome sum (his share of the divided fines) into his own pocket, but effected a great general good. He increased the public revenue, supported a thriving family, and convinced the middlemen of the country that it was altogether useless to deprive themselves of so wholesome an amusement, since their self-denial was likely to be even more expensive than their self-indulgence. Prudence, indeed, appeared to be his great characteristic, and if it prevented his ever achieving any bold or audacious piece of knavery, it at least kept his feet in a safe path. He took care to provide against any chance of counter testimony by laying the information so long after the alleged period of the offence that none could be procured. His talents, humble as they were, recommended him to the notice of Dalton, who kept a kind of nursery of scoundrels, and put them to use according as they became necessary to his purposes; purposes which required the agency of knaves in all the gradations of depravity.

"Well, who are you?" said Dalton, suddenly raising his head and staring the new comer in the face.

"'Tis I, sir, Maney Kennedy, plase your honour," the man replied, ducking his head two or three times, and grinning in mingled fear and courtesy.

"Oh! Maney, my little terrier, is that you? Well, did you take my message to O'Decimum, the tythe proctor?"

"I did, sir, plase your honour," with another duck of the head; "an' 'tis the answer he made me to come with me himself, an' he's below in the parlour, waiten to spake to your honour, sir. I was afeerd to say a word to him about the bizness when I heerd he was coming to your honour, in dread I might spoil the bizness."

"You are a cautious, fine fellow. You are always 'afeerd,' and, 'in dread,' but your fear is a brilliant fear, and your dread is the dread of a man of intellect. Did your prudent fear enable you to do anything with respect to my process against Mr. Paul Purtill?"

The "little terrier" of the magistrate's human pack, twisted his wiry countenance into an expression of excelling shrewdness at this question, shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head with much archness.

"Your honour never gev me a more contrairy job than that yet. I was afeerd I never could do it, for Mr. Purtill is a wild jettleman that doesn't much care what he does, an' he has a strong back in the boys of his neighbourhood, who won't see any branch o' the family *insulted*.* Well, I was very unaisy in myself, for I remembered well that Tim Ready, a man that would make four of myself, tried to sarve a process on the same gentleman, and was fairly murthered three times running (heaven save the mark!) upon his lawn out before the hall doore; an' sure, says I to myself, if he wasn't able for 'em, what could I do? lord sa' me! says I. Well, what did I do? Easy now a minute, an' I'll tell your honour the whole story. I got up in the morning, to-day morning, an' I said to myself, an' I drawin' on my stockings, 'Now,' says I, 'Kennedy, mind yourself. You know,' says I, 'that Mr. Purtill is no child's play to have to do with, an' if you don't take care o' yourself, I'm afeerd—I'm afeerd' says I, 'something that's not good will happen you. You know,' says I, 'he's up to all the law in Europe, an' keeps no man servant, only one old woman an' a Newfoundlan' dog, an' lives by himself in a small cottage in the mountains, were he's ever an' always on his guard again' all manner o' writs, an' summonses, an' processes, an' law papers of every nature. So take care o' yourself, I advise you,' says I, 'an' look about you, or you may have a quare story to tell before night,' says I. Well, what did I do? I got an old bag, an' rowled a couple o' sugans† about my ankles, an' put an old tattered coat, belonging to a bucaugh [lame beggar] in the neighbourhood, upon my back, an' I stuck a short pipe in the side o' my mouth, and thrun (threw) the bag, with a few praties in the bottom of it, up over my shoulder, an' off I set to the mountains, taking a blackthorn stick in my hand, in dread the Newfoundlan' dog would be conthrairy with me. So when I came a near the place, in dread they'd suspect something wrong if I went sthraight to the house, I called at a few o' the neighbour's cabins, axing a charity (I have a good face for it, they

* Applied to for payment of a debt.

† Hay ropes.

tell me, sir)," here he made another grin—"an' done my business so well that it wasn't long till I had the bag a'most full. Well, in dread it would be late with me, I took a short cut across the fields, an' waited a while behind the haggart, till I seen the ould woman going down the lawn for a can o' spring water, an' the dog afther her. I got up: an', afeerd that Mr. Purtill, if he saw a paper in my hand, would slap the doore in my face before the process could be duly sarved, I rowled an' twisted it up tight, an' putt it in my pocket, an' came an' knocked at the hall-doore. There being no one in the house, Mr. Purtill himself kem (came) an' opened it. 'Well, what do you want? there's nothing here for you,' says he. "Eyah then, wisha, nothen in the wide world, sir,' says I, 'only I thought may be the ould woman would be within, that she'd putt this bit of a match in the ashes for me, till I'd light my pipe again' the road.' 'Oh, if that's all,' says he, 'I'll do it myself my poor man, an' welcome,' says he. So he tuk the paper to light it. 'Wisha, then, the heavens bless your honour!' says I, 'an' mind, Mr. Purtill, you have it, now.' 'What have I?' says he; 'Mr. Dalton's process,' says I; 'an' he expects you'll answer it a' Monday.' Well, I never seen a man in such a born rage. He hullooed the dog an' the people afther me, but there was nobody in hearing; an' I *thrun* my fine bag o' praties, more was the pity, upon the gravel (afeerd they'd be too heavy for me), an' I cut, an' I run, an' I pelted away over the rocks an' stones, hedges an' ditches, driving an' pushing for the bare life, until I came to the head o' the sthreet above, where I was tould your honour was stopping at McGawyl's here."

"You have done your part like a second Ulysses," said the delighted Dalton; "your caution becomes not only politic, but inventive. As Pyrrhus said of the Romans, I may say of my adherents, that with such a pack I would undertake to hunt down the whole world, not to speak of a puny district like Munster."

"If t's talking o' my being a *Roman*,* your honour, is," said Kennedy, who understood only one word in the above speech, "I didn't go to mass these six years, nor to a priest to my juty since I was the heighth of that."

"Don't take the trouble to vindicate your character, my good Maney," said the chief magistrate, half smiling. "I did not mean to cast any aspersion upon it. My trusty Cineas, I have another occasion to exercise your craft and industry. You must serve a writ on this Purtill, next week, and bring him into the jail of Limerick."

"Body an' bones, sir?"

"Body and bones, as you say."

"I'm afeerd—I'm afeerd that will be a very cross bizness, sir. But I'll try it; I'll watch my opportunity."

"Do so, and hark you: as you go down stairs, you may tell the police they need not wait; I will ride home alone to-night. Here's something for your trouble."

* Roman Catholic.

"Long may your honour live!"

"Send O'Decimum up to me, and go at once. Stay!"

The "terrier" stopped suddenly at the door, between which and the table, during the last few minutes, he had been starting backward and forward, like a frightened hare, in his excessive anxiety to obey his patron with promptitude.

"Tell me, Maney," said the latter, in a low, whispering voice, "did you take the money to that poor girl, as I bade you?"

"I went there, plase your honour."

"That's right. I thought I had placed the poor creature out of the reach of want; but her misery was shocking."

"I went there, sir, as I was saying, but I couldn't give her the money, for I found her talking to a strange gentleman, Mr. Abel Tracy, of Cushlanebeg, that was."

"Abel Tracy!"

"Abel Tracy, sir."

"Impossible, fool! He does not even know that Shanahan ever *had* a sister."

"Far be it from me to contradict your honour. But I'm sure he couldn't but know it the time I saw him standing near Baal's-bridge, in Limerick, talking to that woman, when he tuk a place in a car for her, an' sent her home to her own people."

"This is strange! this is quite unexpected! Abel Tracy out, and well! I know the man; he has heard something. This is very annoying. Go along, Maney, and remember what I have told you. This is altogether sudden and unlooked for; go, and hark you! you may desire the police to remain. I have altered my intention of riding home unattended."

Kennedy left the room, and Dalton, unable to return with so easy a mind, as heretofore, to his book of memoranda, remained gazing with some perplexity of countenance, on the blazing turf fire, until his next courtier, O'Decimum, made his appearance. I groaned in heart when I saw him enter, and endeavoured to summon patience to support this new interruption.

This person seemed to be of a rank, and appearance, rather superior to the other two. He was of a stout figure, which was wrapped up in a large dark coloured great coat, buttoned tight up to the chin, and wore a smooth yellow wig, under which a few locks of black hair were still apparent. His face, which was red and well nourished, had a slight shade of clerical gloom and trimness, the effect, perhaps, of his constant intercourse with, and imitation of, the tythe proprietors, under whom he acted. Obeying a slight action of Dalton's, he seated himself on a corner of a chair at about two feet distant from the table, smoothed the front of his wig over his brow, and waited for the chief magistrate to open the conversation.

"Well, O'Decimum, what about my tythes?"

"Oh! bother to 'em, for tythes; I don't know what to do with 'em; I valued 'em; I could do no more. There's the returns."

He took from his breast a bundle of papers tied with red tape,

and laid them on the table, after which, he hung his hat on his knee, and continued—

"There's one Connolly, a strong* farmer, a very strong, snug man, has fifty acres there, an' he objected to the valuation, as all of 'em did; all of 'em, high an' low, protested again' the valuation; but he tuk it up in airnest, an' vowed an' swore he never would pay a fraction of my valuation. Hih! indeed! 'Mr. Dalton,' says he, 'is lay impropriator, an' has a right to the tythes, no doubt, but you're a rogue an' a publican,' says he, (hih! indeed!) 'an' I'll not submit to be tyrannized over. This is the way I'll prove it,' says he, 'I'll pay in kind. There's my corn, an' my hay, an' my potatoes, an' all upon the ground. I'll lave the tythes of all upon the land, an' let Mr. Dalton draw 'em himself, or let 'em rot where they are. An' as for you, you imposing scoundrel,' says he, 'for one brass farthing I'd kick you out upon the high road.' Hih! indeed! I wisht I had evidence when he called me an imposing scoundrel. I'd larn him another story."

"Connolly? Well, we can't help that. The fellow knows he has the law on his side, and I may find an opportunity to make that matter even with him. But I am sure you, a respectable man of your kind, have no right to sit down quietly under the imputation of being a rogue and a scoundrel."

"Hih! indeed."

"Very well. I see you have the proper feeling of resentful indignation, and I will show you how it is to be indulged. They all cry out against your valuation of their property, and say that it is exorbitant. They would thus insult you and wrong me at the same time. But I have got the power now to do us both justice, and it shall be done. I cannot afford to be merciful. I have too much occasion for money. Would you suppose it? I was master of two thousand pounds within the last week, and I have not now fifty sovereigns in the world."

My heart sunk with a heavy and horrid feeling of despair, as I heard those words. But I was determined not to believe them. I would not believe it possible that my exertions to save myself from shame, to rescue my plundered child from misery, and the agony of a disappointed hope, should be in vain, and that I should yet be compelled to hug this uttermost ruin, which I had fled so fast and far to avoid. I set my teeth hard, and longed eagerly and wickedly for the departure of the stranger.

"But this is what I would propose," continued Dalton, who was not economical of his confidence to those creatures whom he had in his power, and whose characters, moreover, were of that peculiar notoriety which would render their treachery a matter of trivial consequence. "Listen to these people," he said; "seem to be touched by their remonstrances. Drop a few hints of your obligations, and the impossibility of your showing more lenity while you are left unintimidated. Do you understand?"

O'Decimum, who was a good slow hound, sure and untiring, but

* Comfortable; easy in his circumstances.

by no means one of the most sagacious and quick-scented animals of the chief magistrate's pack, gaped a silent but most expressive negative.

"Are we to saze in the mean while on the lands o' Ballyneagh, for their tithes?"

"Undoubtedly."

"They haven't a ha'p'ny now, except we sould the beds from under 'em."

"Sell the beds, then, by all means. I tell you I cannot afford to be merciful. I didn't pay Parson Dowdy to have the pleasure of making these fellows a free gift. Go now, O'Decimum, and remember what I have told you. I must have money, wherever or however it is to be procured. I want to send my boy, Henry Dalton, to England, to leave him at a fashionable seminary, and I am resolved that his young and sensitive mind (for it is more sensitive, more delicate, than the shyness of a virgin), I am resolved that it shall undergo none of those mortifying slights from the inability to maintain the station to which I lift him, which are so blasting to the early dignity of the human character. But good night to you, I have something more to do before I sleep."

"I wish you a good night's rest, sir," replied the slow hound, as he left the kennel; "I will take care of everything. An imposing scoundrel! Kick me out on the high road," I heard him continue to mutter as he descended; "hih, indeed!"

CHAPTER XV.

He departed, and others succeeded him. It would be a wearying task to present a faithful detail of the various characters, the petty schemes of violence and injustice which filled up the magistrate's time for the next hour. Let me say, in few words, that the time, long as it appeared, rolled away at length, and I was left alone with my enemy.

"McGawyl!" I heard him call from the door, as he followed the last hound of his extensive and well selected pack to the head of the stairs.

"Meaning *me*?" cried the host from beneath.

"Yes, you, you Papist. Is there any one else waiting to see me?"

"Nobody else, plase your honour. Unless you'd have myself go up an' look at you for a while."

"Let me not be disturbed, then," said Dalton, "unless I call. I have some business to do. And hark you, tell that piper who has

been squealing like a choked cat this hour past, that I'll put a slit in his bag if he is not quiet."

He closed the door, locked it, and walked to the table.

Exhausted in all my frame by the long continuance of my voluntary durance, I had almost begun to fear that my patience or my opportunity would fail me. When Dalton turned the key in the lock, the blood gathered on my heart, and caused it to bound within my breast with a violence proportioned to the agony of the suspense which I had undergone. I waited to see him slowly and considerately resume his chair before the flickering turf fire, place the key on the chimney-piece, and recommence the perusal of his note-book, before I ventured to make a single movement. He who has seen a great river dammed in its course, and forced to accumulate its waters in one reservoir, and who has beheld that obstruction suddenly removed, and the bulky stream possessing itself with a treble violence of its ancient channels, may imagine what the condition of my feelings was at this conjuncture.

I paused, however, for some moments in order to collect the subject of my proposed remonstrance, before I made my presence known. I had need of little reflection for the purpose. My wrongs came flitting by me in swift and stimulating succession. My former peace and happiness, my long anxieties, my ruined reputation with my old adherents, my blighted ambition, my dowerless child, my alienated home, my murdered wife, my own ready confidence, the hollow and wanton treachery of my betrayer, all rushed hurriedly and yet distinctly upon my mind. The enemy of souls omitted no circumstance of the exciting catalogue, no whispered recollection that could make mischief certain. A single steady glance at the past and present was sufficient to send me

—— mounted
Upon my injuries

against my unconscious and unsuspecting ruiner.

"He has a child," I said, within myself, "and they say that even the most relentless and selfish natures are capable of a generous emotion when they are assailed on the ground of sympathy. If he should be impenetrable to that, however, I will take another tone, and wring from his terror the justice which his humanity may refuse to render."

I looked upon him as these reflections passed through my mind. It seemed as if some deep and absorbing train of meditation were passing through his own mind at the same instant. He laid his book aside, and remained gazing fixedly on the burning fire. Soliloquies are seldom uttered in real life, but I could almost read the changes of his thought upon his countenance, strongly illumined as it was by the great light. At first he seemed to meditate some plan of vengeance, for I saw his lips contract and settle into that taunting smile which was seldom absent from his features. Then it appeared as if a startling doubt arose, and a sudden perspiration covered his forehead. Unconscious now of an observer,

it astonished me to see how lucid and easily penetrable was that countenance which when shadowed by the veil of hypocrisy was as illegible as the front of Mokanna. His brows were gathered with an expression of pain and anxiety, he waved his hand impatiently, and strove to dispel the thought by an exclamation of peevish contempt, but it seemed to fasten upon his spirit in his despite. The knave rendered glory to virtue in his hour of reflection and privacy. I saw that peace was a blessing that never lighted on his eyelids.

He was endeavouring to compose his mind to a short slumber in the great chair which he occupied, but I interrupted the intention.

CHAPTER XVI.

I PUT my shoes from off my feet (oh, *not* that it was holy ground!), and approaching the table with a soft and noiseless footstep, remained close to the side of the magistrate, contemplating him in his fancied security, with that fullness of satisfaction, which makes us pause on the verge of fruition, in order to prolong the enjoyment of an assured expectance. Turning round in his chair and lifting, with an effort, his heavy eyelids, he suddenly encountered my figure, half concealed by the light of the candle which burned between us. At first it seemed as if he thought the appearance was a cheat of his half dreaming imagination, for his eyes became dilated and fixed in a stare of mingled wonder and inquiry. He held the candle high above his head, and becoming convinced of the reality of his vision, remained gazing on me in an attitude of sudden terror, which his presence of mind could not enable him to disguise.

"Dalton," said I, "I congratulate you on your advancement."

"Abel Tracy!"

"Yes, Abel Tracy. Your occupations did not allow you to visit your old friend since your good fortune, so he has come to visit *you*."

He cast an apprehensive and eager glance towards the table while I spoke, and started in renewed fear.

"They are safe," I said, smiling on him; "I have taken the precaution to remove them. I feared, Dalton, that they might make mischief between us. I feared them, both as a temptation and a hinderance. We are both unarmed now; let there be no violence between us. Heaven help my wandering brain! I have not now that government of my passions which I was wont to have. A

sudden temptation finds not my reason so watchful and so strongly fortified, as in the days before I knew you, Dalton. I wish to speak with you, and nothing more."

He seemed to recover something of his self-possession as I spoke, although confusion and fear still remained visibly impressed on his features and demeanour.

"This was unexpected," said he, "it is so inexplicable. How did you enter?" He looked at the key which lay on the chimney-piece.

"I have been waiting your leisure," I replied, pointing coolly to the recess, "in that corner during the entire evening."

His face altered its complexion from yellow to a deep crimson, and again to frigid paleness.

"I thought," he continued, after a pause, "that you were too ill to be seen. I am glad, I rejoice, to see you recovered."

"What a foul lie that is! Do you not blush to contradict yourself so shamefully?" I paused, pressed my hand upon my brow, and arrested the torrent of rage which was bursting forth. "Forgive me!" I continued, "my passion will get the better of me. My misfortunes have quite destroyed my temper. I wish not to insult you, and have only one small request to make."

"I can bear much from you, Tracy. I know how strange my conduct must appear in your eyes, but when you shall have heard me explain——"

"I understand. But it is altogether unnecessary. I only wish that you would listen to me for a few moments. You may have heard, that after the night of Mary's murder——"

"Poor, sweet woman!"

"Ay, poor, sweet woman! Well, after her murder," (I felt it almost impossible to refrain from striking the hypocrite to the ground,) "on the very evening of her murder, an ejectment was served, and keepers put on our property at Cushlanebeg. Everything we possessed in the world was snatched away from us. I was unable, from my illness, to attend in my own person to the disposal of my affairs, and when I rose from my sick bed, I found myself a pauper. I have now nothing in the world. My children are depending on the kindness of friends, and my young and gentle daughter, whom I robbed of her marriage dowry, in order to accommodate you, is left in danger of sharing my poverty, and losing for ever her present hope of happiness. That event would make me mad."

Dalton appeared greatly perplexed. "Anything that it is in my power to do, Tracy," he said, in some hesitation, "you may instantly command."

"You can do everything," I replied. "Hear me, Dalton. I ask not from you the fulfilment of those hopes with which you deluded me—I require not that you should make good the false and treacherous promises by which you duped me; I was the fool of my own credulity, the gull of my own selfish desires; I take the responsibility of my own well-merited destruction upon my own guilty hands. I inquire not the motives of your conduct, I

forgive, from my soul, the evil you have brought upon my own head: from this hour you never shall be troubled with reproach or question on that subject. But I have no power to remit so easily the wrongs you have inflicted through me, on others. For these it is my duty to demand redress, and it is well for you and for me, Dalton, that the redress I ask is within your power."

"What injury, what redress, do you speak of?"

"You will be astonished to learn how moderate it is. You may remember that, trusting in your honour (like a fool, as you have justly named me), and calculating on a brilliant remuneration, I lent you, when I was low in funds and could but ill afford it, a sum of money. It was the wedding portion of my daughter who is—was—on the eve of marriage, and who entrusted her little fortune to my keeping, supposing, silly one, that it could not be safer than in her father's hands. Pay me that money back, that I may restore it to my child, and let us part, as we have met. It is a trifle now to you; give it as freely as it was given, and I will never trouble you again."

"You cannot doubt my will to do it," said Dalton, still in deep perplexity, "but the truth is——"

"That is the whole extent of my present claim upon you. It is not my own demand."

"I acknowledge there cannot be a more just one, and my gratitude alone would make it a paramount one. But in plain truth, Tracy——"

"My daughter will be ruined," said I, "if it is not paid at once. It will be known that I have plundered her, and I shall be hooted from the country."

"I feel all the urgency of the occasion," said Dalton; "believe me, I feel its necessity. But, indeed, Tracy——"

I would not suffer him to give utterance to the negative I saw ready to pass from his lips. "Again, Dalton, hear me!" I said. "You have a child. I heard you, but a few minutes since, describe my feelings for my orphan girl, in painting your own towards your son. Suppose yourself in my situation, imagine that you beheld your boy ready to fall a prey to poverty, to disappointment, to want and hunger (for that must be the event). Answer me as you would have your debtor answer in those circumstances, and answer quickly, for the night passes, and I have far to travel yet."

Dalton appeared somewhat touched. "If it were the last shilling in my possession," he exclaimed with warmth, and I now think, with truth, "I would not withhold it from you for an instant. But once more, my good Tracy——"

"Villain!" I cried, losing patience at his hesitation and hypocrisy, "is it your intention to do me justice? I hate your fawning terms, they disgust, they insult me; I ask a plain question, and I demand a plain answer. Is it your intention to discharge my debt?"

"It is assuredly."

"Enough. Let me depart then quickly on my journey. I have seen evil enough beneath this roof to-night to make me fear and

fly it. Let me hasten with the tidings of happiness to my forlorn child."

"It is my determination to pay you;" Dalton resumed, "but to-night it is impossible. Many days shall not pass before your claim is settled, but I have not a sixth of the sum at present in my possession."

"And you will not pay me, now?"

"I cannot."

"Look hither, Dalton. I arose from a sick bed to find you out, and tender you this proffer of forgiveness on these conditions. I have ridden in your track these two days, almost without food or sleep, and the Almighty who watches over the interests of my innocent child has made my search successful, not for my sake, but her's. If you suppose my credulity still continues unenlightened, and that I can be prevailed on to trust a self-convicted liar for another day, you are grievously in error. Neither you nor I shall leave these walls until this demand is settled."

"What shall I say to convince you? I cannot pay you the money now. I have it not."

"It is impossible. Make me not desperate, I warn you. I am determined to be paid. If you could only see the horrid thoughts that have been thrusting themselves upon my imagination since we have been alone altogether; with how much exertion I have been wrestling against the hideous temptations that are momently rising up against my reason, and wasting its strength by repeated contests, you would be glad to make this compromise. Compel me not to recall the memory of your treason; I feel it rushing upon me at this instant with an almost irresistible violence. Be wise, and let this interview terminate quickly."

"I know not how I shall satisfy you. I will give you a note—a bond."

"I am aware of the value of your credit. I will take nothing but the hard gold I gave you; or notes which will leave nothing dependent on your own honesty. Pay me, ruffian, or I will tear the black heart out of you! If you have any mercy, pay me! Consider my agony; think of my distress; remember what you found, and what you left me; pursue not your prey too far; you have persecuted me enough for your own purposes; be satisfied with what you have done, and have some pity."

"I have—I do pity you from my soul, but—"

"Pity me!" I exclaimed, bursting into incontrollable rage and delivering myself up altogether to the triumphant passion. "Do you dare to flout me with the word?" I griped his throat and pressed him to the earth.

"Will you murder me?" he exclaimed, "I tell you I will satisfy you to-morrow."

"It is too late now; the devil has entered into me, and I am not my own master."

"You will not murder me?"

"I think I will." I pressed my knee hard upon his breast—"I should do the world a service."

"Help! murder! mercy! Take off your hand."

His face blackened and his voice grew thick; a bad spirit put strength into my fingers, and they fastened in his flesh almost without an effort. I heard a tramping of many hurried feet upon the staircase, and there was a sudden cessation of the sounds of merry-making below. My victim grew silent in my clutch. At the same moment my own frame became exhausted by the violence of its own exertion, two or three painful throbs struck through my brain, sudden clouds gathered on my sight, and my limbs became unnerved. A loud crash from behind sounded in my ears, and I became conscious of a crowd of persons surrounding and forcing us asunder. I made the effort of a dreaming man to keep my prey within my grasp, but my senses failed me in the exertion.

CHAPTER XVII.

When I had perfectly recovered my recollection (for I was indistinctly sensible of many occurrences that passed in the night), I found myself seated between cushions on the same tattered, leather-bottomed chair which Dalton had occupied. A bandage was fastened round my arm where a vein had been opened, and a check curtain was drawn across the window, through which the gray light of a rainy morning diffused a feeble influence through the apartment. I listened for a few moments to the wind outside, which drove the heavy showers in fitful and uncertain gusts against the small window-panes. My head-ache was gone, and a slight ringing and confusion of ideas was all that remained. The sight of Dalton gasping in the agony of suffocation, as it was the last object on which my sight had closed, so it was the first vision that presented itself to my imagination on awaking. I groped with my expanded fingers and gazed around, as if expecting to find him still before me.

"Where is he?" I asked; "he has not paid me."

"Whisht! who, sir?" I heard a voice exclaim at my side. "Misther Dalton. Ah! if he didn't pay you, take it from me, you paid him, an' that well."

"Is the bad man dead?" I asked faintly, and in great fear.

"Dead, says he? Oyeh! I'll be your bail for it, he has a better grip o' the life than that. I wisht all the honest men in Munsther were as *clever* as he rode off from this last night."

"I am thankful," I said, after a long pause, "to the divine Being for this mercy, though I merited it not. He is gone, and I am glad of it. I might have had a heavy crime to answer for. I am most

thankful for this great mercy. Well, Dalton, you have prevailed! Farewell, for ever!"

"Take it from me, you gave him a rale choking for all," resumed McGawyl. "'Twas myself untied the handkitcher from his neck, and there was the print o' the five fingers as plain as the brand upon a cask. I declare, I'll tell you no lie, I didn't begridge him the little squeeze he got. His windpipe won't be the better of it between this and Michaelmas. My hand to you, he'll spake a little hoarse afther it. He has some notion of what the gallows is now, any way. Maybe the idaä he got of throttling himself will make him think a little before he'll bring so many good boys to the same fate without any rason."

"McGawyl," said I, after some moments' consideration, "I have a favour to ask of you. You used to think me a proud man for my scrupulosity in avoiding obligations, but you see how circumstances alter our dispositions. Pride is a fine tall tower, but misfortune is a miner that knows how to bring it low enough."

"Oyeh wisha, then, sir! what's the use o' talken o' that? Ar'n't you the same as ever? What talk it is! Look now; I never *warmed to you* rightly until to-night, after you choking Dalton. I wished I had a palace to put you into the minute I see you a-top of him. I consider myself bound to do anything in raison that I can do to please you after it."

"Can you lend me a horse? My own, that is, my friend Mr. Clancy's, is knocked up, and I wish to have her sent home."

"Is it lavin' this you'd be? An' the doctor after bleedin' you, an' desirin' to keep you quiet, an' not to stir out o' the place until he'd see you again?"

"I feel myself quite strong; and even if it were otherwise, I have business to do which requires my presence immediately."

"Oh! what 'mediately, sir, what presence? I wonder to hear you talk so foolish, Mr. Tracy. An' besides," here he lowered his voice to a whisper, and cast a hasty glance to the door, "an' a stranger besides wantin' to spake to you."

"What stranger?"

"Oh! that's more than I'll tell you this time, unless he'd be made known to you by his signs an' tokens. He's a tall *likely* looking man, only as yollow as goold, an' as chilly as a lady in an ague. The world wouldn't keep the heat in him. It's what I tould him myself when he had some coffee for tay last night, in the little parlour below, and calling for more turf, till I thought he'd never stop, halpen, haipen it on, till the place was like an oven, an' the blaze flyen up the chimney like a flood, an' he sitten in the chair with *oceans** o' great coats about him, drinking his tay; it's what I tould him, if he wanted to drive the cowld out of his heart, 'tis'nt that thrash he ought to be swallowing, but some o' the stuff I have abroad, that would be a better jacket to him than all the tailors in Europe could make, if they wor paid for it. But he wouldn't hear to me. Signs on, 'tisn't I that'll be losing to it."

* A great abundance.

"A tall, yellow man?"

"A tall, yollow man. He has money about him as plenty as pratie skins, an' keeps a loose hould of it very often. He is the same gentleman, although you mightn't have heerd it, that has bought up the lase of Cushlanebeg, an' is going to live in it, they say."

I felt a strong curiosity to learn something of the history or motives of this perplexing personage, although I was predisposed to form a judgment on both, from the conjecture of Dalton's able-bodied spy. I bade McGawyl inform the gentleman that I should be glad to see him at his leisure.

In a few minutes I heard a slow and measured step accompanying the tramp of McGawyl's brogue across the small landing place. The door opened, and the "tall, yollow man," made his appearance.

The subdued light which filled the apartment scarcely permitted me to scan with sufficient accuracy his face and person, although I experienced the same feeling of unaccountable embarrassment with which he had before now inspired me. Immediately on meeting his first glance, I could yet discover that my surmise of a family likeness to Purtill was entirely an error. On the contrary, if I were disposed to trace any particular resemblance, the person and manner which would most readily have occurred to my memory were those of Dalton.

The tall yellow man was, in the first place, as fame pronounced him to be, tall and yellow. His eyes were sunken and yellow as his face; his jaw hung downward, and his lids dropped heavily over the discoloured balls from the influence of the general languor which pervaded his constitution. His dress was such as I had seen it at night in the Abbey.

He bowed and smiled faintly as he entered, drew one glove from his hand, produced a letter, and looked piteously, and with a chilly shuddering at the open door, which I bade McGawyl close after him.

"I have not sought this interview," he said, in a languid, querulous tone, as he dragged his trailing limbs toward a chair which McGawyl had placed for him, as if, to use the language of that quaint person, "the life *had been thrown after him.*" "I have not sought this interview without some introduction. This is a letter from your daughter, Miss Tracy, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at —at—" he elevated his finger and remained gazing on the floor as if endeavouring to recall the name to his recollection—"at Cushlanebeg, I believe. I had the pleasure of knowing some of her family at one time, and I called to see her and you last week. She was hospitable enough to insist on my taking this letter, and an attendant, to find you. So that our acquaintance began quite in an Irish way."

Here, as if exhausted by the exertion of moving his lips during so long a time, he sunk back in his chair and remained in a lethargic attitude while I glanced over the letter. I could not avoid feeling an emotion of deep pity, when I contemplated the shattered frame of this unhappy being, whom, in all likelihood, the ambitious in-

quietude of a sanguine and fiery youth had sent abroad in quest of distinction, which he was doomed to attain, but never to enjoy. It is astonishing how feelingly we can moralize on the fortunes of others, while we can never contemplate our own with the same distant and philosophic eye. It is probable the tall yellow man drew the same religious conclusions, as to the vanity of all earthly projects of self-advancement, from my condition, as I did from his.

The letter contained no name for the gentleman, and conveyed a slight hint that it was a convenience that certain reasons rendered him unwilling to allow to his acquaintances. I read no farther, but resumed the necessary attentions to my visitor.

"You have found Ireland much changed since your departure, I dare say?" I said, in the careless tone of one who feels it necessary in complaisance to lead to a conversation.

But he seemed not to hear me. An air of absence not unmingled with melancholy overspread his features, and I found it necessary to repeat my question, in order to awake his attention. He started suddenly from his meditative position, and apologized for his inattention.

"I do find it much changed," he said with a shudder, "in climate particularly. It is a great deal colder than I remember it in my youth. Your May now is like what your January was in my time. I am aware," he added, reddening slightly at the smile which I was scarcely able to suppress, "that much of this fancied change may be attributed to the altered habits of my own constitution, and that the same brisk air and fresh wind, that makes the blood run more warmly and merrily through the veins of two and twenty, may exercise a very different influence upon the frame of the valetudinarian, who has numbered those years once again beneath the fervour of an enervating West Indian sun. But I think there *is* a change independent of that."

"Or else our philosophers of the Royal Academy are greatly in error," said I, "for I believe that is a popular point of inquiry at present. But I meant changes of another nature."

He shook his head and smiled. "That has become an exceptionable topic of conversation amongst you," he said, "but if you will have my opinion, I find little to surprise me. I might have left the surface of the waters at rest, but I knew that the elements of commotion were within and around them. I found the country labouring under the same nightmare which has been oppressing her energies and obstructing the circulation of her resources, with more or less severity, during the last ten centuries. Her convulsions, perhaps, were less hideous and violent at the time of my departure, but her condition was not more prosperous. But I can find little use, and less pleasure, in speaking or thinking on this subject. There are other changes which touch me far more nearly: the alterations which the lapse of years, my own enlarged experience, and my long estrangement, have made in the scenes of my childhood. I left them, as I imagined, a faery region of rural beauty and luxuriance. I return to them, after my senses have become naturalized to the

fertile and voluptuous scenery of the West, and find, to my astonishment, a dreary wilderness of gray crag and sullen bog, the skeleton of my ancient home, recognisable indeed in every individual trait, but dismantled of all that richness and summer splendour in which my young experience and my absent memory had dressed her; a land apparently as poor, wild, shelterless, and neglected, in her natural, as in her political condition; but I should ask pardon for that questionable analogy. I would not talk so freely but that I was one of those who found you last night in the act of choking a magistrate."

"Ah! the black knave!" I exclaimed, "it was my own wrongs, and no general principle, that moved me to that fierce act. He merited a worse fate, although I had no right to inflict it."

The tall yellow man raised his sable collar over his ears. "I heard enough of your story," said he, "to hold you somewhat excusable for an unpremeditated act of passion. At all events, you are the best judge of your own culpability, so we will pass to a more agreeable subject. Your daughter Ellen, that is her name, is a very beautiful creature."

"Relatives that have long lived together," said I, "are not capable of observing those peculiarities of person and manner which appear most striking in the eyes of a stranger. I am told Ellen is handsome, I know that she is amiable."

"She is a very excellent young creature, in every respect. There is a mixture of frank gaiety and mildness in her manner and conversation, which I think is the most winning circumstance of demeanour that a girl could possess. Her gently inclined head (which a rigid mother or governess, stern advocates of the bolt-upright, of whale-bones and monitors, might condemn as a fault in carriage), and which imparts an appealing look to all her movements, reminded me forcibly of an old friend of my youth, who gave me and the world the 'counterfeit, the slip,' in my absence from Ireland."

Here a silence of some minutes ensued, which was suddenly broken by his asking me whether I had heard that he had purchased the lease of the farm near Cushlanebeg?

I replied in the affirmative.

"I believe," he said, "there is a foible very usual with us wealthy old bachelors, who have wasted, in attaining the means of enjoyment, the time which happier and wiser mortals bestow on enjoyment itself, and who, when they *have* achieved the means, are deserted by the power and the inclination to use them. The foible I mean is an affectation of despotic whim and eccentricity in their mode of dispensing that happiness which they are no longer capable of indulging in their own persons. I confess to you I have a large portion of this caprice in my disposition. I have laid down, in my own mind, a certain scheme for the employment of my future life, and I should feel little gratitude to any of the actors in my projected drama who might mar it in the performance, by rejecting or disputing the parts I have allotted them. The plot flashed on my mind, yesterday," he said, with a smile, "and all its details sprung

up and grew rapidly out of each other with all that consecutive force and aptness, all that vivid and harmonious brilliancy of contrast and arrangement, which, it is said, render the moment of conception one of such exquisite felicity to a fine dramatic genius. Although my plot has not the merit of original invention, seeing that the characters are ready furnished to my hand, yet I am as fond of it as any poet could be, and as firmly resolved to bring it to a catastrophe."

"By the trouble you are taking to lay your prepossessions before me," I said, smiling, "I should suppose that I am one of the persons interested."

"Not as a principal," he replied, bluntly; "you are only indirectly connected with my plan. It is, briefly, this. I have no immediate connections in my own family, and few acquaintances that I wish to revive. I feel a strong desire, therefore, to create for myself a small domestic circle, with whom I may dwell as a close friend during the remainder of my life. For this purpose I have formed the intention, under your good leave, of bringing about an intimacy between the family of a young friend (to whom I intend to bequeath a great portion of my property), and your own, if you have no objection."

I was highly honoured.

"That young friend," he proceeded, "is one in whom I have almost a paternal interest. Now, I am about to say something to you which will, in your eyes, fully establish my claim to that eccentricity which I admitted, but I hope you will meet it with indulgence."

I bowed and smiled.

"My young friend has seen and known your daughter Ellen. He admires her, he loves her. I know your history perfectly well, and I am sure there could not be a more happy union formed than that on which I have already fixed my mind, between my young friend and your daughter Ellen."

"This is rather sudden," said I, in great astonishment, "though very flattering. Pray who is the young gentleman?"

"That," he replied, "must yet remain a secret."

I was greatly offended at the abruptness of this proposition, and yet why should I? He is a very rich man, thought I.

"My daughter, I think," said I, with some hesitation, "would like to see her husband before the ceremony."

"Nay," he replied, smiling, "so she shall, and more, I promise, if she should not like her lover, she may discard him without ceremony."

I paused a moment, endeavouring to make a plausible conjecture. Ay, Dalton's spy is right, I thought; I believe he means Purtill. 'Tis Purtill's brother.

"He is a neighbour of yours," said the stranger, observing me hesitate.

'Tis Purtill, I believe, thought I.

"As ardent an admirer of the young lady as she could wish her accepted lover to be."

Oh! it is Purtill, I concluded.

"Although I have not heard that he ever ventured to ascertain his interest in her esteem."

"He did," said I, "but ——"

"What, you know him then?"

"No, no," said I, "it was merely a conjecture."

It was true Paul Purtill had openly and frequently, even after his rejection, professed his admiration of Ellen, as I have before mentioned, but his poverty and his dissipated character rendered him a very inadequate competitor to young Clancy. Even now, that his prospects appeared to brighten up with a sudden and fortunate change, I shuddered at the idea of placing my poor girl's happiness at the mercy of such a profligate, although she could be freed from her present engagement.

"I anticipate," said I, "some considerable obstacles to your arrangement."

"And what are these?"

"Are you quite certain your ward will be so willing to accept the part which you have allotted him?"

"I promise myself sufficient influence with him to know that he will present no obstacle. I have good reason to be well assured of his consent."

"I fear there is a difficulty which cannot so easily be conquered. My daughter is already betrothed."

"Betrothed?"

"Betrothed. The young gentleman's father and myself have hitherto kept the contract a profound secret, lest any accident, any inability on either side to fulfil the requisite conditions, or any change of inclination on the part of the young people, should prevent the agreement from being fulfilled. But the contract is made and witnessed."

"That ought, with your leave, to have constituted your *first* objection to my scheme, and not an idle speculation upon the dispositions of my ward. That," the stranger continued, drawing his gloves higher on his hand with an offended air, "that at once sets the project at rest. I am sorry for it, for the plan had taken a deeper hold of my imagination than I should be willing to let you discover. But it is, of course, at an end. Yet I will never forgive you, if you have not found Ellen a husband who is worthy of her," he added, in a gentler and sadder tone.

The spirit, covetous of wealth and influence, which had reduced me from competence to poverty, had not yet deserted me. It seemed to me an unwise course to neglect any means of cultivating the friendship and intimacy of so arbitrary and so affluent a person as the tall yellow man appeared to be. And yet there appeared now no possible means of retaining them amongst us, unless I proved false to my engagement with the Clancys: a base line of conduct, the rejection of which admitted of no hesitation. But, on second consideration, was not my engagement, in point of fact, already virtually broken by our inability to fulfil its conditions? How knew I how the Clancys would act, when they had learned

that Ellen was dowerless, and what would my daughter or her lover have gained by the exposure of my shameful appropriation of her little fortune, now become quite irreparable? It was true, Clancy, the generous old man, had professed his willingness to wave all considerations of self-interest, at our interview a few days previous, but I could not subject my child—(thus do the selfish ever impute to themselves the most purely disinterested motives)—I could not subject my child to the mortification of being received as an incumbrance, where I would have her bestowed as a blessing. Therefore I thought there might not be much difficulty or objection in breaking off the match, so far as the Clancys were interested. But a greater bar remained in the way. No violence must be offered to the affections of my daughter. Yet here again a doubt arose. What violence was needed? Were those affections in reality so deeply implicated in the alliance? Was it a match of love, or a match of obedience? I have before said, that this love, if it existed, was not suffered to appear, and how knew I that it did exist? I had suspected, but I might have been mistaken. And even if she did, even if her affections were pledged——. I paused awhile upon this article.

If they be, why she must marry him, was my first conclusion. That was very hard, for if she should, what was to become of me, and Ulick, and Willy? And what addition, nevertheless, could it be to our evil, to know that a dear friend had escaped it? Ay, truly, but I was the father of her brothers as well as of Ellen, and what authority had I to sacrifice them to her? Truly, indeed, I would do no such thing. Had not Ellen an obligation, under the present heavy afflictions which burthened our house, to bear her share of sorrow? Could she be selfish enough to hesitate in snatching us from ruin, at the cost of some restraint upon her own inclinations? If she could be so, she merited not to have those inclinations so tenderly consulted. I was no tyrannical father, affluent myself, and compelling my dependent child to yield me up her predilections, that I might make them subservient to some scheme of needless aggrandisement. I should merely require her to take poverty out of one house, and to refrain from carrying it into another. It was a very reasonable course, and one that I saw no cause to reject.

The advantages which would result from her compliance then rushed in upon my still doubtful will, and completed the conviction to which I had laboured to invite my reason. My fears, my anxieties were calmed in a moment. The hideous phantoms of want and misery which had been staring out upon me whenever I ventured to look forward, and let my eyes rest upon the vast and dreary blankness of the future, now vanished from my sight, and in their place came "white-handed Hope," with all her gallery of pictured promises, the restoration of my lost content, together with the fulfilment of my more brilliant and ambitious desires. And should all this be flung aside, merely to indulge a partiality which perhaps had no existence, or a fancied one? I felt it right that she should comply.

To confirm me in this judgment, my imagination next recurred to the difficulties, the disgraces, and intolerable embarrassments which now hung suspended above my head. My pride could not contemplate, without agony, the prospect of unpitied misery, perhaps of ready scorn and derision, which lay before me. I resolved that Ellen should place no obstacle in the way of the tall yellow man's arrangement.

"Nevertheless," said I, in my own mind, "if she persist in declaring her objection (but that is impossible), I will not use violence. If her love be so deep as to render her separation from young Clancy a circumstance of real agony (but that cannot be the case), I will not force her duty. But the alternative can never be laid before me."

This chain of reflections passed through my mind with much more rapidity than I have used in detailing them. When a resolution once became formed in my mind, my whole soul, all the passions and bad feelings of my nature, were enlisted in its prosecution. If I were not a tyrant or a ruffian in the common occurrences of my life, I soon became one when I had a shadow of justice to uphold me in any cherished project. The circumstances which had brought me to the gates of ruin, had called out all the violence of my nature, but not taught me the secret of governing and restraining it.

While I was engaged in battling my way to the conclusion abovementioned, the stranger, who seemed in no wise displeased when left to his own reflections or his own apathy, remained in his attitude of lethargy or exhaustion, his head drooping, his hands hanging over the arms of the chair, and his dull and sunken eyes fixed on the floor. I felt it a second time necessary to awaken his attention, by repeating, in a louder voice, a sentence which passed unheard when spoken for the first time.

"Thinking more deeply on your proposal, generous as it is," I said, "I have reason to say that the obstacle of which I spoke may not be found so obstinate as I at first imagined."

"Why? Is she not contracted to another?"

"She was, but the contract was a conditional one, and the conditions have been broken on our side."

"So that the contract is, in fact, again invalid?"

"In point of fact, yes."

"Here comes the wind round to the old point again. The sum total of your deliberation, therefore, is that my plan is still practicable."

"I see no objection to it."

"And you will ensure the consent of your daughter?"

"I think—I am sure I can—I will ensure it."

"It is very well. I ask you not by what means you propose to obtain it, what difficulties you may have to encounter, or how you design to surmount them; I shall leave the question of your daughter's consent entirely in your own hands, and proceed to carry the other parts of my arrangement into effect."

"You may rely with security on our compliance," I repeated,

anxious that he should retain no doubt of his success. "The contract was in a great measure, one of convenience, and since the convenience has fallen to the ground, I see not what should uphold the agreement that was founded upon it."

Lifting my eyes, as if by way of appealing to him for the truth of what I said, the sudden alteration that had taken place in the stranger's look and manner startled and confused me. He seemed, for the instant, to have lost all that languid inertness of look and attitude which was habitual to him. His head was elevated with an air of proud indignation; his eye, fully opened and filled with fire, was bent fixedly on my face; and his lips, on which I thought I could discern a certain doubtful and flickering expression of contempt throughout the whole interview, was now curled and set in the unequivocal expression of that offensive sentiment. I felt, at the same instant, a hurried and agitating recollection, like the dim and transitory glimpses which the memory retains of a troubled dream, pass swiftly through my mind, and vanish before I could distinctly define a single image of the suddenly-awakened picture. It is impossible to convey an accurate impression of the sensation which I underwent. A number of familiar faces, all expressive of trouble or apprehension, and figures in various attitudes of anxious expectance and dismay, were, by some strange association, presented to my mind at the instant I met the stranger's glance, and withdrawn as suddenly and as completely as if they had never been. I had not the power to recall or retain any figure of the phantasma a moment longer on my sight. In the same manner, oftentimes, on recurring accidentally to that position of the frame in which I had slept during the preceding night, the story of a forgotten dream has swept across my memory, like the shadows of a careering sky over a sheltered lake.

The change in the demeanour of my visitor was as momentary as the impression which it produced. He quickly relapsed into his usual indolence of manner, and said, in the faint and hesitating tone which was peculiar to him—

"We will meet then soon again. I intend at present to proceed to the house of my young friend, and after I have rejoiced him with the tidings of his good fortune, we will lose no time in returning to Cushlanebeg, and rendering ourselves agreeable to one another. I suppose I shall find you with your daughter?"

"There is little doubt of it, for I intend travelling to-day, and the distance is not more than a few miles. You must be sensible," I continued, after a pause, "of a very exquisite pleasure in the possession of the power which your fortune gives you, and which enables you to exercise something like a magic influence on the condition of others."

He tossed his head slightly, and replied to my observation, rather as if in communion with his own reason than with the intention of honouring me by any confidence—

"I am not generous enough," he said sadly, "to be content with this secondary species of enjoyment, though it is all that is now left me. As I entered this inn, last night, I saw a stout fellow, without

shoes or stockings, seated at a table in the landlord's kitchen, with a mountain of laughing, mealy potatoes, and a wooden piggin of thick milk before him. His cheeks were flushed with health and exercise, his eyes (they were gay, happy, light blue eyes as ever I looked on,) wandered with such an enviable satisfaction over the plenteous fare, and his whole face was lighted up with such a keen sense of enjoyment, that, if I were to look no further than this world (I *have* hitherto seldom looked further), I would have gladly changed persons with the boor. Ay, and minds also; for if knowledge be only valuable for the increase of happiness it brings, he had no loss in his inferiority. But," he added, with a sudden change of manner, "this long interview in your present condition must be of little service to you, and I am myself somewhat weary. I will take my leave for the present."

One of those awkward mistakes in ceremonial, which are so mortifying when committed, and which stick so long and so sharply in the memory, here occurred to me. As the stranger rose, he reached his hand towards me; I thought it was with the intention of taking mine, and offered it in consequence. But he declined the courtesy.

"I beg pardon," he said, very coolly, and without any embarrassment, "it was only my cane I wanted, which is near your chair."

I handed it to him in great confusion; which was not abated by my observing a contemptuous smile upon his lip, as if he were surprised at my expecting such a familiarity. Before I had recovered my self-possession sufficiently to make any observation, he had gathered his furs close about his ears, sunk his head low between his shoulders, applied a silk handkerchief to his mouth, and made all the necessary preparations for beating across a broken pane in McGawyl's lobby, which admitted a thorough draught of air that rendered the enterprise one of a sufficiently hazardous nature.

Never was an individual left in a state of greater perplexity, confusion, pleasure, mortification, attachment, and dislike, than that into which this professed eccentric had contrived to throw me. His pride filled me with indignation, and I felt my heart rise up and call for the rejection of his acquaintance; his generosity attracted me, and I forgave him; his good-nature pleased me, his indifference mortified me, the singular and unaccountable influence which he exercised on my memory confused me, and I contemplated him with a degree of awe; his eccentricity perplexed me, and I threw up the subject in despair of arriving at any conclusion.

I now referred for information with more of leisure to the letter of my daughter. After a gentle reproach for my absence, it ran in the following words:—

"A tall, and somewhat sunburnt gentleman, very apprehensive of cold, and very languid and absent in his manner, called here to see you last night, and remained to tea with us. I was polite to him not only because he was an acquaintance of Rowan's, and because I thought he might be a person of consequence, and likely to be of service to you in your present necessity, but because, even from the first moment of his appearance, the gentleman attracted

my liveliest interest. They call him an eccentric, and I think correctly, for he took no sugar nor cream in his tea, and wore his travelling cap the whole evening. He is the politest old gentleman you ever saw. I am ashamed to tell you what a strange and unaccountable feeling the very first sight of him excited within my mind, for I suppose you would call it ridiculous nonsense. But though *that* might be fancy, *this* at all events is a fact, that on the second day of our acquaintance, for he stopt the night, I felt towards him the same confidence, affection, and reverence which I should have felt towards an aged and well known relative. If Rowan does not look about him, I cannot answer for what I may be tempted to do with myself. Don't you know he is a very rich old gentleman, and though he is now past the bloom of youth, I think there is something exceedingly, and to me, mystically interesting in his features? He was particularly anxious to be made acquainted with the fortunes of our family, but finding me reserved on that subject, as I did not like to say anything without your permission, he desisted with a ready delicacy, for which I admired him. If he should not become a constant friend, I shall surely break my heart.

"And now, my dear father, for our own sad story. Do not remain long from us, do not leave me longer alone, while you go to struggle with misfortune at a distance; do not any longer put me away from you, as if I had no interest in your afflictions. It is not treating me well, my dear father, although I am sure you mean it kindly. My heart is heavier than I have told you. My dear brothers! Let us remain together, my father, and all will yet be well. They will become irreclaimable truants in your absence, for my authority is nothing. Let me echo the invitation of the tuneful Amiens:—

Who doth Ambition shun,
And loves to lie i'th' sun,
Seeking the food he eats,
And pleased with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither;
Here shall he see
No enemy,
But winter and rough weather.

"ELLEN TRACY."

"Who doth Ambition shun!"

I repeated to myself as I folded the letter, and placed it in my capacious pocket-book. "She is a fond little knave, but sufficiently self-assured, when she bestows such a satirical inuendo as that upon her father. 'Twas a little hard, but let it go. I deserve it. I am rejoiced, however, to see that my purpose with respect to the stranger seems to be more than half achieved before I have made known a single wish. There is no ambition in this at all events."

I was shallow enough to think so, and shallow enough to take for the serious feelings of her heart, the light and toying gaiety of her allusion to her old affection. There never were father and daughter who lived together so long in ignorance of themselves and of each other. She little dreamed that I could be a tyrant, and I never suspected beneath that light gaiety and submissive gentleness, which illuminated all her character, the existence of such depth and strength of passion, such an unhesitating firmness of determination, and such a piercing clearness of perception as I afterwards found it necessary to contend with.

While I was still engaged in considering the emergencies in which I was placed, a smart knocking at the door announced the return of my landlord.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SITTING down before the mirror, which McGawyl had placed on the table, and looking on my own shadow (for the first time since that memorable day on which I had left Cushlanebeg), I started back in a transport of sudden fear and astonishment. Not more lively was the amazement of the young prince in Hawkesworth's tale, who discovered upon his own shoulders the head and features of his rival, than was mine at the alteration which had taken place in my own appearance. My hair, a cluster of jet-black close-fitting curls, of which I was once not a little proud, and from which even in my latter days it was my custom to pluck with a jealous anxiety the silver warners of approaching age, was now a gray and grizzled mass, well suited in expression to the fierce and violent lineaments which it overshadowed. Those lineaments likewise had undergone a frightful change. It was not their distortion, in the mutilated mirror before me, that shocked my self-love; while I saw my nose, and mouth, and eyes, with the other features, wrenched out of their proper collocation by the numerous cracks in the glass, and resembling the dissected map of a child, awkwardly put together by some blundering geographer. But they were in themselves rendered sufficiently hideous by the neglect and agitation of the preceding days. The cheeks and eyes were hollow, the forehead dry and yellow, deep lines were sunk around the mouth and between the brows, and the whole was so disguised in dust and mire, that it had not only a wild and ferocious, but a mean and vulgar air. I felt the blood mount up in my face when I recollected the unhandsome figure I must have made before the elegant stranger, and

thought, in my own mind, that he was hardly to be blamed for declining to shake hands with me.

While McGawyl busied himself in procuring breakfast, I despatched a messenger to Dalton's house with the following note:—

"Your good fortune preserved you from the fate you merited at my hands last night, and Providence, for some secret design, permits you still to prolong a life that you have made many unhappy wretches like me desire to abridge. I am satisfied. The violence which I employed towards you was unpremeditated, and I am rejoiced that it has not had a more serious termination. You have succeeded. I have served your purposes. You have robbed me with impunity, and I have little hope now of regaining the property with which I was weak enough to entrust you. There I suffer our connection to rest for the present, and it is possible that it may never again be renewed. But I have a farther warning to give you. Attempt not, as you value your safety, to carry into execution one of those diabolical schemes which I overheard you and your creatures project while I waited your leisure last night. Farther than this, there is nothing which I feel myself obliged to do with respect to information obtained as it was by a course unintentionally indirect. You are therefore still the guardian of your own bad secret, so long as you find it expedient to refrain from putting it into execution against the victims you had marked out.

"I am, &c.

"ADEL TRACY."

I had concluded a breakfast on hot coffee and toast, with eggs "that were laid that morning," and made nearly all the necessary preparations for my departure, when my Mercury returned with Dalton's answer to my letter. It was cautiously worded, and evidently written in the anticipation of its meeting other eyes than those for which it was professedly intended. He affected an entire independence of the friendly or hostile disposition of a person so little governed by the accepted regulations of social intercourse as I was. I had thought proper to overhear private conversations, framed for specific purposes out of the emergency of the occasion, in which I could not discover how much was in accordance with the sincere opinions of the speaker, and how much was the result of a necessary policy. With respect to his own impressions of my conduct, I might consider myself indebted to the domestic affliction which at present absorbed all his attention, for the impunity with which my violence was attended. My apology, indeed, (such was the term he applied to that passage of my note) ought to be considered sufficient, according to the opinions of "the world," on such contingencies; but even if it had not been so readily and speedily made, he doubted whether he should feel himself authorised in seeking redress at the hands of one who was capable of so frantic

a mode of retribution as I had thought proper to adopt. Without explanation given or received (although he could have amply satisfied me, had I heard him detail the motives of his conduct), I had rushed upon a course of practical recrimination for which he was but little prepared, as he supposed it to be a long time out of use in civilized life. That he took no farther measures at present to convince me of the little wisdom my conduct manifested, I might thank his boy, Henry Dalton, and with regard to those insinuations in my note, apparently intended to intimate that any part of his character was within my power, he should think it unnecessary to adopt any precaution whatever; he should consider it scarcely worth protecting, if it were liable to injury from the malice of a baffled assassin.

For some moments after I had read the letter, I remained in doubt as to the course I was called on to pursue. My choler rose and swelled within my bosom at the daring insolence with which he received what I conceived a free and generous proposal. I knew enough of the man, however, to be convinced, that notwithstanding this fanfaronade of defiance, he would be careful to comply with all the stipulations contained in my letter, and as my principal object in writing (the safety of the people against whom his machinations were directed), would be thus accomplished, I had little difficulty in resolving to suspend all personal altercation for the present, and until my weightier interests should be adjusted. At all events, I determined not to expose his character until I had established my own circumstances in better security than that in which they stood at present, for assuredly I had a duty to discharge to my dependent family. It was this trimming between the wrong and the right, this serving of heaven under the guidance of Satan, this worshipping of virtue and of mammon, this facility of taking evil for good, and patching over the suggestions of selfish passion and covetousness with stolen fragments of right reason, that constituted the leading error of my conduct, and continually involved me in ruin, disgrace, and sorrow. There are many in the world who thus frame to themselves a false conscience, and force themselves to believe that they are doing the will of the Almighty, when, as that great Being knows, they are doing nothing less.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was now so long since I had conversed with the fortunate Purtill, and his domestic economy had been at all times so entirely unknown to me, that I formed the design, contrary to my original intention, of dividing my journey, and spending the approaching night at the cottage of my adopted son-in-law. I had the less hesitation in resolving upon this project, as I soon became aware that my recovered strength was not sufficient to enable me to prosecute the whole journey without a stage of rest. My limbs were stiff and pained, and my joints snapped and creaked on the lightest motion, like hinges obstructed with rust.

Another purpose might be accomplished by a visit to the lucky mountaineer. I had heard and read much, and experienced more, of the changes in heart and mind, that are produced in men by a change in fortune, and (although it may appear to some that I slander myself in saying so) I secretly longed to prevent the news of his good fortune at Purtill's cottage, and ascertain the present state of his disposition towards my daughter. So far had I now, by the force of wholesome reasoning, conquered my fatherly repugnance to this alliance, that I felt not a little anxious lest it might be prevented by any want of inclination on the part of the young gentleman himself. A timely visit would afford me the double opportunity of learning the condition of his mind, and of scattering in his ear such accidental words of encouragement as might arouse his long-surrendered hope, and possibly entangle him in the difficulty of a proposal, which I would hold in deliberation until the announcement of his legacy had taken place.

But was I, indeed, capable of constructing and executing a scheme so full of meanness and base chicane as this? If I had been charged with such a design, at the moment in which it was formed, I would have disclaimed it with some violent and perhaps practical demonstrations of indignation. And if I had asked my own heart what its motives were in making this visit, it would have answered with all the simple honesty in the world, that it was conscious of nothing more than a desire to see an old acquaintance,

and to become more intimately known to an individual with whom it was probable I should soon be closely connected. But it would have lied for all that, to itself and to me. The design above-mentioned formed, almost unknown to myself, the motive on which I acted.

The ostler now brought to the door a horse which my landlord had borrowed from the village apothecary, and I rode off. McGawyl continued to watch me from the door in conjunction with several of the idle villagers, who were seated outside, on the sill-stones of their low windows, enjoying the warm sunshine of a summer noon, with their straw hats drawn low, so as to shade their eyes (the only active parts of their frame at that lazy moment). I galloped rapidly away, and soon withdrew myself from their observation.

Considerable delay was occasioned while I lingered in the neighbourhood of the village, by certain professional habits in the apothecary's mare, which, however amusing they appear on recollection, were sufficiently annoying at the time they occurred, and prevented my arrival at the house of Purtill before the sun was in the west. All the doctor's patients who lived on the road-side were to be visited, before the stubborn animal would listen to any proposition of leaving the neighbourhood. Accustomed as she was "from a filly up," as my landlord expressed it, to convey her master on a certain course of visitations, and convinced that I could not know better than he did what way she ought to travel, or perhaps supposing that I had similar reasons for inquiring after the health of her old acquaintances, she trotted up to the cabin doors one after another, nor could any remonstrances of whip or spur prevail on her to move a step forward until I had held some communion with the inmates. I discovered, moreover, another practice, sufficiently indicatory of her master's profession, which entertained me more, as it annoyed me less, than those before mentioned. Her usual movement was a jog-trot, or a heavy lazy walk, more tiresome to the unhappy individual whose destiny placed him astride upon her ribs than the greatest rapidity of progress which she could exercise. I observed, however, that when a carriage, or handsome car, or even a horseman of a more genteel appearance than the country people who passed us, appeared on the road, she suddenly altered her pace, raised her head erect, affected a certain smartness of movement, trotting sprucely forward, or even galloping, as if I were in a prodigious hurry somewhere or another, on a concern of life and death. When the equipages, however, passed out of sight, and while we met no vehicle nor person of greater importance than a countryman or common car on its way to market, no efforts of mine could induce her to continue the same expedition.

I was jogging along, when an able-bodied, hard-featured man, jumped suddenly down upon the road, and laid hold of the bridle of my mare. A glance was sufficient to enable me to recognize my former enemy, Shanahan.

"For what you did last night," he said, "and not for saving me from thransportation and my childhren from ruin, I tell you now I am your friend. You have made my enemy your enemy, and I

am free with you for ever. So you had your fingers last night, I'm tould, Misther Thracy, upon Dalton's throat, had'nt you?"

"I certainly collared him," said I, a little startled by the suddenness of the query.

"And how come you, sir, to let him slip through your fingers so soft?"

I acknowledged the truth, that weakness alone obliged me to relinquish the perpetration of a frantic and horrible revenge.

"Wakeness!" he exclaimed aloud, with a mixture of contempt and indignation in his tone and look; "Poh! where was all the beef an' mutton you ever ait?"

I stared upon him in silence.

"Look at that!" he continued, throwing the bridle into his left hand, and extending towards me the right, with all its hard and bony fingers displayed abroad. "There's a hand that was reared upon nothing but the praties, an' see! if it once got the same grip o' Dalton's wind-pipe that you had, I'll be bound it isn't wakeness that would make it let go o' the howld, any way."

"But I think it was a very fortunate weakness for me, Morty," I said, "that saved me from so foul a deed. You would not have me murder the man?"

He looked troubled. "Oych wisha, Misther Thracy!" he replied in some uneasiness, "the heavens bless you! an' let me alone!"

"Whatever my own injury might have been," I continued, "you would not have me take the right of vengeance into my own hands? Would you?"

"Let me alone, Misther Thracy, an' the heavens bless you!"

"I should be sorry, Morty," I said, after a pause of some moments, "to think that you would be capable of justifying a proceeding of that kind."

"An' I'm sure I wouldn't, sir. The Lord be good to me! I wouldn't either."

"Then what did you mean by taxing me with my failure?" I asked.

He raised his hands and waved them slightly with a deprecating gesture. "Look now, Misther Thracy," said he, "don't talk to me at all, that's what you won't."

An almost uncontrollable spirit of curiosity urged me to disrespect his entreaty. He had excited my interest in too extraordinary a degree to hope that I should desist so readily from its gratification.

"I only spoke," said I, "because I was curious to learn whether you knew anything worse of Dalton than I have already learned?"

"A deal, I did; a deal. There now, let it stop there, sir, an' the heavens bless you! for I'm not myself at all, rightly, when I hear that man mentioned, or when I think of him in my own mind. The Lord direct him this day, but he done me great harm surely! My brains in me head you'd think would be fairly afire sometimes, when I do be thinken of him. I strive to do what's right, an' to be said by them that knows better than me what I ought to do; but

the Lord forgi' me, I'm afeerd I'll do something that's not right some time or other."

"We are fellow-sufferers, then, Mihil," said I, "for I have much to say against him also; but yet I forgive him from my heart."

"Oych, what signify is what injury he ever done you?" exclaimed the mountaineer. "He made a poor man o' you, maybe. Ah! what's that? Did he come to you in the biginnin' o' your youth and put himself between you an' all you ever owned? Did he ever—— But what's the use o' talken?"

Passion, although it affects a certain degree of secrecy, is never displeased to meet with the opportunity of a confidence. I conjectured now, by Shanahan's manner, that he was quite as willing to impart, as I was to ascertain, the occasion of his struggling resentment. After walking smartly forward by the horse's side during a few minutes, he suddenly exclaimed—

"I won't be darkening my soul with it any longer for one story, but tell it off at once, an' so have done with it. I'll tell you how it was, Misther Thracy, now, and let you say yourself have I any raison again' Dalton or no. Listen, hether.

"You know the colleries over, where they raise the culm? 'Tis a good piece now since I lived with my brother hard by that place, an' a sister o' mine that you heard me spakin' of the night you were over at the house when Phaudhrig was brought in dead to us. You heard me charge him with deluding that girl away from us, although I wasn't rightly sure of it at the time; but I have raison since to think I spoke the fact, for Maney, his man, mentioned to a neighbour that he had money from Dalton for her; an' I'm sure Dalton would never send her money if it wasn't for raisons. I'm going now to learn more about it; an' indeed the day I find it so, will be the sorest day to Dalton that he ever knew."

"It would be madness for you, Shanahan," said I, "to attempt anything against his life. He is too securely guarded, and it would be a lunatic as well as a wicked effort."

"I will never lay an angry finger on Dalton himself," replied the man, "but I have a way to be revenged."

"What's that?"

"A way that will set him mad; that will turn his brains for ever, without hurtin' a hair of his head."

"What is it, Shanahan?"

"You'll know when the day comes. He keeps the poor sisther in plenty o' money. I wisht I could make her out."

He closed his lips hard, and walked on in silence, leaving me in great perplexity as to what this terrific mode of vengeance might be, at which he darkly hinted. Although he treated me with a scrupulous civility, yet there was an occasional wandering and absence of mind observable in his manner, which showed that something of greater importance than any subject of conversation before us pressed upon his mind.

"Great throubles in England lately, I hear, sir," he said aloud, after observing a long silence, and in a tone quite altered.

"Yes," I replied, "the poor manufacturers were in great distress,

They were wretchedly destitute of employment, and of course of food."

"See that! I hear they ait very little piatez at all in England?"

"No more than a man eats here of greens with his bacon."

"Oh murther! murther! Only bread entirely, sir?"

"Bread is their chief article of diet."

"See that! Why then, I declare, sir, now, although they talk so much o' that white bread, I doubt whether itself or the piatez is better, after all. I was passen' through Derrygortnacloghy the other day before buckisht, an' not being able to wait for the cups boiling, I bought a loaf of it, an' I declare to you I thought it no more under a man's tooth than a bit o' sponge. It hasn't the substance o' the piatez at all with it."

"A great deal depends on custom," said I.

"True for you. Custom is to one man what nature is to another. An' them English, would they get a bit o' meat often in the week, now, with that bread?"

"They seldom go without it."

"The Fridays or Sathurdays itself?"

"Fridays, or any day."

A deep groan followed this announcement. The mingled result of amazement at the habitual profusion of good living, and horror at the little self-denial which was used in its consumption. Turning towards me soon after, with a ghastly smile and an intensity of look, which contrasted strangely with the simplicity displayed in the preceding conversation, he said—

"An' if that's the way they live, it's little wonder that a scarcity this way should set 'em going. They don't know what poverty manes at all. Let 'em come over here, and spend a season in Ireland after a poor harvest, an' we'll larn 'em how to die in a ditch, or along the road-side, quiet enough, an' make little noise about it."

We rode on now for several minutes in unbroken silence, the mountaineer appearing wrapt in his habitual mood of abstraction, and little disposed to endure any interruption on my part. In a short time after, however, the bitter or mournful association, whatever it might have been, passed away from his mind, and suddenly raising his head, he resumed his inquiries into the political condition of the neighbour island.

"Isn't it a wonder, sir, the parli'ment wouldn't do anything for them people that time?"

"They did something," said I, "but it is not possible for them to find the means of relief in an instant. The king, however, gave some portion of his own property to assist the poor people, while the distress existed."

"See that! Why then, I often think with myself that the king has nature in him, an' would do something for us if he could, but I b'lieve he's bothered from the whole of 'em about him, an' doesn't know how to manage."

Here he mused for a few moments. "The House o' Commons?

Shasthone! That hasn't any call to the House o' Lords now, sir, I b'lieve?"

"They are two separate houses altogether."

"See that again! An' them commons, now, they daren't go into the lords be any means?"

"They dare not show their noses there, beyond the railing that's about the foot of the throne. If they did, there would be pretty work."

"There would be great work, surely, I b'lieve. An' them commons, now, in the coorse o' time, will any o' them come to be lords?"

"Those who are sons of peers will, on the death of their fathers."

"I understand, well. An' I b'lieve it's a deal easier for them to go there than for those that it isn't kind* for 'em to be lords?"

I continued to make familiar to him the peculiar constitution of the British aristocracy, while he interrupted me occasionally, as I unfolded the various harmonies of the system, with ejaculations of "See that!" or "Murther! murther!" Before we had exhausted the subject, however, I could perceive that the interest which he manifested in the subject was very superficial, and that there still remained something underneath of a deeper import, which he longed, yet hesitated, to bring under discussion. By degrees, the conversation was again broken off, and the poor mountaineer relapsed into his disappointed and abstracted air.

We had now lost sight of the village, and of the majestic Shannon, which winded slowly at some distance below, now embosomed among blue and purple hills; now thridding its gentle course through the intricacies of wooded creeks, turretted headlands, and green islands; and further onward, dilating its giant bulk, and placing a long and weary distance between the sunny shores and glimmering white-washed cottages on either side. As we proceeded, in a slow, but continual ascent, the country began to alter its appearance. The fertile and richly cultivated undulations of the soil, its sun-dried meadow fields, and dark green acres of potato-land, chequered with a gay variety of blossoms peculiar to the vegetable at this season, gradually disappeared behind us, and a country of a singular wildness and sterility arose upon our sight. The hills, no longer swelling gently out of the champagne, like the unbroken billows of a breathless ocean, now rose in sudden and abrupt masses around our track, presenting in their chequered costume of gray limestone crag and scanty verdure, an appearance somewhat analogous to that of the ragged peasant, who toiled on his narrow strip of tillage along their sides. The vales, no longer enriched by the efforts of rural industry and cultivation, no longer beautified by the handsome villa, the stately improvement, the cheerful bounded lawn, the trim

* "It is kind for a man" to have any particular disposition, means that the same disposition has been observed in his progenitors. The term only applies to character, and is used in this instance with reference to a transmission of hereditary rights, "by authority;" that is to say, the poetical license of an Irish mountaineer.

plantation, and the happy cottage, now presented to the eye nothing of a higher interest than a tract of uncut bog, or a sullen lough, half concealed by rushes and weedy shallows, on the banks of which a wretched cabin, with mud walls propped, and roof falling in, sent up its thin and tremulous smoke into the sultry air above it, while the poor solitary, who housed his wretchedness in this lonely tenement, suspended his labour before the door-way, and leaned forward on his spade, to speculate on the appearance and destination of the travellers. At a long interval, a farm-house of a more comfortable appearance than was usual, might be discovered in a well chosen corner among the crags, and at a longer yet, the apparition of a handsome cottage, with its elegant pleasure ground and neatly tended shrubbery, started up before the astonished eye of the wayfarer, and furnished a pleasing evidence of a truth (on which, though long impressed upon my mind, I had seldom acted), that the magic of real life is industry.

Feeling a desire to ascertain something more of my companion's real character than he seemed willing to disclose, and curious, moreover, to know how far he participated in the natural indolence which is so generally, and in point of fact, so falsely, attributed to the peasantry of his country, I directed his attention to one of the snug farm-houses above described.

"There is a proof," said I, "of what a little care and industry can accomplish. The man who built that house, and reared the young timber about it, had little time to waste in fighting at fairs, or drinking in public houses."

"An' that's what built the house an' planted the timber for him, you're thinking sir," the mountaineer replied, taking up the inference I intended he should deduce with that rapidity of perception for which, amid all their simplicity, the people of his class and nation are most remarkable; 'True for you, so it was, indeed. Drinking is a bad business for a poor man, or a rich one either, and fighting is a deal worse. You never spoke a truer word than that. But I'll tell you what helped to make the place as nate as it is, besides. The man that owns that house is a *Palentin** an' a protestant; he has his ground for five shillings an acre, on a long lase; he has a kind landlord over him, that will never *distress* him for a small arrear; he isn't like a poor catholic that has a mud cabin, an acre o' pratie ground, an' seven landlords above him,† an' that has no feeling nor kindness to look for, when times run hard, an' poverty strikes him between the cowld walls. An' with submission to you, sir, that's the very thing that causes all the drinking an' the fighting. When a poor man sells his corn at market, an' feels his pocket full o' money, I'll tell you what he does, an' what he says to himself, an' he returning home of a cowld night, sitting upon the corner of his *thruckle* [cart], with the moon shining down upon him, and the frosty wind blowing into his heart, an' the light streaming out o' the windee o' the public house on before him. 'I have thirty shil-

* Palatines, descendants of German settlers.

† This is no fiction.

lings or a pound now,' he says to himself, 'an' that's enough to pay my rent for this turn. Very well,' he says, 'an' when I have that paid, what good 'll it be to me?' I don't know my landlord, nor my landlord doesn't know me. I have no more howld o' my little cabin an' my bit o' ground, than I have o' that smoke that's goen out o' my pipe. I don't know the moment when I an' my little craithurs 'll be wheeled out upon the high road, an' the more pains I lay out upon my ground, the sooner, may be, 'twill be taken from me. An' I'll go home now in the frost, and pay this money to the masther, giving him a wattle to break my own head! Wisha, then, indeed, I won't. Let the masther, an' the rent, an' the cabin go, an' whistle together, if they like, *I'll* go an' warm my sowl in my body with a glass o' spirits, an' have one happy hour at any rate, if I never have another!' In he goes, an' I needn't tell you the state his pockets are in when he comes out again. That's the way the drinkin' comes, Mr. Thracy, an' the fightin' comes o' the drinkin', just as nathural as a child is born of his father."

"I can't but acknowledge," said I, "that there is some justice in what you say. But you do not mean to tell me that the man makes his condition any better by such reasoning as that?"

"Heaven forbid I should main any such thing! No, Misther Thracy, I only state what's nathural, when temptation falls in a poor boy's way. I'm far from saying that he does right in falling into it, but I'm thinkin', sir, that I wouldn't like to be in the state o' that man that puts it before him."

"Yet, after all, Shanahan," I said, a little entertained by this display of national dignity in the decayed descendant of a once honourable name, "after all, you must allow that if there were more industry there would be some little increase of comfort among the people. You can't deny, you know, that there is a great deal of idleness among them."

"I'd be sorry to deny anything your honour is pleased to charge again' us, I'm sure; but where is it you see it, sir, if I might make so bould?"

"Why, there, for instance," said I, pointing with my whip to one of the poor cottages that were scattered at various distances along the road side. "Do you see the way that roof is patched up with whole sheaves of reed, when a few days' work would enable the owner to thatch it far more comfortably, more neatly, and more durably, with half the quantity of material? Do you see that broken gateway propped up with a few stones, when half an hour's work would put good hinges on the piers? And look at that gap, in which he has thrust a car instead of a gate; how long would it occupy his time to nail a few rough sticks together that would enable him to leave the car to its proper uses? Look at the little field on the left, where the cow is grazing, disfigured with loose stones; and look at his own little truckle-road, almost rendered impassable with rocks and ruts which a few hours' trouble would remove!"

"I see, I see it all; an' its aisy for you, sir. A few days' work, an' a few hours' work, an' a day's an' an hour's, an' a few hours to

that again, would set the place to rights, may be, sure enough. An' that's one o' the idle boys that your honour thinks are too plenty in the country? I'll tell you, for I know him well, what sort of an idle boy that is that owns the house. He gets up every morning of his life at day-break, an' takes a spade on his shoulder to go up an' work out his rent upon his landlord's ground, and when he has that done, he has to dig out his own little spot, an' after that again, he works about among the neighbours from sunrise to sunset, for eight pence a day, so that between saison and saison, there isn't a day that he has to himself, excepting may be a month or two in the year that he can enjoy himself, at aise within upon his bed, on the broad of his back, in a taking faver. He might stay at home, surely, to-day an' to-morrow, or for a week to come, if he liked, and do all that wants to be done about the place; but if he did, himself an' his crathurs should go without milk to their praties for that time; a thing they couldn't well afford, in times so full of sickness and sorrow as these. While the poor man would be *tatchin'* his house, his childer would be crying inside of it; while he'd be gathering the stones, he'd be scatthering their bread; an' while he'd be driving the nails in his gate, hunger would be driving a nail in his own coffin!"

"Well," said I, "I won't dispute the question of an indolent disposition with you, but don't you think, now, that there is loss of time, one way, if there is not another? Do you think it would do that man any harm if the priest allowed him to do a little work on a holiday, instead of spending it in idle gossipping about the place, or perhaps in a worse way?"

"By your lave, sir, I'll tell you what I think o' that also. Them people that spend the holidays in idleness or worse, as your honour says, would do betther, surely, if they spent 'em at the spade, an' so the priest would tell 'em too. 'Tisn't the fault of a good thing that a bad use is made of it, an' the people that drink and fight on a holiday would do the same another day if they hadn't 'em. But I'll tell you what I'm thinking, sir. We are so aiger for gain, (the Lord forgive us!) that if there wasn't a little check put upon us, now an' then, we'd break our heart for lucre. An' what signify is what's of 'em for holidays? Twelve in the whole year! I don't know, nor ought I know, as much of other counthries as you, sir, but I'm thinken you'll name few where a man works so hard and gains so little by it, as here in Ireland."

I would have been ashamed, (poor human vanity!) to let him know at the time what an alteration his plainly and homely eloquence had affected in my own long established, but lightly founded, opinions.

"Well, Shanahan," said I, "you speak rationally. It would be well if all your neighbours had as proper notions of duty as you seem to have."

It appeared as if I had struck a jarring chord within the breast of the mountaineer, for his features instantly lost their open and sensible expression, his eye winced with an air of consciousness, and his face grew deadly pale and yellow. He contented himself,

however, with merely replying, as he tossed his head, with an appearance of indifference:—

"Oyeh, sir, I'm long enough in the world not to know the wrong from the right."

"And to act accordingly," said I.

He made no answer.

Once more the conversation was suspended, and my companion resumed that mournful look which I had already observed. Our roads now separated, and I took that leading up to Purtill's house, at a loss to conjecture under what new light I should have to contemplate the character of a man who had first broke upon my acquaintance as a ruffian, then softened into a simpleton in knowledge, then soared into a philosopher, and finally, by the moody disposition indicated in his look and demeanour, left me in doubt whether I ought not to look upon him as one

> So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune,
> That he would set his life on any chance,
> To mend it, or be rid on't.

CHAPTER XX.

LATE in the evening I turned my horse in upon the broken and neglected avenue leading to Purtill's dwelling. The residences of country bachelors in general, though often trim and neat, have an air of unconquerable loneliness, which is inseparable from the condition of their owners; an appearance of something forlorn and unfitted. But Purtill was an Irish bachelor, the relic of a peculiar and now almost forgotten race, and his dwelling was quite in character with his person and habits, distinguished by a mixture of idle neglect and ingenious contrivance, and with a profusion of succedanea of all descriptions. Carts for gates, boards for window panes, cords for hasps, and other specimens of Irish lieutenancy, were here to be seen on every side. There was no knocker to the door, a small rope served for a handle, the bobbin of the latch had been pulled in, but on examination I found that this was no inconvenience, for it was without a latch, and yielded to my hand. A spade, with the iron stuck in a crevice of the flagged hall, and the head against the door, served for a dumb porter. There was not even a dog to bark at me when I came in. I went to the parlour door and tried the brazen handle, but it came off for want of a rivet, and remained useless in my hand. I knocked, but no one answered. With a little further examination, however, I ascertained that the groove of the lock had been destroyed, and entered the parlour on the same "open sesame!" system which had been successful at the hall door.

A table was laid in the middle of the room, of good mahogany, but covered with stains from drinking. Under another, close to the wall, were placed a quantity of empty jars and bottles, the rifled monuments of noisy hours gone by. Some broken glasses and tumblers were placed on the wooden mantel piece, as ornamental trophies. A small bell lay near, with a little button hung to a piece of whipcord instead of a tongue. A cracked fiddle hung against the wall, and a flute, corded in a dozen places with cobler's wax-end, lay on the table. The character of the place, altogether, was like that of an infirmary for all kinds of maimed and superannuated articles of furniture.

I had thoughts, when I looked around upon this scene of indolence and dissipation, of stealing quietly out of the house, remounting my horse, and riding quietly home to my poor child, without degrading her with the proposition of such an alliance. But while I walked across toward the parlour door, I was startled by the report of a gunshot in another room. It was followed by the loud roar of a man's voice, and an exclamation uttered in one that was familiar to my ear, of "Ah, ha! What say you now? How am I now, do you think?"

Snatching up a poker, I hurried out into the room from which the sounds proceeded. It was the sleeping chamber of Purtill. On the floor lay a man upon his back, bellowing hideously, and kicking his feet into the air. It was the young fellow to whom I had committed the charge of the poor girl in Limerick. Through the clouds of smoke, which was slowly dispersing above him, I saw the figure of Purtill, sitting erect in his bed, with a brass-barrelled blunderbuss in his hand, his night-cap pushed back upon his crown, and a triumphant smile upon his countenance.

"Ah, ha! you scoundrel!" he exclaimed in a taunting voice. "How am I now? Do you hope I'm better now?"

The man answered by a redoubled roar of pain and terror.

"What are you doing, Purtill," said I; "are you going to charge again?"

Hearing these words, the man suddenly stopt howling, and looking up with a terrified face, scrambled off the ground, and rushed out of the house, after threatening all the vengeance that law and violence could enable him to inflict upon his foe.

"What's the matter, Purtill?" said I; "have you really shot the man?"

"No," replied he laughing, and settling his night-cap, "it was only a good fright; though he is yet in doubt himself whether he is not meat for worms."

"What did he do to you?"

"I'll tell you, if you'll lay that blunderbuss upon the rack for me. But in the first place, how are you? I am glad to see you."

We shook hands, and I placed the weapon on the rack, as he desired.

"That fellow," said he, still laughing, and gathering the clothes about his shoulders, "has the reputation of being a very great wag in our village, and has often boasted of playing pranks on me, but I think I am pretty even with him. Our acquaintance began in a manner that ought to have given him a lesson, but fools will never learn."

"How was that?" I asked.

"Why," said Purtill, "I was in the market-house, getting some corn weighed, when this fellow happened to come in. Seeing me very intent on what was going forward, he told the owner of the corn that he saw me touch the scale. I overheard him, and I told the rascal, what was true for me, that he lied in his teeth, so he struck me on the head. I turned round, I had no stick, but I snatched up a butcher's cleaver that was lying by the wall, and I

made for the rascal. He *cut*, and I cut after him; he darted into his house and shut the door in my face; I sunk the cleaver into the pannel, and split it from top to bottom behind his back."

"That was rapid work," said I.

"Wouldn't you think that it ought to have been a warning to the fellow?"

"'Pon my word there certainly was something ominous about it."

"Well, and so it was. He didn't venture to sneeze in my hearing for six months. But after my duel with young Dalton, who had the misfortune to shoot me through the leg, and within the last month, when I received a touch in the left shoulder in another affair of the kind with Lorenzo Doody, this fellow began to run a quiz upon me, while I could not help myself. He used to come to that room door every day and begin whining out, 'Well, how are you to-day, Misther Purtill? Do you find yourself anything betther, sir. That Mr. Doody, sir, is a terrible man, sir. He's as bad to you as Misther Dalton, sir. Will you go fight *jewils* any more, sir?' and various witty taunts of that description, drawled out with a tone of great simplicity, and affected concern. Well, sir, what did I do? Stop, and I'll tell you. I got old Batt, abroad, to hand me that blunderbuss off the rack. I put in a good charge of powder, and laid it quietly here at the head of my bed, determined to give my lad a proper salute when he should come next to ask after my health. Well, sir, this evening, about half an hour ago, he comes as usual to the door, but with a different manner, for the rogue knew I was getting well, and he was afraid of a practical retaliation. So he asked me quite seriously how I was getting on? I answered him just in the same tone, and begged him to walk in, as I had something to say to him. He did so, sir, and when I had him in the middle of the room, out I whipped my piece from under the quilt, and banged the contents into his face. You saw the rest yourself. So much for visiting the sick."

"Well, Purtill," said I, laughing, "it would be well if all your jokes were as harmless; but you will get a broken head at the next fair."

"Oh! that as a matter of course," said Purtill. "I take my chance for that. I should enjoy little peace if I were to be calculating on the consequences of every freak of this kind. But to what am I indebted for this visit?"

"It will take me some time," said I, "to inform you."

"Oh then! if it will, go to the parlour, and amuse yourself with something while I get out of bed to follow you."

"But ——"

"Nay; I was just going to rise. I only staid in bed to waylay that fellow."

I re-entered the parlour, where I found old Batt with a basket of turf between his knees, making down a fire.

"Well, Batt," said I, "so your master fought another duel lately?"

The man tossed his head and smiled. "He did, sir," said he, "an' a dhroller jewel never was fought before or after."

"How was that, Batt?"

"Why then, I'll tell you, sir. The masther an' Misther Doody over, that had a difference about a horse o' the masther's that he knocked again' misther Doody's chestnut mare, an' faix if they had, they sthruck one another on the rights of it. Well, it was late at night, afther they dinin' together over at the priest's house, an' so afther they going they agreed to fight one another in the middle o' the village, an' they havin' no seconds, nor nobody with 'em but meself. Indeed, only Misther Doody was drunk, I don't say he'd do it, for he was always very exact about discipline, an' to say the truth, fonder of the discipline than he was o' the fightin', [with a knowing wink.] But the masther threatened to post him if he wouldn't do it that minute. So they borried a pair o' blunder-pushes, and loaded 'em with slugs, an' they agreed to walk up to one another from one end o' the street to the other, an' to fire when they plazed. Well, when Doody walked away to his post, an' the night so pitch dark, that you couldn't see a stem apast your hand, 'I'll tell you what it is now, masther,' says I, makin' up to him an' whispering in his ear, 'walk away home with yourself now, an' lave him there, an' you'll have a joke again Doody for ever.' He made me no answer, only ga' me a kick that tumbled me in the gutther. I had no time to say more, only made a one side, an' hid behind the pump, for fear Doody would begin to fire unknownst. Well, it isn't long till I hear the masther crying out, 'Where are you, Doody, you scoundhrel. Are you skulkin' anywhere in a corner? Let me know, till I blow your brains out.' 'Here, you rascal,' cries Doody; 'out frontin' you in the middle o' the street.' So they blazed at one another. 'Did you get it that time, you scoundhrel?' cries the masther. 'No, you rascal, did you?' cries Doody. 'I didn't, you pig,' says the masther; 'let us load again.' So they stept a one side and loaded. 'Stand out again, you tinker,' cries the masther, 'until I riddle you.' 'I'm here already, you ruffian,' says Doody. So they blazed again. 'Well,' cries Doody, 'did you get it now?' The masther said nothing, so I crept out afeard; an' went over an' found him sittin' upon the ground, an' the gun lying anear him. 'Are you hurt, masther?' says I. 'Batt,' says he, with a groan; 'I believe we're a pair o' fools.' 'Have you much pain, sir?' says I. 'It went through the shouldher,' says he, 'an' lodged inside, I fear. Where's Doody?' 'He run off,' says I, 'when he seen you down.' 'He was right,' says the masther. 'Well,' says he, an' I puttin' him upon the horse, 'whatever comes of it Batt, it's a comfort to know that we done the business like gentlemen."

By this time Purtill entered the room; and old Batt, laying his finger privately along his nose, winked at me, to signify that I should say nothing of what he had been telling.

"Do you see how that fellow leaves the door open?" said Purtill, after Batt left the room; "the fellow has been living with me these fifteen years, and I never once saw him shut a door without being desired."

"Call him back," said I.

"Not yet," replied Purtill, "I always wait until he is seated snug

by the kitchen fire, with his pipe in his mouth, and then I summon him back."

He rung the maimed bell, and Batt re-appeared.

"What's wantin', sir?" he asked.

"Shut the door," said his master.

"Oyeh, wisha, Lord help us!" said Batt, going out and doing as he was bid.

"It is your own fault, Purtill," said I, "to have your servants in such bad order. If they had a mistress to train them, they would not be so negligent."

"Ah! Tracy!" exclaimed Purtill, in a most pathetic tone, "it is not you that ought to make me that reproach."

Dinner, or rather a collation bearing some resemblance to it, was now served in, and Purtill entertained me during the repast with accounts of his adventures in the neighbourhood; how he cheated the doctor in a bargain of a horse; how he *wigged* the parson out of half his tythes; how he *humbugged* the proud old barrister by taking off his hat, and bowing to the ground whenever he came in sight; how he threshed a bailiff; kicked a process-server, and performed other feats of a similar description.

Without at all letting him into the secret of his good fortune, or hinting anything of my private views, I now took an opportunity of inviting my host to Cushlanebeg for a few days. Perceiving that his countenance brightened at the proposal, I fixed the time for the following morning, and then rolled on into some talk of my domestic affairs, and let him know enough to imagine that the alliance with the Clancys was at an end. Seeing that he became still more joyously interested, I took an opportunity, in the course of some further conversation, to venture a plain intimation that his visit might not at this time prove so unacceptable to Ellen as it did when she was younger and more foolish.

"By——!" said Purtill, swearing, "I'll get drunk for that word before I leave this chair. Batt!"

Batt appeared.

"Bring me a kettle of hot water and tumblers, and turn out Mr. Tracy's horse into the short field. Do you hear? the *short* field."

"I know, sir;" said Batt, with a look of sharp intelligence.

"And, Batt!"

"Well, masther?"

"Shut the door after you."

"Oyeh! choke it for a doore!" said Batt. "My heart is broke from it. It won't stay shut, sir."

"Why, where's the plug?"

"It was cut up into *kippens*, sir, to *skiver* the chickens."

"Well, draw a chair against it then, and go along."

Batt took his departure, laying hold of the back of a chair, and drawing it after him with the door, until he just left room for his hand to escape; while he muttered, during the whole manœuvre, "Wisha, the dickens carry you for one doore; dear knows we're kilt from you! I'd as lieve be mindin' a young child."

Purtill made good his promise of becoming intoxicated that night,

and the natural consequence was, that the sun was high in the heavens before we got on horseback the next morning.

"The masther thrated you well, sir," said Batt, in a whisper, while he led my horse to the door, "in turnin' your mare out last night into the *short* field as he calls it."

"How is that, Batt?"

"'Tis the best grass he has, sir, that he gives only to those he likes. The long field he has for sthrangers, such as tax-gatherers, and ministhers, an' people that there's nothing to be got by."

"And where *is* the long field, Batt?" said I, after looking vainly round for one that might answer the description.

He approached the saddle, laid hold of the stirrup leather, looked cautiously over each shoulder, and then putting his open hand to the side of his mouth, he whispered—

"Faix, then, the high road sir, and sorrow one else. Long enough, I'll be your bail. One would think the horse himself couldn't name it betther if he was axed, poor crather!"

CHAPTER XXI.

PURTILL did not set out like the "frog who would a wooing go," in his opera hat. On the contrary, his dress was exceedingly shabby. A rusty black coat, buttoned up to his chin, a pair of greasy doe-skin *tights*, cobbled-up boots, and a hat that looked as if it had been singed over a fire, constituted the external man.

"It will look better," said he, turning up his elbows on perceiving that I perused his attire askance, "when I get it turned, and new buttons sewed in."

It was not, however, until I was once more seated in my home, until I had taken my gentle daughter in my arms, and kissed her, and looked upon her fair and affectionate countenance, and her slight figure, attired in a mourning dress, and thought of her departed mother, and looked once more at Purtill shrinking into a corner in his conscious inferiority of pretension, that I felt the entire baseness of the resolution I had formed.

Yet what was I to do? The first step had been already taken, and Purtill was here already standing on a virtual proffer of my paternal interest on his behalf. Was I again to be guilty of a retraction? Was my life to be one continued series of deceptions? And then my promise to the wealthy stranger. I was already bound to take the course I had in view, and I determined for once in my life, to act with consistency and resolution.

I had taught my daughter from her childhood to treat me with perfect and entire sincerity, and the consequence of this mode of instruction was that she had no secrets from her parents either with respect to her feelings or her inclinations. My spell for securing her confidence was this:—when she avowed to me any natural sentiment which the peculiar constitution of society renders unfit for general currency, I did not, like many foolish parents, express a sudden horror and astonishment, and thus compel my child to keep her own counsel on another occasion. I always said, "My child, that is a very natural feeling on your own part, and you are a good little girl for telling it, but if you indulge those feelings, my darling, it would lead to very bad consequences."

And then I let her see just so much of those consequences as was necessary to convince her reason, but never affected a horror at her freely expressing a sentiment that nature had implanted in her breast. On the contrary, I rather coaxed than terrified her into a hatred of vice, and taught her to consider concealment as the most shameful of all offences. I made candour sweet to her by my endearments. For I thought, that if fortune should frown upon us, and Providence should think fit in its wisdom to leave my child alone upon the earth, without a guardian or instructor, the world, intrinsically indifferent as it is in matters of virtue, had yet an external decorum upon its surface, that would prevent her doing anything egregiously wrong while she kept nothing secret from her friends. The alteration which had taken place in my own character during the last few months, was the first occasion of reserve which had ever arisen between my child and me. Even that had fully disappeared since she was left an orphan, and we were now on those confiding terms which always had existed between us, and always ought to exist between a parent and his children, a sweet, and condescending love, without familiarity on his part, a depending confidence and filial openness on theirs.

But that passionate thirst of influence and wealth which had first assailed my heart when I made the acquaintance of Dalton, had settled like a storm cloud over our free affections, and steeped our hearts in gloom. That innocent, that confiding child, had trusted all her happiness into my keeping, and I was now about to sacrifice it. It is with shame and agony I dwell upon this portion of my story; but I have determined to hang up my character as a warning example to those who may be tempted by the same dark passion, and that determination shall be unsparingly pursued.

Three days elapsed, however, before I could bring my mind to enter upon the task which I had set for it. The day arrived which the tall stranger had appointed for his visit, and it was only then, when necessity compelled me to be resolute, that I finally resolved on putting my plan into execution.

Paul Purtill, who had by this time made himself quite at home, was inspecting some cocks of a peculiar breed in the yard. Rowan Clancy, attired in holiday trim, was standing at the window of the little drawing-room, and expecting Ellen, who was in her chamber preparing for a morning walk. I entered the parlour through which I knew she must pass on her return, and turning the key in the lock, awaited her appearance.

I drew a small table and writing-desk to the centre of the room, and judging that it would be easier to induce her to give her consent in writing than by word of mouth, I wrote a short letter addressed to Rowan Clancy, stating that in consequence of the unexpected calamities which had fallen upon our house, and which made her father unable to fulfil the conditions of the agreement between both families, she was compelled to withdraw the promise which she had given at a time when she thought she could bring something to him besides poverty and suffering. I left a blank for the name, and replacing the pen upon the desk, continued to

walk backward and forward, with my hands behind my back, and my breast filled with unusual struggles.

The desk was Ellen's, and in looking for paper, on which I might write, I found a little poem in the hand-writing of Henry Dalton, with an unfinished copy in her own. I transcribe it here, for I feel an interest in any relic of that unhappy youth, greater perhaps than another might in its intrinsic value—

When some unblest and lightless eye,
With light half droop'd, and moist, and meek,
Tells silent tales of misery,
The trembling lip could never speak.
What is it wets the listener's cheek,
What fills with love his answering voice,
And bids that suffering heart not break,
And bids that trembling eye rejoice?
When the heart wavers in its choice,
What is it prompts the generous part?
Oh, spring of all life's tender joys!
Oh, sun of youth! 'tis heart! 'tis heart!

When the advancing march of Time,
With cheering breath had rolled away
The mists that dull'd her morning prime,
And Beauty steps into her day;
What gives those eyes that conquering play
That aching bosoms long confess?
And lights those charms with quickening ray
That else had charmed and conquered less?
A sweet light unto loveliness,
A meaning breathing o'er the whole
That else might charm, but could not bless
Win, but not fix? 'tis soul! 'tis soul!

When youth and youthful friends are gone,
When disappointment glooms the brow,
And early loves leave us alone,
To walk in friendless sorrow now,
And chilled is young rapture's glow,
And hoary grown the raven hair,
And age its paly tinge of woe
Hangs over all youth fancied fair,
What guards our home from still despair?
And bids joy linger, loth to part?
Oh! balm of grief and pining care!
Oh! stay of age! 'tis heart! 'tis heart!

When beauty feels the touch of years,
When the round voice grows faint and small,
And that bright eye is dimmed by tears,
That once held many a heart in thrall,
What makes that voice still musical?

And beauty, even in beauty's fall,
As full of witching life and light,
As when the hue of young delight
Over its blushing spring-time stole?
Oh! star of love's approaching night!
Oh! shield of faith! 'tis soul! 'tis soul!

Seldom they shine in worlds like this,
Seldom their favouring light we see,
For passion taints earth's purest bliss,
With spots of dark mortality;
But once a sweet dream came to me,
A vision of a glorious land,
Where sounds of gentle revelry
Rose on the soft air, making bland
And rapturous music to a band
Of nymphs that o'er the green path stole,
Where Beauty and Youth walked hand in hand,
Lock'd in love's faith with Heart and Soul.

My daughter entered the room while I was reading, and had already turned the key in the opposite door before I was able to call her back. A feeling of reluctant shame made my nerves as those of a recluse. When, however, she had passed out of the room and closed the door after her, I rose quickly, opened it, and said in a low voice—

"Ellen, I want you."

She returned instantly.

"Come in, Ellen," said I, "and close the door. Lock it. I have a great deal to say to you, and I am afraid of being interrupted. Is it fast?"

"It is, sir," Ellen answered, looking a little puzzled.

"Come hither, then, at once, and sit down here. Lay aside your gloves."

"Why so, sir?"

"I want you to write something for me."

"Will you want me long, father?" said Ellen, in a simple unconscious tone, while she drew off the gloves as I desired, "because Rowan is waiting for me."

"For what?"

"To walk, sir."

"You must not walk with him, my love."

"Not walk with him!"

"No; you must not walk with Rowan any more."

"Father!"

"Well, Ellen?"

She laid her hand upon my shoulder, and looked up into my eyes. I avoided the glance as well as I could, though I saw quite enough to cut me to the heart. I removed her hand, pressed it, and summoned strength to go on.

"Ellen," said I, "listen to me. I am utterly ruined now."

"Oh, father, not ruined!"

"Well, perhaps not ruined quite. Only disappointed in all my undertakings—in all, without a hope (but one), to redeem a part of what I have lost, to save my children and my dependants from utter penury, and my own old bones from growing cold within a dungeon cell. You may not think this ruin, but it wears a gloomy aspect."

"Dear father!"

"Do you understand me fully, Ellen? We are all undone. I am ducked to the ears in debt, and left no choice at all between famine and a jail. This house will cease to be ours before another day. I have not even ——" I paused and leaned my head upon my hands.

"Not even what, father?" said Ellen, in a gentle, piercing tone of sweetness.

"Not even that sum of money left by your uncle for your use, and which was to have entitled you to Rowan's hand. I know," I added, perceiving the girlish indifference with which she heard a piece of intelligence that ought to have filled her with uneasiness, and more annoyed at this apparent levity of mind than I could have been grieved by her reproaches; "I know how it is with the young and inexperienced when ruin frowns at a distance, and her hollow eye is yet bent with a feeble influence on their condition. They will not heed her threats, nor detect her approach by the far and warning signs that older ears are tuned to startle at. They hear of her, when they are seated at their morning meals, how she has stalked athwart the affrighted island, and turned into liquid fire the blood of her children; how she has stung the peaceful citizen, by invading his domestic love, and that way rendered him a brawler and a wretch; they hear how the hungry-eyed and iron-fingered fiend has snatched the food from the lip of the famishing labourer; how she has shook the mighty frame of the great state itself, till it rocked on its foundation and seemed about to sunder; these things they hear as if themselves were sacred from the ills they shudder at, and till the gripe of the demon is fixed upon their throats, till the bread is wanted at their board, and every sense shouts famine in their ears, they look on these as distant perils, and flatter themselves that they are exempted from the common chances of human-kind!"

"Dear father!" said Ellen, "why do you say this to me?"

"Does the picture fright you, then?" I continued. "'Tis ours, my girl; my children's and my own. Ellen, we are lost. Ay, look around, and lift your eyes, even so. It *is* the home which you have known from childhood, and yet which you must know no more, unless you do what I am sure you will not."

"And what is that, sir?"

"Will you do it for me?"

"Will you not trust me, father?" said Ellen, putting her hands around my neck.

"I will, my girl, my love, my treasure. It is but to write your name to this letter and send it down to Rowan."

I handed her the letter, and I saw her eyes swim, and the blood

leave her cheeks and lips while she read it. Her hands sunk upon the desk, and she remained for some moments as if a struggle had oppressed her breath.

"Is it possible," she said at length, "that my father wishes me to sign such a paper as this?"

"Ellen, it is our only resource."

"And why, sir? Why should this cold rejection come from me? If I am not now the bride that Rowan loved, why should I be the first to divide the knot that has bound our hearts so long? A knot that you, my father, first tied, and which I have always thought so entirely delicious."

"Rowan, my love, is poor, and he could not in the present circumstances make you happy, nor be content himself."

"But, sir, we are both young. Why should we hasten then?—The world is fair before us, and a few years of exertion may find Rowan independent, and capable of realizing all our wishes yet."

"And where may these few years find your father and your brothers, Ellen?"

She drooped her head suddenly.

"No, my child," I continued, seizing on the sympathy I had just awakened, "even if Rowan were willing and able at this instant to perform his portion of our agreement, you must surrender yours. I am sure, Ellen," I added, taking her hand and looking in her face, "I am sure you do not love Rowan after all."

"Indeed, indeed I do, sir!" she replied, with great earnestness and simplicity; "I have told him so fifty times."

"Ay, but not quite as well as you could love your husband?"

"Quite, quite as well, indeed, sir," Ellen replied, looking up in my face, with her eyes sparkling and brow glowing with the clearest blushes.

"But I have a lover for you, Ellen, who will love you better, and be more worthy of your love. A Crœsus, Ellen, who will restore the golden age to our comfortless home, and make its walls re-echo once again with careless laughter. You shall visit no more afoot; you shall have a coach and horses, and—see, here's the pen; the place is left a blank for you; I tell you he is wealthier than a miser; he is full of riches. Rowan? Psha! Purtill, Ellen. Here's the place. Come, write."

"Purtill, sir; Mr. Purtill?"

"Paul Purtill is the man of whom I speak!"

"A rich man, sir?"

"He is the master of a mine of wealth. He could buy sixty Clancys."

"I thought," said Ellen, "there was something in his visit at such a time. If you please, father, I will take Rowan's arm, and still continue to walk afoot. I'll have no coach with Purtill."

"You will not sign the letter?"

"I cannot, sir."

"Very well, Ellen," said I, folding the letter, "go down to Rowan, then, and take your walk, and leave me alone if you please."

"My dear father ——"

"Take away your hands, if you please. Go and amuse yourself. I have something else to occupy me now. Take away your hands."

"Oh! father ——"

"Are you my enemy too, Ellen? Are you too deserting me?"

"I am not, indeed, sir," she answered, crying aloud.

"Will you write your name here?"

"Father ——!"

"In one word, let me have your answer."

"Oh! spare me, sir."

"I would save you, my daughter. Save yourself and obey me."

"Have you no other hope?"

"None, Ellen, none; not one, my child, my angel!" I drew her into my lap and caressed her cheek. "Look, Ellen, I am utterly destroyed. In my days of sunshine and of hope I was proud, puffed up, and scornful; and I must now become a mark for the gibes and jests of all those who feared me then, even while they hated me. You know not, my gentle, my humble, my timid child, you know not what the agonies can be of blasted ambition, of disappointed pride. You know not how dark and how unpitied is the fall of him who, when he sought to rise, began by severing the social ties that bound him to his fellows, and clambered up the ambitious height alone. I am that lonely wretch, so crushed, so fallen, and yet if you desire it, safe from evil."

"Oh! father," cried Ellen, suddenly flinging herself upon my neck, "my heart is in your hands!"

"I'll give it to one, my love, who will treasure it as if it were a faery dower."

"I cannot, I never could love Purtill."

"Then take away your hands, and leave me. I do not want you to fondle me with your arms while you stab me with your tongue. Begone!" I continued, rising in anger from the chair, and putting her away, while my limbs trembled with a passion similar to that which I had felt during my interview with Dalton; "I can do without you. I have degraded myself, and I deserve to be repulsed. Again, I desire you, touch me not."

"What can I do to serve you, father?"

"Nothing! I will have nothing from you; never again will I ask you to move a finger if it were to save my life. Go, go, and enjoy yourself. We can do without you well."

"Oh! father, I never saw you looking thus till now. You never said an angry word to me, till Mr. Dalton first came near us."

"And by what claim," cried I, stamping in uncontrolled fury, "do you dare rebuke my looks or manner? I bid you leave me at once. If you have never found me passionate, never till now have I found you undutiful. But do your pleasure."

"Stay, my father!" cried Ellen, sinking suddenly upon her knee, and clasping my hand.

"For what?" I asked, looking round upon her.

She paused and lowered her head for a moment, and then looking up with a pale and altered face, she said—

"I will do all for you that a daughter should do."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"I know not," she said, in great agitation; "I'll sign the letter: oh, no! no! Oh, Rowan!"

"My daughter! My dear daughter!"

"Don't ask me, father; I am in your power. I cannot refuse you if you ask me."

"My darling, and my deliverer!"

"May heaven forgive me, father! Where's the place?"

"Here, here; this blank; don't tremble; dry your eyes."

"I will, sir; heaven forgive me! I'll do it for you, father. I'll sign it for you, sir! I'll write whatever you please. I cannot!" she almost screamed aloud, as her eye fell upon the letter. "Let me rather die at once."

"Good girl!" I said, bending over her chair, and holding her hand, which still retained the pen, and replacing it upon the desk. She averted her head, covered her eyes with her left hand, and with a little assistance from me, the important signature was affixed.

I now loaded her with caresses and expressions of gratitude, reminded her of the poverty and woe she had escaped, and the wealth and splendour she had secured to herself and to her family. But she seemed to take no heed of what I said, and remained, during the whole time, pale and motionless, with a kerchief pressed against her lips, and her eyes resting low down. When I had done, she merely said, in a faint tone—

"May I go now, sir, to my room?"

"I'll lead you there," said I; "you will be merrier, Ellen, by-and-bye."

"I will, sir."

"You have my blessing, darling."

"I hope so, sir."

"Your mother's spirit blesses you."

"Oh, no! I have broke the word I gave her."

"Ay, Ellen," said I, "when virtue bade you; virtue, which was her idol."

With a low moan of piercing anguish, she withdrew herself from my embrace, and hurried up to her apartment. I felt my heart-strings torn, but I clenched my teeth hard, and resolved to suffer all and persevere.

CHAPTER XXII.

After I had sent the letter down to Rowan, I remained seated at the desk, and altering my spirit to prepare it to encounter that of the fiery and violent young man whom I was about to injure. I could not, however, divest myself of the nervous anxiety which remained upon my heart, until the first sound of his rushing feet upon the stairs awoke the combatant within it.

He entered the room with the open letter in his hand, his person expanded, and his eye lighted up with extreme indignation.

"Where's Ellen, sir?" he asked.

"She is in her room, Rowan."

"I wish to see her; I wish to know if this," pointing to the signature, "be really her hand."

"You may learn that from me, Rowan. It is her hand. I have seen her write it."

"And then, of course, it has your sanction too?"

"It has."

He paused and stared on me for some moments in silent wonder.

"May I ask, sir, why is this? What have I done to deserve this sudden, this cruel change?"

"Nothing, Rowan. It is no fault of yours that we are unable to fulfil that agreement on which from the beginning this alliance was supposed to rest. I thought our reasons were stated in the letter."

"They *are* stated there," said Rowan, with great indignation, "and with so cold and heartless an indifference, that I cannot think that Ellen even ever read the letter. Nothing *but* the signature, I see, is in her hand."

"The rest is mine," said I, "and I think I do you good service, Rowan, in preventing you from completing what would be an act of folly and of certain misery to all concerned in it."

I was met here by the same arguments at which Ellen did but glance. Rowan used them with fervency, with force, with eloquence, and with dexterity. He promised impossibilities, he remonstrated, he reasoned, he pleaded, he importuned. At length,

finding it impossible to meet his instances in a satisfactory manner, I said—

"The truth is, Rowan, it is impossible for me now to hear you, Convinced of the expediency of the measure which I have adopted. and feeling satisfied of your acquiescence, I have already formed other arrangements."

"I feared, I thought it," exclaimed Rowan, with sudden vehemence. "I knew there was something more in this than zeal for my advantage."

"—— Which cannot now be retracted without a grievous injury."

"And is there no injury to me?" said Rowan. "Have I sustained no wrong? Without notice given, without a word of explanation, without even so much form as the courtesy of society requires, I have been flung aside in a manner, sir, that—that is very wrong, sir, that is most injurious, that is—base, Mr. Tracy."

"Young man," I exclaimed, much incensed at the word, "if you wish to have this interview continued, you must use the language of a gentleman."

He walked up rapidly and bent his brow upon me for a minute. "I have been so long accustomed," he said at length, "to regard you in the character of a father, that I cannot instantly forget my own. And if you were not mine, you are Ellen's, and that is sufficient for your safety. But I must and will be satisfied, and therefore I demand from you, as an act of justice, the name of the person in whose favour those other arrangements have been formed."

"I cannot oblige you in this, for I do not know the name myself. But I have no wish to conceal from you all that I *do* know. The principal agent in the transaction is an elderly gentleman, whom I met by accident, who appears to have lived a long time in a tropical climate, and who has been observed wandering about this country during the last year."

A sudden astonishment appeared to seize upon the listener. "Is it possible," said he, "that he can be the mover of this measure? I know him well. He is at this moment at my father's."

"The yellow stranger?"

"He whom I met here in your absence within the last fortnight."

"The same."

"I am utterly astonished. I have an appointment with him on this very day. I met him accidentally about a year since, when he made many inquiries about your family. I met him since on many occasions, and have even had professions of friendship from him. He has even hinted that——"

Here he paused, his face brightened, and he seemed to have caught at some idea which bewildered and yet pleased him.

"I will take my leave," he said, in a hurried manner. "I will say no more of this until we meet again. The time for my appointment will soon arrive, and that will throw some light upon my situation. To you, sir, I say nothing, I refrain from giving expres-

sion to my indignation, but if *he* have acted with duplicity, I will take measures to redress my injury before you see his face again."

He hurried from the room and left me in a state of strange perplexity. How was I to reconcile these circumstances? The wealthy brother of Purtill a visitor of Clancy's, and an acquaintance of his son! I felt myself unable to account for what I heard, and left the house to meditate upon it in the open air.

It was a still summer noon, and I strolled in the shadow of the hedge-rows as far as the ruin already mentioned more than once. There was something in the fevered noon-tide stillness, as I entered the abode of death, more impressive than even the lonely moonlight under which I had last beheld it. A few herons were settling on the ivied steeple, and making the deserted aisles re-echo, at long intervals, with their harsh screams. The rank grass lay brown and withering in the heat upon the nameless tombs. The castled elms flung their dark and motionless shadows short upon the ground, and gave shelter to some sheep and goats, whose natural appetites were not acute enough to force them out into the parching vertical sunshine.

There is no time at which the solemn repose of such a scene as this produces such a charm upon the spirits as when they are beginning to subside from the agitation of recent passion. I sat down on a broken capital, and suffered the events of the preceding year to glide, like wave after wave, through my memory, while I listened in perfect stillness to the twittering of the golden wren among the branches of the yew, the cooing of the lonely wood-quest, the distant voice of the cottager, and the occasional bursting of a small seed-pod on the wild shrubs that hung around me as I sat.

The sound of a woman's voice, uttering the Irish cry which is used at wakes and funerals, attracted my eyes in the direction of the church-yard gate. Two men were entering, bearing on a hand-barrow, which they carried on their shoulders, a coffin, painted a coarse brick colour, and having a cross of black stuff nailed down upon the lid. A woman, hooded and kerchiefed, a simple-looking girl, and half a dozen country people, were following this poor funereal display. One of them bore under his arm a couple of spades and a shovel, for the purpose of committing the departed to the earth without requiring the expensive assistance of the sexton. They bore the coffin round the place before they laid it down near the spot where two of the men had already begun to dig the grave. I observed that the spot selected for that purpose was close to the tomb of Shanahan, where I had endured his mother's curse, (a curse that since has fallen so heavily upon me.) Indeed, there were several of the faces which I recognised as familiar to my eyes almost from my boyhood.

"Take care, Ned," said one man, who was standing near the head of the coffin, and spoke in a low voice of sullen grief; "don't let the spade touch Phaudhrig's coffin where you're diggin'."

"No fear, Morty," replied the delver; "there's a foot of earth between 'e

"That will do," returned the first speaker.

"What's the raison," asked a third, "that she wouldn't be taken to Kerry, to her own people, Morty?"

Morty did not appear to hear the question, but his wife, from whom the funeral wail had proceeded answered for him.

"Oyeh, the distance is too far," said she, "and moreover, she declared it as her delight to be buried here, o' 'count o' Phaudrig."

At this moment I felt somebody touch my arm, and started slightly. On looking over my shoulder, I saw the figure of the old soldier, so often mentioned, who was standing close to my side. His appearance at this moment was very different from what it had been at any former interview. His face was more haggard than usual, his lips blue and trembling, and his whole figure shaking with what appeared to be either the result of ill-health, or mental agitation.

"I ask your honour's forgiveness," he said, uncovering his gray and scanty hair, "but would you tell me who that man is that's standin' near the coffin, with his arms gathered over his chest, if you plase, sir?"

"His name is Shanahan, Morty Shanahan," said I; "put on your hat. Be covered, my good man."

"Shanahan!" he repeated, not seeming to have heard my last advice. "And, if you plase, sir, whose is the berrin'?"

"I have not heard," said I, "but I can perceive that it is his mother's."

"A Kerry woman was she, sir?" he asked in a somewhat tremulous tone.

"She was, and some people said, not the most flattering specimen of her native county."

By this time the grave had been completed, the woman renewed her wail, and I took no further notice of the soldier. They lowered the coffin into the earth, the son took off his hat, and knelt down to say a short prayer, they all followed his example, and when this was done, they arose from their knees, and the grave was covered in.

At this moment I saw the old soldier, advancing, with an uncertain step, towards the funeral group. When he came to the head of the grave, he uncovered his head, and seemed about to address the people, directing his attention in particular to Morty Shanahan. He remained, I think, for more than a minute in the same attitude, like one struck motionless while in the act of speaking. At length, fetching a deep and painful sigh, he suddenly let his clenched hands fall down; his head sunk, his eye stared meaningless, and he fell, with a hoarse sound in his throat, prostrate upon the grave.

They all recognised him as the pious military pilgrim, who had been residing among the ruins about the country now for several months. They attributed his illness to that enthusiastic spirit of devotion, which had suggested his nocturnal austerities, and which excited at once their awe and admiration. They lifted him up with care, placed him sitting on a headstone, and finally perceiving that

he gained no strength, they bore him away between them in the direction of Shanahan's cottage.

I was too much occupied with my own difficulties at the time to pay much attention to this event, although it recurred to my memory in some time after, with a singular force.

As I returned homeward, across the sheep-walk (a memorable spot to me and the poor family from whom I had just separated), I was crossed by a leash of handsome pointers, which I recognised as Harry Dalton's. I heard his voice calling to them from an adjoining field, and in a few moments he sprang over a broken gap and came upon my path.

It was the first time I had seen either of the Daltons since my quarrel with the father. Henry had been, until lately, absent at Cove, (the Boulogne of Southern Ireland), and he looked as fresh, as young, and as gay as ever. He came up to me with frank and evident delight, and gave me his hand like one who had never heard of the quarrel between me and his father, or like one that was determined not to lose a friend for his father's fault. I was greatly pleased with this instance of good-nature, and met it with equal cordiality and good-humour. After he had inquired with great interest for all the remaining members of my family, he said—

"I will come and pay you a visit soon, Mr. Tracy, but not this morning, for I have not come in proper visiting trim, and I have to make a long walk yet before I return."

"Oh! come in," said I, "your friend Ellen will excuse you, and there are no other ladies. Besides you will meet an old friend of yours."

"And who is that, sir?"

"A gentleman who has had reason to remember you. You put your mark upon him a few months since."

"Oh, Mr. Paul Purtill! Ah, is he there? I have a great mind to go. Does he stay the night with you?"

"I think so."

"I wish I knew his chamber, and I would come on purpose to sing under his window. Do you remember the evening at the bridewell? Ah! that was a freak after his own heart."

"I am sure he likes you the better for it," said I, "if the truth were told."

"He told me so himself upon the ground, the instant we had shaken hands. Well, Mr. Tracy, I'm delighted to see you, and to hear that Miss Tracy is well. Will you remember her friend Henry to her, and say that he will come to put her in mind of him in a few days? I owe her some delicious hours, and I am unwilling to give them up until she tells me I have ceased to deserve them."

"Henry," said I, perceiving to what he alluded, "you always were, and always will be welcome to us. You never once lost ground in our esteem even for an instant. It would be impossible for us not to like our friend, and the constant friend of all within the circle of his influence."

The youth reached me his hand with a face that glowed with delight. He seemed about to reply, but after a moment pressing my hand, and smiling with an expression of vivid satisfaction, he touched his hat and turned away. In a few moments I saw him bounding towards the shore, and encouraging his dogs, which were gambolling around his path, as if he had charmed them too by a more than common attachment. Indeed, there was no being at all, capable of the sentiment, who did not feel it forcibly for him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Two o'clock, the hour appointed by the wealthy stranger for his arrival, was now very near, and I hurried homeward to prepare for his reception. I was seated in the drawing-room with my daughter, endeavouring by every argument which presented itself to my mind, to encourage her in the resolution she had formed, and to restore composure to her manner. But I had not been at all successful in this, before we were startled by a loud knock at the hall-door.

I expected the stranger, but it was only old Clancy. He entered the room with a peculiar and perplexing expression upon his countenance. His salutation was constrained and cold, and yet he entered freely into conversation with us both. I experienced the uncomfortable feeling of one who perceives by many signs that there is

Something ill a brewing towards his rest,

and yet can gather only vague indications of what is intended from the countenances that surround him.

In a short time, a second knock announced the arrival of the tall nabob. We heard his slow and languid step upon the stairs; I perceived that the heart of Ellen began to fail her, and a secret smile crept over the features of old Clancy, which perplexed me in the extreme. The door opened and the stranger entered, attired as usual, and with that air of languid haughtiness in his demeanour which made him even the more formidable from his very feebleness. He walked with an appearance of much exertion to Ellen, took her hand, inquired kindly after her health; then turned to Clancy, who had left his chair in order to save him the labour of crossing the floor again, gave him his hand, and finally bowed courteously to myself, but yet with that delicacy of repulse which had before offended me in his demeanour. He then sunk into a chair, and remained for some moments drooping in a state of perfect exhaustion.

"I feared," he said at last, after referring to a richly chased gold

watch, "that I had let my time go by, but I find that I am punctual. Well, Mr. Tracy, as business must always come before pleasure, perhaps you will excuse me if I wish that our arrangements may be at once completed."

I was entirely at his service.

"My friend, Mr. Clancy," he continued, pausing to gather strength almost at every word, "has come at my request to act as one of our witnesses."

I reddened a little, and looked a good deal embarrassed, but neither of the gentlemen appeared to take the slightest notice. It was impossible for me to say anything; so I made an awkward bow, and continued silent.

"My young friend," added the stranger, "whose interest in this affair, is the most intimate of all, must shortly join us now. I sent to-day requesting him to meet me here, and I am sure we shall have him amongst us ere long."

"Your messenger," said I, "will not find him at home, for he is in the house at this moment."

Old Clancy and the stranger exchanged glances of alarm. "In this house!" exclaimed the latter. "Have you seen him then?"

"He has been on a visit here," said I, "these three days."

Here the two old gentlemen again exchanged glances, and looked as if relieved from some unpleasant fear.

"Will you have the goodness to let him know of our arrival then?" said the stranger.

I rang the bell accordingly, and a servant made his appearance.

"Will you let Mr. Purtill know," said I, "that he is wanted in the drawing-room?"

"Mr. Purtill is out, sir," replied the man.

"Where is he gone?"

A tremendous knocking at the hall door cut short the answer. Looking down through the window, I saw that it was our swain, and though it was only a little after noon, as drunk as Silenus. The door was opened, and he staggered up the stairs, shouting, singing, and lashing the banisters with his whip. The stranger placed his hands upon his ears, and old Clancy covered his lips, to prevent his laughing aloud. Ellen seemed utterly dismayed, and her father looked the very image of disconcerted folly.

Purtill dashed into the room, his hat placed awry, and thrust down upon his head, and his dress displaying the marks of recent strife. He gazed for a moment on the strange faces which the room contained, bowed very low, and smiled in the most grotesque manner, and then turning towards where I stood, a picture of a pitiable interest, he said aloud—

"Tracy, congratulate me, I have done it."

"Done what, Mr. Purtill?"

"Done what you couldn't do, with all your industry; I've killed him! I've sent him half way down; your foe, your enemy, Dalton. No, let me see, what am I saying; no, not Dalton, but his man, his ferret Maney; cunning, cautious Maney. I've given him another cause to be *in dread*. He is kicking among the eggs and butter-

like a papist as he is, begging you pardon, Miss Tracy, for talking of a papist in a drawing-room, but things will happen."

"What have you done?" asked Mr. Clancy, while the stranger stared like one possessed.

"An impudent dog! I paid him for his begging trick, though 'twas a right good one; and he deserves credit for it; but, stay, let me see now; here I was, walking quietly down the street of the old town, when who should come behind and tap me on the shoulder but Maney. Ah, ha! says I, Maney, is that the way; 'tis, says he, sir, the very way, the very way; let me see now, what was I saying?"

"And so you walked on," said Clancy, leading him.

"Ay, that's it; I walked on, and Maney kept close to my side, until we were passing a cellar where they had eggs and butter, and crubeens and cabbage, exposed upon the steps for sale. Well, let me see now; Maney was there, here was I, and there was the cellar. Very good. What was I saying?"

"And you tumbled him into the cellar?"

"Head over heels! Smash went the eggs and dishes, the butter mashed upon the ground, and Maney's head stuck fast into a firkin. The women screeched, the dogs barked and yelped, the cats mewed, children squalled, the blackguards shouted, the mob collected, and the huxters below stairs fell tooth and nail upon poor Maney, and almost flayed him alive. I stood all the while at the top of the steps stretching out a pacific hand, and exhorting them to mercy; how do you know my good people but it was accidental? How do you know but some mischievous person threw him down? But they paid me no manner of attention, so I passed on to the next tavern, to enjoy a laugh in a corner, and to take a little——let me see now. Eh? What was I saying?"

"It is sufficiently evident," said Clancy, "without any explanation."

"But," said Purtill, with a look of sudden self-recollection, "I ought to apologise for entering the drawing-room in this *degagé*. I will just step down and put myself in better plight for good society. 'Twas a capital joke though, wasn't it?" And he staggered out of the room, singing, marvellously out of time—

> He on whose pale and sunken cheek,
> The hot grape leaves no laughing streak;
> On whose dull white brow and clouded eye
> Cold thought and care sit heavily,
> Him you must fly,
> 'Tween you and I,
> That man is very bad company.

"May I ask," said the stranger, with a languid smile, "whether that is the gentleman whose pretensions you supposed I had come here to advocate?"

"I cannot account for this," said I, in much confusion; "I never saw this before."

"I never saw him before," resumed the stranger; "I have no knowledge whatever of the man."

"No knowledge!" I exclaimed in a faint tone.

"None whatever," he replied.

It struck me like an electric bolt. My mean and selfish retraction then was wholly vain and idle. I ventured a glance at my daughter, and she seemed at once perplexed and relieved. I dared not look at Clancy. I felt an agony of shame, remorse, and disappointment, such as I never before had any idea of.

At length, after leaving us in suspense for a sufficient time, the yellow man of mystery arose in the manner of one about to perform an inevitable yet agitating duty. He approached my daughter, took her hand, and after gazing on her countenance for several moments in silent thought, he said—

"Ellen, I told your father at our first meeting, that I had long indulged myself in certain eccentric habits, and found an enjoyment in employing the magic power which wealth places in the hands of those who, perhaps, have little other enjoyment left on earth. I perceive by what has just taken place, that my failing, in this instance, has occasioned you some painful moments, and I regret that, for the sake of trying another (perhaps, too severely), I overlooked the circumstance of your being necessarily a fellow-sufferer. Forgive me for it. The young friend for whom I undertook to use my interest with you, is indeed in this house, at this instant, though not quite so buoyant in spirits as that gay gentleman who was preferred before him. He is waiting your pleasure in the hall at this instant. Shall I call him in?"

Ellen bowed her head, while her whole frame trembled with an agitation of fearful and joyous expectance. As to myself, I was so stupified that I had but a dim and sensuous perception of what passed before me. I suffered nevertheless an agony of exquisite suspense, until the stranger re-appeared, introducing by the hand young Rowan Clancy.

"Nothing but pistols, sir! nothing but pistols would satisfy this young gentleman two hours since. He would not even hear me speak a word in my own vindication. The end of a handkerchief, or across a billiard table, were the only arguments that could have any weight with him."

"My dear sir——"

"Well, it is ended. Miss Tracy, I believe you know this gentleman. We have discovered, at last, the real cause of that extraordinary document to which you affixed your signature this morning, and though it was a weakness, we must think it a very venial one. If you should be induced to recall that astonishing production, my young friend will at all events have the satisfaction of knowing that he is not likely to be met, in future domestic contingencies, by any singular contumacy in his companion. To you, Mr. Tracy, I will make no observation. I perceive that you have within the last ten minutes been reading a heavy lecture to your own heart, and the painful recollection of my own faults will not suffer me to insist upon the failings of another. But by what strange mistake did you happen to take me for the friend of Purtill?"

"I was given to understand," said I, starting a little from my

place, "that such was your own name. I knew he had a brother in the Indies and—"

"I see, I see it all! Ah, shame! shame! shame!"

His attitude, his look, at this instant, filled me with that strange sensation which I had so often felt in looking on him. The same hurry, the same tumult in my spirits, the same feeling of deep and mortifying shame swept through my mind and passed away again. He stood leaning with one hand clenched upon the table, and gazing upon Ellen with a face of tender sorrow and affection. At length he said—

"Why should I any longer keep this restraint upon my own feelings? My name is not what you supposed—it is——"

His head sunk upon his breast. He trembled exceedingly. Ellen left her chair and came forward to his side, looking with a wild anxiety into his face.

"It is difficult," said he, "to speak it within these walls, where it has occasioned so much of penitence and perhaps of blame. But does no one here remember Mary's brother?"

"My uncle! my dear uncle!" Ellen shrieked aloud.

"My child! my child!" was the answering call of nature in the stranger's heart, and with kisses and murmurs of fervent love, the orphan child and the long exiled brother were locked within each other's arms. A thrill of painful delight struck through my bosom at these sounds; the tears burst freely from the eyes of the aged Clancy, and the son stood firmly upon his feet, contemplating, with swimming eyes and arms folded hard across his breast, the affecting picture.

"My dear child!" Ulick exclaimed in a broken voice. "My own poor Mary's image." And then he put her face away a little, and looked upon her and caught her to his breast again, and kissed her close and often. "The very voice! the eye! the gentle manner! The rose-bud never grew more truly to the likeness of its faded parent! Oh, my forsaken sister! When shall I forgive myself? When will you forgive me?"

He sunk down into a chair, and a tender silence fell upon the scene. I took the opportunity of stealing away from the apartment, and going to look for that packet which Mary had committed to my keeping on the morning before her death. I found it, sealed and directed, in the place where her own hands had laid it. I brought it back to the drawing-room, where not a figure had changed its position in my absence, and gave it without saying a word. Looking around him for permission, he broke the seal, and discovered two portraits on ivory, unset, which I remembered having seen Mary execute. They were the likenesses, done from memory, of her parents. Underneath these was a letter which Ulick read in silence. I read it shortly after, and found it to contain the following words:—

"My dear, dear brother—

"I have a secret feeling, whether the result of my habitual nervousness, or a real presentiment, that the hope which I have

long indulged of meeting you again on earth is not to be fulfilled. I wish, therefore, to leave you some remembrance that you may receive with kindness, if you should return to Ireland after I am called away. I entreat your pardon for my fault. I implore your forgiveness, and I beseech you to preserve these portraits, by the days of our childhood, and by the love of the dear originals! Forgive me, forgive me for my fault! The remembrance of it has haunted me awake and asleep, ever since the day of our separation. Do not punish my innocent children for my offence. Be the friend of my husband, for he has been a tender and a constant friend, and I was always more to blame than he. My brother, whom I have wronged! my guardian, whom I have disobeyed, forgive me! I promise myself that you will, for I could not meet my hour with the necessary peace of mind, if I thought my offence so great, that it could not find forgiveness even in the tomb. Farewell, my dear —dear brother, always think of me as your affectionate sister,

"MARY TRACY."

After Ulick had read this letter he leaned forward, supporting his forehead on his hand for some minutes, in deep affliction. At length, he arose, and for the first time took my hand in his.

"You were dear to her," he said, "evidently dear, and she does fervent justice here to your affection. To you, therefore, I say what I would give life itself to be enabled to say to her, that I forgive her for that lonely fault, that I regret my selfish anger, and that I deplore my long estrangement from her and from her family. Mary's fault was venial, it was the fault of a moment, an error of the judgment rather than the heart. But mine cannot be so easily forgotten, nor forgiven; it was deliberate, selfish, and excessive; it was the willing act of years, and the remorse which it has left must be proportionate to its duration."

Even while he spoke thus in sincere and heartfelt acknowledgment of error, the manner of Ulick Regan had not wholly lost that self-sustained and patrician air which he had derived from his birth and education. When most he blamed himself, he held his head most high, and there was something of rebuke mingled even with the pathos of his voice at those moments.

I was prevented from replying by a knocking, rapid and confident, at the parlour door, which Rowan had taken the precaution to secure. It was Purtill, who had now returned stripped of his *degagé* as he called it, and made a little decenter than usual. I took him out upon the lawn, and endeavoured as well as I could to break the matter to him, hinting that I had made a mistake, and that it would be wiser and better for all parties to let the negotiation sink to the ground at once. But nothing could exceed his indignation.

"I'll tell you what, Tracy," he said, with great vehemence, "this is the second time I have come to you here upon this business, and as it has happened now upon your own invitation, I'll not quit your house until I carry your daughter out of it."

He sealed the protestation with a brace of oaths, and seemed about to add a third, when his purpose was interrupted in a laconic manner. A blow from behind, taking him exactly on the bare crown, made him stagger a little, and fall prostrate on the earth. Looking round to see whence the violence proceeded, I beheld the young countryman whom I had seen last at Purtill's, with a hazel stick in his hand, and his body bent forward, while a triumphant smile was in his eye, and over his ruddy face. At the same instant, little Maney McManus, with a face all covered with patches, and a kerchief bandaging his head, came forward with halting speed, and laid his hand upon the shoulder of the fallen man. He was followed by Mihil, the great-coated Goliah of Dalton's gang, who arrived in time to overpower the captive just as he seemed inclined to rise and contend for liberty. They led him off, notwithstanding my remonstrances, added to his own, for though I had no desire to detain him any longer as a visitor, I did not wish to see him taking his leave under circumstances so unpleasing to the feelings of a gentleman.

"I tould him I'd be even with him," said the young man, "an' I think he can't say but I kep my word. Well, Misther Thracy, you know the young woman your honour gay me the charge of that night in Limerick?"

"What of her?" I asked.

"When I came home that night, sir, she took ill, an' was forced to stay at my mother's 'till to-day. But I'm to carry her home to her people to-morrow mornin'."

"Did she tell you who they were?"

"Faix to tell you a fact, I didn't once go out o' my way to ask her the question."

"Well, it is no matter, for I have a surmise of my own. But why did you strike that gentleman?"

"Oyeh, what signify is what hurt I could do him with this bit of a kippen?" he said, looking at a hazel stick of an inch and a half in diameter. "It's hazel I always uses for things o' that kind, for though the blackthorn gives a better blow, still the hazel hops lighter off the head, an' enables a man to recover his guard the readier."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE next morning we had a visit from Henry Dalton, who was received by Ellen with a frank, joyous welcome, that gave more satisfaction to me and to him than it did to Rowan Clancy. Her uncle, likewise, to whom Henry was altogether a new acquaintance, was much delighted with him. This I thought was principally owing to that unseen spirit of generous boldness which ran underneath the frankness and gaiety of the young gentleman's manner, and which was an indication to the old nabob of similar claims and a similar disposition.

It was therefore with much concern that we heard him announce this as a parting visit. He came, he said, to take his leave before he should depart for England, the following day being fixed for that purpose. After the course of compliments usual on such occasions, which he performed with the grace of a gentleman and the good feeling peculiar to his own disposition, he left the house, and I accompanied him a considerable distance.

We parted on the banks of a deep gully, which ran into the river through the corcass of reed and bulrush, and on the sides of which a number of country people were employed in cutting the latter, and binding them into sheaves for matting. As I returned slowly along the raised walk, enjoying the beauty of the morning, and the exhilarating freshness of this scene of rural industry, my attention was suddenly attracted by the sight of a man, rushing across the field in the direction of my house, with a speed that had something in it headlong and furious. I called to him by name, for I knew the ponderous and muscular figure of Morty Shanahan. He stopped short upon the instant, and turned round with a look and gesture of savage dignity and ire. His hair was blown backward from his temples, his brows knitted hard together, and an expression of fierce and gloomy resolution was over all his frame, like that which terrified me on the night when I underwent his menace at the cottage.

"The deed is done at last!" he exclaimed, as I came near, in a hoarse voice, and with a desperate smile upon his lip; "the deed is

finished, and Dalton has done his worst against us: he sent home my sisther to our floore in shame an' want."

"Morty," said I, "be pacified awhile, and listen to me."

"That's what I want," he said, with great fury, "an' that's what I'm going to be. I told you what I thought, that he was the deçaiver of my girl, an' this mornin' proved my words were true. My brother's blood was nothing to this. But I am going to be pacified, and I will be pacified, if I should die for it. I care for nothing now, nor nobody."

"Are you sure it was he sent her home to you?"

"She's there, desthroyed, upon my floore! I didn't ask a question of her; why need I? I wondher is Dalton at home now?"

"What do you want with him?"

"To speak to him about our tithes. Believe me, if I have your luck with him, I'll not let go the grip so aisily."

"You never will, depend upon it."

"An' that's what I'm in dhread. But I'll watch for it. He's greatly guarded, surely. I wondher," he said, and then he paused in gloomy thought for several minutes; "I wondher where's his son?"

"Ay," said I, "if you would speak to him, you would have a good friend with his father."

"So I'm thinkin', so I'm thinkin'," he muttered, a little wildly; "I wondher where he is? I'm goin' to be pacified, an' I *will* be pacified, if there's blood in Dalton's veins, or strength in these fingers." He said this with frantic loudness, and then suddenly falling into a low tone of voice and musing attitude, he muttered, "I wondher where's the son?"

"He is gone homeward by the shore," said I; "run after him, make him your friend, and you are certain of redress from the father."

"I'm thinkin' so; that's what I'm thinkin'!" he murmured, his eyes still gloomily fixed upon the earth. "My brother shot, my sister brought to shame, a thrap laid for myself, an' all for no raison! Why, then, since he can do so much for no raison, we'll see what I can do with raison on my side. I told him I would bring him low before the year was ended. That's eight months since, an' I'll see if I can't make my word good at last; let him blame himself for that ——"

While he muttered this speech in a wild and absent manner, he walked rapidly down the bank, and I could perceive continued to commune aloud with himself when he was out of hearing. Totally unconscious of the design he had already formed, and yet filled with a secret and prophetic anxiety, I returned home and joined our company at luncheon.

They were all merry but me. I lay apart upon a sofa, reflecting with sorrow upon my faults, and occasionally forming an uneasy conjecture as to the intention of Shanahan. I felt it my duty to send off Phil Fogarty with a sealed note to Dalton, putting him upon his guard against violence, without exposing poor Shanahan to further persecution by mentioning his name. When I had done

this, I felt more at ease, and returning to my sofa, listened to the following song which Ellen sang to her piano, and which, as she informed us, was one of the numerous little pieces with which he had furnished her portfolio. He regarded her, indeed, more in the light of a sister than an acquaintance:—

You never bade me hope, 'tis true,
I asked you not to swear;
But I looked in those eyes of blue,
And read a promise there.

The vow should bind, with maiden sighs
That maiden lips have spoken;
But that which looks from maiden eyes
Should last of all be broken!

Towards evening my anxiety became almost oppressive, and I walked out upon the lawn to relieve my spirits by exercise. The appearance of the sky was singular and imposing. Over one half the heavens there reigned a purple gloom, which threw its shadow on the distant landscape, and impressed the spirits with a feeling of insecurity and awe. The remainder of the landscape was lighted with a dim and feeble sunshine, like that which is shed through a faintly coloured medium. The disk of the sun himself was broadly visible in the west, his splendour slightly veiled by the skirting mists that fell from the aggregation of vaulted gloom, already described. Presently a slowly moving mass of cloud settled over the western horizon, and turned its dark mass to a thousand brilliant and varied hues, according as the majestic lord of day sunk down and couched within its bosom. The sunshine was now fled, except in the extreme west, where the rays, shooting downward straight through the cloudy volume, fell, like a shower of golden light, upon the earth. A rushing sound, like that of a rising wind, proceeded from the region of distant gloom, although not a leaf was stirred upon the trees around me.

While I stood contemplating the changes of the heavens, I perceived my messenger at length returning with Dalton's answer to my note. Without waiting to question him as to the occasion of his long delay, I opened his reply, and read as follows:—

"Not for my sake, not for the sake of any claim I have on your forgiveness, but for the love of mercy, of humanity, forget for one night the injuries that I have done you, and come hither to Shanahan's cottage the instant you receive this note.

"H. DALTON."

I hurried into the house for my hat and stick, and departed with all possible expedition for the place of rendezvous. The way was not long, and a few minutes found me at the cottage door.

Several country people were assembled outside, and a number of police, as usual, guarded the approach. On entering, I beheld Dalton seated on a hay-bottomed chair, in the centre of the kitchen, leaning forward on a carbine, placed erect, his hands crossed over the muzzle, and his forehead resting upon these. He did not perceive my approach. The wife of Shanahan was standing at a distance, with her apron raised to her eyes, which were red from weeping. Two or three children were huddled behind her in a corner, gaping in simple wonder on the crowd. The unfortunate sister was standing nearer to her destroyer, and gazing on him with an expression of deep compassion.

"He misses his son, sir," whispered a countryman, who stood near the window as I passed in, "an' the world wouldn't persuade him but what Morty Shanahan is afther wreaking his revenge upon him."

A sudden horror darted though my bosom. "Is it possible?" I exclaimed; "I thought Henry Dalton was the friend of every one who knew him."

"Revenge, revenge, sir!" returned the countryman, tossing his head, "it's the only grip they had o' the father, an' it isn't the first time they threatened to use it."

The evening at this moment darkened extremely, and a few sheets of reddish lightning quivered through the gloomy vault above, followed at a long interval by the sound of the far distant thunder. Some of the country people crossed their brows in silence, and looked out.

"He has messengers out in all directions, sir," continued the countryman, "an' I believe they'll be shortly comin' in, now."

"Did not Mr. Henry Dalton return home then," said I, "since morning?"

"He did not, sir," said the man. "Mr. Dalton here was told by some of the Morans, that they were cuttin' bulrushes below in the gully to day mornin', that they seen yourself and himself walkin' together, an' that afther he partin' you, they seen Shanahan come up an' spake to you awhile, an' then make afther the young gentleman, an' they tould Dalton of it, an' that's what made him send to you, I believe, to ax you about it."

"'Twas the sore day to him," said old Moran, who had joined us during the last speech, "that ever he angered Morty Shanahan. The whole o' that family had ever an' always a dark sthrain in 'em, that wasn't aisy to be meddled with."

The rain had now begun to descend, the lightning became more blue and vivid, the thunder louder and nearer, and the people began to crowd into the cottage to avoid the descending shower.

A quick and rattling peal, almost close overhead, startled Dalton from his posture of abstraction, and made him stare wildly through the open door-way. His face, which looked fearfully pale and distorted, was like that of a person suddenly aroused from a deep and dreamless sleep. He signified by his hand that they should keep the passage open between him and the door, and as they obeyed, and began to form it, his eye lighted on myself.

"Ah, Tracy!" he said, in a faint, weak voice, "I see you got my note. When did you leave him? Tell me at what hour, once."

"Immediately before noon," said I.

"How did he say he should return home?"

"By the shore."

"And you saw Shanahan afterwards?"

"Immediately."

"Did he," he paused, "did he threaten Henry at all?"

"No."

"Not in the indirectest manner?"

"He threatened *you*," said I; "he spoke of vengeance on yourself, and said he had a way to reach you, but he never mentioned Henry's name, except in kindness."

"*That* was his kindness. Oh! he said very truly, he had, he has a way, and he is treading it knee deep, even while I speak with you. It flashed upon me like a sudden light the instant I received your note; though that gave no such intimation. My sands of happiness, I said, are nearly run, for my enemy writes to me like a friend, without a cause of change. Pity my heart! but hush! Another time."

The rain was now rushing down in torrents, the lightning flashes came, like a rolling fire, in rapid succession, and a stormy horror reigned through all the air. A man rushed into the cottage dripping wet, and was instantly accosted by Dalton, yet in a feeble, and restrained, and anxious tone.

"Well, Maney, has he arrived?"

"Wisha, no, sir," said Maney, "they had no account of him at the house before me, and 'tisn't five minutes since I left it."

Dalton groaned audibly.

"I hurried back again," continued Maney, "afeerd you might want to send me elsewhere on the head of it."

"Not yet," said Dalton, "stand aside here, Maney; do not stand between me and the door."

Again a deep silence fell upon the group within the cottage, and all eyes were alternately directed from the anxious father, to the storm that raved prophetic in the heavens.

Another figure, drenched in rain, crossed the threshold and stood before the father. It was that of Mihil, the spy. I did not think that such a countenance as his could ever have displayed so much compassion as it evinced at this instant. But there is often a kind of affection arising out of long habits of fellowship in roguery, that throws a softening hue of amiability upon the most repulsive pictures of human depravity, and unites the hearts of knaves with a bond resembling that which binds the virtuous.

"Mihil," said Dalton, "if your news is good, tell me so; but if not, stand aside here, and say nothing."

Mihil stood aside, and said nothing.

"If I could be sure," I heard Dalton whisper low, as if in communion with his own spirit, "if I could be sure my reason would not fail me." And then he gave utterance to a faint and exquisitely

painful moan, that went to my heart at once, and made me forget all his injuries on the instant.

Two policemen, covered with their long blue cloaks, now appeared at the door, with downcast looks, and helmets draggled in wet. They looked in for a moment, and then turning round, seemed to expect the arrival of some comrades. It was a long time before Dalton could mutter, in a thin and broken voice, like that of a person in sickness—

"Did you come too late?"

"Too late, sir," echoed one of the men.

"I'd rather it had been my own child's case," added the other.

Dimly, then, through the rain and gloom, we could gather in the outline of another group advancing up the road, and bearing between them, on their shoulders, what appeared to be a heavy burthen. They came near, and lowering the charge from their shoulders, they entered the cottage. It was a narrow wicker door which they carried. A space was cleared for them within, and they laid down their burthen on the floor. The scene which followed disturbs my dreams, night after night, even at this distance of time. Upon the door, lay dead and stark, the body of Henry Dalton; the face untouched, and beautiful even in death; the fair and curling hair dabbled with rain, and the fashionable attire disfigured and torn by the assault of violent hands.

The women screamed and clapped their hands aloud. The men pressed close upon each other, and gazed upon the corpse with looks of stern dismay. I looked to the wretched father, but his eyes were fixed, tearless and hot, upon another figure in the open doorway. It was that of Shanahan, standing guarded between two policemen, and gazing with a look of troubled triumph on the scene within.

Dalton looked at him for a long time before he was able to articulate a word. At length, he pointed with one finger to the corpse, and looking on Shanahan with a ghastly smile, he said in a tone of feeble and querulous reproach—

"What did *he* do to you?"

Shanahan did not follow with his eyes the finger of the miserable father, but he fixed them full on the latter, and then he pointed to his sister, to his wife, his children, and replied—

"He was as much to you as my dead brother and those were to myself. Upon this floore, eight months ago, you laid my brother's body where your son's is lyin' now; an' you stood smilin' and defyin' me there where you are sittin' now with a different smile upon your lips. I tould you, an' I swore an' oath upon it, that I would bring you low enough before another year, an' you druv me at last to make good my word."

"Well," said Dalton, "you say very right. The time was when I would have found a pleasure in telling you that you should hang high for this, but that's all gone now, for you have broke my heart."

Shanahan looked greatly troubled.

"It was your own doin's," he said, with an anxious sullenness; "you dhruv me upon it, by your own behav'our."

"It was, indeed, the work of my own hands. Well, all is over now, and I have not the heart to curse you for it. May heaven forgive us both! How strange that prayer sounds! Cover that poor boy's face until we are alone. You are right, indeed, you say truly, you have brought me low enough. You may be very proud, for never was a triumph more complete; never! Oh, Harry! oh, my child!"

He shrieked the last words aloud, as if in sudden agony, and then sunk down, stupid, and tearless still, into his seat. Some one removed the carbine from his hand, but it was a needless precaution, for the heart of the man was evidently broken, and the commencement of a lasting imbecility was visible in his countenance. The spirit, that would not bend, was shattered on its throne.

The murderer was removed in a state of mind far different from that which he had anticipated in the gratification of his revenge. The policemen told me that they had found him on the shore, sitting by the body of the ill-fated youth, whom he had strangled by downright strength, in a state of almost idiotic remorse. I cannot shake off a horrid sensation that haunts me even to this day, that the manner of the poor youth's death was suggested to his murderer by a recollection of my own assault upon the father.

We followed Henry Dalton to his grave in a few days after, with a feeling of deeper commiseration and regret than is often felt for those who die young and single. Never did I witness such a concourse of people, of all ranks and all parties, as were assembled at his funeral. The country people, too, were most forward to evince their sympathy at the wholly undeserved fate of the universal favourite.

Dalton continued to live on in a state of mournful imbecility for many years. To my great astonishment, within a few months after the above event, he sent me back the sum of money I had lent him, with the interest, and many thanks for its use. This touched me, not so much for the value of the money, as for the indication which it afforded of the entire change that had taken place in his own character.

The unhappy Shanahan suffered publicly for his offence, after expressing, while in prison, the utmost remorse and contrition for what he had done. The occurence, terrific as it was, furnished an additional corroboration of a truth which has been unhappily demonstrated within our memory by too many examples: that the vengeance of an Irish peasant is not to be despised.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I HAD strong suspicions that he was not the last male member of his unfortunate family (on whom the judgment of the parricide had fallen so heavily), and I was enabled in a few months to ascertain the correctness of this surmise.

I had made many inquiries after the old soldier who had been residing within our abbey, after the morning on which I had seen him in the grave-yard. I could only learn, however, that he had left the neighbourhood on the following day, and taking one of the western roads, departed, no one knew whither.

After the marriage festival had been celebrated in our family, which event took place early in the spring, the greater number went to reside, for some months, among the lake and mountain solitudes in Kerry. We occupied a cottage on the Killarney side of the lower lake, and spent our time, as all visitors do, in exploring the natural wonders and scenes of loveliness and grandeur with which it abounds.

The Hag's Valley, from the circumstances which had been related to me by Dalton, attracted the principal portion of my interest. We explored it several times, and discovered, in the centre of the terrific recess, the remains of the cabins which had once contained the rival families of Shanahan and his bride. I made some efforts to learn the particulars of the story from a few straggling goatherds, who resided in various corners of the valley, but without much success.

At length, accident threw in my way what I had long been seeking for in vain. I had undertaken the ascent of Carraw Tual, and leaving my party behind on the borders of one of the lakes which Dalton had described to me, I penetrated the Esk Collee, accompanied by a fair-haired mountaineer, who bounded up the steep as lightly as a dapper footman on the staircase of a city fashionable. Struck by the magnificent horror of the scenery by which I was surrounded, and wishing to add to my enjoyment by associating it with some appropriate legend, I turned to my companion for information. But although the mountaineers are generally remarkable for that quickness of imagination and retentiveness of memory which take a lasting hold of the legacies of old romance, it was my fortune, in this instance, to light upon a spirit

that was purely of the present, and cared neither to give nor receive intelligence of persons and events with which his own immediate fortunes could never become connected.

"Have you ever heard any old story connected with this place?" was my opening query.

"Ould story, ershishin?"

"Yes. Any account of war or battles, or love, or murder, committed there."

"Faix, I never seen any love committed there, nor murthers aither."

"What, did the O'Donoghues never do anything remarkable in the neighbourhood?"

"Why then, I wouldn't be surprised to hear they did."

"Did you not hear any story told of a murder done in that valley?" said I, pointing down into the lonely Coom Dhuv.

"Why then, I wouldn't wondher if there was; 'tis a lonesome place, surely."

"But you never heard of any?"

"Oyeh, wisha, faix, I didn't."

"Did none of the ancient chieftains ever reside among those mountains?"

He looked musingly for a moment, in the direction in which I pointed.

"I don't doubt," said he, at length, "but the McCarthy Mores lived over on that mountain."

"And what did they do there?"

"Wisha, faix, it's hard for me to tell. I suppose they hunted there, an' fished, an' things that way."

"And did they never meet the O'Donoghues, or any other family, in their excursions."

"Why then I don't doubt but they come across one another below in that valley."

"And what do you suppose they did when they met?" said I.

"Dear knows; I wouldn't wondther if they fought a battle there."

So much, thought I, for a legend of the Coom Dhuv. The historian supposes that the McCarthy Mores resided on one of the mountains, he doesn't doubt but they "came across" the O'Donoghues in the Black Valley, and he wouldn't be surprised to hear that they fought a battle there. But if every hypothetical part of history were delivered with the same candour, to what a "poor half pint" might we reduce the quantity of positive information.

"Did you never," said I, preparing to try him on more modern subjects, "did you never hear of a family named Shanahan, who resided in the centre of the Hag's Valley?"

"Oyeh, the Shanahans!" he exclaimed, bounding off at once, as if I had struck the feather-spring of his intellect, "Mostha wisha! 'tis I that do, an' that well! Sure 'twas my own father, the keeper, he was near killin' upon this mountain. You heard the story how himself an' his wife, murthered the ould father between 'em?"

"I did."

"Well, he's come home again, afther all. He went sodgering for many years, an' he's below at this moment, livin' in a corner o' the ould ruin at Mucruss. Sure I seen him myself."

"And why is he not apprehended?" said I, "if he is certainly known."

"Known, eyeh? Right well they all know him. But who'd take him? Who'd lay a hand on the poor ould man? Look, 'tis the way; in place o' wishin' to bring him to justice, they all have compassion for him, you'd think; an' so would any one that would look at him. He doesn't afford himself a meal's mait in the day, an' when he walks out about the place, he has a lonesome look with him, that you'd pity him, now, to see him."

"Has he ever come into the Hag's Valley?"

"Not he, for the world, nor across that river below that divides it from the Killarney side. But I often seen him of an' evenin' comin' down to that bridge, an' he'd come half way across it, an' there he'd stop for hours, lookin' up the valley, an' then he'd go back again. Do you see that little chapel there at this side o' the river below?"

"I do."

"Well, 'tis there he comes all the way to hear mass of a Sunday, in preference to the Killarney chapels, for that's the place where he used to hear it of ould. But he never crosses the sthrame, nor comes among the ould neighbours at all, only pulls out his beads there over, an' kneels down upon the bank by himself, ashamed to come near them, an' they knowin' him."

"And afraid," added I, curious to discover if my humble companion could apprehend the fineness of the sentiment, "afraid of his life, too, I suppose?"

"Oyeh, no, sir!" exclaimed the mountaineer with quickness and warmth, "not a bit afeerd. He hasn't a morsel o' that fear about him, for he wouldn't care this minute for death, I b'lieve. Only ashamed, he is; ashamed, now, to have 'em lookin' him in the face, an' he knowin' what he done. If you go yourself, next Sunday, an' it's a Palm Sunday, too, you'll see him there below, as I tell you."

I mentioned this conversation on my return, and it was agreed that I should accompany the catholic part of the family to the little chapel on the following Sabbath. We were early at the place, and the scene which was presented to our view on our arrival, was pastoral and interesting. The doors and altars of the humble temple, were decorated with boughs of yew and other evergreens, used as substitutes for the triumphal palms which were scattered in the path of Him, whose lowly ovation into Jerusalem, this morn was set apart to celebrate. Groups of the peasantry, dressed in their best attire, were seen descending the mountain paths, bearing in their hands and on their shoulders burthens of the votive tree, and assembling around the chapel doors with cheerful and healthy countenances.

The service proceeded, the palms were collected near the altar, and blessed by the officiating clergyman, who prayed aloud while

he sprinkled them with holy water, that as by an olive branch the Almighty commanded the dove to proclaim peace to the world, so, by His heavenly benediction, He might sanctify those branches of olives and other trees; and grant that what his people on that day acted corporeally for His honour, they might perform the same spiritually, with the greatest devotion, by gaining a victory over their enemy, and ardently loving mercy.

The ceremony being concluded, the palms were distributed amongst the people, and the assembly dispersed in many a festive group, a great number taking their way over that bridge which was the charmed boundary of the remorse-stricken solitary's wanderings. We beheld him kneeling, as usual, by the rapid stream, his stick thrust into the soft bawn, and his hat resting upon it. When the people had passed away, we saw him rise and move in the direction of the bridge. He stopt, as was his wont, in the centre, and remained gazing up the valley. After a little time he turned back, and seemed about to leave the place, but he often paused and communed with himself, and looked back over his shoulder, as if debating whether or no he should once more return to the centre. We watched him now with increasing interest, for we perceived that he was undergoing some internal struggle with his own mind. He turned about at length, and walked across the bridge with a rapid but uncertain step. Before he had crossed the stream, however, we observed him stagger and fall prostrate on the ground. Two or three young peasants hastened to his assistance, and curiosity, if not a better feeling, induced the gentlemen of our party to turn back and follow their example. But he had no need of help, for we discovered that he had died upon the spot of some internal lesion.

So perished the last member of that unhappy household. For myself, I now lead a peaceful life among a circle of merry friends. My ambition is entirely set at rest, and I think if I could only succeed in obtaining the commission of the peace, which I am at present using every exertion to procure, I should be a contented man for the remainder of my days.

THE END.