

BEFORE
THE DAWN
IN BRIN

D. G. DEYNE

Irene Owen Andrews

Feb. 1923

**BEFORE THE DAWN
IN ERIN**

BY

D. C. DEVINE

Author of "Faithful Ever; and Other Tales," Etc.

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Dedication.

To

My Brother,

Very Revd. Matthew J. Devine, P.P.

This Volume

is

Affectionately Inscribed.

2060817

Author's Preface.

LANDLORDISM—the creation of conquest—the impost of confiscation—is practically a thing of the past in Ireland,—and those dark days, ere the “Dawn” (so far as concerns the peasantry) had even feebly illumined our Land—are to some but a shadow—to others, echoes of a bygone time.

There are widely-divergent views as to what brought about the “Dawn,” but it is not our province to analyse them. Sufficient for us that the fundamental principle on which legislation had previously dealt with land tenure in Ireland has been completely upset, and that to-day the tillers of the soil are practically the owners thereof.

But in those days of which our tale treats, the doctrine of the landlord's absolute and unlimited right was regarded, by men professing to be statesmen, as sacred,—while the dogma of such even as Lord Palmerston was that Tenant-Right was Landlord's Wrong.

De Beaumont,—a foreigner—declared in 1837 that “the miseries endured by the peasants of Ireland were worse than those of the Indian in his forests, or those of the negro in his chains.” The landlord could eject whether the rent was paid or not,—could

raise the rent at will,—distrain the crops,—make what estate rules he pleased,—and had at his command the whole force of a mighty empire.

Title of right on the part of the tenant was not recognized.

Little wonder, then, that the condition of the tenants was a pitiable one, and that parasites of the bailiff class throve on the Upas tree.

To the action of those parasites much of the then misery of the tenants is traceable; and while some writers assume that such a state of affairs was incompatible with any "spirit" in the unfortunate peasantry, our conviction is, that, were it not that the Celtic nature has something in it which seems to defy extinction—the Celt in Ireland would long since have been nought but a remembrance.

Though the Author has his misgivings that there are many shortcomings in the volume, he is not without hope that a sympathetic consideration will be accorded him; and if its perusal tends to impress the peasant youth of Ireland—now, happily, emancipated,—with a sense of their indebtedness to those who clung to the "Old Sod"—through genuine love of Motherland—his effort will not have been in vain.

D. C. D.

TUBBERCURRY,

Co. SLIGO,

November, 1913.

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Before the Dawn in Erin.



CHAPTER I.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

WELL-NIGH seventy years have vanished in the shadowy past since Hugh O'Donnell tilled his snug farm on the banks of the Moy. The O'Donnells were always regarded as "strong farmers," and, at the death of the old couple some few years previously, Hugh, in whom all their hopes had been centred, as he was an only son, was left in comfortable circumstances ; and as he inherited the thrifty qualities which had characterised his predecessors, he was a comparatively well-to-do farmer, satisfied at being able to lay by a trifle, after paying a somewhat exorbitant rent.

His twenty-one summers had passed lightly over his head ; there had been, indeed, nought to dim the bright glow of youth's sunshine ; and possessed of a temperament which lent a roseate colouring to the future, his coming of age, some two years after his

soon afterwards, found him—as the old folk put it—“as good and good-natured a soul as you’d find if you saw the barony through.” He had the good fortune to hold his farm under lease, a rather important feature in those days, and a blissful, contented future seemed in store. But times changed; a depreciation in agricultural produce ensued, and it needed skilful management, and judicious “calls” on the old couple’s savings, to brave off the evil hour. However, the consensus of opinion was that the times must soon mend, and Hugh was as hopeful as any. True, his lease would expire in a short time; but the agent on the estate—a kind and indulgent one—whose relations with the tenantry were ever of the happiest description—had promised him a renewal; so that the prospect of an improvement in the times naturally brought joy to the troubled heart of Hugh.

And it was troubled; for all this time there existed an *affaire d’amour* in which he was interested. Nora O’Rorke—dark-eyed Nora, as she was called—was a winsome colleen, and those who knew her were not surprised that Hugh’s heart could not withstand the witching influence of her dark and lustrous eyes. Typically Irish, she was sprightly and vivacious; but remarkable withal for that child-like bashfulness which lends a peculiar charm to our peasant maids. Somewhat above the medium height, she had a graceful, queenly bearing, clear-cut features, and a complexion harmonising with the lustre of her deep,

dark eyes, those dreamy orbs whose expression held one, as it were, spellbound; and there were not wanting in the neighbourhood youths who yearned for a kindly glance from their liquid depths, and though twenty summers had not glided over her head she was not without suitors for her heart and hand.

And Nora was as good as she was beautiful—and as poor. Her widowed mother had lived in a little cottage on the estate, and the few acres of indifferent land attached were barely sufficient to keep body and soul together; and at her death, some ten years previous to the opening of our tale, the orphaned daughter had been taken in charge by Father Tom, the good-hearted soggarth. Hugh and Nora had known each other from childhood, and, as the years rolled by, had learned to love each other with a fond and lasting attachment; and thus matters stood—five years after the old O'Donnells had passed away.

It was a lovely summer's evening, and the golden sun was sinking to rest behind the crimson-fringed peaks of the Slieve Gamh mountains, as Hugh O'Donnell leisurely reclined on the banks of the Moy—the noble old river gliding peacefully on without a ripple on its clear, calm bosom—at the foot of an ivy-clad ruin, which, reft of its cross, though not of its sanctity, stood as a memento of days that were. An hour passed—and Hugh still reclined in the shadow of the ruin—when the hoot of an owl bespoke the approach of night.

“By the bye” he exclaimed, starting to his feet, and approaching the ruin, “the hours must have sped apace. That’s what Nora calls ‘poetic,’ and, by the way, I have even been growing poetic all the evening at the thought of the bliss that’s in store for me. I wonder though what can have detained her? ’tis surely not her fault. Mayhap she is even now ‘facing Father Tom with her story,’—and what if the good soggarth dosen’t give his consent? Tis too bad, no doubt, to throw herself away on such a scapegrace as I; but love levels all; and I think Father Tom must know how fondly I love her. Ah! the good old soggarth will, with God’s help, give us his blessing into the bargain. I think—”

The sound of hurriedly approaching footsteps fell on his ear, and the next moment a young girl of very prepossessing appearance stood before him, her dark, velvety eyes tear-dimmed.

“Nora, darling,” eagerly enquired Hugh, “have our worst fears been realised? Has Father Tom refused his consent?” and he took the trembling hands in his, and gazed with an expression betokening deep feeling into the sorrow-veiled eyes.

“Oh! Hugh, dear,” she began breathlessly, “it was terrible,—the poor man cannot last long,—the horse rolled over him,”

* Great God, can it be? Father Tom dying!”

“Oh! no, Hugh, not Father Tom, but Mr. Herbert.”

"Mr. Herbert," he echoed, with a gasp, allowing her hands to slip from his grasp, "Mr. Herbert."

"Yes! poor man, his horse took fright—fell—and rolled over him,—just at the Manor gate. Father Tom had him carried to the house, and he fears he is dying."

"Dying!" echoed Hugh, "poor man! where shall we find his like again? May God be merciful to him!"

"Amen!" said Nora reverently. "I couldn't get away a moment sooner, Hugh, and ran over to tell you I cannot speak to Father Tom to-night."

"Yes, Nora," he answered, rather absently. "Is there no hope of his recovery?"

"I fear there is no hope, Hugh; Father Tom thinks so."

Hugh was strangely silent and embarrassed. The intelligence of the accident to Mr. Herbert seemed to affect him deeply; but Nora, who was also visibly affected, did not notice his altered mien.

"I must be going, Hugh," she said after a pause, "good night!"

"But, Nora,"—he said,—and there was a tremor in his voice,—“perhaps you wouldn't wish to ask Father Tom's consent now?"

"Oh, no, Hugh, 'twill be time enough. We can afford to wait a little longer."

"Yes, Nora,—but perhaps you wouldn't wish to— to marry me if Mr. Herbert dies."

"Not marry you if Mr. Herbert dies. What can you mean, Hugh?"

"The lease, Nora."

"The lease! How does the lease affect the matter, Hugh?"

"Of course you know 'twill shortly expire, Nora, and if Mr. Herbert dies, 'tis a poor chance I'll have of getting it renewed; and, perhaps, you wouldn't wish to—to—well, I wouldn't wish to bring you to poverty, darling."

"Nonsense, Hugh," she replied lightly, "if the worst comes we'll seal up the windows so that love cannot escape, and if we succeed in keeping the little fairy captive, our lives will be blest even though we be poor. But you must not look at the dark side. It will, indeed, be difficult to find the equal of Mr. Herbert,—but with God's help the new agent will be kind and indulgent, and Father Tom won't have any difficulty in securing a renewal for you."

"God bless you, darling, for your cheery words,—with you to comfort and console, happiness is sure to come."

'That's what comes of your taking to the poets, Hugh. You give one a mixture of seriousness and blarney.'

"Nora—you are my more than all."

"Now, Hugh, romancing by moonlight once more. I really must be going."

"Then you *will* ask Father Tom's consent, darling."

“ Yes, Hugh, for better or worse I am thine alone,” and the next moment she was gone,—Hugh slowly wending his way homewards—hoping for the best—and fearing, almost feeling, the worst.

He had proceeded only a short distance when he saw coming towards him a venerable-looking old man. He was apparently long past the proverbial span, but had withal an air of juvenility about him. His step was active and light, and his dress, the swallow-tail and hose then in vogue, lent a peculiar charm to his appearance. The features were clear and well cut, while his massive forehead gave him an air of intellectuality quite uncommon, and it did not require much penetration to realise that the cognomen, “ the old historian,” by which he was familiarly known, was an apt one. Such was the oldest resident on the estate,—Malachy O'Hara.

“ A chara ! ” he sighed, with tears in his eyes, as he came to a halt, and, with his staff under his arm, raised his hands heavenwards. “ Is this the truth I'm hearing ? ”

“ About Mr. Herbert ? ” enquired Hugh.

“ Ah, yes, acushla ! they say he's dying.”

“ I fear 'tis true, Malachy—too true.”

“ Glory be to God ! ” sighed the apparently heart-broken old man, “ what'll become of us, a chara, what'll become of us ? ”

“ We must trust in God, Malachy,” replied Hugh, assuming a hopefulness he was far from entertaining, “ we must trust in God.”

“God is good, surely,” said old Malachy, “but you don’t understand. Let me see. Why, you were only a slip of a gorsoon when ould Norburry was agent ;—but don’t ask me to talk of him? sure every grave in the ould churchyard yonder cries out against him—there isn’t a mound you could point to that doesn’t hold some victim of his,—the ould man cut down with the grief—the stout man with starvation—and the women—the poor creatures—with the heart-ache and the misery. And then when Mr. Herbert came, —Oh! glory be to God!—but I suppose we didn’t deserve such goodness, Mr. Hugh ;—we weren’t thankful enough, and God has punished us—punished us sorely. Sure, as I often said, Mr. Herbert was a ‘miracle’ in agents.”

“Better times are coming to Ireland, Malachy.”

“Sure enough,” said the old man, “the great Dan is doing wonders, and maybe, with the blessing of God, we won’t die till we see the ‘Ould House’ open again.”

“God grant!” said Hugh reverently, “and God knows, Malachy, we want some change when poor Mr. Herbert’s death would be attended with such consequences.”

“Maybe I’m too fearful, boy—too fearful. Let us hope for the best—and leave all to God. Lucky for young Dermott he had the business over before this occurred.”

“Oh, by the way,” said Hugh, recollecting himself, “your grand-daughter was married to-day.”

“Ay! and lucky for the young fellow, as I say, that he hadn't to be bowing and scraping for leave. A nice state of affairs, wasn't it? And sure if God doesn't spare us Mr. Herbert no one knows what may happen.”

“In Norburry's time permission was necessary I believe,” said Hugh.

“Ah! the old villain begrudged us the air we breathed. Marriage! you might as well think of flying to Heaven as think of marrying in his day; heaping up expense, as Shaun the bailiff used to say—heaping up expense on his honour. You'll be calling in on your way—they'll be expecting you. Miss Nora was telling Maire she'd come up for a start. God bless her—sure she's been like a sister to the little girl,—and we're all hoping she'll be getting a good husband one of these days. Don't be forgetting to call in. If they didn't hear of the accident, don't mention it. Let them enjoy themselves while they may”;—and the old historian proceeded on his way, leaving Hugh with even more gloomy forebodings than before.

He had forgotten all about the prohibition on the estate. For years Mr. Herbert had set it aside, but if the accident proved fatal;—what if the new agent reverted to the old practice?

“No,” soliloquised Hugh, “I won't look at the dark side of things; Nora,—God bless her,—is always right.”

CHAPTER II.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.

YOUNG DERMOT, as the old historian had called him, was the son of Widow Brennan, who, in common with the generality of tenants on the estate, had known what sorrow meant.

Thirty years before, she had met the blue-eyed Paudraic at a neighbouring pattern,—an attachment sprang up between them, and on the death of the old woman Paudraic brought home his winsome bride, and for years theirs had been one long spell of joy.

Paudraic was as fine a specimen of the hard-working and contented peasant as could be found. Of powerful physique, and blest with a constitution that seemed impervious to the maladies that afflict man, he overcame difficulties which would have deterred many a stout heart. His farm consisted of a few acres of arable land and a wide expanse of cut-away bog ;—but Paudraic set to work with a will, and, in the course of a decade, had reclaimed a considerable portion of the cut-away. True, the task was a herculean one ;—even the now familiar donkey-cart was not then in requisition, and the clay and gravel necessary to give “weight,” as the old people put it, to the peaty soil, had to be carried a considerable distance in “creel” loads on the unfortunate tenants’

back. But God fits the back for the burden,—and this, in a special manner, seemed to apply to Paudraic's case ;—the harder he worked, the happier he felt. If the task was a laborious one, had he not the satisfaction of seeing his holding grow more snug year by year, and had not “ the good woman herself and the little ones, full and plenty of what was going ” ;—and if exposure to the scorching rays of the summer's sun and to the biting blasts of winter had begun to tell its inevitable tale, was he not more than recompensed by those hours of serene tranquility beneath the old roof-tree, where the cheery influence of the “ gude wife ” and the hearty laughter of children dissipated each gathering cloud ?

But 'tis a long lane that has no turning, and Paudraic came to the turn at length ;—a new agent had been appointed on the estate. He was what is commonly termed an “ upstart,”—one who had wheedled himself into the good graces of the landlord—and he deemed it in the natural order of things that he should rule the tenantry with an iron hand. The old saying, “ put a beggar on horseback and he'll ride to—his Satanic Majesty,” required,—the tenants thought—a slight qualification in his case. They all believed that the ultimate destination of the rider was a matter that admitted of little doubt, but they felt, with old Malachy, that “ in his tantrums he'd do a lot of mischief before the journey was over.”

A few of the more favoured tenants held their lands under lease, but the vast majority were tenants-at-will. Norburry, the new agent, saw the possibilities; the rents, he averred, were scandalously low; and the exercise of his undoubted right to raise them would be appreciated by the landlord. 'Twas a simple solution—what he professed to consider a conscientious righting of a glaring wrong—and so the lands were re-valued,—a mere mockery—and those who, by their untiring industry, had affected improvements on their farms, suffered most. And Paudraic came out of the re-valuing worst of all. His years of labour, given ungrudgingly to keep “full and plenty to herself and the little ones,” were not alone thrown away, but were, in fact, a contributory cause of the “big rise”;—and what years of slavery had failed to accomplish, the canker of blighted hopes effected in a comparatively short time;—he died of a broken heart.

The bereaved widow—stricken with a sorrow too deep for words—that elevating sorrow which exacts nothing, but which tries to put itself out of sight for the sake of others,—had her hands full nursing the little ones;—and so in the course of a few years, the cut-away, for want of “nursing,” returned to its former condition. But the rent remained at the re-valuation scale, and for many a weary year the Brennan family had a hard, hard struggle for bare existence.

When Mr. Herbert took over the management of the estate, young Dermott was a sturdy lad of fifteen years—God had been merciful and had taken to Himself the rest of the little ones—and, inheriting the robust constitution of his father, and, inspired with a new-born hope, he took to nursing the cut-away ;—with the result that at the time our tale treats of he was so far successful in coaxing it back to fruitfulness, that—in the exuberance of his joy—he fell. And it was none other than Maire O'Hara that tilted the balance.

Dermott and herself had been companions from childhood—the farms of the old couple adjoining each other—and at all the merry makings in the neighbourhood the old *seannachies* nodded suggestively whenever the rollicking Dermott and the fair Maire took the floor.

“Troth I wouldn't be surprised,” old Nelly Murphy was heard to exclaim on one such occasion, “and ne'er a purtier pair you'd find in a day's walk.”

“True for you,” rejoined old Peggy O'Connor, “Dermott's the living image of poor Paudraic ;—but maybe the mother mightn't be over-willin' to let a slip of a girl in on the floor yet awhile.”

“Sure she'd be a comfort to the poor woman,” pleaded old Nelly. “She's keepin' 'donny' now a good while—poor creature.”

“With all that,” persisted old Peggy, “ne'er a one of us likes to see the stranger comin' in.”

But Mrs. Brennan had none of the prejudices which are supposed to be, by right divine, the privilege of the old people.

"You're sure you're fond of the girl, Dermott," she said when her son had unburdened himself of the secret.

"Fond! mother; now sure you needn't be asking me that;—troth you're not so blind as you pretend."

"Well," said his mother smiling, "I suppose you're right, Dermott. Yes," she continued reflectively, "you grow more like your father every day, Dermott—God rest his soul;—'twas he was the good husband, and I'm thinking you'll follow in his footsteps;—and Maire is as good a girl as you'd find in the barony."

"I knew you liked Maire, mother,—but she was uneasy that you'd be objecting on the score of fortune. They're poor, you know, mother."

"Dermott!" she replied, and a glad light came into her eyes, "I hadn't a penny piece when your father, God rest him, married me,—and his love never grew less. No, Dermott, your mother won't stand in the way. Maire will get a *ceud mile failte* from one who knows what love is."

"God bless you, mother," and tears dimmed his bright, blue eyes as he went over and affectionately kissed her fair brow, "I hope I'll always be worthy of mother's and Maire's love."

And so Dermott and Maire were now one, and the wedding was in full swing. The big barn had been

specially prepared for the dance and the whole countryside was represented,—Dermott's and Maire's relatives down to the thirty-second cousins, besides the neighbours' sons and daughters for miles around ; and all was merriment when Hugh arrived. His advent was the signal for a general shifting of positions ;—he was a special favourite, and everybody sought to make room for him, with the result that he was bewildered for a time,—but, recollecting himself, he walked straight to the blushing bride and tendered his congratulations. Terence O'Gara, the renowned musician who had played at Paudraic's wedding, was there in all his pride of power,—and, availing himself of the quiet which prevailed for the time, indulged in one of his masterpieces ; and there was a world of tenderness in the plaintive air,—and as Mrs. Brennan, —proud of her boy and his young bride, listened to the sweet strains, tears dimmed her eyes ;—she was back in the shadowy past—that cherished period which haunted her ever and always ;—their hard but successful struggle in the early stages of their married life, their pride in their little darlings, their joy when the cut-away proved comparatively productive, and then the bitter, bitter blow that well nigh bereft her of reason. Indeed there were, even yet, times when her friends were not without their fears that her sorrow, unostentatious, but nevertheless held religiously sacred, was threatening the citadel,—and on to-night she was in one of her dreamiest moods,

Hugh begged the favour of a dance with the bride, and with a blush, the fair Maire responded to the invitation, and in compliment to the pair, the floor was left to themselves ; but just at that moment the old historian and Miss Nora arrived, and Dermott—gallantly leading her in—a four hand reel was executed with a grace and perfection truly marvellous.

“Glory be to God,” exclaimed old Biddy Maguire, who, with her three score and ten years on her hoary head, was still susceptible to the inspiring influence of the mirth that prevailed,—“isn’t the youth and the strength, ay! and the beauty, grand things entirely?”

“Ay! Biddy,” assented her companion, old Nancy O’Neill—great grand aunt of Dermott on the father’s side—“and isn’t Dermott, God bless him, the fine *stocac*? It’s proud the O’Hara’s ought to be to get such a husband for Maire.”

“Oh, Dermott’s a gainly *gorsoon*, and kind father for him; but faith, Maire is fit for the best of them; and look at the way she carries herself. Faith I tell you the whole four of them are well met, there’s very little pickin’ or choosin’ among them, and isn’t Dermott proud of the wife entirely?—and no wonder—so young and innocent and good lookin’. Troth, Nancy, meaning no disparagin’ of Dermott, I think he’s the lucky boy to-night.”

“I’m not belittlin’ the girl, Biddy, no, indeed;—and to give her her due she’s a rale dacent colleen, and as

fine a worker as you'd meet in a day's walk ; but you'd travel far before you'd find the equal of Dermott ; see how he's brought on the cut-away. Ne'er a boy in the barony could hold a candle to him in regard of work."

"Ay ! sure enough, he's done wonders with the cut-away," assented old Biddy, who seemed to be in a reflective mood ;—"now then do you know what I'm thinkin' of? I'm just wonderin' if they'll make a match of it."

"Who?" questioned old Nancy.

"Why? then, who but the pair of them, Mister Hugh and herself,"—nodding at Nora—"I wouldn't be surprised if Father Tom would give her to him ; there isn't a dacenter boy in the whole country and—"

"Mister Hugh's all right, hard workin' and respectable, and middlin' well to do ; but these ladies that get the learnin',—there's no depending on them ; they be lookin' out for a duke or a lord,—oh, devil a doubt of it, Biddy,"—this in answer to her companion's look of surprise,—“for some big swell to carry them off to a grand castle, or some out-landish place, out of the world altogether.”

"Troth, Nancy, agra, I think Miss Nora is as nice a girl as you'd find anywhere, and as humble and good-natured as can be. Didn't I see meself when Kitty Reilly's little one was down with the measles, she'd come over every day with something or other for her,

and was as troubled, poor thing, as if it was her sister; and I'm thinking meself she's fond of Mister Hugh."

"Ay! but the big notions—Biddy—the big notions"; and the self-opinionated Nancy nodded suggestively. "I don't want to lean a hard word on anybody, God forbid, but there's no getting over the big notions, Biddy."

"Troth, then, Mister Hugh is good enough for the best of them, notions or no notions," responded the somewhat-riled Biddy; "and hasn't he the learnin' too?" but the four hand reel having come to an end, the interesting dialogue was—perforce—suspended.

Old Terence, after a few grandiloquent flourishes, laid down the violin, and thoughtfully stroked his chin; and Malachy, to whom a nod was as good as a wink, determined that there was "nothing for it but to ride a coach and four through Father Pat's rules—just for once." Father Pat was the local curate, and in the wide-spread Temperance Movement which the Great Apostle, Father Mathew, was then so successfully carrying on, he was one of the most strenuous lieutenants. A strict teetotaller himself, he had pledged all the young fellows in the parish; and though he was not so keen on having the "old fogies" within the circle, still Malachy was not without his misgivings, that if it came to his reverence's ears that the "drop" was at the wedding, there was danger that more would be heard of it. But then Terence was an

“institution,”—not a mere man ; there was no going on without him, and Malachy knew of old what was necessary to maintain the institution in “flourishing” condition ; so, after-consequences notwithstanding, the deed had to be done.

“’Tis tired you ought to be entirely, Terence,” said Malachy, standing with his back to the company.

“Now, Malachy,” he exclaimed, “just a thimbleful ; you know I’m getting ould, and a little drop knocks me over ; and then the quavers and the crotchets get mixed, and I’m fairly puzzled entirely.”

“Just a thimbleful and no more,” rejoined Malachy, “none of us can stand what we used to,—and now, Mr. O’Halloran,” turning to a wiry little man of some fifty summers, with hair of a silvery white, which was kept well brushed back from a high-standing forehead, “won’t you join us, this once, if it’s pleasing to you ?”

Mr. O’Halloran was the local preceptor of youth. He had, in his early manhood, ambitioned a professional career, but, in an evil moment, had taken to Shakespeare, and Shakespeare had proved his undoing. His friends averred that it was no wonder the brain couldn’t stand it ; and he had spent the long intervening span in mystifying, rather than enlightening, those whom fate led to his academy.

“With infinite pleasure,” he replied, with a graceful bow ; “not through love of the ardent spirit—good sir,

‘O that men should put an enemy in their mouths
To steal away their brains’—

a fitting shibboleth for the Great Crusade we all have so much at heart ; nor yet to observe the conventionalities ; no mere ceremony, friend Malachy, but friendship tried and true :—

‘ Nay, my lords, ceremony was but devised at first
To set a gloss on faint deeds, hollow welcomes
Recanting goodness, sorry ere ’tis shown ;
But where there is true friendship, there needs none.’

No, friend Malachy, I stand on no ceremony. I accept the sparkling bowl, brimful, no doubt, but symbolic of the fountains of unalloyed joy that fill, even unto overflowing, the hearts of one and all on this auspicious occasion.”

“ I’m sure we’re all highly thankful to you, Mr. O’Halloran ; you’d be heartily welcome to it, if it was ten times better. We don’t forget the compliment you’re paying us by coming here to-night.”

“ No compliment, friend Malachy, and if I may be allowed to obtrude myself on the company,” this with a majestic wave of the extended arm, “ I would, though as tersely as possible so as not to delay the pleasurable amusement, toast the health of the fair bride and that of the fortunate individual who has secured such a precious helpmate ; and in doing so would fain include the fair partners in the mystic evolutions just brought to a close, who, if

‘ My observation (which very seldom lies)
By the heart’s still rhetoric—disclosed with eyes
Deceive me not now,’

will shortly follow the example of the worthy couple who have so successfully, so to speak, moored their barque in the haven of blissful content."

Nora, who, during the recital, felt not a little confused, was somewhat relieved to find that the mystic reference to herself and her lover was, from its very profundity, regarded by the assembled guests, rather a tribute to the worth of the happy young couple, than a prophetic pronouncement concerning Hugh and herself; and as the gallant Mr. O'Halloran approached to tender his best respects before despatching the ardent spirit, she received him with a beaming smile.

"A flatterer still, Mr. O'Halloran," she said, making room for the venerable scholar beside her.

"Flattery, my dear Miss Nora, is for fools; praise for the virtuous and the fair—

'Where fair is not, praise cannot mend the brow,
Here, good my glass, take this for telling true.'

and he sipped the sparkling liquor with evident relish.

But the young couples were not to be denied their amusement; even the glories of Shakespeare failed to win their allegiance, and ere the learned disciple of the poet had time to further mystify, old Terence, rejuvenated, as it were, by the thimbleful, was rattling off an Irish jig, and three fair colleens and their favoured partners were treading the light

fantastic, the very embodiment of genuine joy ; while congratulatory remarks, shifted ever and anon with characteristic impartiality from the light-footed dancers to the nimble-fingered musician, shot out from the admiring throng, like sparks from an anvil, bringing light and warmth and encouragement with them.

"It's pleased I am," said the old historian, taking advantage of the hubbub which prevailed to whisper in Hugh's ear, "that the bad news didn't break out on us ; 'twould spoil the young people's night entirely, and maybe, with God's help, 'twon't be much in the end."

"Yes," assented Hugh, "'twas as well ; if the worst happen they'll learn it soon enough."

"True for you," replied Malachy as the dance came to an end ; but his gaze happening to fall on old Terence, who sat sphinx-like stroking his chin the while, he was on his feet in an instant pressing "just a thimbleful" on the protesting but obliging Terence.

There was some commotion at the door.

"Great God," exclaimed a man seated near, "can it be possible ?"

"The Doctor is just after telling us," was the reply.

"The Heavens be his bed," fervently exclaimed the person addressed ; "dead" !

"Who ?" exclaimed several voices simultaneously.

“ Mr. Herbert,” replied the man ; “ killed at his own gate.”

A shriek, a piercing shriek, broke from a retired corner of the barn, and the next moment a woman arose, stretched forth her arms, and fell in a swoon on the floor.

All was confusion in an instant, and Hugh darted for the door, and in a short time returned with Doctor Mullaney, who, fortunately, had remained conversing with some of the boys.

Dermott's mother, for she it was who had swooned, lay prostrate on the floor. The Doctor had her conveyed outside, and though he worked with a will it was a considerable time before she showed signs of regaining consciousness. There was a strange light in her eyes as, for a moment, she gazed fixedly at the Doctor, then, covering her face with her hands, she broke forth in a pitiful wail. “ Take him away, take him away, the villain—the—the murderer ” ; and uncovering her eyes she sobbed piteously. “ Will no one take him away ? Paudraic ! Paudraic ! ” she went on, turning around, evidently imagining she was addressing some one near, “ ould Norburry is back again.”

“ Mrs. Brennan,” said Hugh in a gentle voice, “ don't you know Dr. Mullaney ? ”

She gazed at Hugh for a moment, then looked searchingly at the Doctor, and turned around as before ; “ Paudraic,” she whispered, “ there's no use

killing yourself with the cut-away," and she lay back completely overcome.

"Get her home at once," said the Doctor to Hugh, "she must have absolute quiet. I'm greatly afraid there's brain trouble here. I shall send over a mixture"; and thus the death of Mr. Herbert had already cast a gloom on one happy household.



CHAPTER III.

A BLACK, BITTER DAY.

OF no people can it be more truthfully said, that they rejoice with you in your joy, and grieve with you in your sorrow, than of the kindly Irish; and nowhere are the tear and the smile so blended. Their joys, though few and far between, have a roseate colouring peculiarly their own; while their sorrows are, in no small measure, assuaged by their truly Christian resignation. Sympathetic in a marked degree, their hearts beat responsive to the sufferings of their fellow-man; and when the cold hand of death stills for evermore a heart that joyed and mourned with them, the loss is to each a personal one, and a wave of sympathetic sorrow floods each generous soul.

No wonder, then, that the death of Mr. Herbert cast a gloom over the district; for, apart from the

sadness incidental to death, the personal loss was felt in all its poignancy. He had been to them practically a saviour. Coming to them after their experience of his predecessor, the notorious Norburry, he was, as Malachy the old historian put it, "a miracle in agents." Persecuted and down-trodden for years, they had begun to look upon a state of abject dependence as their natural condition; born, as it were, to slavery, it was not to be wondered that they were content to be allowed to crawl along, subservient and spiritless; nor in any manner surprising that a new-born content was theirs when they had been relieved of many a burdensome yoke. Fines for trivial offences against the rules of the estate, duty-work imposed with a vengeance, had been the order of the day; and freedom from these, with the consciousness that some show of mercy would be extended them, gave the poor struggling tenantry a second birthright.

And now their friend was no more. No wonder that wails of anguish echoed and re-echoed through the length and breadth of the estate. Where should they find his like again? "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," but who could hope for another "miracle"? And now that the days of their fancied enfranchisement were gone their slavery would be more dismal than of yore. Thoughts, such as these, filled the minds of the vast multitudes who thronged to pay their last tribute of respect to their dead friend.

It was the day of the funeral, and, though the hour had been fixed at two p.m., noon saw the highways and byeways filled with sympathetic and sorrowing crowds, all converging towards the house of desolation—the Manor—whence Norburry, ever harping on the sacred rights of property, had chastised them with scorpions, and whence their deceased friend had, as it were, cast the ægis of his protection over a long-suffering and persecuted people; mere tenants-at-will most of them, who would have deemed it treason to be reminded that no man owes a moral obligation to an exterminating decree. One of two choices was open to them—to pay the rent and starve—to neglect doing so or incur the ill-will of the agent—and bundle and go. And happy, thrice happy, the unfortunate tenant-at-will considered himself who was allowed to starve within shelter of his old home; for, attachment to the old roof-tree—love and reverence for the cherished, hallowed spot where they were cradled, has ever been strong in the human race, irrespective of country or of creed. Travellers tell us “no water is sweet to the poor negro but that which is drawn from his own well, and no shade refreshing but that of the tabba tree of his own dwelling. When carried into captivity by a neighbouring tribe, he never ceases to languish during his exile, seizes the first opportunity to escape, rebuilds with haste his fallen walls, and exults to see the smoke ascend from his native village.” What wonder, then, that the Irish tenant-

at-will, though really a slave, should, with all the love of his Celtic nature, cling—through joy and sorrow—to the old home.

“A black, bitter day for the country,” said old Shemus O’Connor, as, awaiting with his brother-tenants the formation of the funeral procession, he was seated on a moss-grown fence on the roadway, “a black, bitter day, boys.”

“True for you, Shemus,” assented old Malachy O’Hara, another tenant-at-will, who, with his four score years on his hoary head, seemed the embodiment of sorrow; “’tis yourself and myself well know what it means. And do ye know, boys?” he continued to the more youthful members of the confraternity, “this same bitter day and the thought of what may be in store for ye will be the death of ould Malachy if the great Dan doesn’t do something for us soon and sudden. Ay! boys,” he went on, warming to his subject, and seeming to take a special pleasure in the respect accorded him, “ay, boys, though ’tis myself that’s saying it, there wasn’t a tougher bit of flesh on the property than the same Malachy, and though I’ve lived through the starvation and the persecution, the rack-renting and the fines, the duty-work and the slavery, the ould spirit is gone boys, and I’m crushed, crushed, boys, when I think of the ould days coming back again.”

“Ah! Malachy, a chara!” exclaimed a sorrow-stricken woman well over the seventies—one Nelly

Murphy—"think of the lot of them that's gone, the poor creatures lying in the graveyard yonder. Oh! Murty asthore!" she wailed, "Murty asthore! 'tis you was the fine, strong man, and to think that you died without bit or sup. My seven curses, day and night, on you, Norburry; 'twas you that drove the life out of my brave man—the best husband that ever drew breath."

"True for you! Nelly asthore!" said the hoary Malachy, "'tis well I remember the day ould Norburry drove ye out on the door. 'Twill be twenty-five years come Michaelmas, boys, and as bitter a day as came since; and remember, boys, 'twas himself built the little house he lived in, but the sickness came down on him, and out he had to go; and shame on the whole of us, boys, shame on the whole of us—there wasn't a man of us had the courage to give him the shelter of a roof."

"'Twas no blame to ye, Malachy, a chara, no blame to ye. Sure 'tis out ye'd have to go if ye did. Don't you mind of ould Widow Carroll sheltering Maire Marren, and dear she paid for it, Malachy! dear she paid for it."

"Ay; Nelly; dear she paid for it, sure enough. Oh! boys! boys!" continued the old man, "ye don't know what ye're losing. If another Norburry comes there isn't a mother's son of ye that wouldn't wish himself in the coffin rather than bear all the misery. Ah! Shemus," he cried, turning to his brother

patriarch, "'tis you could tell them what they might expect. Yes! boys! there before you is the very man who was thrown out of his house and home, and his little crop seized on the ground; and what for, boys? what for? for taking in his daughter to live with him, boys! when starvation had knocked the life out of her young husband. Oh! the curse of Cromwell on you, Norburry. Yes! boys! no more nor no less than sheltering the poor lone widow—his own flesh and blood, boys—but breaking the rules, boys, breaking the rules."

"God's truth, boys—God's truth—every word of it," assented the sorrowing Shemus.

"Ay!" went on the loquacious Malachy, "and there's Meehaul Henry that was at the mill—now a wizened ould man like myself, living down the bog these twenty years—and strangers in the ould home. And what did he do? shot more birds of a day than the ould villain, Norburry, could, and out he went too; and poor Myles McNulty, because the ould viper, Shaun, the bailiff, said he was a conspirator—a conspirator, boys—'thinking of marrying and heaping up expense on the landlord,' Shaun said; and then there was a letter found, by Shaun, boys—by Shaun. A forgery, boys—a forgery—complaining of the rules of the estate, and out he went too; and to think that the ould viper, Shaun, is still enjoying his land. *Keep ye're eyes on Shaun, boys, keep ye're eyes on Shaun.* Mr. Herbert, God be good to his soul this sorrowful

day," and a chorus of reverent "amens" broke from the assembled throng, "put a stop to his devilment, but keep ye're eyes on him, boys, for he'll be his ould self once more if the new agent isn't tender-hearted."

"God help us, Malachy," wailed old Nelly, "'tis a poor chance we have of getting any one with feeling—a poor chance, a chara."

"Well, Nelly," said the old man, "*we* needn't complain. We've got a good time enough of it, lately, and we havn't long to wait now. No, Nelly, asthore, 'twon't be long till *our* trials are over; but the young people—'tis them I'm thinking of and feeling for—'tis them I pity this black, bitter day. Everything against them, and ne'er a friend in the world to strive to keep off the cruel blow. But God forgive me—ay, boys—just to give me the lie, here comes Father Tom, God bless him. While he lives ye can count on one true friend, anyway. God save you, Father Tom."

"God save you kindly, Malachy. I'm glad you all remember poor Mr. Herbert to-day."

"Shame on us if we wouldn't, your reverence, and him the best friend we had."

"Very true, Malachy, we all have good reason to deplore his death," said Father Tom.

"A black, bitter day, your reverence," said old Shemus. "What'll become of us at all?"

"Truly," assented Father Tom, "a black, bitter day for all, but we must put our trust in God, Shemus,

and with His help we shall have a worthy successor. The good which Mr. Herbert has effected will, I trust, induce him to act similarly ; the tenants can ill afford to lose such a friend."

"True for you, Father Tom, but sure they can always count on your reverence," said old Malachy.

"Yes, Malachy," said Father Tom quietly but earnestly, repeating the old patriarch's words, "they can always count on me."

"God bless your reverence," echoed one and all—and the good soggarth went on to the Manor.

"Now, then, wasn't it stupid of me, Malachy," said old Nelly after a while, "I was near forgetting asking about Winny—the poor creature. How is she to-day" ?

"Poorly, Nelly, poorly. I think the Doctor was right. I'm afraid the mind is wandering, Nelly."

"Poor creature," exclaimed Nelly with evident sympathy, "and sure 'tis no wonder ; she was never the same since Paudraic died, and small blame to her, and it's meself that knows it that got me trial too. She never cheered up at all, at all."

"No," said old Shemus, "I don't think anyone heard her laugh since ; and my—but she was the gay, lively lass when Paudraic brought her home. The ways of God are wonderful, surely."

"Ay, Shemus, but it's not right to let the sorrow lie on the heart—hiding it away from everyone."

"Right, Nelly, right ; a philosopher thou," inter-

jected our Shakespearean friend, Mr. O'Halloran, who, in passing, paused for a moment to propound his theories—

“ ‘Give sorrow words : the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart—and bids it break.’ ”

“ Yes ! ” assented old Nelly, “ that's God's truth, Mr. O'Halloran ; sure I wouldn't have stood it meself but for the moanin.’ ”

“ No doubt, no doubt, Nelly, ” replied Mr. O'Halloran, “ but

‘ Death, a necessary end
Will come when it will come. ’ ”

and the old man, having unburdened himself, moved towards the Manor.

“ 'Tis wonderful, entirely, the brain stands it, ” said Nelly. “ Here's the Doctor, Malachy ; maybe you wouldn't mind asking him about Winny. ”

“ God save you, Doctor, ” said Malachy.

“ Why, Malachy, ” said the Doctor, affably, “ I greatly fear you'll bury the whole of us. For thirty years I haven't missed you from a funeral, and I don't think you ever trouble me or my medicine. ”

“ Maybe that's why I stand it so well, Doctor. ”

“ No doubt, Malachy, but you shouldn't give the secret away. You'll ruin me entirely if it gets abroad. ”

“ No fear, Doctor ; you bring more than the medicine with you, and sure God will reward you for

it ; but we're anxious to hear about Dermott's mother, Doctor.”

“Physically, she's as well as ever, Malachy, but—” and he suggestively tapped his forehead with his forefinger—“I fear the shock has left its mark” ; and he proceeded on his way.

“God comfort her and hers,” sighed old Nelly. “Amen ! amen !” responded one and all.

Shortly afterwards all that was earthly of their late friend and benefactor was laid to rest, and, with a parting benediction, the sorrow-stricken people returned to their homes.



CHAPTER IV.

“FACING” FATHER TOM.

THREE months had passed away, and Autumn once more browned the cornfields, but, unfortunately, the harvest was even scantier than its predecessors, when, one evening Father Tom and Nora were seated in the cosy parlour of the priest's cottage. The magic words had been uttered ; Nora had at length mustered up sufficient courage to “face him with her story.”

“Nora,” said Father Tom, smiling at his fair protegee, “you surely are joking ; going to get

married, you say; and you in your 'teens. Well! well! but are you really serious, Nora?"

"Oh yes, Father Tom. Hugh and myself have made up our minds long since. He intends speaking to you himself, but I was anxious that you should hear of it from myself first."

"And so 'tis nothing new. But tell me, Nora?" he asked, with a smile, "which is Hugh or yourself the cause of all the mischief?"

A blush was the only response.

"Most likely," he continued, "Hugh would declare it to be Nora, while Nora—if pressed—would shift the responsibility to Hugh. Well, dear, may God bless you both. You shall have my consent and my blessing. Hugh, I have known since he was a child, and I feel sure he will prove a good and loving husband, and I hope and pray your union will be a very happy one. But how shall I contrive to get along without you, Nora? Hugh will keep you entirely to himself, and your new-born happiness will be so great that all your thoughts will be centred in Hugh, and I fear there's many a lonely hour in store for Father Tom."

A moment later he would have given worlds could he have recalled his words, uttered, indeed, without the slightest notion that they would wound her sensitive nature. Poor, faithful Nora!

With a pang she realised all the parting would mean, and, sinking on the couch, she gave vent to her

feelings in a burst of tears. For years, ever since her aged mother had placed her hand in Father Tom's—she had loved the good soggarth with a great love—an affection which had intensified as the years rolled by, and now, at the thought of parting with him, even under circumstances which would otherwise bring joy, her heart was smitten with a sorrow she had never before experienced. During those ten years the good soggarth had been kindness personified, and had spared neither time nor trouble in training her to walk in the path of virtue; and his efforts were well rewarded; and as she grew to womanhood it was his proudest boast that he had some share in making her a perfect woman. And the affection which he had lavished on her had not fallen on barren soil, it was repaid a thousand-fold, so that those ten years had been to her, years of perfect peace and happiness, one long, uninterrupted chapter of bliss.

And Father Tom was happy in the happiness of Nora. His was a kindred spirit. He, too, in early youth had missed a mother's jealous care, a loving parent's embrace; he, too, had witnessed a death-bed scene. Sixty years before, his father, the wealthiest tenant on the estate, had been carried away by a malignant fever, and a few weeks later, two little brothers and a sister followed. The poor mother's heart was broken, and ere six months had elapsed it was evident that hope for her was beyond the grave, and on her death-bed she had given little Tom in

charge to her brother. "John," she said, "you will take care of my darling; he won't be any burden on you, and I would die content if I could only hope that one day he would be a priest. Tom, darling, come and kiss your mother," and but half understanding the awful scene, he had kissed her, and while yet his lips lingered on hers, her spirit had flown to the better world above. John was faithful to his trust, and little Tom became a priest; and his heart was ever open to the poor and afflicted. And when he was asked to hold a sacred trust he did not shirk the responsibility; and in the unselfish attachment of Nora he felt he had been recompensed a thousand-fold.

"Nora, dear," said Father Tom, laying his hand tenderly on the sorrow-stricken girl's head, "what's the matter, child? Have I said anything which caused you pain?" and a tear bedimmed his eye.

"Oh, Father Tom," she exclaimed, lifting her tear-stained face, and clasping his hand in both her own, "I am so sorry; it looks so much like ingratitude on my part."

"Ingratitude, Nora; surely no one would think of accusing you of that, assuming there was anything to be grateful for."

"But it looks very like it, Father Tom," she said, wiping away her tears and trying to appear calm, "and it was only when you said you'd be lonely that I realised how ungrateful it was of me to be thinking

only of myself. I am, indeed, sorry, and I won't leave you if you'll let me stay."

Poor, faithful Nora! Her love for Hugh, strong as it was, must give way to the great affection she bore her beloved guardian; at least she resolved that if any one were to suffer, it must not be Father Tom.

"Now, Nora," said Father Tom, returning to his seat in the big armchair, "you misunderstood me, dear. You must not for a moment imagine that I would harbour a thought of ingratitude on your part. I have had too many proofs of your generous nature. And as for staying with me, that cannot be. I am not so selfish that I would countenance, much less desire, your remaining. Each one of us has a station to fill and a duty to perform in this world, and if we do not conform to both, irrespective of our own or our friends' feelings, we shall not merit the 'reward exceeding great'; and I feel sure I have only to remind you of your duty to Hugh, now that he is your affianced husband, to secure your compliance."

"Yes, Father Tom, I shall do anything you wish."

"That's a dear, good child. You were ever gentle and kind, and if a poor soggarth's prayers can bring you happiness, your life will be blest, indeed."

"Oh, Father Tom, how can I ever repay you for your loving care, your more than paternal affection?"

"By making Hugh happy, Nora. That will bring me joy, indeed. I have for a long time admired his manly, chivalrous nature, and, by the way, have half

suspected that he would succeed in kidnapping my little one. Tell me, Nora, was it the poetry that stole away your heart?"

"Poetry," said Nora innocently, "does the poor boy cultivate the muse?"

"Perhaps I may be wrong," said Father Tom, with a smile. "But, somehow, I was under the impression that that little love song you warble so incessantly was one of Hugh's. But I won't be too hard on the poor fellow, though I'm rather inclined to punish him for his theft by insisting on not allowing him carry away the spoil till after the Christmas. I wonder how he'll relish that little interdiction, Nora?"

"I am sure he will be satisfied with any arrangement you make, Father Tom."

"Provided he secures Nora," answered Father Tom; "that, I suppose, is a *sine qua non*."

"No flattery, Father Tom!"

"Flattery, Nora; why—"

A knock at the door interrupted the reply.

"A sick call, Father Tom," said Nora when she returned, "old Mrs. Monahan is very low. Shall I get your coat and hat?"

"Yes, Nora, the call of duty is imperative. She was poorly when I saw her last. I trust in God she may be spared till I arrive"; and the next moment the good soggarth went forth on his errand of mercy.

The messenger had waited to accompany Father Tom, who was to walk, the distance to the residence

of old Darby Monahan being no more than a few hundred yards by the "short cut," scarcely a quarter of a mile round the road.

"We ought to go by the road, your reverence," said old Roderick McCarrick as they started forth, "the ford is too high to-night."

"All right," said Father Tom. "Now, Roderick, put your best foot foremost. Do they say she's sinking?" he asked, as they walked along at a brisk rate.

"Very donny, your reverence, very donny," replied his companion, who had enough to do to keep pace with the priest. "Shemus and old Nelly are with her, and they think she won't last the night."

"Sad, sad," soliloquised Father Tom, "and she's not an old woman."

"Ah, the poverty makes one ould in no time, Father, and God knows she got her share."

"True, Roderick, very true; she won't have many regrets leaving this world, poor soul."

"But the ould man himself, Father? I'm thinking it won't be long for him either; he's worn to a thread minding her the last twelve months, and her death will finish him entirely."

"No doubt, no doubt," said Father Tom, "poor, faithful soul!"

"Do you know, Father, I'm often thinking that the Irish don't see one blessed sight of purgatory, that is, the purgatory beyond, Father."

“Well, Roderick, you know the soul must be white as the driven snow before it enters Heaven. Yes!” he went on, communing with himself rather than addressing his companion, “patience in poverty and privations, resignation in all their afflictions, and a charity that surpasseth understanding.”

“And now do you think is there any chance of the good news coming true, Father?”

“What good news, Roderick?”

“Any chance of us getting the Repeal, your reverence?”

“Repeal,” echoed Father Tom, not a little mystified at this sudden bound from theology to politics: “Oh, I see you’re one of Malachy’s disciples, Roderick.”

“I hear him reading the paper, Father. That was a great meeting was at Tara, your reverence; and we were thinking something good might come of it.”

“O’Connell is making great strides, no doubt. Bad and all as we are we were far worse before; but I fear the Repeal is not quite in sight yet, Roderick.”

“More’s the pity,” sighed Roderick, “for you know yourself, Father, the best of us hasn’t much to boast of in the way of living, and now that our best friend is gone, it will come mighty hard on us if we have to return to the ould times.”

“Oh, God is good, Roderick; the new agent, will, with His blessing, be humane, and the seasons may soon improve.”

“God grant, Father. Well, but you’re the walker

for it. We were no length getting over the ground," said Roderick, as they turned into the short boreen leading to old Monahan's dwelling.

The lowly cabin was, indeed, anything but an ideal place for a twelve month's nursing. Built by the old man himself, who knew as much about architectural adornment or sanitary requirements as he did of the solar system, it was not to be wondered that it was little adapted for hospital work. The low, badly-built walls, the ill-fitting door, the small four-paned window, the chimney that would not draw, the damp earthen floor, the half-rotten thatch; all tended to render the cabin as undesirable a residence as could well be imagined. But it was to poor Darby and the wife—*home*—with all the holy associations that surround that endearing name, and, poverty and privations notwithstanding, there had been more blissful peace, more holy harmony, and more real joy beneath that tottering roof-tree, than had been vouchsafed to dwellers in palatial mansions or regal edifices. It comprised, in common with the majority of dwellings, but two compartments; the kitchen and the little room—the sanctuary of the home, so to speak.

"*Pax huic domui!*" said the kindly soggarth as he entered the kitchen.

"God save you kindly," responded old Shemus O'Connor and old Nelly Murphy in chorus, as they got up from their seats by the fire.

"Well," enquired Father Tom, "how is the good woman?"

"Poorly, your reverence," said old Shemus, "but sure you told us the other night she wouldn't last long."

"Oh, Father Tom, Father Tom," wailed old Monahan, a man of about sixty years of age, but feeble in the last degree, and he came down from the little room, "you'll have to forgive me, your reverence, for sending for you, and you here only the other night, but we knew she wouldn't be content if you weren't by her side, and she's going fast, your reverence—going fast."

"You did right, Darby," said Father Tom, kindly. "God comfort you, my poor man; and now I'll see the good woman herself"; and he entered the "sanctuary" to bring peace untold to a soul that pined for celestial bliss.

"We'll recite the Litany again," said old Shemus; and, as with a fervour that was contagious, the old man invoked the aid of her Creator and Redeemer, of the Angels and Archangels, of the Saints and Martyrs and Confessors, the sight was one edifying in the extreme.

"Well, your reverence," enquired old Darby when Father Tom returned to the kitchen.

"Sheela has gone to Heaven, Darby!" and, as if wishful to avoid witnessing the scene that was to follow, the good soggarth, with a parting benediction, went forth.

"Roderick," he said to the old man, who insisted

on accompanying him home, "I think you were right. Sheela, at all events, will, with God's help, know naught of the purgatory beyond."



CHAPTER V.

"A BIT OF A GENIUS."

"**S**ORRY! really sorry! Master Stanley, but the matter is—er—entirely out of my hands."

"Hang it, Dunscombe, you're becoming grumpy, old chap. Why, 'tis only a mere bagatelle, a few hundreds one way or the other."

"Pardon me, my dear sir, it is entirely a matter of—shall I say—business. Your esteemed father, not over pleased with the late affairs at Monte Carlo, you'll excuse me, my dear sir, but I must be plain-spoken, insists on your receiving no more than your allowance; and you will agree with me, that, in that he is not ungenerous, so any personal feeling of mine,—my dear sir,—any personal feeling of mine cannot possibly weigh in the matter against his express instructions—his express instructions, you understand"; and Mr. Dunscombe, seated in his London office, the quintessence of the stereotyped family lawyer, dressed "*a la mode*" in finest broad-cloth and immaculate shirt front, rubbed his hands

together with the unmistakable air of a man who would have all whom it might concern know that, though the heavens fell, departure from the strict letter of the law, as clearly and definitely set forth in his client's instructions, was not to be dreamt of in his philosophy.

"But the circumstances should weigh with you, Dunscombe—you see I'm in the devil of a fix, and a few hundreds won't beggar the estate."

"But, my dear sir, you don't understand. We, lawyers, are, shall I say, cribbed, cabined, and confined to the letter of the law; and it would be quite irregular, my dear sir, quite irregular, to depart from its observance. Our code of honour is—"

"A devilish funny code," interrupted the other. "But, the old governor—well, the fact of the matter is, Potter, that old fossil of a medico who is constantly with him, is more apt to kill than cure. He knows as much about gout as I do about law."

"No doubt, no doubt," said the obsequious Mr. Dunscombe, reclining in his office chair and toying with his huge albert. "I regret to hear that your esteemed father is not progressing as satisfactorily as we all could wish," and he endeavoured to look as sanctimonious as the melancholy subject demanded.

"By the way," he broke off, arranging some parchments with a nervousness that showed he was not sure if he were treading on safe ground, "I thought you contemplated, ah—contemplated—well, I rather

fancied you left me under the impression that you intended to—ah—"

"Slide out of the business," laughed his companion, who seemed to enjoy the other's embarrassment. "Yes," he continued, "the sliding process might work very well if you'd to deal with an ordinary individual, but you don't know her, Dunscombe."

"Of course not," said Mr. Dunscombe, nervously re-arranging his parchments, "of course not."

"I rather think so," said the other. "I fancied I'd some—some experience myself, but, by my faith, she is more than a match for me."

"Any possibility of—er—arranging—er—an allowance," stammered the politic Mr. Dunscombe.

"By jove, I'd like you'd try it, Dunscombe," laughed the other; "good as a play. By jove, she'd wither you, Dunscombe."

"Of course, of course," assented the affable lawyer. "I merely throw out the suggestion; thought it might—er—meet the case."

"By jove, Dunscombe, you've but a poor idea of her spirit. Why, she's as proud as a titled dame."

"No doubt, no doubt," acquiesced Mr. Dunscombe, "but the—shall I say alleged—er—"

"Oh, the marriage," broke in his companion. "Yes, there's where I fell—irretrievably fell. Levington, the idiot, would have it so. He arranged the whole business. The honourable way, he said,—there seemed no other so I fell into the trap."

"Stanley, I think, was the name," blandly remarked the sanctimonious lawyer.

"Yes," assented the other, "they all called me Stanley at our hotel, and I became known as Stanley."

"Then she is not aware that you are—"

"Oh, hang it, Dunscombe, she is quite content in her blissful ignorance. She's certainly deceived me, I thought her—well—I didn't fancy she'd be content to settle down, but, by jove, there's the rub, Dunscombe, there's the rub. I've been endeavouring to persuade her that she wants a change of air, to try Nice, or some outlandish place; she insists on my going too, but I think I could manage it if I had the funds."

"You think you could manage—er—what?" enquired the interested lawyer.

"Oh, bother it," snapped his disgusted auditor, "what's the use of discussing the matter if you are not prepared to stump up like a man? You, lawyers, should all have been sent to the Tower long since. You've heaps of the 'ready' mouldering there, and still you allow a fellow drift to perdition—without a pang."

"Without a pang," exclaimed the suave Mr. Dunscombe, opening wide his eyes, and viewing his companion with well-affected surprise; "you certainly do me an injustice, Master Stanley; a great injustice, indeed. It pains me exceedingly, my dear sir, to have to—to—well—to be in such a position as to

render it impossible to accede to your wishes. 'Twould be a pleasure, I assure you, my dear sir, a real pleasure, could I act otherwise; but you must understand how irregular—”

“Oh, cut it,” broke in the exasperated Stanley, “don't be doing the sanctimonious; just say whether I can have the money or not.”

“I can only refer you to your esteemed father's express instructions,” meekly protested the snubbed Mr. Dunscombe.

“Instructions be hanged. Then there's no use discussing the matter”; and the young man rose to leave.

“Sorry, very sorry, my dear sir; but by the way, you will find no difficulty in raising the money. Your expectations will—”

“Expectations,” broke in his companion, “don't they weigh mightily with my friend, Dunscombe”—this, with a sneer—“and, by jove, the Jews have had enough of me.”

“Could I venture, Master Stanley—er—well—does your esteemed father know anything of this—er—entanglement?”

“Not at all,” responded his companion. “Levington, the idiot, is the only one who knows. Why do you ask?” and, as if the matter troubled him, he resumed his seat.

“So far, so good, Master Stanley,” said the sphinx-like lawyer, bringing his finger tips together as if the

process lent inspiration ; “so far, so good, my dear sir, but if you were not so prejudiced against me, my dear sir, I should—well—speak more openly on the—the relations with your esteemed father.”

“Oh, bother the prejudice, Dunscombe, say what you’ve got to say.”

“You’ll excuse me, Master Stanley, but, your esteemed father, for some considerable time, has been under the impression that you have evinced very little interest in—shall I say—family matters—in short, in what he most prides, his Irish estate.”

“By jove, he’s not far wrong there, Dunscombe; got as far as Dublin once—Monte Carlo is more in my line you know.”

“Quite so, my dear sir, and though this may be very irregular,” and the sanctimonious Mr. Dunscombe lifted up his eyes to the ceiling as if to implore forgiveness from on High for his temporary abdication from that stern rectitude which he deemed his ; “though—as I say—this may be very irregular, still, as you have reminded me, the circumstances should weigh with me. If, my dear sir, you were now to evince an interest in the Irish estate, I think it would be opportune—most opportune—my dear sir, would, in fact, go far to appease your esteemed father.”

“Why, Dunscombe, what the deuce could I do? Doesn’t the agent see to that?”

“No doubt! no doubt! but possibly you have not heard. The agent is no more.”

"Shot?" interjected his companion.

"Oh! no, my dear sir, great favourite—very lenient—too lenient, some thought, accident—horse fell, brain trouble—died."

"Well?" queried his companion.

"Well," said the wily lawyer, eyeing his companion sharply, "it just struck me, that, possibly, you might wish to—to—excuse me my dear sir, to show your esteemed father that you had—shall I say—turned over a new leaf, that you were wishful to see something of your Irish tenants, that, in short, you would be anxious to improve the estate."

"To take up the agency, Dunscombe?"

"Not exactly taking it up in the strict sense of the word—but—"

"Oh, nonsense, man; you couldn't find a more incapable dolt."

"Now, now, Master Stanley, you know you've ability enough."

"But the damn nuisance of the thing; only fancy me spending my days in that benighted region. Couldn't dream of it—old chap."

"But under the circumstances," responded the oily lawyer; "your esteemed father ill, relieving him, so to speak, of cares, the effect of this—shall I say, thoughtfulness on your part, you'll excuse me, my dear sir, but I think the time is most opportune."

"Couldn't dream of it, old chap; couldn't dream of it," replied the other.

“And—pardon me—my dear sir, this—er—Levington business,” and the old gentleman paused, seemingly to allow his companion time to dwell on the possibilities.

“Well?” enquired Master Stanley.

“Quiet place,” replied the diplomatic lawyer, gently chafing his hands, “retired—nobody known—off the beaten track.”

“By jove, Dunscombe, you’re rather a bit of a genius—after all.”

“Genius, not at all, rather prosaic, I should say. We, lawyers, are merely logical—approach the subject from the syllogistic point of view—find out the premises and base our conclusion on these. Rather prosaic, I should say, but this Levington, by the way, he’s, I presume—er—to be trusted, relied on.”

“Oh, don’t bother about Levington. God alone knows where he is now. But what about the governor? how will he take it?”

“Ah, yes! Well, I fancy you can rely upon your humble servant to—to see that your esteemed father looks upon the matter in a favourable light. We shall arrange details later. I’ve detained you too long. Rather chilly for the season. Well—well—how you have grown; reminds me I’m going down hill, Master Stanley. Ah! good day, my dear sir, good day,” and Mr. Dunscombe bowed his visitor out.

“By jove, Dunscombe, you’re rather a bit of a

genius after all.' Rum saying of Master Stanley, that "; and the astute lawyer, lying back in his arm-chair, and stretching forth his long legs, so far forgot himself and his environment as to indulge in a hearty laugh. "Yes, Master Stanley, rather a bit of a genius after all—*after all*—mind you"; and a peculiar puckering of the old man's lips proclaimed that, on reflection, he rather resented the qualification. "Deuced impertinent, that "; he continued, bringing his finger tips together; "but why bother about the young scapegrace? mere accident that he hit on the fact at all,—dull as some of my rivals. Yes, the conceited nonentity imagines I was deeply interested in his case. The old governor, as he styles the *pater*, will be delighted, and the 'bit of a genius' shall not have to indulge in the questionable luxury of trying to appease a pack of savages"; and the sympathetic Mr. Dunscombe returned to the consideration of his parchments in apparent content with the world in general.

He had scored his point. Familiar with the wishes of his respected client he knew that his cherished desire was to see his dearly-loved prodigal evince an interest in the paternal estate; and in a recent interview, Master Stanley's esteemed father had expressed a wish that he, Mr. Dunscombe, should—in order to keep the agency open till the young hopeful would turn up—proceed to Ireland to collect the rents when due.

This was rather a poser. Mr. Dunscombe knew of old what was likely to be the result of a non-compliance with the old man's wishes, and was naturally unwishful to lose such a desirable client ; but, deep as was his reverence for the old man, and strong as was his desire to retain among his *clientele* one who contributed not a little to swell the revenues of the firm, he was loth to undertake so undesirable a pilgrimage.

He esteemed as the best of all blessings a life of luxurious ease ; was never happier than when advising with a sanctimonious air his numerous clients ; and his views regarding Ireland and the mere Irish were such, that he would rather have undertaken a journey to the South Sea Islands, than trust his sacred person to the tender mercies of such a " pack of savages," as he was wont to style them. He felt convinced—though he knew absolutely nothing of the country—that he would have been far safer among a race of cannibals ; and, though professing to treat most matters logically, would have deemed it insensate to approach the subject from a syllogistic point of view, to base his conclusion on any premises—major or minor ; sufficient for him, Ireland was Ireland, therefore Ireland was—out of the question.

And now the wily old lawyer had scored, and, with a conscience lulled to repose, gave his undivided attention to matters legal.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW AGENT.

NORA O'RORKE'S happiness was complete ;— the much dreaded interview had taken place and the result left nothing to be desired ;— and throughout the succeeding night her dreams were those rosy ones of the happy lover. The pleasant evening walks by the Moy, the happy hours spent in the shadow of the old ruin, were succeeded by visions of happiness around the fireside in Hugh's cottage, and morning's dawn found her in the seventh heaven of bliss. She arose early and set about making preparations for Father Tom's breakfast,—and her surroundings seemed to partake of the joy that was hers. The sun shone through the latticed window with a brighter glory than usual ; the little kettle sang more sweetly than was its wont ; the cheery fire sparkled with its ruddiest glow, and a white-faced kitten, engaged in performing wonderful gyrations in its efforts to secure a stray cotton ball, wantoned more joyously than ever.

“ Now, Miss Nora, will you just sit down here and let me do the work for once ? ” and Mrs. Dillon, who had entered the kitchen from the yard, where she had been looking after the material well-being of the host of fowl she kept to ensure a plentiful supply of new-

laid eggs for Father Tom, placed a chair beside the little table;—"you keep an eye on me and I'll not be muddling things. I'll not be boiling the water without the eggs";—and the old housekeeper, recalling an incident of recent date, laughed merrily at the recollection of her *faux pas*.

"You've got quite enough on your hands, Mrs. Dillon; and you've been working all morning while I was snoring soundly," rejoined Nora.

"But I'll not be able to manage at all, at all, if I don't get some practice," sighed Mrs. Dillon, seating herself on the chair, and wiping beads of perspiration from her brow with the corner of her apron,—“and what'll become of Father Tom, then?”

"You won't get rid of me so easily as you imagine," said Nora, laughing; "you'll have to put up with me till the Christmas at all events."

"Troth, now, Miss, I don't know that. Mr. Hugh has me plagued entirely to try and get round Father Tom to remove the 'intervention'—or whatever you call it,—and sure it's small blame to the poor boy."

"So you think he's pining for a tormentor," laughed Nora.

"It's not that, Miss Nora,—but you see the poor fellow is that fond of you, that——"

"Now, Mrs. Dillon," interjected Nora, "I thought a sensible woman like you would be able to see that he is merely trying to get into your good graces."

"Bedad, then, if that was all was troubling him he'd

be the happy boy, entirely, and if he takes my advice I'm thinking he'll get round Father Tom yet."

"So you've been acting legal adviser to him, Mrs. Dillon?"

"I would then, and plead the case for him myself, but I'd be afraid I'd muddle it too;—but says I to him no later than yesterday;—'Watch your chance, Mr. Hugh, and when you get the old man in good twist, give him plenty of soft soap and he'll give in in a twinkling.'"

"You must have had considerable experience in love affairs when you are so versed in recipes, Mrs. Dillon," said Nora, archly.

"Well, you see, I've knacks of my own, Miss Nora, —and though I'm an old womau, and it's myself that's saying it, there wasn't a lovingler couple in the whole barony than myself and poor Barney—God be good to him;—but he was none of your little gimcracks;—you needn't laugh, Miss Nora."

"I couldn't help it, Mrs. Dillon. I haven't an idea what a 'gimcrack' is."

"Well, I'm surprised, Miss Nora; and you gettin' all the schoolin' you did. A gimcrack is a little dandy of a fellow who goes on just for all the world like a monkey."

"And Barney was——"

"The broth of a boy—every inch of him," interjected the loquacious Mrs. Dillon;—"no antics of bowing and scraping, but tormenting and wrangling, and

teasing the life out of me, night, noon, and morning. He was only a month here when I goes up to Father Tom and says,—‘Your reverence, I can’t stand Barney.’ ‘Then I’ll have to send him about his business,’ says his reverence. But, somehow, when I cooled down, I felt sorry to be the cause of him losing his place, and put up with his tormenting sooner than have my conscience worrying me.”

“And how is it you married him, after all, Mrs. Dillon?”

“Well, I suppose it was God had hands in it, Miss;—but it all came about through the falling of a tongs.”

“*The falling of a tongs?*” echoed Nora.

“Yes, Miss, but it was his fault. A few months after I complained to Father Tom, we were sitting at the fire—Barney and myself—arguing about one thing or another, when what did the vagabond do but let the tongs fall on my toes. Before I rightly knew what I was doing, I up and gave him three ‘skelps’ of it across the shoulders;—but the poor fellow took it so quietly—with ne’er a word of complaint out of him—that I felt sorry for him after all.

‘Bridget,’ he says, after I cooled down, ‘I must have been born to torment you.’

‘Sure enough,’ says I, ‘and you’re sticking to your work well.’

‘Then,’ says he, looking at me out of the corner of his eye,—‘maybe you’d marry me, Bridget.’”

“And you did,” said Nora, smiling.

“Yes, Miss, and a better husband never stood in shoe leather, and ’twas happy we were till we went to live on the stretch of bog ;—but sure a horse wouldn’t stand the slavery, and poor Barney left me all alone,” and Mrs. Dillon requisitioned the apron—“and it’s often I wonder what I’d have done at all only I’d a good friend in Father Tom, God bless him.”

“I never knew there was so much virtue in the falling of a tongs, Mrs. Dillon.”

“No more did I, Miss Nora, but as sure as you are standing there this minute, ’twas the same falling of the tongs that got me Barney.”

A shadow darkened the door.

“Good morning, Miss Nora ; best respects, Mrs. Dillon,” and Mr. O’Halloran stood within the kitchen.

“You are welcome, Mr. O’Halloran,” said Nora, procuring him a seat. “I hope your health is good.”

“Fair, I thank you, Miss Nora. ‘Age is as a lusty winter——’” but the quotation stopped short. Mr. O’Halloran looked at Mrs. Dillon—and Mrs. Dillon looked at Mr. O’Halloran—the one, apologetically—the other, threateningly.

Mr. O’Halloran was fortunately blessed with a good memory. Two years before, himself and Mrs. Dillon had fallen out over a trivial point ;—a wordy argument ensued ;—Mrs. Dillon, brilliant in plain, unvarnished, every-day language—while Mr. O’Halloran, mounting what he styled ‘the didactic pedestal,’ flooded the

kitchen with quotations from his favourite author. He had, with a richness of comparisons,—similes,—metaphors,—rhetorical figures collectively,—risen step by step, in dignity, importance, force ;—had, as it were, reached the topmost rung in imagery, and was about to cap the climax, when—like a bolt from the blue—came Mrs. Dillon's "*anti*" She lost control of her temper—assumed control of the rolling-pin—and floored poor Mr. O'Halloran.

"Now," she said, majestically waving her truncheon over her fallen foe, "ne'er a stir you'll stir out of that till you promise me on your knees that I'm never to hear any of that gibberish any more. You'll not be '*dilacting*' me."

And Mr. O'Halloran—judging discretion the better part of valour,—with a pang,—promised ;—and for two long years Mrs. Dillon knew not Shakespeare.

"You'll do us the favour of having breakfast," said Nora.

"I can no other answer"—but the mystic looks being repeated, Mr. O'Halloran stopped short.

Meanwhile, Nora had placed a goodly repast before the man of learning, who, quietly but efficaciously demonstrated that, though wrapped up in Shakespeare, he was not oblivious of the fact that the 'inner man' requires sustenance.

A stray hen invaded the kitchen ; Mrs. Dillon was up in arms in an instant, and she and the boisterous biped were soon fluttering down the garden path.

Mr. O'Halloran cast a quick glance through the kitchen window, and turning to Nora said, with a graceful bow, "Now, that the coast is clear, allow me to finish the quotation :—

'I can no other answer make, but thanks
And thanks and ever thanks : oft good turns
Are shuffled off with such undercurrent pay :
But were my worth, as is my conscience,—firm
You should find better dealing.'

"Dont mention it, Mr. O'Halloran," rejoined Nora, "you're always welcome"; and, wishful to make the old man feel more at ease, changed the subject. "Have you seen the new agent?" she enquired.

"Yes, Miss Nora, I have seen him ;—and if I may be allowed to observe

'Let every eye negotiate for itself
And trust no agent,——'

but Mrs. Dillon's return cut short the quotation, and after a short time the old man gallantly bowed himself out.

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"Nora," said Father Tom, after he had done ample justice to the inviting repast, "the toast was excellent. I half envy Hugh. You rival him in accomplishments. He has cultivated the muse, you—art,—more especially that of making toast."

"You seem to have made up your mind to complete my spoiling, Father Tom."

“Would you preclude one speaking the truth, Nora, though it be complimentary?”

“Oh, no, Father Tom, a good joke seems to do you as much good as the product of my ‘art cultivation.’”

“Very good, Nora; but, by the way, I forgot to mention to you last night that Mr. Howard promised to give me a call to-day, to confer with me as to the condition of the tenants.”

“Indeed,” said Nora; “does he seem interested in his tenants?”

“Yes, Nora; and I would say humanely interested. He intends to reside at the Manor, so will have a good opportunity of familiarising himself with the wants of the struggling tenantry, and will, no doubt, prove a worthy successor of poor Mr. Herbert.”

“I hope so,” said Nora, “but it is rare to find so kind-hearted and indulgent a man as Mr. Herbert was—in his circle.”

“No doubt, Nora, but I have every hope that Mr. Howard will be kind and indulgent. He was educated abroad and has travelled much, though still young, and I feel sure his experience will enable him to see that justice demands that the tenantry of Ireland be accorded a little more consideration. It will be a blessing if my expectations be realised.”

“A much-needed blessing, Father Tom, as the tenants are in a very helpless condition at present.”

“Quite true, Nora, and it seems such a hardship to expect that the tenants alone would suffer when the

Almighty, in His inscrutable ways, is not pleased to bless the land with fruitfulness."

"Won't much depend on the action of Mr. Howard, as agent, Father Tom?"

"Yes, Nora dear, a vast responsibility rests with the agent. Old Norburry, for instance, who preceded Mr. Herbert, was a noted tyrant. He was ever and always squeezing money out of the tenants. They had money then, and the fines and other charges amounted to nearly as much as the rent; and to make matters worse, Shaun the Bailiff—a mischief-maker by nature,—was hand and glove with Norburry, and left nothing undone to vilify the tenants. When Mr. Herbert took over the agency, the fines were abolished, Shaun was powerless, and the tenants, struggling and honest, were comparatively happy, having only the rent to pay,—and being freed from the bailiff's intermeddling. Besides, Mr. Herbert did not unduly press those unable to pay on rent-day; so that, as you say, much depends on the course of action adopted by the agent, and I sincerely trust Mr. Howard will be kind and indulgent. He will, of course, be interested in the welfare of his future tenants,—but here he comes";—and a few moments later Mr. Howard entered the apartment.

He was a man of about twenty-seven years of age, with well-formed, aristocratic features, black eyes, with a suspicious twinkle ever lurking in their dark depths, and a mouth which, casually viewed,—partly

concealed as it was by the luxuriant moustache, portrayed more want of firmness than anything else ;—he was, in short, a most gentlemanly-looking personage.

“Good morning, Mr. Howard, you are welcome,” said Father Tom, rising, and receiving him most graciously.

“Good morning, Father MacDermott. I trust I have not disturbed you.”

“Oh, not at all. This is a ward of mine ;—Miss O’Rorke—Mr. Howard.”

The usual salutations were exchanged, and Nora, taking the tea service, left the apartment.

The conference was a lengthy one, and Father Tom made the most of the time and opportunity. He told in feeling language of the poverty of his people, —of their industrious habits,—their laudable desire to at all times meet the demand of the landlord,—and emphasised the fact that it seemed providential that Mr. Howard himself should have taken over the management of the estate at a time when a kindly consideration of the wants of the tenants was of vital importance. And the result gladdened the good soggarth’s heart. There was hope for his poor people, and he breathed a fervent prayer to the Father of the oppressed for having sent them a friend in their distress.

“I shall carefully note all you have told me, Father MacDermott,” said Mr. Howard, as he rose

to leave. "By the way, I notice you play the classic game."

"Oh! yes," replied Father Tom, "one is not necessarily benighted though 'far from the madding crowd.' My books and my chessmen are among the few of my remaining joys."

"But there must be a difficulty in finding one versed in the kingly game in country districts."

"My ward plays splendidly. Indeed, I'm no match for her lately,—and we while away many an hour at the noble game."

"Indeed?" enquired Mr. Howard, "might I hope to have a friendly trial of strength over the board, Father McDermott? I take a special interest in the game."

"Most certainly, Mr Howard; you will always be welcome."

"Father MacDermott has just told me you play chess excellently, Miss O'Rorke," he said to Nora as he met her on his way out. "I have a rather exalted opinion of my ability as a player, and intend, with your permission, testing my skill one of these days,—but shall not be disappointed at being defeated by such an opponent."

Nora fancied there was a tinge of flattery in his words, so she merely expressed the pleasure it would afford her to oblige him, and bowed him out.

"A gentleman of culture and experience!" said Father Tom to Nora when she entered the parlour;

“his travels have given a decided polish to his manners, though I fancy he has some objection to refer to the time he spent abroad. I trust we may see him often, as I should much desire to impress him with the necessity of indulging some of the struggling tenants. What is your opinion of him, Nora?”

“It would scarcely be fair to Mr. Howard, Father Tom, to express an opinion on such a slight acquaintance.”

“But I have heard that woman intuitively fathoms a man at the first glance,” said Father Tom, smiling.

“No doubt,” replied Nora, “but fathoming sometimes brings undesirable things to the surface; so we’d better give Mr. Howard, for the present, credit for being what he wishes to appear.”



CHAPTER VII.

THE CROSS-ROADS.

THE dulcet, thrush-like notes of the flute, comingling with an impromptu chorus by some four or five peasant maids,—touching, as it were, the chord of Nature, produced an effect which would have charmed the heart of an impresario.

’Twas the usual Sunday gathering at the cross-roads, and all the young boys and girls of the locality

had collected to while away a few hours in innocent amusement. Mirth and fun and frolic were the order of the day, and now, the sweet voices of the impromptu choir carolled forth; and throughout the tuneful harmony a note of joyful thanksgiving prevailed.

Somehow or other the impression had gone abroad that Mr. Howard had taken over the agency for the express purpose of bettering the condition of his tenants, and the intelligence in a special manner brought joy to the habitués of the cross-roads.

'Twould indeed have gone hard with the young people had another Norburry come to desolate and "desecrate," as old Malachy had put it; for what was it but desecration to forbid their attending the local Olympia.

True, the charge against Myles M'Nulty arose out of a cross-road gathering. Shaun the Bailiff, who, in Norburry's time, was the scourge of the locality, had represented the gatherings as pretexts for fostering sedition. Myles was then the hero of the parish; for had he not on many a well-contested field sustained its reputation. He was the best stone-thrower, the swiftest runner, the finest jumper, and the ablest hurler for miles around, and the idol of all the young girls in the neighbourhood. But his heart had gone out to the blue-eyed Kathleen, the only daughter of old Meehaul Henry, and poor as both were they would have esteemed it a proud privilege had they been allowed to link their fortunes together. But the

bailiff had set *his* heart on Myles' patch of ground, and so the marriage never took place. Old Meehaul, because he had "shot more birds of a day than the ould villain, Norburry, could," had fallen into disfavour; his eviction was a matter of course, and Shaun the Bailiff saw the possibilities. His honour was duly warned that Myles was rousing the young fellows to rebellion; a conspirator, Shaun declared; and a letter, alleged to have been found at the cross-roads after one of the meetings, showed that Myles was the ring-leader of the band, and it proved the death-knell of his hopes. He was immediately evicted,—the cross-road gatherings were prohibited under severe penalties,—and Shaun the Bailiff came into possession of the land.

But Mr. Herbert had, as old Malachy was wont to express it, put a stop to his devilment. Shaun had retired into exile, and the cross-road gatherings,—Phoenix-like—had, with renewed vigour, risen from their ashes.

What wonder, then, since a worthy successor had replaced Mr. Herbert, that jubilation reigned supreme at this particular re-union of the young people; ay! and of many of our old friends, who could not resist the temptation to exult on the renewal of old Shaun's enforced exile.

"It's pleased I am," said the old historian, "to see ye enjoying yourselves."

"Come! Mr. Ginty," said a roguish-looking colleen,

—one Delia Dempsey, approaching a staid bachelor, “we’ll show them what we can do!”

Mr. Ginty, originally from the “far North,” but now carrying on a roving commission in the neighbourhood,—buying up “bargains” in horses, was somewhat non-plussed by Delia’s offer—but, *nolens volens*, he was led out to the sacrifice.

“Tim Reilly,” went on the unblushing Delia, “will you bring out one of the girls, and we’ll have a four-hand reel.”

Tim would have preferred to have had the coquetish Delia as partner, but had to accept the inevitable, and the “mystic evolutions” were executed with a grace that would have done credit to professionals,—it being understood that, claiming privilege, we throw the mantle of charity over Mr. Ginty’s display.

“Do you know, Sam?” said Tim, with a smile, when the dance had concluded, “you’ve put your foot in it a second time.”

“Don’t heed him, Mr. Ginty,” said Delia, “he’s jealous himself. He’s afraid you might be making me Mrs. Ginty one of these days.”

“Now, Miss Dempsey,” said the blushing Sam, using a favourite expression of his, “*quot it,—for ’evan’s saike—quot it.*”

“You were always too innocent, Sam,” went on the exasperating Tim, “I thought Jemmy Durcan’s case cured you,”—an allusion which sent the whole gathering into roars of laughter.

Jemmy Durcan's case was the bane of his life. Some years before, he had aspired to the hand of one Julia O'Flaherty, but, feeling that he was rather "out of his depth" in arranging amatory matters, he had secured as "diplomatist," one Jemmy Durcan. Jemmy was invested with "full powers of attorney,"—but Jemmy had betrayed his trust,—and Miss O'Flaherty became Mrs. Durcan. The cares of married life had, however, proved too much for poor Jemmy,—and Mrs. Durcan was once more among the "eligibles,"—and Sam was not without hopes.

But youth and beauty had something else to think about besides Sam and his hopes, and another four-hand was soon in full swing, and many and varied were the encomiums bestowed on the fair participators, while the elder members of the assemblage testified to the joy that was theirs at seeing the cross-roads thus "sanctified."

"Boys!" old Malachy was saying to a group of stalwart youths who were awaiting an opportunity to join the fun, "isn't the liberty the grand thing, entirely?"

"Why?" said one of the young fellows,—one Cormac McHugh—"is there a chance of the Repeal, Malachy?"

"The Repeal," replied Malachy, "Oh, yes! Cormac, the Great Dan is doing wonders, and, with the blessing of God, we'll see the 'Ould House' open again; but I was thinking of the time ould Norburry was at the 'desecrating.'"

“’Twas lucky we got the gentleman, himself,” said one of the young fellows, “or the desecrating might be begun again.”

“True for you, Bartly, and I’m thinking we got the real gentleman in earnest this time,” said old Malachy.

“Reilly talks well of him,” said Cormac, “but he shouldn’t be forgetting Mr. Herbert.”

“It’s no disparagement of Mr. Herbert to talk well of the gentleman,” protested Malachy. “I met him a few days ago, and he was as civil as you please.”

“Civil as you please,” echoed our friend, Mr. O’Halloran, who, in passing, paused to admire the “mystic evolutions,”

“‘There is something in this more than natural,—
If philosophy could find out.’”

“Mr. O’Halloran,” pleaded the saucy Delia, “won’t you do me the honour?”

“Madam,” he enquired, “what’s your gracious pleasure?”

“A dance, Mr. O’Halloran, a dance.”

“Fair lady,” he began, with a courtly bow,

“‘Mine honour is my life ; both grow in one ;
Take honour from me, and my life is done ;’”

and he was off in a twinkling.

“The ould fool was afraid Mrs. Dillon would hear of it,” said Tim, and ere the laughter had subsided, Tim had calmly appropriated the not-unwilling Delia

—and a slip jig was rattled off in faultless style---and so engrossed were one and all, that no one noticed a strange figure hurrying up the road.

Suddenly the music ceased,—and all eyes were directed towards the musician,—some in evident surprise, others in indignant protest.

Old Mrs. Brennan was in possession of the flute, and was whispering to the erstwhile performer.

“Yes, ma’am,” he said gently, “whatever you like.”

“Hush !” said Mrs. Brennan, turning to the boys and girls, and motioning them to silence, “do ye want to have Myles persecuted again? Have ye any sense, at all, at all?”

“We’re going home now, ma’am,” said Cormac, evidently to please her.

“Cormac,” she went on, “is that you? Will you tell Paudraic to come up and not be killing himself with the cut-away?”

“He’s gone home, ma’am. Here, Malachy, go up with Mrs. Brennan,” and, apparently satisfied, the poor woman accompanied the old historian towards her home.

But her advent had cast a gloom on the merry party,—and after a short time the cross-roads was deserted.

Tim insisted on accompanying Delia—and they had not proceeded far when they met Hugh and Nora, who were enjoying a walk.

“Well, Miss Dempsey,” said Hugh, “is the fun all over?”

“Yes, Mr. Hugh. Old Mrs. Brennan came on us. She thought we’d be getting Myles into trouble again—and so we left to please her.”

“Poor woman,” said Nora, “she is, indeed, a pity, and poor Maire takes the old woman’s affliction very much to heart. How is little Maggie since her illness, Tim?”

“Grand, Miss. Grand, entirely; but she may thank your goodness, Miss Nora. The old mother ’ll never forget it to you, Miss. She’s always praying for you.”

“Then I’m more than recompensed for any good I may have done,” rejoined Nora.

“How do you like your new master, Tim?” asked Hugh.

“A real gentleman, Mr. Hugh. Mr. Herbert was very good, but Mr. Howard is a very nice gentleman, entirely.”

“Has Shaun got into his good graces yet?”
“Well, it isn’t his fault if he hasn’t, Mr. Hugh. He haunts the ‘big house’ like a ghost; but I’m thinking, myself, that Mr. Howard wouldn’t be believing any of the ould villain’s tales.”

“How are Miss McNulty and Father Pat, Delia?” asked Nora.

“Very well, thank you, Miss. Nothing could knock up Father Pat.”

“Miss McNulty will have to be looking out for another housekeeper, shortly,” said Tim.

“So you’re blest at last, Tim. Congratulations!” said Hugh.

“No, Mr. Hugh, she’s becoming Mrs. Ginty one of these days.”

“Is it possible?” enquired Nora, surprised.

“Ah, don’t heed him, Miss; he’s jealous because I danced with old Sam.”

“Capital,” said Hugh, laughing. “I hope my old housekeeper will hear it, Delia.”

“You needn’t be a bit afraid but she will, Mr. Hugh, for Tim told him he was out of Mrs. Durcan for life, and it’s the first thing some of the young fellows will tell her—to torment her.”

“So you think she’s sweet on Sam, Delia.”

“The old fools are the worst, Mr. Hugh,” replied Delia, laughing.

“Does that imply, Miss Delia,” asked Hugh, affecting a serious air—“that the young, who tempt Cupid, are fools too?”

“Ask Tim, Mr. Hugh; he thinks he’s a great authority on—everything.”

“Well, Tim?” said Hugh, laughing.

“Ask Miss Nora?” said Tim, unabashed.

“Well, Nora?” said Hugh, “now is your golden opportunity.”

“Wait and consult Mr. O’Halloran; he’ll favour you with an appropriate quotation,” and all laughed heartily at the happy rejoinder.

“Do you know, Miss,” said Tim, “that reminds me that he’s as big a fool as Sam. Delia wanted him to dance—and he spouted something about his honour and his life, and was off like a hare.”

“Poor fellow!” said Nora. “I wonder he wouldn’t have more sense.”

“Love!” said Hugh. “Love! Nora, love! I think Delia is right. It makes fools of the whole of us. Eh! Tim?”

“Fools or no fools,” said Tim, laughing, “it’s small blame to me when ould ‘fogies’ like them are making laughing-stocks of themselves.”

“And I suppose you exonerate Delia too, Tim,” said Nora, archly.

“With all my heart—Miss Nora! with all my heart—and I wouldn’t want much pressing to be giving a free pardon to others, too—Miss,” and laughing heartily, he and the fair Delia went on their way, while Hugh and Nora resumed their walk.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "STATION."

OLD Mrs. Murphy, aided by a number of volunteers, had been a whole week making preparations for the great event. Every nook in the humble dwelling had been turned inside out;—the kitchen and little room limewashed with a zeal that did credit to all concerned; the result being that it rivalled the proverbial hound's tooth. The tables, the few chairs, and even the "creepies" scoured with marvellous scrupulousness;—the muslin curtain on the little window, bleached and starched and ironed;—in short—the whole house rejuvenated. It was her proud privilege to have a "station" called on her.

What need to dwell on the joy that was hers. With truly Celtic reverence, anything and everything that could be done to make fitting reception for the Lord of Hosts, was as nothing compared to what she would have accomplished had her means been in any degree commensurate with her desires. And then the clergy were to breakfast in the house, and this, in itself, entailed an amount of deep thought and careful preparation. But, as has been said, volunteers were not wanting, and on the morning of the appointed

day, with a cheery face and a beaming smile she welcomed neighbour after neighbour till the house was, as the saying goes, "choke-full."

Father Tom and Father Pat attended in good time, and soon all was silence and devotion;—confessions were being heard. After a time, Father Pat celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, all reverently received the Blessed Sacrament, and after thanksgiving, the soggarths were conducted to the little room for breakfast.

Now this particular "station" partook somewhat of the nature of a state affair, for word had gone round that Father Tom would speak to them of the new agent on the occasion.

It is usual to invite a few of the leading lights to keep the priests in company at breakfast, and accordingly we find our old respected friend, Malachy, the venerable Shemus, Hugh O'Donnell, and a few others, told off for the distinguished office. True, Mrs. Murphy would have been delighted if all could have graced her festive board, humble though it was, but the exigencies of space necessitated her confining her invitation to a select few.

"Well, Mrs. Murphy," said Father Tom, with a genial smile, when all had been seated, "you're a wonderful old woman. You've the house very neat, indeed."

"It's little to what I'd wish, your reverence, seeing as it's the happy day with me;—but sure I've done

the best I could,—and the neighbours—God bless them—didn't spare themselves."

"Bedad, Father Tom, said old Malachy, "Mrs. Murphy was ever and always tasty and above the common. It's well I recollect old Murty—God rest his soul—bragging of what she was when he met her."

"'Twould be fitter for you be minding your soul, Malachy," replied the by-no-means-displeased Mrs. Murphy, "than to be going on with your humbugging."

"No humbugging at all, Mrs. Murphy. Father Tom," he went on, "if you misdoubt me, ask Shemus there."

"Well, Shemus," said Father Tom, "isn't Malachy speaking truth?"

"Gospel truth, your reverence ;—gospel truth, every word of it," replied Shemus.

"Now, Father Pat," said the old woman, turning for sympathy to Father McNulty, "isn't Father Tom as bad as any of them?"

"To tell you the truth, Mrs. Murphy, I think he's a great deal worse—a great deal worse, ma'am."

"Father Pat won't fall out with a lady," said Father Tom. "Don't you think he's wise, Hugh?"

"I'm sure Father Pat knows what he is doing," replied Hugh. "I haven't much experience of the gentler sex, myself."

"Now, do you hear him, Father Pat," exclaimed

the old woman, "Troth, Father Tom, the same boy knows well;—but, no matter—not but that he's a good, dacent boy—though not as innocent as he pretends;—but you'll have to find it out for yourself, for I'm not going to put between ye."

"Mrs. Murphy evidently thinks you are a little more experienced in the fair sex than you lay credit to, Hugh," said Father Tom, smiling.

"That's only her way, Father Tom;—she likes to be regarded as an oracle,—but we're good friends—are we not, Mrs. Murphy?"

"Troth, Hugh, acushla, if you've no one to disparage you till ould Nelly does it, you won't have much difficulty in getting the Missus!"

"Well, well," said Father Pat, "and do you tell us, Mrs. Murphy, that Hugh has serious notions of settling down?"

"And if he has itself, Father Pat," urged the old woman, "isn't it small blame to him."

"Well!" said Father Tom, in seeming bewilderment, "wonders will never cease,—and still we complain of the bad times."

"But sure what'll keep one will keep two," pleaded Mrs. Murphy, in direct contravention of the recognized arithmetical theory, "and there's good times coming, with the blessing of God."

"That reminds me," said Father Tom, "that I promised to speak of my impressions of the new agent."

“They’re all waiting below,” said old Malachy. “I hope he’ll be the right sort, Father Tom.”

“I hope so, Malachy;—indeed I must say I am convinced he means well.”

“A black, bitter day for us if he doesn’t!” said old Shemus. “Oh, Father Tom, wasn’t ould Norburry a terror?”

“Oh! the ould—Oh! God forgive me this blessed day,” said old Nelly, clasping her hands together, and raising her eyes heavenward;—and, wishful not to jeopardise her soul, refrained from expressing her thoughts.

“A terror, truly, Shemus. It often surprises me how our poor people had the patience to bear all the persecution that was theirs.”

“The old people tell queer tales about him,” said Father Pat.

“Not within the four seas of Ireland would you find as bad,” said old Malachy. “You wouldn’t believe he could be such a terror, Father Pat. He was never in good humour only when he was wrecking a heart or a home——”

“A monstrous system,” exclaimed Father Pat.

“Raising the rent one day—fining another—heap-
ing on duty work—evicting and house-burning,”
continued old Malachy.

“Let us hope we have seen the last of it,” said Father Tom, “and now, I think we won’t keep the people any longer”;—and, repairing to the kitchen,

which was a larger apartment, and where all who attended the "station" were patiently waiting, Father Tom and Father Pat having been provided with seats,—the conference opened.

"Well," began Father Tom, his face expressive of the pleasure that was his, "I am very glad, indeed, to be in a position to speak favourably as regards my impressions of Mr. Howard."

There was a deep murmur of content.

"Yes," went on Father Tom, "he called on me lately, and I was much impressed with his evident desire to gain an insight into the circumstances of the tenantry. He will, you know, be more interested in your welfare than a stranger, and I need not say that I made as good a case for you all as I possibly could."

"God bless you, Father!" echoed round the relieved and delighted throng.

"He has evidently travelled much," continued Father Tom, "and this, in itself, should be an education;—should show him, by comparison, the abject poverty and wretchedness that prevail around him here. He does not seem to know much about the condition of the people, and it should be our policy to try and instruct him, without unduly obtruding ourselves on him;—to try and bring home to him the true state of affairs, and by every means in our power to endeavour to enlist his sympathy."

"And sure no one can do that better than yourself, your reverence," said a member of the crowd.

"Of course," said Father Tom, "anything I can do on your behalf to gain his good will, consistent with self-respect, I shall willingly and cheerfully do."

"God bless you, Father, sure you always stood our best friend," exclaimed old Shemus.

"And so, Father Tom, you think he'll follow in Mr. Herbert's footsteps?" said old Malachy.

"Perhaps that would be expecting too much, Malachy," replied Father Tom.

"Glory be to God!" exclaimed old Nelly, turning to Father Pat, "isn't it too bad entirely that the villains can come and do just what they like?"

"That's where the shoe pinches, Mrs. Murphy," said Father Pat, "and that's what prevents me taking the rosy view that Father Tom does."

"How is that, Father Pat?" enquired Father Tom, somewhat alarmed.

"Oh, the system, Father Tom;—it begets slavery,—slavery begets oppression,—and there you are."

"True," said Father Tom, "but we cannot hope to change the system;—we have only to endeavour to make the best of it,—to get what concessions we can."

"True, very true," rejoined Father Pat, "and that's the melancholy part of the business;—but is it not monstrous that in a Christian country you find men slaving from year's end to year's end—starving themselves and their families to endeavour to scrape together the rent—in many cases a physical impossi-

bility—and even when accomplished—what then? misery!—deeming themselves happy if they have succeeded in coaxing or cajoling the oppressor from exercising his undoubted right to do wrong;—and, our rulers, who are supposed to consult the good of the people, doing all they can to perpetuate the monstrous system."

"I don't think they imagine we are so hardly pressed," said Father Tom.

"They know it quite well," persisted Father Pat. "Was it not Lord Stanley who said on the debate on the Irish Registration Bill, that 'persons having from 15 to 20 acres of land are generally from April to September in a state of the greatest destitution, living upon potatoes without either milk or meat, and considering themselves very happy if they have dry potatoes enough;—men whom the landlords, letting their land at a rack rent, may upon any day turn loose upon the world to starve in the last degree of misery.'"

"True for you," said the old historian, "and if the great Dan doesn't do something for us we've a poor chance of justice."

"I greatly fear O'Connell's day is done," said Father Pat. "The authorities seem to have realised that demonstrations are merely demonstrations, Malachy, and his recent action at Clontarf, in issuing that proclamation, capped the climax. As O'Connell himself says, 'a good speech is a good thing, but the

verdict is *the* thing,' and I fear we won't get the verdict, Malachy."

"But," said Father Tom, "we have to turn our attention to the practical, or should I say, the feasible aspect of the case, and do the best we can under the circumstances."

"And no one will rejoice more than I, if you can accomplish anything, Father Tom;—but my doubts remain."

"Ay!" said old Malachy, "and I'm with you, Father Pat;—'tisn't likely we're going to have another miracle performed for us."

"Well, Hugh," asked Father Tom, "what do you think?"

"I don't like thinking, Father Tom,—to my mind we're all slaves—the slaves of circumstances."

"But," said Father Tom, "the question now is, how best to mend these circumstances? or at least prevent our becoming worse."

"Sure we'd be content enough," said one of the throng—who evidently had the cut-away in good 'heart'—"if we were left undisturbed, and without the fines and the duty work."

"Something of my own state of mind," rejoined Father Tom. "As Father Pat says, no doubt, the system is a monstrous one;—but 'tis present in all its reality. How, then, make the most of our opportunities? A new agent—and one we naturally expect to be humane—has taken over control of the

estate. He may, with God's help, follow in Mr. Herbert's footsteps, or he may not. Can we do anything to influence his action? If so, I think we owe it to ourselves and our successors to make the most of the occasion. I would, myself, counsel prudence and forbearance. Let us show that we believe in his honesty of purpose; that we are anxious to do all in our power to appreciate kindness. The rent-day will come round in a short time;—let us show that we are prepared to meet the demands made on us, by paying the half-year's rent due, and I believe we shall have no reason to complain of Mr. Howard."

"God bless you, Father Tom," exclaimed old Shemus, "you always had the cheery word. God grant your words will come true."

"Amen!" said Father Pat, solemnly, rising from his seat—and the conference was at an end.

The two soggarths and Hugh were proceeding homewards—Father Pat and Hugh discussing the situation—Father Tom evidently in a day dream.

"Hugh," said Father Tom, after some distance had been traversed, "did you notice Dermott at the station?"

"No," replied Hugh, "I don't think he was there."

"Then the old woman must be keeping badly. I think I'll call over to see her."

"We'll all go," said Father Pat. "I fear her case is hopeless. Norburry haunts her incessantly."

"Very good!" said Father Tom, and he lapsed into

his day-dream once more,—Father Pat and Hugh continuing their conversation ;—and after a short time they arrived at Dermott's dwelling. Nancy O'Neill—the great grand-aunt of Dermott on the father's side—was sitting by the fire, having slipped over to see how Mrs. Brennan was going on. Dermott's wife was out attending to the fowl—Dermott was leaning against the dresser absorbed in thought—while his mother, who was seated opposite old Nancy, *was rocking an empty cradle* and crooning a plaintive air.

'Twas a sad sight.

"God save all here," said Father Tom, cheerily, stepping into the kitchen.

"Save you kindly, your reverence ; you're heartily welcome," answered old Nancy, rising from her seat ; "and you, Father Pat, and Mr. Hugh."

Dermott went out and shortly afterwards returned with Maire,—and with simple but earnest enthusiasm the young woman welcomed her visitors.

"Well, Mrs. Brennan," said Father Tom, gently laying his hand on the old woman's head, "how are you to-day?"

"*He's sleeping, your reverence—'tis little Donal.*"

"'Tis the only thing that seems to console her, Father," said the young wife ; "she sits there all day crooning to herself, and keeps quiet so long as she's not disturbed."

"God comfort her !" said the kindly soggarth.

"Amen!" said the young woman, wiping a tear from her eye.

Dermott had gone out again.

Suddenly the rocking of the cradle ceased, and Mrs. Brennan arose, walked over to where Hugh was standing, and peered scrutinisingly at him;—a smile lit up her countenance for a moment, and she resumed her seat by the cradle.

"Where's Paudraic?" she asked, glancing round the kitchen.

"Down at the cut-away, mother," answered the young wife.

"I was forgetting," she replied, and crooning softly to herself, lapsed into her dreamy state.

"Come!" said Father Pat to Hugh,—evidently anxious to get away from the painful sight.

"Won't you give her your blessing, Father?" pleaded the young woman.

Father Pat went over and laid his hand gently on the poor woman's head.

"Hush!" she whispered, "he's sleeping;—'tis little Donal."

"Well, your reverence," enquired Dermott, who was waiting outside—leaning across the little gate—"do you think is there any hope?"

"God is good," replied Father Pat, reassuringly.

"But sure she's wasted to a shadow, Father;—and if it was God's will 'twould be a happy release for her if he took her to Himself."

“Truly,” said Father Pat, “but you must try and bear the affliction, for God’s sake.”

“And sure I am, Father—we all are. I wouldn’t mind at all, but Maire takes it to heart greatly. She thinks God wasn’t pleased with her coming in on the mother.”

“Nonsense, utter nonsense,” said Father Pat;—“the poor woman seemingly never got over the death of her husband, and the shock she received has told its tale. Tell your wife, Dermott, from me, that she musn’t give way to such a foolish notion. I shall have a talk with her myself to-morrow.”

“God bless you, Father!” fervently exclaimed Dermott, tears dimming his eyes.

“Hugh,” said Father Pat, as they proceeded homewards—“the curse of God attends this vile land system.”



CHAPTER IX.

GLOWING SUNSHINE.

THE rent-day came round in due course, and Mr. Howard sat in state in his sanctuary, the spare room of the Manor where Mr. Herbert was wont to receive the tenantry when they called on him. Father Tom was one of the first to put in an appearance. He was anxious to intercede for old

Monahan, who, in consequence of the lengthened illness of his wife, was unable to meet the rent at the appointed time.

“Good morning, Father McDermott,” said Mr. Howard, graciously; “you are setting the tenants a good example.”

“You’ll find your tenants compare favourably with most, Mr. Howard,” said the good priest; “and it is only just to say, the friendly relations which exist are mainly, if not wholly, due to the humane action of Mr. Herbert.”

“Herbert was popular, I understand,” said Mr. Howard.

“And justly so,” affirmed Father Tom; “he had a good heart and still contrived to have the rents collected in full without unduly pressing any of the struggling tenants.”

Mr. Howard felt that he, also, could afford to have a good heart, provided its possession did not interfere with the collection. He was, besides, anxious to ingratiate himself into the good graces of Father Tom, so he considered it politic to harp on his inexperience.

“My inexperience handicaps me to some extent, Father McDermott,” he replied, with affected humility; “but I hope our relations will be friendly, too.”

“Unquestionably so, Mr. Howard; the tenants were delighted with the favourable account I was able

to give them as to your good intentions on their behalf."

Mr. Howard felt that Father Tom's estimate of him reflected credit on the priest's "penetration." He rather enjoyed being thought "emotional," and had already begun to realise that a little unbending would not detract from his dignity.

"You flatter me, Father McDermott."

"No, Mr. Howard. I merely gave them my impressions, and I rather fancy I underrated your merit."

"I fear you'll quite spoil me if you thus extol my supposed virtues," said Mr. Howard, with a laugh.

"Even so," said Father Tom, smiling, "it will be in a good cause. But, by the way, I must crave your indulgence for an old tenant who is unable to pay at present—one Monahan who lost his wife lately."

"Oh! that will be all right; but tell me, Father McDermott—what about these—let me see, Cassidy, I believe, is the name. What about that family? I hear they are inclined to be a little refractory."

Father Tom was startled. He recollected that the tenants had strong reasons for suspecting that Shaun the Bailiff had set his eye on the farm of the Cassidys, which adjoined his own. He was, he knew, on—if possible—worse terms with the Cassidys than any other tenant on the estate, from the fact that Mr. Herbert, when fever had reduced them to very straitened circumstances, had been instrumental in

having concessions granted them ; and an unfortunate expression, which one of the Cassidy children overheard, and repeated in the bailiff's presence—"spying Shaun"—so roused his animosity, that the Cassidys had since been on his black list. But Father Tom was unwishful to have Mr. Howard imagine that he had any fears that the tales of his underling would in any way influence his action. "Refractory!" he exclaimed ; " quite the contrary—an industrious and respectable family—and I may mention that your father, when sickness had rendered them unable to pay, forgave them a half-year's rent."

This supposed large-heartedness on the part of his father (as a matter of fact it was Mr. Herbert who paid the small sum) impressed Mr. Howard. It behoved him to at least express appreciation of his father's generosity.

"I am very pleased to hear that, Father McDermott," he replied, "but, by the way, I hope the tenants respect our rights on the river—that there is no poaching going on."

He had heard that Father Tom had been instrumental in putting down the practice in Mr. Herbert's time.

"Well," said Father Tom, with a frankness peculiarly his own, "since the matter has cropped up, I must say some were to blame on that matter ; the young fellows occasionally gaffed a salmon, but they regarded it more as an offence against the bailiffs.

Of course I deprecate this practice, Mr. Howard"; but his modesty forbade him mentioning having put a stop to it; "and I think that a word from you to-day would prevent its recurrence."

The tenants arrived in a body and were introduced by Father Tom. Mr. Howard was all smiles. He had, he said, learned from Father McDermott that they and the late agent had always been on good terms, and he hoped friendly relations would continue. There was, however, one matter he wished to impress on them. He would expect that they would scrupulously respect his rights on the river—there had been, he understood, some poaching in the past—and he trusted his reference to the matter would be sufficient, and warned them that any infringement of the rules of the estate would be punished with the utmost rigour.

The tenants were charmed with his manner. There was something of a fatherly solicitude permeating it—and they were captivated with his address. They acknowledged that, in simple justice, his rights on the river should be respected; and as soon as they had paid their respective rents they proceeded homewards, with light pockets and lighter hearts. The dark cloud which had hung over the land had been dissipated by glowing sunshine—their hopes had been realised.

"Boys," said old Malachy, as the crowd moved slowly down the avenue, "ye don't know what ye've

escaped ; my heart was bleeding for ye since Mr. Herbert's death, God rest his soul in glory this blessed day ; and a blessed day it is, boys, to think that we've got such a man in his stead."

"Ay!" said old Shemus, "and even yourself, Malachy, that's so learned, was out for once. You said something at the 'station' about two miracles being impossible."

"You brought some of the story with you, Shemus," said Malachy, who expected exactitude in the quoting of his pronouncements. "I said it wasn't likely we'd have another miracle performed for us."

"Well," rejoined old Shemus, "and isn't that what I'm after saying ; and still the miracle came to pass."

"Even so," said Malachy, anxious to excuse his lack of prescience on that particular occasion, "I was in good company ; Father Pat, himself, was out in his calculation too. And do ye know, boys, maybe, with the help of God, he'd be out in the great Dan's case too."

"I don't know," said Donal O'Loughlin, the local blacksmith ; "Father Pat doesn't say much, but there's a lot in what he does say when he talks ; and see how he could tell us what the ould lord over in England said. I think myself there's good stuff in Father Pat if it was drawn out."

"Do you know what I'm thinking, boys?" enquired Malachy, with a smile ; "I'd like to know how Shaun will take to-day's business. I was beginning to fear he'd be getting the upper hand of Mr. Howard."

"Give him a decent chance, Malachy," said Donal. "Rome wasn't built in a day."

They had by this time reached the high road, and at some distance a horseman was seen approaching.

"Father Pat, as sure as I'm here," exclaimed Donal; "doesn't the little mare strike the irons beautifully, boys?"

"He'll be glad to know we got on so well with Mr. Howard," said Malachy.

"I don't think he has much faith in anything the likes of him says," put in Donal; and the next moment the little mare was pulled up.

"Well, Malachy," enquired Father Pat, "how did he receive ye?"

"Grand, your reverence, grand entirely; you'd think 'twas poor Mr. Herbert himself was in it. No bullying or threatening, your reverence, but as civil spoken as any of ourselves."

"Negative virtues," said Father Pat with a smile.

"Yes, your reverence," acquiesced old Malachy, who, though he did not understand Father Pat's reference, was unwishful that his *clientele*, so to speak, should have any misgivings on that score, "negative virtues, your reverence."

"So he considers it just," continued Father Pat, "that the unfortunate tenant should bear all the burden when continued bad seasons render the land unfruitful."

"Bedad," said old Malachy, who evidently had not

considered the matter from that standpoint, "there wasn't a word about it. Of course," he continued, as if in extenuation of Mr. Howard's lack of consideration, "he couldn't be expected to know much about that, your reverence."

"Did he make any enquiries, Malachy?"

"No, your reverence; he just took the rent from us, and that's all."

"Little wonder that he should not have known much about your condition. I had thought that, in common justice, he would have granted a considerable abatement in the rent this time."

"An abatement, your reverence. Lord save us, you'd be too good to us"; and the old man looked around to see what his fellow-tenants thought of Father Pat's new-fangled ideas.

"Yes, Malachy, an abatement. When God, in his inscrutable ways, does not bless the land with fruitfulness, why should the tenant be expected to bear all the burden?"

"True enough, Father Pat; but sure the landlord must get his rent, no matter what happens."

"Yes Malachy, I suppose that puts the case in a nutshell; the landlord must get his rent, no matter what happens. Well, I'm glad you all are impressed with the new agent."

"Another miracle! your reverence," said old Shemus; "another miracle."

"Yes," said Father Pat, smiling, "and if matters

go on as at present I think we should be justified in claiming yet another."

"How is that, your reverence?" asked Donal.

"Why, you see, Donal, the system, as I said before, begets slavery—slavery begets tyranny—and there you are."

"Then," said Donal, "you think—"

"No, Donal, I prefer not to *think*; it leaves me peace of mind"; and patting the little mare gently on the neck, he rode off.

"Just as I was thinking all along," said Donal, reflectively—" *there's good stuff in Father Pat—if it was drawn out.*"

"What did he mean by expecting another miracle, Malachy?" asked Shemus, as they proceeded homewards."

"I don't think I was listening," rejoined Malachy, who was loth to lose prestige with his fellow-tenants, "I was thinking of old Meehaul Henry, beyond. I was just considering would it be any use expecting he'd get back the land. Maybe he meant we'd be getting an abatement next time, Shemus."

"Do ye know what he meant, boys?" said Donal, with a superior air; "he just meant as much as to say, 'don't shout till ye're out of the wood.'"

"But sure no one could be nicer to us than Mr. Howard, Donal."

"Devil thank him," rejoined Donal. "What did he do, Malachy? but speechify, and take the rent;

and didn't Father Pat tell us at the 'station' that your great Dan, as you call him, said speeching was all very well, but the verdict was *the* thing."

"Well?" said Malachy, enquiringly.

"Well," rejoined Donal, "that's just what Father Pat meant; just for all the world as to say; 'boys wait till ye know the verdict.'"

"Something like what ould Meehaul said to myself the other day," said Malachy, judging it impolitic to run counter to Donal. "But sure I think we're sure of him now, anyways."

"What did Meehaul say?" enquired Donal.

"'Malachy,' he says to me, 'how do ye like the new agent'? Father Tom speaks well of him, says I. 'I wouldn't mind that,' says ould Meehaul, 'Father Tom's too innocent; sure I saw meself in ould Norburry's time he was always expecting he'd improve; the ould villain used to be speechifying to him when they'd be out shooting.' 'But sure Norburry was no good shooting,' says I, knowing what'd please the ould man. 'Shooting,' says he, 'a fellow that the ladies said wasn't fit to shoot for monkeys.' Ye know the story about the monkeys, boys; but, as I was saying, I wonder would there be any chance of him getting back the land."

"Is there any chance of ye getting back Paudraic Brennan and the children, and old Murty Murphy, and Maire Marren, and all the others in the graveyard yonder?" asked Donal.

"Sure they're dead and buried ever so long, Donal," replied old Shemus.

"Well," said Donal, solemnly, "when ye're able to get them back, old Meehaul might have a chance of the land."

"Troth, then, 'tis a poor chance he stands so," said old Shemus; "but is this Mr. O'Halloran steaming up the road, boys?"

"Yes," responded Malachy, "and mighty excited he is; he's not safe, boys, when he's speeding along like that."

"Good day and good luck, Mr. O'Halloran," he said in his suavest tones as the man of learning came near.

"Good day, good day," echoed Mr. O'Halloran, who evidently was in one of his flightiest moods. "Why, good day?"

'What hath this day deserved? What hath it done,
That it in golden letters should be set
Among the high tides in the calendar?'

and the old man passed on his way.

"He's in one of his tantrums," explained old Malachy.

"Tantrums, or no tantrums," said Donal, "I think, boys, *he's supplied the verdict.*"

CHAPTER X.

REMOVING THE "INTERDICTION."

FATHER TOM was elated ; his hopes had been realised ; the new agent was all that could be desired—in every sense a worthy successor of Mr. Herbert—the tenantry were now secure ; and as the good soggarth and Hugh O'Donnell walked to the priest's house, Hugh felt that the time was opportune for getting the soft side of Father Tom on the "interdiction" question. He had previously laid the burden of his hopes at the old man's feet, and the good soggarth was kindness personified ; but inflexible on the subject :—Nora was to remain with him till after the Christmas.

But now that he seemed to be overburdened with joy—bubbling over, as it were, with good nature, Hugh, with a shrewdness that did him credit, saw that Mrs. Dillon's "psychological moment" had come ; that a generous lather of her "specific" would have the desired effect. He had listened with a patience sublime to Father Tom's eulogy of the new agent, and had heard for the twentieth time the old man express the joy that was his, when a happy thought struck him.

“Father Tom,” he enquired, as they approached the priest’s residence, “is it not customary for kings and princes, and all who hold sway, to signalize a joyous event by extending to their subjects certain favours which otherwise might not have been granted.”

“I believe so,” replied Father Tom. “I have, in fact, known them to liberate prisoners on such occasions.”

“Then,” said Hugh, smiling, “what appertains to kings and princes should hold good in most grades of society.”

“Well?” enquired Father Tom, somewhat mystified.

“Behold, then, Father Tom, a loyal subject of yours—anxious to afford you an opportunity of signalizing this auspicious occasion—would fain beg that you would grant him an inestimable boon, that you would remove the interdiction.”

“Ho! ho! my young kidnapper, so that’s how the wind blows,” laughed Father Tom as he entered his dwelling. “Why, Nora,” he went on, as he met her at the parlour door, “you’ve this young fellow’s head so turned that he has lost consciousness of who he is. He now imagines himself an outlawed chief, and craves the withdrawal of the exterminating decree.”

“What?” exclaimed Nora, somewhat startled, “what’s the matter, Hugh?”

“Father Tom is romancing, Nora.”

"Do you know what the young rascal is up to, now?" said Father Tom as they entered the parlour. "He seeks to take advantage of an old man who has seen his hopes realised, and who, according to Hugh, must pay for the pleasure. Yes, Nora, there is no denying I feel truly happy this moment. Mr. Howard has won all our hearts, and I'm not so very sure but that I shall relent. There was a diplomatist lost in you, Hugh."

"But what is it all about?" enquired Nora, who was at a loss to understand the somewhat Delphian utterances.

"Oh, the famous interdiction," replied Hugh. "Father Tom is consenting to our being married immediately."

"To-night, is it, Father Tom?" enquired Nora, innocently.

"Nora," said Father Tom smiling, "I think I must include you in the diplomatic service; but I suppose, I should, as Hugh says, signalize the auspicious occasion. Well, now, let me see. Nora," he broke off—"here's Father Pat," and Nora left the parlour, and shortly afterwards returned with the young soggarth.

"Glorious news! Father Pat, glorious news!" exclaimed Father Tom, "you'll be delighted to hear that Mr. Howard is very kindly disposed."

"So I understand," replied Father Pat; "I met the tenants returning from the Manor."

"He received them very graciously," said Father Tom,

"So I believe," rejoined Father Pat—"and the rents in full."

"Did you hear he gave time to old Monahan?" asked Father Tom, who was apparently anxious to place Mr. Howard's action in a favourable light before Father Pat.

"No," replied Father Pat, "but I'm truly glad the old man won't be molested, though I fear the poor fellow won't last long."

"Truly," said Father Tom, "the death of the old woman has shaken him completely. I sometimes fancy his intellect is growing weak."

"Little wonder," rejoined Father Pat; "it appals one to see the misery of the poor people, while it is edifying in the highest degree to witness their resignation in all their trials. Well, Hugh," he continued, anxious to change the subject, "what about the fatal plunge? Has my fair lady named the day yet?"

"Oh, that reminds me," said Father Tom, that Hugh is suffering from a fresh attack of—"

Mrs. Dillon's bustling in interrupted the discourse. Dermott had called to see Father Tom, and the old soggarth went out.

"Poetry!" said Father Pat. "So he has taken to the poets once more. You certainly have a great deal to account for, my good lady."

"Now, Father Pat, do be serious, or you'll have the poor boy sighing to be relieved from the dread responsibility," pleaded Nora.

"Eh? Hugh," enquired Father Pat, with a smile, "is that how matters stand now? Well, my poor fellow, I really don't see how you can be blamed. The responsibility is, no doubt, great; though, by the way, I had no notion Nora was such a refractory spirit."

"That's because you only see me at my best, Father Pat," laughed Nora. "We, ladies, have a happy knack of keeping the veneer well polished, so that to the casual observer it may appear the genuine article."

"So Hugh is no 'casual' observer, Nora."

"I should think so, Father Pat; the poetic instinct is strong in him, and he flatters himself that he can study nature in the rough."

"And would you oblige us with the result of your observations, Hugh?" said Father Pat assuming an air of seriousness. "As our friend, Mr. O'Halloran, would put it:—

'In Nature there's no blemish but the mind;
None shall be called deform'd but the unkind.
Virtue is beauty.'

Now, Nora, I think the poet acquits you. Come, Hugh, give us your impressions!"

"'And a thing of beauty is a joy for ever,'" said Hugh.

“Capital,” exclaimed Father Pat, “I think we have rubbed off the veneer, Nora, and found the genuine article notwithstanding—eh? Hugh.”

“Father Tom is removing the interdiction,” said Hugh, shifting the conversation to more prosaic grounds.

“Glorious!” exclaimed Father Pat; “congratulations, Hugh; and you, Nora, you have my sincerest sympathy”; this, with a smile; “but tell me, Hugh, what good angel pointed out the way?”

“Mrs. Dillon,” interposed Nora; “she has ‘knacks’ of her own, Father Pat. She married Barney because he let the tongs fall on her toes.”

“Capital,” exclaimed Father Pat, indulging in a merry laugh, “why, that completely o’ershadows Cupid’s bow. I recollect hearing the tongs called the ‘messenger of the hearth,’ but, after this, we’ll have to eject the final ‘h’.”

“And she uses the rolling-pin as an antidote to Shakespeare,” went on Nora.

“Poor Mr. O’Halloran!” laughed Father Pat, “when he is in his richest flow I have only to enquire for Mrs. Dillon, and he’s off like a March hare; but about the interdiction, Nora?”

“The ‘intervention,’ Mrs. Dillon calls it. Her prescription to Hugh was to use plenty of soft soap when he got Father Tom in good twist,” rejoined Nora!

“A diplomatist—every inch of her”—said Father

Pat; "and Hugh went at it with a vengeance. Well, that's one point scored by Mr. Howard; he has unconsciously been acting the good Samaritan in Hugh's case; and pray, when are we to have the joyous ceremony?"

"Let me see," said Father Tom, who had just re-entered. "We had better get it over before the Advent. What do you say, Hugh?"

"As Nora wishes, Father Tom," responded Hugh.

"If Father Pat could conveniently attend then," rejoined Nora, with an arch look.

"*Signed—sealed—and delivered,*" replied Father Pat.

"Then," said Father Tom, "you may fix the day when you will, Nora; but you must excuse me now. Dermott called over for me; his poor mother is worse to-day. I must go over to see her."

"Perhaps I would do," said Father Pat, wishful to relieve the old man.

"He said she was calling for me," rejoined Father Tom; "but I'd be glad you'd come with me. You might have some influence with her. Nora, Father Pat will dine with us; try and induce Hugh to wait"; and Father Tom left the room. "Mrs. Dillon," he said, as he met her in the hall, "put Father Pat's name in the pot."

"And Hugh's too," said Father Pat, allowing Father Tom to proceed. "Mrs. Dillon, you're a diplomatist to the finger-tips."

“The Lord save us, Father Pat,” exclaimed the old woman, blessing herself, “what’s that, Father?”

“A diplomatist, Mrs. Dillon, is one who is able to take advantage of the means at hand—a rolling-pin for instance.”

“Now, Father Pat, you’re humbugging me about Mr. O’Halloran; but sure I couldn’t put up with his gibberish.”

“And one who can remove an ‘intervention’ by prescribing ‘soft soap’”; and Hugh and Nora joining them, they all indulged in a hearty laugh.

“Ah, then, do you tell me Father Tom gave in at last?”

“How could he hold out, ma’am, when Hugh followed the prescription? but the essence of diplomacy, Mrs. Dillon, is to secure a husband through the falling of a tong.”

“Ah, Miss Nora, Miss Nora,” sighed Mrs. Dillon, covering her face with her apron, “you’ve ruined me for ever”; and Father Pat, hurrying away, shaking with laughter the while, soon overtook Father Tom.

After a brisk walk they arrived at the house of Mrs. Brennan, and found Dermott’s wife in sore distress. The old woman, while Dermott was away, had disappeared. Father Tom was sorely troubled, and having ascertained the direction Dermott had taken, he and Father Pat took a different course.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Brennan, who, with the cuteness of those mentally deranged, had quietly slipped out

of the house without attracting the young woman's attention, was following the bent of her thoughts. The Manor and Norbury were inseparably associated; and in the direction of the Manor she strayed.

Half way she encountered Mr. Howard, who was enjoying a walk, and who was not a little surprised to see the strange creature approaching. When she came within a few yards of him she stopped suddenly and viewed him from head to heel.

"Oh, *wirrastrue ! wirrastrue !*" she wailed, "why didn't you stay where you were?"

"My good woman," said Mr. Howard appeasingly, recognising that the woman was distraught, "there is nothing to fear."

"Nothing to fear—nothing to fear," she echoed, "from you. Ah! you were always a lying ould hypocrite."

Mr. Howard saw that his best plan was to humour her—and he felt a keen pity for her distress.

"No doubt," he said, quietly, "but I'm completely changed now."

"Then you won't mind Paudraic nursing the cut-way."

"Not in the slightest; shall be very glad if he does."

"Paudraic! Paudraic!" she cried, turning round, "he won't mind if you—where's Paudraic?"—and then as if recollecting herself, "ah! you murdering villain, why didn't you stay where your were?"

Mr. Howard was about proceeding on his way

when he observed the two priests approaching at a short distance. Mrs. Brennan saw them also, and running to them, clung to Father Tom with intense eagerness.

"Come on," she cried, "he's here below—the villain."

"Who?" questioned Father Pat.

"Norbury!" she whispered. "Look at him now," she cried, as Mr. Howard came up and exchanged salutations with the priests, "why didn't he stay where he was, the ould villain?"

Father Pat went quietly over to her and whispered something in her ear.

"God bless you, Father Pat!" she exclaimed vehemently. "God and his Blessed Mother bless you, *avourneen*. We can go on nursing the cut-away again"; and smiling pleasantly she proceeded in the direction of her home.

"How did you succeed in quieting her, Father McNulty?" asked Mr. Howard;—"she was terribly upset when she met me."

"She has a delusion that every stranger is a former agent—one Norbury,"—said Father Pat. "She thought you were he. I told her we had come to bury you again—and advised her to go home—that there was no other one to rock little Donal."

"And she has young children depending on her," said Mr. Howard.

"No!" rejoined Father Pat, "she rocks an empty cradle all day long."

"Has she been long afflicted?" enquired Mr. Howard.

"You haven't heard her story," said Father Pat.

"No! I've never met her till to-day."

"A truly sad tale," rejoined Father Pat,—and in feeling language he recounted the whole lamentable history from Norburry's revaluing to the time when the news of Mr. Herbert's death dethroned her reason.

"I presume she must have unwisely brooded over her sorrow," said Mr. Howard.

"Probably," acquiesced Father Pat; "it was her sole heritage."

"It struck me during your recital, Father McNulty, that you complained most of Mr. Norburry revaluing the land and assessing the rent in accordance with that valuation. Is not the proprietor of land entitled to raise the rent when the land becomes more productive?"

"Yes, I grant you, provided the proprietor is the improver," rejoined Father Pat; "but here, in Ireland, the increased value of land is due to the industry and skill of the occupier, and the landlord loses nothing by not sharing in what otherwise would not have existed. Take the case of Mrs. Brennan's cut-away. Its value was non-existent; at the expense of ten or twelve years' labour Paudraic created a value, and then your agent steps in and taxes his industry; robs him, so to speak, of the fruits of his labour."

"You claim, then, that nature has no tendency to

increase its productiveness ; that land has no inherent productiveness of its own," remarked Mr. Howard.

"I make no such claim," replied Father Pat; "though it must be admitted that the cut-away did not possess this inherent quality ; but I claim that it is the height of injustice to allow this gift of nature to be monopolised by individuals, and more especially when they object to share in the loss entailed when nature is unkind. The landocracy want both ends of the bargain: they carry on the game on the 'heads,' I win—'harps,' you lose principle,"

"I fear me, Father McDermott, that Father McNulty has some strange theories regarding the rights of property," said Mr. Howard, smiling.

"These are merely the side lights," responded Father Pat; "look at the question of eviction; the poor struggling tenants—often when nature has been unkind, often through mere vindictiveness on the part of the landlord or agent, often through the misrepresentations of the bailiff, often for clearance purposes, deprived by one fell blow of the benefit of their past exertions, to become, as Smith O'Brien, himself a landlord, recently remarked—*forlorn outcasts*. We have instances of all four on the estate."

"But sometimes the consolidation of farms improves an estate," said Mr. Howard.

"Yes," rejoined Father Pat, "and if I mistake not 'twas Sir Robert Peel who said that, giving notice to ninety or one hundred families to quit their

possessions, and then turning them loose upon the world, might be the means of insuring better management of gentlemen's estates, and might be true according to the principles of political economy; but it was not true, according to the dictates of moral principle and Christian duty, that the landlords were under no obligation to provide a settlement elsewhere for those whom they had driven from their homes, and thrust loose upon the world."

"But the land belongs to the landlord," pleaded Mr. Howard, "and may he not do with it as he wishes?"

"I had hoped," rejoined Father Pat, "that that absurd theory of immutable right had long since fled from the minds of thinking men,—a fallacious and untenable impression, gained from the traditions of ascendant power."

"Then you would have a fixity of tenure for the tenant," said Mr. Howard.

"Unquestionably," replied Father Pat. "I would plant him as securely in his cot as the landlord in his castle, provided he paid his rent—a seasonable value remember—and would establish right to undisturbed possession as sacred in the one case as in the other."

Dr. Mullaney rode up on his little grey mare and saluted the three respectfully.

"Father Pat," he exclaimed with affected pique, "I fear you are encroaching on my domain."

"How is that?" enquired Father Pat. "I wasn't

aware I had been responsible for sending anyone to the 'undiscovered country.'"

"He'll have his joke, Mr. Howard, come what will; but seriously, what miracle have you worked in Mrs. Brennan's case? I was sent for in haste, and to my surprise found her quite composed, rocking the cradle as usual; and Dermott said she told him that Father Pat sent her back to little Donal."

"She mistook me for old Norburry," said Mr. Howard, "and Father McNulty appeased her by saying he had come to bury me."

"Well! well!" exclaimed the doctor; "so there was no miracle after all. Little wonder the intelligence brought her joy."

"Was Norburry such a character?" asked Mr. Howard.

"Character?" echoed the Doctor—"the greatest rascal—"

"*De mortuis nil nisi bonum,*" interposed Father Tom.

"Then 'mum' is the word, Father Tom," said the merry Doctor putting his finger on his lips; "for I don't believe it possible to rake up a single good deed of his; there's an old saying 'give the devil his due,' so I think we'll leave old Norburry where he is."

"So you think each of us is entitled to his own," said Mr. Howard, evidently wishful to score a point against Father Pat.

"Oh, unquestionably!" replied the Doctor.

"And," went on Mr. Howard, "entitled to do what he likes with his own."

"I don't think so," said the Doctor, "and I'm sure you'd agree with me if you were in the coat of the barefooted boy who was driving the donkey."

"What donkey?" enquired Mr Howard.

"Oh," said the Doctor, "you never heard the story."

"No," said Mr. Howard; "where's the application?"

"Oh, bedad there was more than one application," said the merry Doctor. "A young chap was driving his donkey along and whacking him unmercifully. A clergyman who was passing remonstrated with him for his cruelty."

"'What is it to you?' said the unmannerly young scapegrace; 'can't I do what I like *with my own*?'"

"Whack—came the clergyman's stick across the boy's back,—whack—whack."

"'What are you doing that for?' yelled the young fellow, as he endeavoured to dodge the blows.

"'What is it to you?' said the clergyman,—whack—'can't I do what I like *with my own*?' Good day gentlemen"; and putting spurs to the little grey mare the merry doctor rode off.

Mr. Howard returned to the Manor, and the two soggarths retraced their steps towards Father Tom's.

"I sincerely trust Mr. Howard recognized you were merely indulging in generalities," said Father Tom.

"A sorry ending to my great parliamentary effort!" rejoined Father Pat.

CHAPTER XI.

SHAUN, THE BAILIFF.

“ ‘TIS yerself has the tasty place of it Mr. Hugh, and no mistake. You were always an illegant hand at the gardenin’. Why, man, that was a rale beauty in the summer. I used to stand here admirin’ it when I’d be passin’ ”; and Hugh O’Donnell, suspending for a moment his operation on a creeping rose, which he had been interlacing in a net-work specially designed to support it, on looking up—saw, with but ill-concealed displeasure, the admirer of his handiwork. Leisurely leaning on a small wooden gate, which opened on a flower garden in front of the cottage, was a wiry little man of about fifty summers, and of rather peculiar appearance. Short and thick-set he was, with a roundness of shoulders which, tending as it did to throw forward a close-cropped and rather massive head, lent him that expression of self-assertiveness which one instinctively associated with him. A pair of small, sunken eyes, one of which he invariably kept half closed, were almost concealed by large, shrubby eyebrows; while a nose—slightly flattened—had all the appearance of having been artificially set

between, and for none other than the express purpose of attesting how ill-assorted, betimes, are art and nature; and as he had acquired a habit of occasionally tapping it with the index finger of his left hand, the impression—that it was but a temporary structure—was strengthened; that it did the needful for the reality, and required this gentle reminder to ensure its retaining the position assigned it. His lips were thick and coarse, and he had a peculiar knack of puckering them; and it was observed that this “puckering process” was the grand-climax of his self-assertiveness; no one who valued his good will would dare to gainsay him, once the process had, as it were, clinched his argument or asseveration. He wore a swallow-tail frieze coat; waistcoat of the double-breasted style; baggy knee-breeches—open at the ends—and large ill-fitting buckled shoes. A pointed collar of huge dimensions was kept securely pinioned under his protruding chin, by a roll of black silk firmly knotted in front, and one end of which floated free; while crowning all was a three-quarter “caroline.” Such was the admirer of Hugh O’Donnell’s tasty place, and lest our readers should feel aggrieved, we introduce him:—*Shaun, the bailiff.*

His patronimic, no doubt, was Regan; but as his oldest acquaintances had never been known to call into requisition his Christian name, John, by those who wished to compliment him, as also by those who desired to show that they did not relish his society,

he was addressed as *Mister* Regan ; but spoken of in the abstract he was simply—Shaun, the bailiff.

But Shaun did not confine his talents to official duties in his bailiwick. He devoted no inconsiderable portion to “commercial enterprise”; was—in euphemistic language—the local banker—but to those who, eliminating figurative expressions, were content to use epithets unsuited, perhaps, to good manners and delicate ears, he was merely “*a blood-sucking ould gombeen man.*” And, vulgar as the expression may be, it just suited Shaun, as the saying goes, down to the ground ; a gombeen man—a blood-sucker pure and simple—he was ; and in Norburry’s days his animosity towards the tenants was inversely proportionate to the amount in which they were indebted to him. If a tenant owed Shaun a large amount there was always a chance of a collapse, and a reversal in favour of Shaun, and meanwhile the collection was good and the hospitality “big”—in fact he was never known to dine at home in those days ; while if the tenant, struggling and poor, preferred to still struggle without hanging a “millstone” round his neck, he had in Shaun a mortal foe, and it cost him very often far more, than “those who got the few pounds loan,” to keep the bailiff pacified ; so that, borrower or not, Shaun exercised the right of collection over all.

Little wonder, then, that Shaun was soon a man of money, and after the manner of his class, as miserly

as he was covetous, and as tyrannical as he was miserly. A sycophant to his superiors, a lying, scheming intermeddler, he was the bane and terror of the district, and one and all firmly believed that he possessed the "evil eye"; a conviction which circumstances seemed to justify, for it was a matter of notoriety that, during old Norburry's time, Shaun's expression of admiration of a "tasty place" was the death knell of the poor tenant's hopes—his eviction was a mere matter of time.

With Mr. Herbert came a change. Shaun was dislodged from his pedestal, and had since hobbled along, an evil-minded cantankerous old hypocrite, never happy but when he was, as old Nelly put it, "spitting venom, or sucking the life blood out of the poorest of the poor," who alone troubled him.

"Good evening, Mr. Regan," said Hugh, ignoring his appreciatory remarks, "are we to have a spell of good weather at last—or a fall of snow?"

"Now, Mr. Hugh, look you here!" and he gently tapped the structure, but it was evident Hugh did not consider the invitation had reference to that organ, for, though the invitation and the operation were repeated, Hugh paid more attention to the training of his rose bush; "is it not flying in the face of Providence to be ever and always complainin' of the weather?"

"Complaining!" said Hugh, "why, I merely made an enquiry."

“Well, now, Mr. Hugh, I always gave you credit for more *raison* than that—I did, upon me word—but I see you’re no better than another; why now, what’s an enquiry but a complaint?”

“An enquiry a complaint,” echoed Hugh.

“Yes, and I don’t go a dozen yards of the road without meetin’ with shoals of them. ‘Tell me, Mr. Regan, will the rents be reduced this saison? Do you think will Mr. Howard be *lainant* with us in our trouble? will the times ever mend?’ and so on, and so on; and you tell me, Mr. Hugh, you, that ought to know better—that that’s not complainin’. Reducin’ the rents; let them thank their stars if it isn’t risin’ them he’ll be; *lainant*! *lainant*, mind you, to an idle, lazy set; and the times mendin’, just as if the complainin’ lot oughtn’t to be ashamed of flyin’ in the face of Providence,” and the garrulous Shaun nodded his head approvingly, seemingly satisfied that he had reasoned out the matter in a manner which should have convinced the most sceptical.

“By the way,” enquired Hugh, anxious to shift Shaun’s thoughts to a less controversial matter, “how is the rheumatism?”

“The curse of Cromwell on the same rheumatism!” thundered Shaun, in direct contravention of his homilies—forgetful that he enjoyed no prescriptive right to “fly in the face of Providence”—“sure it bangs Banagher; the same rheumatism is making an ould man of me, Mr. Hugh.”

“Oh, nonsense,” said Hugh, quizzingly, “you’ll be making some of our young ladies happy one of these days.”

“There’s more married than’s doin’ well—married indeed—troth I’ve quite enough troubles as it is; but maybe yerself now, Mr. Hugh, isn’t doin’ all this titivatin’ for nothin’?”

“Now, Mr. Regan,” said Hugh, smiling, “would you wish me to get into troubles you yourself are so careful to avoid?”

“Well, then, to tell you the truth, I don’t like to see the tenants marryin’; there’s shockin’ expense in rearin’ up a family, and to be sure the tenants can’t afford that.”

“But they ought to be in a position that would allow of their affording it,” protested Hugh.

“That’s all very fine, Mr. Hugh, but his honour’s claim comes first; he’s the landlord, you know, and the tenants shouldn’t be bringin’ troubles on themselves and him. Now will you just look at young Brennan’s case. What raisin had he to get married?”

“I suppose he was fond of Maire,” replied Hugh.

“*Fond of Maire!*” and the old villain gave a contemptuous chuckle, “arn’t we gettin’ mighty lovin’ entirely—*fond*—now, don’t you think ’twould be fitter for him to have some regard for his ould mother.”

“Dermott is the best of sons,” said Hugh.

“Oh yes, the best of sons, bringin’ in a slip of a girl over the ould woman and turnin’ the poor thing crazy.”

“I thought that you, above all,” replied Hugh, somewhat testily—“should have no doubts as to what affected her mind.”

“And nayther have I, Mr. Hugh; but as I was sayin’, I don’t like to see the tenants marryin’, and what’s more—though I don’t know should I repate what I know—his honour’s agin it himself too.”

“Mr. Howard?” said Hugh—enquiringly.

“Ay! Mr. Hugh; agin it mortal bad; he doesn’t want no tenant marryin’ on his estate, and why should he? sure it’s on him every farthin’ iv the expense will come.”

“All moonshine,” said Hugh in a tone which seemed to alarm the bailiff.

“Aisy, now, Mr. Hugh,—them’s dangerous sentiments;—dangerous, beyond a doubt. If any of the tenants heard you—you, that should know better—you couldn’t know what mischief might come of it. Why, it might encourage them to hape up more expense on his honour.”

“Your logic is rather unsound, Mr. Regan,” said Hugh.

“There’s no logic about me at all man. I’m only thinkin’ of the expense, and whatever your logic manes doesn’t matter, the expense is the chief thing—the expense—and take the advice of a friend and one

who knows what he's sayin', don't fill the tenants' heads with dangerous sentiments."

"Humbug!" exclaimed Hugh, thoroughly disgusted with the old man's raving.

"Humbug," echoed Shaun, irritated beyond control ;—"look you here—Mr. Hugh—look you here,"—and the tapping process accompanying the invitation, Hugh burst forth into a fit of uncontrollable laughter which fairly exasperated the bailiff. "Oh! you may laugh now, but be me sowl you'll laugh less before you're much oulder. Go on,—go on with yer titivat-in',—with yer daisies and yer tay roses,—but maybe yer forgettin' the lase—me boyo—maybe yer forgettin' the lase?"

"The lease!" exclaimed Hugh, somewhat alarmed.

"Yes, me brave boyo—the lase,—maybe yer forgettin' it intirely. Ha," he continued, as he caught sight of a familiar figure coming down the road, "it's time for me to be goin',—but don't be forgettin' the lase,"—and indulging in his "grand climax"—the puckering process—the old villain hobbled on his way.

"The fellow is as sour as vinegar," said Hugh, turning his attention to the trailing of the rose bush ;—"a bitter customer when he's nettled."

"Good morning, Hugh! Is this to be the Paradise?" and Father Tom with a cheery smile stepped into the little garden. "Well—well—what a bother the ladies cause!"

“Good morning, Father Tom,” said Hugh, blushing. “I think you are rather hard on the ladies. I have, as you know, always taken an interest in the cultivation of flowers.”

“No doubt,” assented Father Tom, with a merry twinkle in his eye, as he laid down the fowling piece he carried, “but I think the net-work may conscientiously be put down to the lady’s account. By the way, you had the pleasure of Shaun’s society. What’s the latest?”

“Shaun is somewhat troubled about ‘his honour.’”

“Is he ill?” asked Father Tom anxiously.

“Oh, no. Shaun protests that tenants who have the hardihood to marry only heap on expense on his honour.”

“I was under the impression that your forthcoming marriage was a secret, Hugh.”

“Shaun was merely indulging in generalities, Father Tom,—but he takes the matter to heart grievously.”

“The old sycophant!” exclaimed Father Tom with scorn. “He’s a venomous old reptile. Mr. Herbert, may God be merciful to him, extracted the fangs, but Shaun was a very terror in old Norburry’s time;—but why bother about the old villain? Come, Hugh, get out the gun; we’re off to the moors.”

“Shaun is sore troubled,” said Father Tom as they walked along; “he’s like a fish out of water. He was

hoping we'd get another Norburry,—but now he's stranded for good."

"So you think Mr. Howard won't be influenced by his tales," said Hugh—evidently anxious about his reference to the lease.

"Not at all," said Father Tom;—"sure nobody could expect anything from Mr. Howard but what he's doing. By the way, Father Pat and himself had a discussion a few days ago, and I was afraid Father Pat would go too far. He's impulsive, you know."

"But straight as an arrow, Father Tom."

"Of course, of course," assented Father Tom, "but it is sometimes impolitic to—to——" and Father Tom was evidently at a loss to know how to define what he intended to convey. "It is not wise to seem to expect too much from persons like Mr. Howard. They resent anything like criticism."

"But Father Pat deals more with the system than the man, Father Tom," pleaded Hugh.

"True, but human nature is human nature, and Mr. Howard doesn't see things in the same light as we do."

"And won't," said Hugh, "unless he's educated, and Father Pat may be wishful to afford him an opportunity of studying the system from our standpoint."

"Yes," acquiesced Father Tom, "that would be desirable—in its way—but it is well to be careful—now that we know we can depend on him."

Hugh saw clearly that Father Tom had his fears, that Father Pat would, in what he termed his impulsiveness, fling prudence to the winds when it came to a question of saying what he felt—so he discreetly let the subject drop.

After a brisk walk they came within sight of the moors, when, in passing the ruins of a mill, they espied a man stealthily creeping along one of the standing gables.

“’Tis wonderful what affection people have for the old home,” said Father Tom. “I’m told Meehaul comes here every day to visit the ruins. Good morning, Meehaul,” he continued—halting and addressing the person who was vainly endeavouring to avoid attracting attention.

The old man turned, and, shading his eyes with his hand, peered at Father Tom and Hugh.

“Father Tom!” he exclaimed, coming forth from the ruins; “your reverence is heartily welcome,—and you, Mr. Hugh. Ye’re coming to the moors.”

“Yes,” said Hugh. “I believe you used to be a great shot yourself, Meehaul.”

“My shooting days are over, Mr. Hugh;—but there’s few of the young fellows going can handle a gun as I used. That’s a real beauty you have”; and the old man took the gun in his hands and, with the air of a connoisseur, examined it carefully.

“A sure killer, Mr. Hugh,” he said, fondling the gun,—“and true to a hair’s breadth.”

“Meehaul could judge a gun with the twirl of his eye, Hugh. Eh, Meehaul? Isn't that what Fitzmaurice said?”

“True for you, Father Tom; the first glance was enough for me. I wonder did Mr. Hugh ever hear how I won the monkey for the gentleman?”

“No,” replied Hugh.

“Ah, sure it's a long time ago. 'Twas shortly after ould Norburry came here, and of course we had to put up the guns. But one day a party of fowlers was passing by the ould mill here—I was living here then, you know—and they came in to see me working. One of them laid down his gun, and no more than your own, Mr. Hugh, 'twas a jewel entirely. I was scrutinising it when the gentleman said, ‘Norburry, I'll lay you a monkey the ould chap here wings more birds than you between this and evening?’”

“‘You wouldn't be alive without a bet, Fitzmaurice,’ said Norburry, ‘but if you value your monkey you'll not risk it.’”

“‘Cowed!’ shouted the gentleman. ‘I knew your tales were all moonshine. Clements,’ he says, turning to a young fellow, ‘don't forget to tell the ladies?’”

“‘Come!’ said Norburry—vexed like—‘I'll take that monkey from you’;—and faith, Mr. Hugh, before I knew rightly what I was doing, I was out on the moors,—and of course poor ould Norburry was no match for me—and the little jewel was a real High-

land Mary;—I had twelve brace before he had three, and the gentleman called Fitzmaurice was roaring laughing the whole time. I was mighty glad I won for him,—and small wonder, for he put a five pound note in my hand in the evening.”

“‘No, sir,’ said I, ‘I wasn’t doing it for pay,—but I’m mighty thankful to you all the same.’”

“‘I know that,’ said the gentleman. ‘I knew by the twirl of your eye, when I saw you examining the gun, that you could handle her; and Norburry had us annoyed bragging about what he could do. Besides,’ he said—‘I’ve won my bet—and you must have a share.’”

“‘Bedad, he’ll be a dear monkey that’ll cost you five pounds,’ and with that he roared till I thought he’d split his sides laughing.”

“‘And you thought ’twas two live monkeys was hanging in the balance the whole time,’ he said when he got the talk.’”

“‘Faith, a monkey you said, and no mistake,’ says myself—and he laughed as heartily as before.”

“‘Here, my good man—no denying it—that’s worth another fiver.’ And faith, willing or not, I’d to take the two.”

“But I paid dearly for my shooting afterwards;—the ladies got wind of the story; and one of them, in a pout, told Norburry he wasn’t fit to *shoot for monkeys*; and he never forgave me—and when the sickness came—out I had to go.”

“Maybe you’d try a shot with this one?” said Hugh, thinking it might please the old man,—“just to prove it.”

“Bedad,” said the old man, “’twill be like ould times to have a crack out of a jewel like that. Come, Father Tom, there’s plenty of game in the bottoms below”;—and shouldering the gun, the hoary old warrior went forth as if to battle. And history repeating itself, he bagged more birds than Father Tom, though Hugh had his suspicions as to why the good soggarth missed some rather easy shots.

“Thanks be to God!” said old Meehaul, when, after a few hours on the moors, Father Tom and Hugh were parting with him in his lowly cabin, “*I can die aisy now.*”

CHAPTER XII.

OMINOUS CLOUDS.

MR. HOWARD was hopelessly enthralled. The witching influence of Nora’s presence was more than mortal could withstand, and, ere he had fully realised the possibility of danger, his heart had bowed down to her magical gaze. The feeling which was aroused was of a peculiar nature; certainly not that pure and holy affection which Hugh

bore her ; it partook more of a vain desire of conquest. Mr. Howard was pre-eminently a vain man,—and it was solely for the purpose of indulging his vanity that he had first sought the society of Nora ;—flattering himself that the guileless heart of the inexperienced maiden would not long withstand his fancied charms. But he reckoned without his host. Nora's affection was not a marketable commodity, to be disposed of on the most advantageous terms,—nor was it to be bartered for wealth and station. There was but one avenue of approach,—and, long years since, Hugh had found the entrance, trod the mazy paths, and eventually won the rich reward ;—and Nora would ever remain faithful to her olden love. Two months had passed away, and though Mr. Howard had confidently expected that ere half that time would have elapsed, Nora would pine for his august presence, and her heart go pit-a-pat whenever he blessed her with it, she was still to all appearance unmoved ; in fact, unconscious of his feelings. True, she was invariably treated by him with attention, polite if not altogether marked ; but the artless maiden attributed it to his gentlemanly manners, and she was as self-possessed as ever. Mr. Howard was piqued. This rustic beauty, who strangely fascinated him, was insensible to his charms, and he determined that it should not be so ; nay, he even resolved that he should gain her affections at any cost, and his visits to the little cottage grew more frequent.

“Deucedly pretty,” soliloquised Mr. Howard as he left the Manor and sauntered in the direction of the cottage, “and haughty as a titled dame; ay! and by my faith, as well mannered. ’Tis wonderful that such a creature could be found in this outlandish part of the world. One would fancy she had spent the greater portion of her life in society (presumably with a big S), and she must be devilish proud too, for she’s as cold and reserved now as she was two months ago. Surely it cannot be that she has not suspected,—but what if she resents my attentions? ha! ha! a rich one that, no doubt,—resentment on the part of an Irish peasant girl,—the idea is delightful.”

“Good evenin’ to yer honour,” and Shaun the bailiff, holding his three-quarter “caroline” in one hand, tapped the structure with the other; beaming graciously the while.

“Well, Shaun,” said Mr. Howard, “where the deuce are you off to now—and in such weather. I thought the rheumatism had by this time made a martyr of you.”

“Humberging becomes yer honour, no doubt,” replied Shaun; “but bad and all as I am I must be about, and I’ve me own doubts that it’s not the rheumatics that’ll make a martyr of me. There’s dangerous sentiments goin’ round, yer honour; dangerous sentiments”; and the sly old fox looked cautiously around as if to impress Mr. Howard with the gravity of the case.

“Dangerous sentiments”; echoed Mr. Howard. “what the deuce do you mean? Is it another mare’s nest like the Cassidy conspiracy?”

“The Cassidys aren’t so safe as you think, yer honour; one of them refused to do duty work no later than yesterday; he didn’t do any this ever so long, he said—Herbert ruined the estate, yer honour, and spoiled the tenants,—every mother’s son of them.”

“Yes, but the conspiracy you warned me about was but a mare’s nest, notwithstanding. What about the dangerous sentiments?”

“Would you believe there’s a conspiracy to beggar the estate,—ay! to beggar the estate on yer honour?”

“Beggar your old bones, Shaun; how could they beggar the estate?”

“There you go, yer honour, there you go,—you’re too confidin’ entirely, yer honour. Oh, if we only had Mr. Norburry to dale with them, it’s short work he’d make of them, and no mistake.”

“No doubt, but how can they beggar the estate?”

“By marryin’, yer honour.”

“By marrying me, Shaun. Why, who had the impertinence to speak of having me married?” and there was an uncanny look in his deep, black eyes.

“Marryin’ themselves, yer honour, marryin’ themselves,—rarin’ up families, and beggarin’ yer hononr,—beggarin’ you, beyond a doubt.”

“Oh,” said Mr. Howard, with a smile, “that’s not quite so bad as I feared. The prospect of having to

combat a conspiracy to have me married, whether I would or no, was not inviting. I thought you told me there was a rule on the estate prohibiting the tenants marrying without the consent of the landlord."

"There you are, yer honour; didn't I tell yer honour Herbert ruined the estate, and spoiled the tenants. Mr. Norburry was the boy that insisted on the rules been carried out; there was comfort in workin' under him."

"Oh don't worry, Shaun, I shall know how to deal with them. Old Norburry may have been a genius in his way, but you'll find I can nip a conspiracy in the bud equally well"; and, so saying, his honour, apparently thoroughly satisfied at his self-laudation, went on his way.

"More power to yer elbow, yer honour. I knew all along the spirit was in you," chuckled Shaun as he hobbled along; "*maybe with the blessin' of God, the good ould times are coming back agin,—and then Shaun won't be—nobody.*"

He had not, however, proceeded far when he was disillusioned. Old Mrs. Brennan, from her seat by the cradle, saw Shaun coming up the road. Without attracting attention she quietly went forth, awaited the bailiff, and flew at him in a rage. His screams attracted Dermott's attention, and he was just in time to save Shaun from a severe mauling,—but his "caroline" was bruised and battered,—and his silk

necktie—literally in shreds,—and with a volley of oaths, he retraced his steps.

Mr. Howard was relieved. He had half feared that Shaun's mystic tale of a conspiracy to beggar the estate had reference to his little romance, and though he had left the Manor with the express purpose of paying a visit to the cottage, from feelings the reverse of unfriendly, he should have resented it in indignant terms, were anyone to suggest such a proceeding on his part. He felt, no doubt, some peculiar sensation; one which he fancied might be love; but he would have considered it highly impertinent for anyone to connect his name with that of an Irish peasant; sufficient warranty that the tender passion had never been enkindled in his heart.

"Shaun, poor devil, seems to think the fate of the estate depends on his action as bailiff; well, if harassing the tenants saves it there is no danger of my undoing. He seems to take a special delight in unearthing conspiracies; but the fellow is useful."

He had reached the gate at the entrance to Father Tom's cottage, and looking in the direction of the house, the sight which met his gaze was truly a fitting subject for the skill of the artist. The weather had been rather severe for some few days, and deep snow covered the ground. Father Tom's cottage with its whitened roof, its coating of ivy, and its background of beechen boughs, seemed a very paradise on earth, and Nora,

seated on the window sill engaged in distributing crumbs of bread to a flock of birds, looked the picture of perfect happiness.

“Ever at some deed of mercy, Miss O’Rorke,” said Mr. Howard with his sweetest smile, as he approached, causing the birds to seek safety in instant flight. “I must apologise for interrupting your good work. Is Father McDermott at home?”

“No, Mr. Howard; he left sometime since telling me that he intended visiting old Darby Monahan, who is in very indifferent health lately,—and very—very poor, Mr. Howard”; and there was a beseeching look in the tender eyes of the maiden as she suggestively referred to the poverty of the old man.

“Very, very poor,” echoed Mr. Howard, with apparent surprise, “and a tenant of mine, most likely.”

“Oh, yes,” she replied, “and I think—but perhaps you might misinterpret my——”

“You hardly do me justice, Miss O’Rorke,” interposed Mr. Howard, “I should, indeed, be sorry to misinterpret anything you say or do.”

“Thank you, Mr. Howard. I think the fact of his being a tenant of yours is mainly responsible for his present desolate condition.”

“What?” exclaimed Mr. Howard with a trace of annoyance in his tone, “do you seriously mean to convey that——”

“You must not misunderstand me, Mr. Howard;

you may be wholly ignorant of the circumstances. The poor old fellow's wife died a few months since, and what with his misfortune—she was ailing for the greater part of a year—and the bad season, he was unable to pay his rent last gale day."

"But there is no need of his worrying over the matter," rejoined Mr. Howard.

"No need of his worrying," said Nora, "when Shaun the bailiff, taking advantage of an old rule on the estate, which Mr. Herbert had allowed to fall into disuse, is threatening to distrain the crops on his little patch of ground and leave him dependent on the charity of the neighbours."

"Can it be possible?" questioned Mr. Howard, apparently feeling ashamed that such a state of things could exist on his estate.

"If you investigate the matter, Mr. Howard, you will find that I am not exaggerating."

"Your word is sufficient guarantee, Miss O'Rorke, I shall see that Shaun, who, by the way, is, I think, over anxious about my interests, does not molest the old man."

"Oh, thank you ever so much, Mr. Howard. I am very, very grateful. But perhaps you wish to see Father Tom before you leave. There is a fire in the parlour, and Mrs. Dillon will make you quite comfortable."

"With your kind permission, Miss O'Rorke, I much prefer remaining here."

“But you seemed to regret disturbing the birds, and you will be more comfortable indoors.”

“I feel grateful, Miss O’Rorke, but you will excuse my remaining as—I—I was going to say, feel happy; but I must acknowledge that this cold reserve on your part does not tend to promote my happiness.”

“*Your happiness?*” questioned Nora, with a startled look.

“Yes, Miss O’Rorke; you surely cannot have misunderstood my—”

“Mr. Howard,” said Nora—a strange light in her dark eyes—“I know not whether you are serious or not, but my duty to my affianced husband must be my apology for my apparent discourtesy”; and the next moment she had disappeared within the cottage.

Mr. Howard was no fool. Vain he was, without question, but his common sense precluded him from deluding himself with doubts as to the sincerity of Miss O’Rorke’s feelings, and as he retraced his steps down the avenue he was in anything but a pleasant mood.

“Engaged,” he exclaimed, “ha! ha! ’tis deucedly novel, no doubt; engaged—most likely to some dolt who ekes out a miserable existence on a patch of bog; ha! ha! how romantic.”

He paused in his walk, meditatively gazed on the snow-mantled ground for a moment, and then as if inspired with an idea which brought him pleasure, indulged in a hearty laugh.

“Laughin’ becomes yer honour, but poor ould Shaun must bear all the hard knocks,” and our old friend, the bailiff, who had come up unobserved, bore unmistakable evidence of his recent adventure.

“What the deuce have you been up to, now?” enquired Mr. Howard, somewhat angrily.

“Oh! there you are, yer honour. It’s little you know what I’ve to put up with. Nothin’ but badgerin’ for poor ould Shaun.”

“The Cassidys?” said Mr. Howard, who was fain to laugh at the bailiff’s woe-begone expression.

“Worse, yer honour, worse. But sure that’s what comes of bein’ too laniant with them. They’ll be content when they’ve done for poor ould Shaun.”

“Drinking again, Shaun?”

“Oh! yes! poor ould Shaun gets all the badgerin’. But would you believe, yer honour, that I’m nearly murdthered bekase I stood up for yer honour?”

“Stood up for me, Shaun? Why, who had the impertinence to speak disrespectfully of me?”

“Didn’t I tell yer honour you were too confidin’ entirely; disrespectful, you say; oh! that’d be only child’s play, yer honour; but of all the langwidge ever I heard, it bet it out, yer honour, bet it out.”

“Who?” thundered Mr. Howard.

“Who, then, but the Brennans, yer honour; they think bekase yer honour is middlin’ great-like at Father Tom’s that they can do just what they like—

and the worst word in their mouth is good enough for the two iv us."

"Are those the Brennans where the old woman is mentally deranged?"

"All a thrick, yer honour; all a thrick;—thinkin' to get some softness from yer honour."

"Father McNulty told me she is a bad case."

"Father Pat, is it?" said Shaun. "Didn't I tell yer honour you were too confidin' entirely."

"But what did they do to you?" asked Mr. Howard.

"Can't yer honour see what they done to me. Amn't I a cripple for life after them—and all bekase I stood up for yer honour."

"But what did they say?"

"Now, yer honour, do you think I've any respect for you at all—at all—*that I'd repate what they said.*"

"A rum country," said Mr. Howard.

"And I wouldn't mind the kickin' one bit, yer honour—but what's troublin' me entirely, is how they're humbuggin' yer honour, humbuggin' yer honour—up to yer face."

"Humbugging me, Shaun? By gad, they make a great mistake if they think they can humbug me."

"They're mighty cute, yer honour, mighty cute. Didn't I tell you before that Herbert spoiled them, and they're buildin' on keepin' you to Herbert's ways."

“Building — on — keeping — me — to — Herbert’s ways,” repeated Mr. Howard, astonished.

“Yes, yer honour—buildin’ on keepin’ you to Herbert’s ways,—and hintin’ that—if you don’t—Father Pat’ll — but I won’t tell yer honour—I won’t tell yer honour.”

“By gad, I really am beginning to think they must have been spoiled. But don’t worry, Shaun. Keep up your heart. They’ve a tough customer to deal with.”

“But sure poor ould Shaun can’t last much longer if they’re let go on with their murdherin’.”

“I’ll see they show you proper respect, Shaun.”

“Now, yer honour—*yev struck it right*. There’s where they stand—Shaun, they think is *nobody*—and badgerin’ and murdherin’ is too good for him.”

“I’ll soon change all that, Shaun.”

“Then, do you know, yer honour, I’d bear bein’ murdhered agin for that. There nivir was luck nor grace since Herbert came—but yer honour’ll want to be on yer guard—they’re cute, yer honour—mighty cute,” and nodding suggestively, the old villain went his way.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Howard. “Shaun is probably right. Herbert spoiled the tenants—but the damn cheek of the thing—building on keeping me to Herbert’s ways. Well! the game is not yet played, and mayhap ’twill have a different ending to what they anticipate.”

“Soliloquising?” questioned Father Tom, who at a bend in the road encountered Mr. Howard, “have you taken to the poets?”

“Some lines of Virgil I was trying to recall,” answered Mr. Howard, confusedly.

“Perhaps I could assist you,” Father Tom ventured to remark.

“Oh, ’tis of no consequence, Father McDermott. Heavy fall of snow.”

“Yes, and it has brought its own discomfort to the poor. By the way, I am glad I met you. I was shocked to learn that Shaun the bailiff has threatened to seize the crops of poor Monahan, who, you will recollect, was allowed time by yourself on last gale day.”

“Monahan has, I understand, given a large amount of trouble on the estate,” remarked Mr. Howard.

“Trouble,” repeated Father Tom, “that’s most likely one of Shaun’s venomous shafts.”

“Really, Father McDermott, I have seriously begun to incline to the belief that Shaun’s methods are the only feasible ones for dealing with refractory tenants.”

“Refractory?” echoed Father Tom, “you surely do not mean to convey ——”

“You’ll excuse me, Father McDermott, but I have no desire to discuss the point. Good day”; and, with a rudeness which appalled the kindly soggarth, Mr. Howard passed on his way.

"*Poisoned!*" exclaimed Father Tom, "*poisoned. Shaun's venomous shafts have gone home. May God help my poor people.*"

Mr. Howard, after a brisk walk, had so far cooled down that he felt somewhat his own self, when he saw Father Pat emerging from a small mud-cabin by the roadside.

"Good day, Father McNulty," he said; "is this weather an index of what we're to expect later on?"

"Good morning, Mr. Howard. Oh, this is quite seasonable weather. We welcome a fall of snow in this country; it seems to do good. The old people will tell you that a winter without snow betokens a wet summer and a poor harvest; and in a purely agricultural country like this, that spells disaster. An old saying has it that 'a green Christmas makes a fat churchyard.'"

"A strange country, surely," rejoined Mr. Howard. "You have strange customs—strange likings—and, I think, strange notions. One would imagine that people who profess to be poor should rather complain of such severe weather."

"They accept discomfort with a smile," said Father Pat, "so long as there is hope beyond."

"They seem to live on hope in this country," replied Mr. Howard.

"It certainly forms no inconsiderable portion of their support," rejoined Father Pat, "and it seems providential that they have even *that* to rely on."

“That reminds me,” said Mr. Howard, “that during our recent discussion you advocated, I think, a fixity of tenure.”

“Yes,” said Father Pat, “and a recent experience but strengthens my views on that matter.”

“How is that?” questioned Mr. Howard.

“I am just after attending one of the clearance victims—old Mrs. O’Doherty inside,”—and Father Pat pointed to the cabin he had just left. “Her husband, old Phelim O’Doherty, rented a good farm on the border of the Manor. Norburry wished to extend the demesne, and cleared him out. He got that little patch of bog behind the house.”

“But your grievance, Father McNulty, and if I recollect aright, that of Sir Robert Peel, whom you so eloquently quote, was that the landlords, who, for the better management of their estates, effected clearances, made no provision for a settlement elsewhere for those whom they deemed it necessary to dislodge; and still Norburry seems to have done that in O’Doherty’s case.”

“A literal interpretation of one’s utterances occasionally falls short of their aim and object, Mr. Howard. Would you hold that a landlord, who, as you say, deemed it necessary to dislodge a tenant, had complied with Sir Robert Peel’s claim for a settlement elsewhere, if he had cast the unfortunate tenant into a deep lake,—*settled* him there, so to speak,—to die of drowning?”

“Oh, that’s merely the *reductio ad absurdum* argument, Father McNulty.”

“Well,” rejoined Father Pat, solemnly, “I see but little difference between my illustration, and the crime—as I must call it—of casting out a tenant, and then settling him in a place like *that*,——” and he pointed to the barren tract of bog,—“*to die of want*; in the first case his sorrows are soon over—while in the other his is one long, lingering torture.”

“But they don’t die of want,” pleaded Mr. Howard; “you, yourself, say they subsist on the hope beyond.”

“But there is a limit to such subsistence,” said Father Pat with a trace of annoyance, “and poor Mrs. O’Doherty has just reached it; no literal-interpretation quibbles are of any avail in her case.”

“Perhaps it has been more the fault of her husband than that of Norburry,” persisted Mr. Howard.

“Possibly,” rejoined Father Pat; “somehow the men don’t bear the hardships and the heart-wringings so well as the women. Norburry provided another ‘settlement’ for him long since,—*he tenants the graveyard yonder*”;—and bidding Mr. Howard, good day, he went on his way.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LOCAL PARLIAMENT.

“**T**HERE is no use denying it, boys!” said old Malachy, and the despondent tone of his voice betrayed the fact that it was with reluctance the admission was made, “Father Pat was right—O’Connell’s day is done; and to think, boys, of the big hope that was in all our hearts that we’d see the Ould House opened before we die”; and the old historian, from his seat near the glowing fire in Donal O’Loughlin’s forge, scanned the ruddy faces of his auditors—who listened to his remarks with an attention which bespoke a fitting reverence for his scholarly attainments.

“And what about the big meeting they had at Tara?” enquired Donal. “I thought you were telling us then that the day couldn’t be far distant.”

“Yes; so we thought”; and there was decided emphasis on the *we*—“but, you see, in politics things go contrary.”

“Oh, the devil a doubt of that,” remarked the blacksmith with a merry laugh; “ne’er a truer word ever you spoke, Malachy.”

“I had great hopes myself, Shemus,” continued Malachy, overlooking the blacksmith’s remarks, “but

you see the Young Bloods are getting tired of demonstrating. I think myself they expected Dan would have shown he was made of better stuff."

"I suppose there's a good deal to be said on both sides," said the level-headed blacksmith, as he finished the horseshoe on which he was working; "so the Young Bloods are growing tired of demonstrating, Malachy."

"So the paper says," rejoined Malachy; "they blame him for the Clontarf Proclamation; he was playing into the hands of the Government, they say."

"And still the Government's prosecuting him," said the blacksmith, who, though evidently having leanings towards the Young Bloods, was wishful to give each man his due.

"So they say; the *Nation* I got from Father Pat says there's more than himself to be prosecuted," said old Malachy.

"Troth, then, if they jail Dan," put in old Shemus, "there'll be a poor chance of the Repeal—and we were all hoping that some good would come to us."

"Haven't ye got the new agent," remarked Donal with a smile, "and aren't ye expecting great things from him, Malachy?"

"I think Donal," said Malachy solemnly, "you're not keeping to the facts. I gave my advice. What did I tell ye at the funeral? Come Donal, answer me that!"

"Bedad," said the blacksmith, smiling, "you're

giving me a load of a job, Malachy. I'd sooner face a whole plough than have to rehearse all you said," and the merry knight of the anvil laughed heartily at his sally. "You know I'm a poor hand at the speaking."

"Well," said Malachy, overlooking the sally—"I gave my advice. What does Father Pat do if he wants to know if there's a storm coming?"

"I suppose he looks out for the curlews, Malachy," said old Shemus, who, by the way, was no mean weather-prophet, and who had implicit faith in the curlews as harbingers of meteorological disturbances.

"Well, Shemus, I'll not disparge the curlews, but do ye know what a weather glass is, boys? Well, Father Pat has a big one in the hall. One time it jumps up for 'fair,' then shifts for 'change,' and again drops down for 'stormy.' Well, boys, Father Pat keeps his eye on it, and so he knows what kind of weather to expect. Now, boys, what advice did I give ye? Didn't I tell ye to keep yer eyes on Shaun? he's our weather glass, boys, and how is he doing?"

"Oh, the devil a worse," responded the blacksmith as he blew a shower of sparks over the multitude, "the devil a worse, Malachy. Didn't the ould scoundrel notice my uncle, Darby Monahan, that he'd seize the little crops on him; a shimideen of oats I think is all he has in the world."

"Like master, like man," rejoined Malachy with

the air of an oracle, "and it doesn't want much learning to know how the new agent will be acting."

"God help us," exclaimed old Shemus, "if the ould times come back again."

"I don't rightly know what to say, Shemus, but if all my father, God rest his soul, used to say, was true, it was against flesh and blood to stand it," said the blacksmith.

"But what could be done, Donal? complain is it? well that would only bring the house down on your head, my lad; and then dying in the ditch."

"And sure a fellow would be as well off dead as alive, if he'd to put up with all they say."

"But the children, Donal, the children?"

"Yes," said the blacksmith, reflectively, "there's the children to look to, surely. Good night, Dermott," he broke off as young Brennan entered the forge carrying an old gun, "how is the mother these days?"

"Keeping just the same way, Donal, and as quiet as a child as long as she's not disturbed. Do you know, Donal, there's plenty of duck down in the bottoms now, and I was thinking you'd have a look at the old fowling piece to see if you could rise a hand over it."

"And welcome, Dermott, if I can do anything with it; but sure worse than fail we cannot; but do ye know what I was going to say, boys?" he continued, turning to the assembled throng, "I sometimes think

Father Pat expects we ought to make some attempt to shake off our slavery."

"Talk of the angels and you'll hear the flutter of their wings," said Malachy, as a horseman rode up to the forge, and dismounting, entered. "You're welcome, your reverence. Dermott, will you go and hold the little mare for his reverence?"

"Why, Malachy," said Father Pat, "is it here you hold your Parliament? Donal," he continued, "will you kindly tighten the shoes on the mare, I'll want her in the morning;—we haven't the stations finished yet."

"All right, your reverence. Bring her in, Dermott. I'll have her ready in a jiffy, your reverence."

"Thanks, Donal, you're too good; and now, Malachy," he continued, turning to where the old patriarch stood—having risen on Father Pat's advent—"what is the Parliament discussing?—the Great Dan—or the coming Repeal."

"Well, your reverence," responded Malachy, wishful not to disabuse the good soggarth of his conjecture as to the scope and importance of their deliberations, "we were on the Repeal question, but somehow the discussion turned on the new agent."

"A sorry subject for expending your oratorical powers on, Malachy," said Father Pat with a smile.

"What does your reverence think of him?" asked Shemus.

"That's scarcely a fair question, Shemus; we have

nothing tangible to go on yet; and we must be charitable in our thoughts as in our actions."

"I'm afraid, Father Pat," put in the blacksmith, "that the charity will be all on one side."

"And I'm afraid you're a bit of a radical, Donal," said the young soggarth with a smile. "I often wonder Shaun the bailiff doesn't report you as a conspirator."

"Oh, hang Shaun!" cried the blacksmith, impatiently.

"I don't think the Parliament has that power; eh, Malachy?" enquired Father Pat with a merry laugh.

"What power? your reverence," asked Malachy, failing to grasp the witticism of the priest.

"To summarily convict and execute Shaun," replied Father Pat with affected seriousness.

"Oh I didn't mean that," laughed the blacksmith; "though, begging your reverence's pardon, I'd be none sorry to see the ould viper slung up. Oh, no, your reverence, I meant Shaun wasn't worth talking about."

"He wouldn't be complimented if he heard you, Donal."

"'Twouldn't keep me from sleeping, your reverence," answered Donal. "Now, my little beauty," clapping the mare on the back, "you're as fit as a fiddle. But, Father Pat," he continued, "do you think is there anything we could do?"

"How?" enquired Father Pat.

“Well, your reverence, I was just saying to the boys here before you came that I thought if you had your own way, and the help, you’d see that we got justice anyway.”

“If I had my own way, Donal, I’d pack the whole infamous system, bag and baggage, out of the country. Yes, Donal, if I had the help—the necessary help—I’d drive the vipers, as you call them, from out the land.”

“Now, boys,” said Donal, “who was right? Father Pat,” he continued, “why don’t you trust us? why don’t you show us the way? only show us the way. Father Tom, God bless him, is our true friend, no doubt; but some of us think he’s too easy going, your reverence.”

“Donal,” said Father Pat, impressively, “you’re a young firebrand, but you mean well, no doubt. Now don’t misunderstand me, boys,” he continued, turning to the younger portion of his audience, “I said that, given the means, I’d pack the infamous system out of the country. And right gladly would I; but, unfortunately the means are not at hand. The powers that be lend all their aid to the landocracy; the law is with the mighty, and to use a homely phrase, boys, ’twould be like running your heads against a stone wall to even pretend you were other than slaves. You have—you must recollect—no rights or titles from a legal standpoint, and the arm of the law is strong. No, Donal, any man who has any knowledge

of the circumstances surrounding the unfortunate tenants-at-will in Ireland could not, at present think of recommending any policy but one of a conciliatory tendency; to endeavour, in a word, to lessen the hardships which the poor struggling tenants have to bear; and take my advice, Donal, be guided by your Pastor. Father Tom has experience. Father Tom knows what he's doing; sentiment is of little avail in such a crisis. He has the interest of all of you—and what is not less important—the interest of your children at heart; and his would be a heavy responsibility, and yours a rude awakening, if he recommended any course but the one he has already outlined for you; and with God's blessing, boys, things may not be so bad as we fear. There is no night but hath its morn. Good night, boys."

"Good night, Father, and God bless you," was echoed by all.

"Yes!" said Donal, reflectively, "Father Pat is right again, Malachy; though I fear the morn is far off. Come, Dermott, show me the ould gun. Here, Cormac," he continued, as he took the fowling piece from Dermott, "blow us up a good blaze till we see if there's any chance of getting her into firing order."

"Yes," said Malachy, "I think we'll have to be said by Father Pat. His plan is the best, and I'm thinking;" but he stopped short—thunderstruck.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we could make this do all right, Dermott," said Donal, who was critically

examining the gun by the light of the fire ; “ there’s a shot in her yet ” ; but, noticing the silence that prevailed, he looked up, and there, framed in the doorway, he saw Shaun, the bailiff.

“ Good night, boys, good night. I think we’re in for another fall of snow,” and the old villain scanned the faces of the assembled throng.

Donal hastily laid aside the gun, and the most of the young fellows recollected that it was time to be heading for home.

“ Wild night for you to be out, Mr. Regan,” said Malachy, after a pause.

“ And what about yerself, Malachy ? ” enquired the bailiff with an ill-disguised sneer ; “ it’s surely not young yer gettin’ ; nor, be the same tokens, Shemus here aither.”

“ Oh we must be getting the work done, Mr. Regan,” said old Shemus, half apologetically.

“ Yes,” sneered the bailiff, “ ‘ gettin’ the work done’ —gettin’ things in order—ha ! ha ! ” and the old villain laughed sardonically—“ carryin’ out the plan, Shemus—carryin’ out the plan. Take care, Shemus, you’re not led into dangerous sentiments,” and the old man shrugged his shoulders. “ When will I be bringin’ over the ould jennet, Donal ? ” he asked with a leer.

“ The jennet ! Mr. Regan,” said the blacksmith, stopping short in his work, at which he had been industriously engaged since the bailiff’s advent ; “ the

jennet, is it? So you're leaving Dempsey, Mr. Regan; wasn't he pleasing you?"

"Oh, Dempsey's all right," said Shaun, "but maybe you haven't much time now, Donal, seein' as the boys must be gettin' the work done, gettin' things in order, Donal."

"Oh the devil a much push on me," said Donal.

"No, Donal, ye can take yer own time with the business," and the crafty old sinner indulged in a chuckle. "But the jennet, Donal, he won't be lame for a month like the last time you shod him."

"The last time, Mr. Regan," said Donal innocently, "troth I think I did that job badly; but I was young at the business, then, Mr. Regan."

"Yes," said Shaun with the old sneer, "and I was—*nobody*; but, no matter, you're cliver enough now—at other things, Donal—but, take care, Donal, take care are you puttin' yer head in a noose?"

"Putting my head in a noose? now, you're trying on the humbugging, Mr. Regan."

"Humbugging!" echoed Shaun. "I wonder was it humbuggin' had the crowd of young fellows here?" and the bailiff screwed his mouth into as ludicrous a position as it was possible for any mouth to assume; "was it humbuggin' you were when you said there's a shot in her yet? eh, Donal? and was it humbuggin' Father Pat was *when he was layin' down the plan*?"

"Father Pat," echoed Donal, and there was a peculiar light in his eyes, "what are you drawing

down his reverence's name for? For three farthings I'd duck you in the horse pond outside."

"Aisy, now, Donal, aisy, me boyo, what was he doin'?"

"Go and ask him," snapped back the now exasperated Donal, "and he'll give you your answer."

"Aren't we gettin' mighty independent, Donal; no, I won't go and ask him; but maybe I can guess purty well. Mind yerself, Donal, mind yerself, me boyo, there's dangerous sentiments goin'. And I don't think I'll be troublin' you with the ould jennet after all, I'll be bringin' him to—"

"The devil if you like," said Donal, losing control of himself, "and if you ride him you'll be there the sooner."

"Go on, Donal, go on, me boyo, yer doin' grand; tightenin' the noose me boyo, tightenin' the noose; but don't be blamin' Shaun if Father Pat's plan doesn't work out"; and the old villain hobbled off, leaving the blacksmith in a "white heat."

"Malachy," said Donal, when he had cooled somewhat, "*the weather glass is dropping down to stormy.*"

"A bad outlook, Donal, a bad outlook," replied the old historian.

"Worse than the curlews, Shemus," laughed the merry blacksmith.

"God forgive you, Donal," said Shemus, "to be comparing the innocent cratures to the ould haythen."

“I thought you knew Shaun better, Donal,” said Malachy.

“To the devil with himself and his ould jennet,” said the blacksmith angrily; “where was he drawing down his reverence’s name? Sorry I am I didn’t duck him in the pond outside, the ould hypocrite. He didn’t forget the last shoeing I did for him,” and the blacksmith indulged in a hearty laugh; “no, and he never darkened the door since, and it’s little sorry I’d be if I never saw the ould villain, and have the eyesight. What was Father Pat doing? Now, Malachy, could flesh and blood stand that?”

“Flesh and blood has to stand a lot, Donal; but, do you know what I was thinking, Donal? Don’t be doing anything with the ould gun; Shaun saw it, and Dermott will only be getting into trouble over it.”

“All right, Malachy, all right; are ye going so soon?”

“It’s time to be making the road short, Donal; come Shemus! Good night, Donal!”

“Good night, Malachy; good night, Shemus; safe home”; and the session having ended, the Parliament was prorogued.

CHAPTER XIV.

"ARCADES AMBO."

MR. HOWARD was in anything but an agreeable mood, and strange to say, his disquietude arose from the fact that his esteemed father—as Mr. Dunscombe religiously styled the old governor—appeared to have been very favourably impressed with the conduct of his erstwhile prodigal.

A few months previously the prodigal would have raised his eyebrows in incredulity, had anyone ventured to prophesy that a reconciliation, sincere and apparently to last, would, in so short a time, have been effected; but circumstances had, so to speak, miraculously tended to bring about what one would naturally imagine should be a desideratum. The old governor had set his heart on having his only son evince an interest in his Irish property—the paternal estate as he grandiloquently termed it—as he had very exalted notions of the prestige which the sacred rights of property were supposed to confer; and the suggestion of Mr. Dunscombe that he should afford the young hope of the house an opportunity of demonstrating that he possessed no small share of that natural talent which was, Mr. Dunscombe

proclaimed, so characteristic of the family, by allowing him to take over the agency of the paternal estate, came as balm to a wounded soul ; while "the devil of a fix," in which Master Stanley found himself, was no mean factor in inducing that young hopeful to accept the condition of affairs with seeming graciousness. But he had reckoned without his host. The relations had, to his discomfiture, become too friendly, with the result that the old governor, who, by the way, was not improving in health, thought the time opportune for bringing to a fruition the long cherished ambition of himself and his friend, Mr. Fitzwilliams, with regard to the future of their respective houses. The old governor was astute enough to recognise that the union of the houses would be a capital stroke of policy on his part. The Fitzwilliams were highly connected ; had friends of much influence and small scruple in the nobility, through whose patronage many fat offices could be procured without much violence to their conscience ; and he loved to conjure up visions of parliamentary honours, and mayhap, Royal recognition for loyal services ; while Mr. Fitzwilliams, no less astute, had ample reason for knowing that there were formidable difficulties to be surmounted before he could otherwise secure a desirable protector for his amiable and somewhat expensive daughter, who, by the way, was mainly responsible for the depleted condition of his exchequer.

And now the old governor had written his beloved son a lengthy epistle, breathing forth paternal solicitude for his welfare, and urging on him the necessity of having the matter over before it would please the Lord to call him hence, and summoning his erstwhile prodigal to his side, with the least possible delay, that the necessary arrangements might be perfected.

"A pretty kettle of fish," soliloquised Mr. Howard, as he lay back in his armchair in the library of the Manor, and meditatively gazed at the summons which lay at his elbow, "and all on account of a little flirtation. Yes, Levington, the fool, is responsible for this damned muddle; that's what generally comes of masquerading in the virtuous role. By the way, I wonder what has become of the beauty. She has devilish high-laced notions of honour, and so forth, and I wouldn't be surprised if she has gone and done the independent. I don't think I need fear her running after me at all events; no, by my faith, she's too proud for that; but I don't see how I can overlook this summons. By my faith, there would be real fun if the old governor knew how the land lies. Risk it, old chap! Not if I know it. *Temporise! temporise!* yes, that's the motto; and Potter—the old fossil—can't go on much longer without muddling matters."

To quell, as it were, any compunctious visitings of nature; to brace himself against any temptation to once more masquerade in the virtuous role, he arose,

walked into the drawingroom, and, pouring out a goodly bumper of old malt, quaffed it in a breath; and sauntering to the window gazed on the picturesque scene before him. November was drawing to a close; the earth was mantled in white, and a sharp frost supervening, the snow laden trees glistened like crystal in the morning sun.

"Shaun! by all that's wonderful," he exclaimed, as he espied the old bailiff hobbling up the avenue; "by my faith, the old sleuth-hound was nearer the mark than he imagined when he startled me with the information that there was a conspiracy to marry me. I wonder what's on his mind now?"

"Well, Shaun," he said, as he met the sleuth-hound at the door, "there's another conspiracy afoot!"

"So yer honour's heard it already," sighed Shaun, apparently aggrieved that his was not the congenial task of breaking the news to him.

"No," said Mr. Howard, "but I fancied nothing else would give you such a mournful expression. What's the latest?"

"There it is," said Shaun, somewhat relieved, "you here at the mercy of the scoundrels, and all the while not knowin' what's goin' on."

"'Tisn't every one has your detective powers, Shaun," responded Mr. Howard with a laugh.

"Oh, you may laugh," said Shaun lugubriously; "but it's not a laughin' matter; and if I'm keepin' me eyes and me ears open it's dear I'm payin' for the

same. Would yer honour believe that O’Loughlin, the blacksmith, refused to shoe the ould jennet for me ? ”

“ That’s not a great grievance, Shaun ; there are other blacksmiths, aren’t there ? ”

“ Oh, yes, yer honour ; but how would you like to be tould to ride him to the devil and you’d be there the sooner ? ”

Mr. Howard could not contain himself ; the vision forced up before him—that of old Shaun—a second edition of Don Quixote, riding the old jennet to the gates of Hades, was too much for him, and he broke forth into a hearty laugh. He saw, but too plainly, that Shaun was desperately wroth with the merry blacksmith, and he determined to exasperate him.

“ Well, Shaun,” he replied with affected seriousness, “ provided you know where your friend resides, and wish to get there speedily—which O’Loughlin seems to think is the case—his advice about riding the jennet was certainly a good one ; but it would have been wiser to have shod him so as to make sure of your reaching your destination without mishap.”

“ Yes,” sighed the disconsolate Shaun, “ there’s me thanks ; badgered be the boys, and laughed at be yer honour ; but do you think its me they’re conspirin’ agin ? Was it agin me the meetin’ in the forge was held ? and was it me or me ould jennet had Father Pat there ? Yes, yer honour,” as he saw that mention of the priest’s name roused Mr. Howard to serious

attention — “Father Pat himself—*praichin’ to the boys.*”

“Father McNulty?” exclaimed Mr. Howard; “what has he got to do with the matter?”

“Ah! didn’t I tell you before you were too confidin’ entirely. Father Tom is bad enough, but Father Pat could build nests in his ears. If you take my advice, yer honour, you’ll keep yer eye on him, he’s dangerous, without a doubt.”

Like a flash came the recollection of his discussions with Father McNulty; the priest’s strange theories regarding the rights of property; his denunciation of the evils of re-valuing; his claim that the gift of nature should not be monopolised by individuals, and his outrageous reference to a fixity of tenure.

“By heavens!” exclaimed Mr. Howard, now aroused to a sense of the supposed hostility of Father Pat, “if I thought he was inciting my tenants to rebellion against my authority I’d make him rue his intermeddling. What meeting was this?”

“What meetin’?” replied Shaun with contempt; “what meetin’ would it be but one of the very vagabones that gave trouble before. Ould Malachy—the historian, as they call him, as reads the *Nation* for the boys, and ould Shemus—another ring-layder, and all the young fellows in the country; young Brennan that’s married to ould Malachy’s grand daughter; and O’Loughlin himself examinin’ the guns.”

“*Guns?*” echoed Mr. Howard, in evident surprise.

“Maybe you thought ’twas tin whistles they had”; said Shaun with a sneer, “maybe you thought ’twas a temperance meetin’ I was talkin’ about”; and the old villain chuckled with evident satisfaction.

“You heard for certain that Father McNulty was at the meeting?” said Mr. Howard.

“The divil a hear yer honour, me own two eyes was the witness, me own two eyes. I knew there was something up, so, when I saw Father Pat headin’ for the forge, I followed him, and hid outside and there he was praichin’ to the boys, and sure he could twist every mother’s son of them round his little finger; and when I slipped in after he left, ould Malachy was sayin’ as how they’d have to do as Father Pat planned—*planned*, mind you; and there was O’Loughlin himself; and ’twasn’t a tin whistle he had nayther; no! there he was, yer honour, examinin’ one of the guns, and sayin’ there was a shot in her yet; and do you know what it is, yer honour? as sure as I’m standin’ here afore you they mane fightin’ Monahan’s case. He’s an uncle of the blacksmith’s.”

“What case?” asked Mr. Howard.

“Ould Monahan, yer honour; him as wouldn’t pay the rent; and so I noticed him I’d saize the crops; and then the meetin’ was called, yer honour; *they’re buildin’ on keepin’ you to Herbert’s ways.*”

“So you served notice on Monahan,” said Mr. Howard.

“Yes, yer honour, them’s the rules of the estate ; but of course if you don’t care to rouse them, yer honour,” and the old villain eyed his companion critically, well knowing what effect his words would have on him, “you’ve only to give the word not to saize.”

“Don’t care to rouse them ; by heavens I’ll teach them who’s master here ” ; and there was an evil look in his eyes ; “go, this very day, and seize everything you lay hands on ; they little know the mine they’re preparing for themselves ; give no quarter—carry out the rules of the estate to the letter.”

“And those poachin’ lads, yer honour ? ”

“Poaching ? ” exclaimed Mr. Howard, apparently electrified, “do you seriously mean to say, that, after my warning on rent day, the ruffians dare to poach on the river ; dare to defy my authority like that ? ”

“Didn’t I tell yer honour they’re buildin’ on keepin’ you to Herbert’s ways. Ah, sure they have the life run out of me, yer honour ; no sooner I’m at one foord than they’re at the other, and me life isn’t worth livin’.”

“Where do they poach ? ” asked Mr. Howard, with a calmness that staggered Shaun, who thought he was cooling down ; a sad ending after his heroic struggle.

“At the two foords mostly, yer honour ; at Monahan’s crossin’, the near-cut, you know, and down at the foot of the little hill.”

"Isn't the water between fairly deep?" enquired Mr. Howard.

"'Tis, yer honour, and a good job it is, or we'd have them poachin' all over the river."

"Well," said Mr. Howard, with a deliberation there was no mistaking, "get the boat down here to-day; meet me mid-way to-night at nine o'clock; bring Reilly with you. We'll row down to each ford, and if I come across the poachers we'll not require an introduction."

"But yer honour won't know them," said Shaun, mistaking the import of his words; "they come mostly disguised; and sure if they see yer honour they'll be off in a jiffy."

"Oh, rest easy, Shaun; I'll manage the business all right, and if I get within range they'll regret defying my authority. And now, off to Monahan's. I've got to show them that intimidation doesn't always effect its purpose."

"Oh, glory be to God"; exclaimed Shaun, as he hobbled down the avenue, "*the good ould times are comin' back agin.*"

An hour later himself and his old jennet drew up outside Monahan's door. Old Shemus O'Connor, who lived at a short distance, was seated at the fire, consoling the old man, "lifting the load off his heart, and keeping him in talk to bother the thinking," when he heard the noise made by the cart coming up the boreen.

"I wonder Bartly is back so soon," said Shemus, referring to one of the neighbours who had gone to town.

"That's Shaun," said old Monahan unconcernedly, "that's Shaun ; he's coming to seize."

"Glory be to God!" exclaimed Shemus, as he looked through the little window, "'tis the ould villain, sure enough ; but how did you know, Darby, a chara ?"

"Sheela was telling me last night," replied Monahan, without taking his eyes from the fire.

Shemus gazed at the old man in evident perplexity. A moment before he had been speaking quite rationally, and now—was the old man losing his senses ? Sheela was telling him last night ! Sheela, who was dead and buried three long months.

"Darby," said Shemus, soothingly ; "you're not feeling well, you're not raving, are you ?"

"Raving !" repeated Monahan, gazing at his friend with a far-off look ; "who's raving ? but I don't mind telling you, Shemus. I'm going to-night, Shemus. Sheela was telling me last night ; and maybe you wouldn't mind telling Father Tom to come up, Shemus, if he's not too busy ; I'd like to see him before I go."

"Don't be talking like that, man," said Shemus, somewhat roughly, with a view to rousing the old man ; "don't be talking like that. Shaun is in the garden."

"I was forgetting about Shaun, Shemus," and the old man got up from his seat by the fire, and with some difficulty made his way to the door. The little garden was just in front, and in it was a single "*shimidheen*" o oats, around which a few hens were vainly endeavouring to secure a meal.

"You're welcome, Shaun," said the old man with evident sincerity ; "you're bringing the oats, and the hens, I suppose ; you're welcome to them, they aren't much, but sure 't isn't my fault."

He returned to his seat by the fire, and, after a moment, went up to the little room. He was evidently searching for something, and his strange demeanour so startled Shemus that, leaving Shaun engaged at loading the cart with the seizure, he took the near-cut to Father Tom's. Old Monahan, after his unavailing search, returned to the door ; but now there was a strange look in his eyes.

"Shaun, Shaun," he cried, "are you seizing the only *shimidheen* I have in the world ? you spying ould hypocrite, as if your dirty work didn't cost me dear enough before. Oh, wirrastrue !" he wailed, clapping his hands together, "'twas the sorry day for me when the starvation drove the life out of my poor Sheela" ; and then, as if the mention of Sheela's name had a soothing effect on him, he went on in a hushed voice, "but sure it's no use to me, Shaun. I'm going to-night. Sheela was telling me last night" ; and once more the strange light leaped up into his

eyes. "Shaun, Shaun, come here," and the old man beckoned to the bailiff, "I've something to tell you," and lowering his voice till it was almost a mere whisper, he went on—"you'll die in the ditch, Shaun. You'll die in the ditch—just as you saw many a one of them die, the ones you drove to it, Shaun, without pity or mercy. Yes, Shaun," and there was a prophetic ring in the old man's voice, "you'll die in the ditch, Shaun, but not like the others; you'll die in the ditch, Shaun, with all your sins on your head," and the old man returned to his seat by the fire.

Two hours later, shortly after Father Tom had left, old Shemus, reverently closing the eyes of his dear departed friend, dropped a tear on the upturned face, as he recollected the old man's saying, "*I'm going to-night, Shemus. Sheela was telling me last night.*"



CHAPTER XV.

AT THE FORD.

HUGH O'DONNELL was truly happy. The evil forebodings which had oppressed him on the death of Mr. Herbert had vanished, and now his heart was as light as when, on that eventful evening some few months previously, he set out to meet his beloved 'neath the shadow of the ivied ruin. For years he had loved Nora with a great love; a

love as pure as the crystal streams which coursed by his home, and strong as those mighty oaks which spread their giant arms protectingly around the neat little cottage—that quiet nook, with which, in his dreams, those pleasing dreams—youth’s fanciful visions of future bliss—alas, too seldom realised, he had associated happiness untold, when Nora would be all his own; a love as enduring as the ivied tower which had withstood the shock of centuries, and faithful, ay! faithful, as the ivy which, in its hour of desolation, had clung to it and mantled it o’er. And during all those years his heart was truly glad; happy in the possession of Nora’s priceless affection, and nourished by life’s elixir—hope; and now, that ere one short week would have elapsed, Nora, the light of his life, and the cherished object of his dearest affections, would have blest his life anew, his happiness knew no bounds; and it was the consciousness of how blest was his lot that lent such a musical ring to his voice, as, humming an inspiriting air, he wended his way homewards after having spent the day with some friends.

“What a glorious night!” he exclaimed, “though the clouds are treating clear Luna a little unfairly; and, by the way, doesn’t the old ruin look truly majestic in the half light? while the dear old Moy—ever changing—looks weirdly grand.”

A sound broke on his ear and he paused to listen.

“Seems the stroke of an oar,” he went on, “but

what could bring people out at this hour. I wouldn't be surprised if Shaun had the boat down watching for poachers."

Coming to a crossroads he found a group of young fellows engaged in conversation.

"Fine night, boys!" he said, and he stopped to have a few words with them. One of the young fellows had a stick, which Hugh mistook for a gaff. "By the way," he said, "I hope you're not thinking of poaching, boys, especially after the tenants' promise to Mr. Howard"; and as if to deter them, he continued, "I thought I heard the stroke of an oar as I came along, and the chances are, Shaun the bailiff and Reilly are on the river."

"Oh, no, Mr. Hugh," one of the young fellows replied, "we weren't thinking of fishing, though we'd enjoy keeping Shaun out; we were thinking of going over to the wake for a start."

"The wake?" said Hugh, "what wake, boys?"

"Old Monahan's; maybe you didn't hear he was dead?"

"Old Darby, dead!" exclaimed Hugh, "God rest his soul. It must be since morning he died."

"About three o'clock," replied the young fellow; "just after Shaun had cleared away everything."

"Is it possible that Shaun distrained for the rent?" enquired Hugh, surprised.

"Not a morsel he left, they say; and we're all thinking that if the old villain isn't acting with-

out Mr. Howard's knowledge things are looking black."

"No doubt," said Hugh meditatively; "I wonder could it be possible that Mr. Howard would countenance such injustice?"

"That's just what's troubling the old people; they say it was the custom in Norburry's time."

"But," said Hugh, "surely we are not going back to Norburry's methods again. Besides, Father Tom told me that Mr. Howard very willingly allowed poor Darby time, so that I feel sure, Shaun, the old rascal, is wholly responsible for this tyranny. And old Darby is no more; he didn't long survive the good woman"; and bidding the young fellows, "good night," Hugh proceeded on his way. He hadn't travelled far when it occurred to him that, possibly, old Darby would be interred on the morrow; so he decided on going to the wake for a time, and crossing the fence he was proceeding by a near cut to Monahan's, when he heard the report of firearms, and the next moment a shrill cry broke on his ear.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "that's a woman's scream"; and he ran with all speed in the direction whence the cry came.

“Well, yer honour, of all the frights ever I got, this was the worst,” said our old friend, Shaun, as he steadied the boat so that “his honour” might the more easily enter it. “I thought you were one of

the ringlayders, and that I'd never lave the spot alive; and Reilly here was no better"; and the old villain surveyed Mr. Howard with wonder and admiration. The latter had come to the place of meeting somewhat disguised; an old hat partly concealed his face, while the frieze coat which he wore contributed in no small measure to lend him an appearance well calculated to arouse Shaun's fears.

"I abstracted the uniform from your wardrobe, Reilly," explained Mr. Howard, as he seated himself in the boat. "I thought it likely the poachers would show a bolder front if they fancied they had only yourself and Shaun to deal with. I must give you credit for the idea, Shaun. And so you were startled; you're a nervous old rascal, Shaun."

"Nervous? yer honour; faith, and well I might; if one of the villains caught me alone to-night—and sure I might say I was alone for all the good this chap would be—daylight I'd never see. Do you know the hue and cry that's out now, yer honour? *they say 'twas yer honour and meself killed ould Monahan.*"

"Monahan," said Mr. Howard, "is Monahan dead?"

"Dead as a door nail, yer honour, and another good reddance; always behind with the rent, and always complainin'; but because *we*"—and he eyed Mr. Howard sharply—"just took our own, they're

layin' his death at our door, and cryin' out that there's no justice if we aren't tried for murder."

"By gad," said Mr. Howard, "this is a rum country, truly; they have the funniest notions I ever heard of." And wishing to take a rise out of Shaun, he enquired, "how did you kill Monahan, Shaun?"

"Oh, nothin' but badgerin' for poor ould Shaun," said the crafty old villain, "but don't misdoubt, yer honour, 't isn't me they're aimin' at; and do you know, yer honour, you'll have to keep yer hand down strong or they'll be up in airnest."

"By heavens, I'd enjoy the tussle immensely; 'twould relieve me of this damned *ennui* (Greek, to Shaun). No! Shaun, I don't think we'll have to deal with such a crisis. Did they resist the seizure?"

"No," said Shaun, who well knew such a proceeding was never dreamt of, "but we may thank—I saw ould Shemus O'Connor goin' for Father Pat—but he wasn't at home."

"Ah," said Mr. Howard, reflectively, "so that explains their inaction. I suppose Father McNulty, too, thinks we ought to be tried for murder."

"Every mother's son of them, yer honour; every mother's son of them."

"Well, Shaun, if we come upon the poachers to-night, I wouldn't wonder if they have still more reason for a hue and cry. Lie down in the boat, Reilly."

They were now nearing Monahan's ford, and as

they approached they saw by the clear light of the moon a form coming along the river bank in the direction of the ford.

"By heaven," said Mr. Howard in an undertone, "we're in luck, Shaun. Pull in under the bank. That's like a woman's figure."

"An ould trick, yer honour; an ould trick," whispered Shaun; "they come in every sort of disguise."

"Gently, Shaun. Damn you for a blundering blockhead," exclaimed Mr. Howard, as Shaun, in his nervousness, ran the boat against the overhanging branches of a small tree.

The approaching figure, now only a few yards from the ford, stopped as if the sound alarmed, and, after a pause, retraced its footsteps.

"The ford! you blockhead! the ford!" and in a few moments the keel grated on the shingle, and Mr. Howard bounded out and pursued the now fleeing figure along the river bank.

"Ha!" cried Howard, who was gaining every step, "you cannot escape"; but at that moment his foot caught in a stout twig and he was stretched at full length on the green sward. "Foiled, by heaven"; he cried, as he arose; and in his rage he took out a revolver and fired point blank at the fleeing figure. There was a piercing shriek and the pursued fell flat on the ground.

"Winged, my beauty!" exclaimed Mr. Howard,

joyously, as he ran up to the prostrate form ; and just as he reached the spot Hugh O'Donnell came on the scene.

“Villain!” thundered Hugh, as at a glance he took in the scene, “what dastardly work is this? Coward!” he continued, as his fingers closed in a vice-like grip on the other's throat.

“Hell-hound!” gasped Mr. Howard, angrily, “who are you?”

“It matters not,” replied Hugh, relaxing his hold, as, notwithstanding the disguise, he recognised the man ; “at present I'm the defender of the weak.”

“Then, by heavens, you shall pay dearly for your gallantry,” hissed the other, and grasping Hugh by the coat collar, he levelled the revolver and took deliberate aim. With a supreme effort Hugh tore himself free, just as the report of a pistol-shot rang out on the calm night ; then, realising his danger, he closed with his would-be-assassin, and wrested the revolver from his grasp. Instinctively both bounded backwards, and the next moment Mr. Howard found himself floating down the Moy.

“A narrow escape,” exclaimed Hugh ; “the ruffian would have taken my life ; but I had almost forgotten.”

He put the revolver in his pocket, knelt beside the prostrate figure, and in the light of the pale-faced moon recognised his beloved.

“Nora! Nora!” he exclaimed, wildly, and he

imprinted a warm kiss on the cold lips. There was a quiver of the eyelids, and the next moment the dark eyes were gazing at Hugh. "Nora, my own love, don't you know me?" he went on, chafing the pale cheeks with his hands, "don't you know me, darling?"

The voice roused her.

"Oh Hugh! Hugh!" she cried, appealingly extending her arms, "save, oh! save me."

"You are already safe, darling, thanks to the great God," he answered, as he assisted her to rise; and gently supporting her they proceeded in the direction of the priest's cottage.

Father Tom was from home when they arrived, and as they sat in the little parlour each was evidently somewhat ill at ease. Nora had recognised Mr. Howard's voice, and though she would have been delighted if she could console herself with the hope that Hugh had not recognised him, she had her misgivings. Hugh, too, unacquainted as he was with any of the circumstances which led up to the incident, could not be sure but that Nora knew who her pursuer was. He felt sure, however, that Nora would explain matters.

"You must not have been feeling well, Nora," he said, after a time.

"No, Hugh, but I got a great fright. I was returning from the corpse-house, and just as I came to the ford I thought I heard a noise on the river, and stood still. Someone spoke, and fearing to cross

the ford, I went back a little along the river bank. Then I fancied I heard someone running, and I ran ; a shot was fired and I don't know what happened till I saw you."

"Just as I thought," exclaimed Hugh ; "the poachers ; they mistook you for someone spying on them, and fired the shot to frighten you off" ; and he was congratulating himself on his explanation of the affair when Father Pat and Doctor Mullaney called.

"Why, Miss Nora," said the merry Doctor, "has the interdiction come into force again ?"

"Why do you ask, Doctor ?" enquired Nora, endeavouring to look cheerful.

"Thought you looked troubled, dear. Come, Father Pat," he said with a smile, "this is no place for us—lovers' quarrels, you know."

"Nora has had a shock, Doctor," said Hugh ; (the doctor looked serious) "she was coming from the corpse-house and was startled by some poachers on the river."

"A thousand apologies, Miss Nora," said the Doctor, and he went over and felt her pulse ; "oh, you're all right, dear ; just a little upset for the time ; and now, Father Pat, shall we be going ? you better come, too, Hugh—allow Miss Nora to seek a little rest."

"Poor old Meehaul Henry is no more, Hugh," said Father Pat.

"God be merciful to him," said Hugh fervently.

"And he left you a legacy, Hugh—a jewel !"

“A jewel!” exclaimed Hugh, “the old man must have been raving.”

“No,” said Father Pat. “I was called over to see him an hour ago, and after he had made his peace with God, and had received the last rites, I was about leaving when he beckoned me to his bedside.”

“‘Father Pat,’ he said, ‘there’ll be no more shooting for monkeys for me; but do you know, I had a great day a week ago with Mr. Hugh’s—and a beauty it is—but my own Highland Mary is the real jewel. Will you tell Mr. Hugh, Father Pat, that there’s a big flagstone in the corner of the ould mill, and under it he’ll find the ould gun—a sweet little jewel, Father. I’ve oiled it nearly every day those twenty years, and it’s as good as ever. It’s my legacy to Mr. Hugh, Father; but tell him to give it fair play—fair play—Father—the jew—jewel’; and turning to the wall the old man passed peacefully away.”

“Thank you, Father Pat,” said Hugh, deeply affected, “the old man’s legacy shall lack nothing for want of care.”

“Now, Miss Nora! bed—bed—bed,” said the Doctor, who evidently was anxious to have her seek rest, without unduly alarming her. “Come along, Father Pat; come, Hugh,” and bidding Nora good-night, all three left.

“And now, Hugh,” said the Doctor, when they were outside, “tell us all about it. You’re a poor actor; the ‘poacher theory’ is too transparent.”

Hugh recounted the whole story after he had pledged them to secrecy. He showed them his coat which was torn at the collar, his hat which bore evidence of having received a bullet—and the revolver.

“A marvellous escape,” said Father Pat, who was examining the revolver; “a little beauty,” he went on, handing it to the Doctor, “and evidently of foreign manufacture.”

“A real beauty, truly,” said the Doctor; “it seems quite a new thing in revolvers, and small as it is I should prefer not to get the contents of one of the cartridges—even in the hat”; and as he returned the revolver to Father Pat—the Doctor indulged in a merry laugh.

“Merry as ever, Doctor,” said Father Tom, who came on them unexpectedly.

“One of my old yarns,” replied the Doctor, unblushingly, “and as usual I had to do the laughing myself. No appreciation of humour in these sober-heads, Father Tom.”

“Serves you right,” said Father Tom. “By the way, Father Pat, I’ve some announcements I wish you to make on to-morrow”; and bidding Hugh and the Doctor “good-night,” the two soggarths went on to Father Tom’s.

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Meanwhile, Mr. Howard had succeeded in reaching *terra firma*. The river bank on the off side was

considerably lower than that from which he had fallen, and as he scrambled out—he wisely decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and in anything but good humour he proceeded in the direction of the spot where Reilly and Shaun were waiting.

“The devil take you, Shaun,” he exclaimed, as he got into the boat, “you made a mess of the business.” Then, thinking that the revolver might possibly have fallen to the ground in the scuffle, he said, “Reilly, you must go back along the river bank and see if you can find a revolver I dropped. Keep to-night’s business quiet, both of you; and we may give the poachers a bit of a surprise shortly,” and leaving Reilly to pursue his search—Mr. Howard and Shaun proceeded to the Manor.



CHAPTER XVI.

“GOD-FORSAKEN CAD.”

“HELLO! Stanley! is it really possible?” and the speaker, a young man of some five and twenty summers, with a fine frank countenance, and dressed in the style which betokens the young man about town, stopped abruptly in his walk down Pall Mall, and grasping the other by the hand shook it warmly; “why, I had just given up

the case as hopeless when I stumble across you, and under the most unromantic of circumstances. Where have you been for the past few months?"

"Why, Levington," exclaimed the other, "I thought you were doing the Continent."

"Got back a few months ago, old boy; looked you up on the instant and found you had vamosed; even the little beauty didn't know what had become of you. Lying low, eh? have the Jews been unduly pressing?"

"Nothing new to have the beggars threatening; that doesn't concern me very much; they will have to wait for their money; but they wouldn't go on lending, there was where the shoe pinched; but, by the way, Levington I'm in a bit of a fix presently. Where are you off to?"

"To my old digs; come along, we shall have a little reunion"; and arm in arm the two young fellows strolled along, in idle conversation, till they reached an unpretentious set of rooms in a quiet portion of the city.

"Now," said Levington, "I suppose I'm in for a treat. What brought on the row?"

"Row!" repeated the other, "what row?"

"Oh! is that how it is, old chap? sorry, if I've trodden on forbidden ground. Here, try a little of this champagne; you're looking somewhat done up."

"To tell you the truth, Levington, I was devilishly

hard up. The old governor, after that affair at Monte Carlo, was holding the purse strings religiously tight; Dunscombe was implacable; and the—er—beauty, as we called her, was waxing somewhat nettlesome."

"Nettlesome!" echoed Levington, and there was a trace of anger in his voice; "she must have changed wonderfully, Stanley."

"Oh, you don't know the fair sex, Levington; they're all smiles while they are scheming to have their ends accomplished."

"I rather fancied 'twas the other way about—with you—Stanley. You gave none of us a chance of a look in while you were around; but about Dunscombe?"

"Yes," went on the other, "Dunscombe was implacable. My esteemed father, he said, had given instructions, etc., and at length he persuaded me that the best course to pursue was to evince an interest in the paternal estate, and to take up the agency for a time."

"Nonsense!" interjected Levington; "tell that to the Marines!"

"Fact, strict fact, old boy; time most opportune, he said; Herbert accidentally killed—old governor would be delighted, etc., etc.; and so you see before you a real, live agent, acting the good Samaritan over in the sister isle, and winning golden opinions from one and all."

“A page from a novel, eh? Still I’m devilishly glad, old boy—devilishly glad; the change must have done the beauty heaps of good; thought she looked somewhat done up when I saw her. Of course you’ve put on a bold face and presented her to a forgiving pater. Congratulations, old boy, congratulations. Good-natured—you know—and ’pon my soul, Stanley, a real lady. We must have another champagne. And by the way, Stanley, there was a time when I had hoped that I should have been the favoured one; but, no, the gods were unpropitious; you were the lucky dog; but as I say, I’m devilishly glad; was feeling uneasy you know; didn’t know what had become of her.”

“You’ve seen her since you returned, then,” said the other.

“Oh, yes, but that was just after you left, before the reconciliation, if I may so call it. Excuse me, but you know, she was somewhat pressed for money; thought you were merely lying low for a time, so I—excuse me, Stanley—I really didn’t mean to acquaint you of this; but, of course, I only did what you’d have done yourself; but I suppose she’s told you before now?”

“Told me!” repeated the other. “I haven’t seen her since I left.”

“What?” exclaimed the other, somewhat excitedly, “is she not with you?”

“You don’t understand, Levington; everything

depended on my keeping the matter secret, and I had to leave in a hurry ; I'd—"

"But," interrupted the other, "you don't mean you did the thing intentionally ; left her—er—penniless ; eh ? Stanley. My God, what can have become of her ?"

"Why ?" asked Stanley, "does she not live at the old quarters ?"

"Old quarters," repeated Levington, "not at all ; called frequently since ; nothing known about her there ; left immediately after I—after she had settled. And tell me, Stanley, what have you done ? have you made any enquiries ?"

"Just only got to town yesterday, Levington ; have not had time to think of anything but the devil of a fix I'm in. The old governor, imagining I was turning over a new leaf—Dunscombe yarn no doubt—is very keen on my settling down ; strong on my taking up permanent residence on the estate ; you know there was a sort of—engagement with Miss Fitzwilliams."

"Stanley," said the other, looking his auditor straight in the face, "take the advice of a friend ; do the straight thing ; look up Gracie ; she has probably changed to cheaper lodgings ; go to the governor ; make a clean breast of it, and—"

"Be cut off with a shilling," broke in Stanley. "Yes, Levington, 'tis easy assume the virtuous role when it doesn't effect the—er—lecturer."

“Stanley,” said Levington, with a forced calmness, laying down his glass, and eyeing his companion contemptuously, “I don’t want to quarrel with you; perhaps I’ve no right—to—lecture you, as you so bluntly remark; but isn’t the young lady your wife?”

“Well,” replied the other, somewhat shamefacedly, “there was as you know—a kind of marriage.”

“*A kind of marriage!*” repeated Levington, facing the other with a look of incredulity, imagining that he had not heard aright; “what do you mean? was not the marriage perfectly legal?”

“That’s just what troubles me,” replied Stanley; but he was careful not to mention what the nature of the particular trouble was; “you see it was just—a form—so to speak, and of course, it was not—in my name.”

“*Not in your name,*” exclaimed Levington, rising from his seat. “Good God! Do you mean to say you signed a false name, and had me witness it?”

“Oh, don’t do the heroic, for heaven’s sake, Levington? Stanley was the name; she always thought Stanley was my name, and I didn’t take the trouble to disabuse her. I signed the name Howard Stanley.”

“Stanley,” said Levington, “you’re a low mean cad. You’ll oblige me by leaving my rooms”; and it was evident that he required all his will power to retain his self possession.

“Oh,” sneered Stanley, a little nervously, “is this the virtuous indignation of the disappointed lover?”

“Hold!” thundered Levington, his lips trembling visibly, disgust and contempt plainly discernible in his fine manly countenance; “don’t rouse the devil in me, Stanley!”

“Oh, I apologise, old chap; no offence meant; but about that little account”; and he rose from his seat and set about procuring some gold from his pocket-book.

“No,” said Levington, quietly, but firmly, “*you* owe me nothing.”

“But you gave it to my——.”

“Wife!” added Levington, with a contempt that was but too plain; “no wonder the word stuck in your throat. I merely helped a woman in distress, the woman you now seek to disown. *You* are under no obligation to me.”

“Oh, if you choose to keep on doing the heroic, that is, of course, your business,” sneered Stanley; “but I suppose there is no necessity to remind my virtuous friend that this is—a—er—private matter.”

“There is no danger of my blabbing about your private matter from the house-top; but this will not preclude my entertaining my own opinion of your conduct; and if your—if Gracie should happen to make enquiries, by heaven, I shall not deceive her.”

“Oh, don’t worry about that, old chap; she is now probably enjoying herself on her native heath.”

“Stop!” thundered Levington, his eyes scintillating with a light that boded ill for the personal safety of his companion; “breathe but one word against the honour of your—of—of the lady, and I’ll break every bone in your miserable carcase; and now—go!” and with an unmistakable gesture he motioned his crest-fallen companion from the room.

“Cad!” he exclaimed, closing the door and seating himself in his former position, “*God-forsaken cad!*”

Mr. Stanley Howard felt pretty small as he walked down Pall Mall; but rather wroth that Levington should have taken the matter so grievously to heart.

“Yes!” he soliloquised, as he made his way to the office of Messrs. Dunscombe & Dunscombe, “that’s where we prove ourselves arrant fools. I’ve no doubt ’twas the attentions of snobs like Levington that made me so keen on securing the prize; and now—well, ’tis a pretty muddle.”

He found himself within the familiar offices. Mr. Dunscombe was wearing the same smile, and apparently the same immaculate shirt-front; the parchments presented the same appearance as of yore; in fact, it would seem as if nothing—not even the dust—had been disturbed since his last visit.

“Why, Master Stanley, is it possible? my good, sir, you are welcome. I trust you bear good tidings as to the health of your esteemed father.”

"No, Dunscombe, I don't issue bulletins. I merely dropped in to consult you on a legal point."

"Ever at your service, my good sir; the firm has always esteemed it a special privilege to be associated with your esteemed father; and, if I may be allowed to speak for the firm, my dear sir, it shall always—"

"Oh, cut it, Dunscombe. I haven't time now to listen to sermons."

"No doubt, Master Stanley, no doubt; something in connection with the paternal estate."

"Dunscombe," said Stanley, irritably, "can you possibly answer a straight question?"

"My good sir, it is always advisable—"

"Don't bother about what is advisable," interrupted Stanley, "just simply tell me, is this marriage legal?"

"Marriage! oh, yes, I recollect," and he lay back in his armchair and indulged in his inspiration process, that of bringing his finger tips together; "the laws relating to marriage, Master Stanley, are rather complex."

"Oh, hang it, Dunscombe, leave their complexity for some other time; is it legal?"

"Well, now, let me see"; and Mr. Dunscombe arose, and extracting a portfolio from a pigeon hole, resumed his seat, and after a search took out a document and unfolding it, read:—"Alleged marriage, one Howard Stanley—Miss Gracie Forsythe—one Levington—and a Miss Devereux—an acquaintance of Miss Forsythe's, as witnesses'. Tell me, Master

Stanley,” he said, looking up, “are Miss Devereux and this Levington still alive?”

“Levington very much so,” replied Stanley; “don’t know about the lady.”

“And this—er—Levington, would you think it advisable to—approach him—to—er—you understand?”

“Leave Levington out of your calculations on that score, if you’re wise, Dunscombe.”

“So, so,” said Mr. Dunscombe, reclining in his armchair and invoking “inspiration”; “then that matter’s settled. Yes—arrangement—I think you told me before—impossible; well, then, I see no course except that the firm look up the authorities; complex law, you understand, Master Stanley, and to advise you—in due course—in due course, Master Stanley.”

“Dunscombe,” said Master Stanley, taking up his hat to leave, “this unfortunate country will never know peace till your infernal tribe are all hanged with red tape.”

“Capital joke, Master Stanley, capital joke; convey the firm’s kind regards to your esteemed father; and rest assured that the matter shall have our most careful consideration; good day, sir.”

Master Stanley was in anything but a pleasant humour when he left the lawyer’s office. He had previously had an interview with the old Governor, who, partly from the twinges of his old enemy—the gout,—and partly from the nerve-torturing attentions

of that old fossil—Potter,—was in such a state that reasoning with him on any matter was not to be dreamt of; so that the young hopeful was perforce obliged to assume the role of the dutiful son, hoping that something might turn up to extricate him from the “devil of a fix.”

“By Jove,” he soliloquised, as he sauntered along; “rather trying position this; not much consolation to be got from Dunscombe, though, by the way, ’tis rather an augury of success to know that the beauty is not in the running. Gone and done the independent; well so long as she keeps out of the business things may go on fairly well; complications otherwise, I fear. My God,” he exclaimed, as he caught sight of a lady who was waiting at one of the crossings lower down, evidently somewhat nervous to face the ordeal; “how unfortunate, and at such a time;” and he was about retracing his steps when the lady, seizing on what she considered a favourable opportunity, essayed to cross. “Saved!” he exclaimed, breathing more freely; but the next moment he involuntarily pulled himself up short; the sight that met his eyes was one well calculated to make the most stoical tremble. An open one-horse carriage, driven by a lady, was careering wildly down the street, the spirited animal evidently beyond her control. A policeman rushed forward, and the next moment there was a confused tangle.

“My God!” exclaimed Mr. Howard; but the

traffic rolled on and shut out from his view the scene of the accident. A few moments later the carriage had driven off, and the policeman, who had so pluckily gone to the rescue, returned to his position on the kerb.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Howard; "was the lady hurt?"

"Friend of yours?" enquired the policeman, eyeing the other suspiciously.

"Well—I—I fancied I recognised her; acquaintance, I thought."

"Bad case, I fear," replied the laconic constable; "lady gone with her to hospital—or morgue."

"Thanks!" said Mr. Howard, moving on.

"Rum kind of acquaintance," snapped the policeman; "no fear of his worrying over the matter."



CHAPTER XVII.

THE RAPPAREE.

HUGH O'DONNELL and Nora O'Rorke were one. The marriage ceremony had been solemnized by Father Tom in the little church among the trees, and his task, according to old Nelly Murphy, was a rather difficult one; "coaxing up a smile one minute, and striving hard to keep the big tears back the next; and Father Pat? oh,

sure there was no getting over his ways ; he'd make you feel 'twas yourself was that young again ; and as for the lucky boy himself, you'd think he was stepping into heaven ; while Miss Nora was just what you'd expect, modest and unpretending as ever."

To Hugh this was the crowning of all his hopes. True, there had been times when the recollection of his escapade on the river bank caused him many an hour of uneasiness. Though he was not certain that Mr. Howard had recognised him, he was not without his misgivings that his identity would be revealed by Shaun ; and hopeful as he was that Mr. Howard's gentlemanly instincts would prompt him to accept the incident as one which, under the unforeseen circumstances, was more or less unavoidable, he was rather distrustful of that gentleman's magnanimity,—and as a consequence, the ensuing week was to him one of keen distress. He could not console himself that Mr. Howard was unaware of his contemplated marriage, for the tenants in general had begun to realise that Shaun the bailiff, who had assumed the old-time air of the petty tyrant, had, as it were, come back to power ; and Hugh, in common with the rest, felt that there were few things worth knowing which the old villain would not ferret out and rehearse for his honour ; but the fact that no prohibitive notice had been given him reassured him that all was well, and it was with pleasure he learned that Mr. Howard had left the Manor for some time.

And now, that Nora was all his own, Hugh's happiness knew no bounds ;—while Nora's was increased by the elevating thought that she was in a position to contribute to Hugh's.

“Nora !” he said, as, a few days after the marriage ceremony, they were admiring the arrangement of the little garden in front of the cottage,—“this”—pointing to the net-work—“is what Father Tom says must be put down to the lady's account.”

“And don't you think he was right, Hugh? I don't recollect you introducing net-work before.”

“But,” said Hugh smiling, “the rose bush didn't need it before; the heavy fall of snow brought it down somewhat, you see, and something had to be done to support it. However,” he continued, “I suppose it would be as well to admit that there was a lady in the case.”

“That's as clear as noonday,” said Nora smiling; “whenever there's unnecessary expense entailed you may always put it down to the tender passion.”

“Then it more than compensates for the expense,” pleaded Hugh.

“No doubt,” replied Nora archly; “but I should imagine there was no necessity for it.”

“The net-work, is it?” enquired Hugh.

“As an exponent of feeling!” said Nora with a smile;—“but I dare say you put it down under the heading ‘pleonasm,’ and claim ‘poetic licence’”; and the happy pair laughed heartily at Nora's sally.

“ Good morrow to the pair of ye, and it’s glad I am to see ye standin’ there together, and so jovial and happy ” ; and our old friend, Shaun the bailiff, courtesied with all the grace rheumatics permit. “ I’d be wishin’ you joy, ma’am, if it’s plaisin’ to you.”

“ Thank you, Mr. Regan,” said Nora ; “ it’s very kind of you ; when shall I be able to return you the compliment, Mr. Regan ? ”

“ Aisy now, ma’am, if it’s plaisin’ to you. I’m in no humour at all for humbuggin’.”

“ Why ? ” enquired Nora, “ what’s troublin’ you ? ”

“ If you’d be askin’ me what’s not troublin’ me, ma’am, ’twould be aisier answerin’ you—a long way aisier, ma’am.”

“ Is the rheumatism improving ? ” inquired Nora.

“ Oh, the curse of Cromwell on it, ma’am, but I’m gettin’ so used to it that it’s like an ould friend ; but do you know, ma’am, the unthankfulness of people is beyond compare. Ould Monahan’s case was bad enough, but there’s ould Meehaul gone and died too, and now, to make matters worse, that ould woman in the bog beyond goes and drops off, just as if I hadn’t hapes of trouble already.”

“ And poor old Mrs. O’Doherty is dead,” said Nora feelingly. “ God rest her soul, poor thing ; she hadn’t much comfort in this world.”

“ Oh, yes, there you are ” ; and he gave the structure a gentle reminder, “ just because his honour wanted to improve his own place the lazy drones won’t be

content where he settles them down comfortably. Yes, ma'am, she's dead, without a doubt, and I'm in for me own share of trouble, as I was sayin'. I called in to see her about a little private business, and because she died on the minute ould Honor Marren—I heard her, ma'am—I heard her whisperin' to one of the neighbours, 'sure the poor creature couldn't stand the sight of the ould villain,'—the ould villain, mind you; now, ma'am, isn't that terrible villifyin' entirely?"

"But, Mrs. O'Doherty, God rest her," interposed Hugh, who till then had been ostensibly engaged on the rosebush, "may have thought in her weakness that you were come to evict her once more."

"Now, will you listen to that, ma'am? Just as much as to say that Honor Marren was right."

"Well, without going the length of old Honor," persisted Hugh, "I have no doubt your presence, under the circumstances, was not calculated to comfort her."

"Yes," sneered Shaun; "but I'm not goin' to neglect me business for that same. How could I know what'd be missin' if I hadn't me eyes about me? And lucky I did go in, or there mightn't be a rap there when I'd hear it."

"Why?" enquired Hugh, "how does it affect you?"

"Oh, yes, just like the rest of them. I'm wondered at you entirely—you that should know better. How could I get the pound she owed me these two years

back if I didn't saize her belongin's ? Answer me that, if it's plaisin' to you."

"Seize her belongings!" echoed Hugh ; "do you mean to say you seized the effects of the old woman—and immediately after her death?"

"Ay!" rejoined Shaun, with a merry chuckle,—
"lock—stock—and barrel; *do you think I was goin' to lose me pound?*"

"I'll pay you the pound, Mr. Regan, if you don't remove whatever little is in the cabin, till after the interment, at all events."

"Couldn't do it; them's me rules, and 'twould be givin' bad example to be anyways lainent; and ne'er a doubt of it, but it's sorry I am to have to—but do you know what it is, Mr. Hugh?" and the old villain looked around,—
"but don't brathe a word of this to a mother's son of them or they'd have me annoyed. I'll be takin' the pound this time,—but don't be askin' me agin—don't be askin' me agin"—and he went up the garden path to where Hugh and Nora were standing.

"Thank you," said Hugh, taking some money from a purse and handing Shaun a sovereign, which the old man carefully deposited in an inside pocket of his vest; after which he hobbled down the path.

"Dear me," said Hugh, "what untold misery these poor people must suffer; only fancy the distress the old woman must have been in when she was forced to accept gombeen from that old blood-sucker."

"'Tis heart-wringing to hear ever and always of such misery," rejoined Nora; "but here he's back again, Hugh. I hope he hasn't changed his mind."

"Well, Mr. Regan?" enquired Hugh, "what's troubling you?"

"Oh, just a trifle," said Shaun, coming up to where they stood and groping on the gravel walk. "I thought I dropped a sovereign";—but at that moment Father Pat, riding on his little mare, came in view.

Hugh glanced at Shaun—who, with one eye on the little gate and the other on the ground, was evidently ill at ease—and Hugh concluded that the old villain had come back to avoid meeting his reverence.

Father Pat rode up to the little gate, and dismounting, threw the reins over the pier; and with his riding whip in his hand strode up the garden path.

Shaun was the cringing hypocrite in an instant.

"It's thankful I am to you, Mr. Hugh; and now I think I'll be goin'. Good day, ma'am."

"*Stop!*" thundered Father Pat, tightening his grip on the riding whip;—"you snivelling, sneaking old hypocrite; *hand over that sovereign this instant!*"

Hugh and Nora were electrified. How, in the name of all that was wonderful, did Father Pat know of the transaction concerning the dead widow's goods and chattels?

"Good morrow to yer reverence," said the old villain, courtesying so low that he groaned with pain;

"a sovereign—sure it isn't robbin' a poor ould man yer reverence would be?"

"Hand over that sovereign!" said Father Pat, calmly but sternly, "or I'll give you such a thrashing as you'll remember to your dying day."

"Now, do you hear his reverence, Mr. Hugh," said Shaun with a weary smile, extracting a sovereign from the inside pocket; "sure he was always fond of a joke. Here, yer reverence," and he handed the money to Father Pat. "You won't be seein' a poor man robbed of his hard-earned money, Mr. Hugh."

"Really, Father Pat," interposed Hugh, "it wasn't Mr. Regan's fault"; and Shaun's countenance lit up with a new-born hope; "'twas I suggested the compromise. I gave him the money to ensure Mrs. O'Doherty's household being left in order till after the funeral."

"*What?*" exclaimed Father Pat, amazement in his tone;—"you gave Shaun a sovereign to pay Widow O'Doherty's debt."

"Yes," said Hugh, "to prevent annoyance to her friends."

"When?" enquired Father Pat.

"Five minutes since," rejoined Hugh; "that's my sovereign in your hand, Father."

"Then take your sovereign," cried Father Pat, tossing it towards him without moving an inch. "And now—you old reptile"—he continued, turning to Shaun, "*out with Honor Marren's sovereign this*

instant. Come! come! none of your palavering. I've got you in the grip of the law at last; receiving money from two different persons under false pretences. Would you know *that*, you scheming, sacrilegious old hypocrite?" and he showed Shaun a piece of crumpled paper.

The old man, livid with rage a moment ago, was now trembling like an aspen leaf.

"Oh, yer reverence," he croaked, as he fumbled at the inside pocket and extracted another sovereign, which he handed to Father Pat, "sure—sure—if I knew—that—yer reverence, I wouldn't have taken the money—no—yer reverence—no more nor cut me head off."

"You can reserve your explanation for the judge," said Father Pat, putting the sovereign in his pocket, and carefully folding up the paper.

"*The Judge?*" exclaimed Shaun, shaking from head to foot; "ah, sure yer reverence wouldn't ruin a poor ould man?"

"One of two courses is open to you," said Father Pat, slowly and emphatically: "explain the circumstances to the judge,—*or—buy—this*,"—and he held up the folded paper.

"Ah, sure yer reverence knows it's worth nothin' t'you."

"Yes," rejoined Father Pat with a judicial air, "but 'tis worth something—to *you*. Come," he went on, taking out his watch; "one sovereign buys it—

provided the money is paid to Hugh within sixty seconds,—one sovereign advance for every second thereafter. Now!" and glancing at his watch and holding up the paper he went on,—“ready—one—two—three—four—five.”

“God help me,” cried Shaun, fumbling at the inside pocket.

“Ten—twenty—thirty.”

“Here, Mr. Hugh, quick! quick! for heaven’s sake, quick!” and thrusting a sovereign into Hugh’s hand, the old villain nervously awaited the delivery of the paper.

“Good!” said Father Pat, handing over the paper to Hugh. “I congratulate you, Mr. Regan. This is the first occasion on which you’ve turned your money to good account;—’twill help to bury poor Mrs. O’Doherty”;—and, stepping out of Shaun’s way, he pointed to the gate with his riding whip; while the bailiff, once more livid with rage, hobbled down the path.

“I must crave your indulgence, Mrs. O’Donnell,” said Father Pat, as he shook hands with Nora, “for my rudeness; but trust the circumstances will plead for me.”

“Oh, Father Pat,” said Nora laughing, “you’re quite a genius. I should never have believed it possible for anyone to get Shaun contribute a sovereign towards Mrs. O’Doherty’s burial.”

“Well,” said Father Pat, with a sly look at Hugh,

“’twas certainly as commendable as contributing a sovereign towards Shaun’s exchequer”; and Nora and himself indulged in hearty laughter at Hugh’s expense.

“I believed the old villain,” said Hugh apologetically.

“Yes, and pleaded for him too,” said Father Pat unmercifully.

“You don’t understand the case, Father Pat,” said Hugh.

“Don’t I?” enquired Father Pat. “I wonder who does, then?”

“But what was the mystic paper?” enquired Nora.

“Well, now, Mrs. O’Donnell,” replied Father Pat, “just to afford your susceptible husband here an opportunity of judging whether I understand the case or not, I’ll give you my experiences; but you must not expect that I’ll come out of the business with such a character for charity as our friend Hugh. I was expecting for some time that poor Mrs. O’Doherty wouldn’t last long, so I called in to see her about an hour ago. Old Nelly Murphy and Honor Marren were there; and the poor old creature was no more. ‘Your reverence,’ says Nelly to me when I asked how she died, ‘she was grand entirely a minute before; but ould Shaun the bailiff came in,—and the moment his evil eye rested on her, she turned in to the wall and was gone in a twinklin.’”

“‘Oh, ne’er a word but the truth she’s telling, your reverence,’” protested Honor.

“ ‘And then,’ went on Nelly, ‘the ould villain up and says, how was he to get the pound was owing him these two years back? that he’d seize everything in the house; but Honor here, God bless her, threw him a sovereign and we got rid of the ould vagabone.’ ”

“ ‘It wasn’t fittin’ to have him here with the dead,’ pleaded Honor, as if in extenuation of her good-natured act.”

“ ‘God will reward you a thousand-fold, Mrs. Marren,’ said I, ‘but are you sure she owed Shaun the money?’ ”

“ ‘Faith, ne’er a one of us knows,’ replied Honor; ‘and it didn’t trouble us either; we were only too glad to get rid of the ould villain.’ ”

“ ‘During my visits to Mrs. O’Doherty,’ continued Father Pat, “I observed that anything of value was kept in an old canister on the dresser, and taking it down, what was my surprise to find a receipt for the amount, dated only two weeks before? The poor woman has been lying ever since, and my impression is that, feeling death was near, she was wishful to be out of the old villain’s debt, and paid him the money.” (Father Pat did not mention that it was he himself supplied the amount).

“ ‘When does he say she got the money, Mrs. Marren?’ ” I enquired.

“ ‘ ’Twas owing these two years back,’ he said, your reverence.”

“ ‘Good,’ I replied, putting the receipt in my

pocket ; ' this will settle Shaun,'—and, after saying a few prayers for the poor woman, I mounted the little mare,—followed Shaun—and you know the rest."

" Mrs. Dillon cannot, as she says, ' hold a candle ' to you in diplomacy, Father Pat," laughed Nora, " after how you managed Shaun."

" 'Twas like a chapter out of ' The Rapparees,' " said Hugh smiling.

" Poetic licence, Hugh," rejoined Father Pat with a merry laugh ;—" but eliminating the poetry, I think it was more a case of—a rat in a trap,—the old rascal saw he was caught—and mention of the judge clinched him."

" What am I to do with the sovereign, Father Pat?" enquired Hugh.

" Bury Mrs. O'Doherty, Hugh," and, forgetful that he was supposed to know nothing of her transactions with Shaun, he continued, " she had already paid the old scoundrel £2 12s. interest,—interest alone, remember,—on the one pound loan, before she gave him the principal. It is hers—morally—at all events—and that's sufficient for us. I'll refund the other to Honor Marren."

" Bring in the little mare, Hugh," said Nora.

" And so, Miss Nora—oh, I beg your pardon, Hugh—but sometimes the former glory eclipses the—but that's too poetic for me. And so, Mrs. O'Donnell," he continued, following Nora into the cottage,—“ you extend hospitality even to—a *Rapparee*."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MEEHAUL'S LEGACY.

FATHER TOM, a few days after the Rapparee incident, had called, and insisted on Nora and Hugh dining with him on Sunday. Nora was delighted.

"Hugh," she said, on the eve of the great day, "I'll run over to Mrs. Dillon to see if there is anything I can do."

"Very good, Nora, I'm ready any moment; and, by the way, while you are interviewing Mrs. Dillon, I'll have a walk over as far as the old mill. 'Tis too bad to have poor Meehaul's legacy neglected so long. Under the flagstone in the corner, I think Father Pat said."

"Yes," said Nora, "but come along, I must see whether Mrs. Dillon is, as she says, 'muddling things.'"

They were about setting out for Father Tom's when their attention was arrested by a commotion in the kitchen. Mrs. Durcan, Hugh's housekeeper, and Mr. O'Halloran were engaged in a wordy warfare.

"'Tis your turn now," said Hugh to Nora, as he heard the old man's voice in the hall; "you're in for a Shakespearean treat. Good day, Mr. O'Halloran."

“Good day, my dear sir ; happy ! happy day, that I’ve seen the fruition, so to speak, of my prophecy. And you, Mrs. O’Donnell—how best convey my congratulations ? Perhaps you would allow me to observe, as expressive of my cherished wish ;—

‘ God the best maker of all marriages,
Combine your hearts in one, your realms in one !
As man and wife, being two, are one in love,
So be there ’twixt your kingdoms such a spousal,
That never may ill office, or fell jealousy
Thrust in between the paction of these kingdoms.’ ”

“Thank you very much, indeed, Mr. O’Halloran ; you are very kind, and your appropriate quotation bespeaks a lofty estimate of the marriage contract.”

“Yea, my lady ; and yet my estimate falls short ; for what is marriage ?—

‘ A contract of eternal bond of love,
Confirm’d by mutual joinder of your hands
Attested by the holy close of lips,
Strengthen’d by interchangement of your rings. ”

“Strange, Mr. O’Halloran,” said Nora, “that, with such an exalted idea of the married state, you have never been tempted to test hymeneal bliss.”

“Alas, fair lady, fortune favours but the fair ; my portion has been grief :—

‘ What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis ? whose praise of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers ? this is I.’ ”

“Is it possible, Mr. O’Halloran ?” enquired Nora

who with difficulty refrained from laughter, "that you have been unsuccessful in your love affairs?"

"So far, my fair lady, so far:—

'I have long loved her; followed her with a doting observance; engrossed opportunities to meet her; fee'd every slight occasion that could but niggardly give me sight of her; briefly, I have pursued her as love hath pursued me, which hath been on the wing of all occasions. But whatsoever I have merited, either in my mind or in my means, meed, I am sure, I have received none; except experience be a jewel; that I have purchased at an infinite rate; and that hath taught me to say this:—

'Love like a shadow flies, when substance love pursues;
Pursuing that that flies, and flying what pursues.'

"But why not enlist your friends in a cause so worthy?" pleaded Nora.

"Fair lady, that which you were pleased to denominate my lofty estimate of the marriage contract precludes my seeking extraneous assistance,—

'Marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt with in attorneyship.'

"Yet," persisted Nora, "is it not sad to have thus to mourn love unrequited?"

"Yes, fair lady, there are, indeed times when the mind impatient prompts one to exclaim,—

'O, that this too solid flesh would melt
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self slaughter! O, God! O, God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on it.'

and, bowing to Nora with an old-world grace, the love-lorn philosopher withdrew.

"Now, madam," said Hugh with mock seriousness, "how blame a sentimentalist like myself, when a philosopher like my friend, Mr. O'Halloran, has been winged by Cupid."

"Do you know, Hugh?" said Nora, "the probability is that the poor fellow has had his chastisement."

"How?" enquired Hugh.

"*The tongs!* Hugh, *the tongs!*"

"Nonsense!" rejoined Hugh; "do you mean he's crazy enough to be soft on Mrs. Dillon?"

"You may stake your 'poetical' reputation on it, Hugh," said Nora with a merry laugh; "Mrs. Dillon has been experimenting with her old 'knacks' since I left."

"Why," said Hugh, "the widows seem to possess fascinating powers extraordinary—and on the most staid. There's old Sam Ginty—the horse dealer—who very nearly deprived me of my old housekeeper, Mrs. Durcan, and one would never associate sentiment with him. I wonder what their especial charm is?"

"You've missed your opportunity of testing their virtues practically," said Nora with a smile; "but come along. I'm dying to hear all from Mrs. Dillon."

Just as they were about leaving, Mrs. Durcan came

on the scene. "Do you know, ma'am?" she said, "I won't be standing this any longer."

"What, Mrs. Durcan; what's the matter now?" enquired Nora.

"That old mad-cap to come up here abusing me about Sam Ginty. Now, ma'am, could anyone stand that?"

"But how is Mr. O'Halloran interested?" enquired Nora; "can it be possible that he also has fixed his affections on you, Mrs. Durcan?"

"Affections, indeed, ma'am! they're all sweet enough as long as they think you've a little nest egg."

"So you think 'tis the money that's the attraction. Now, Hugh," said Nora archly, "hear Mrs. Durcan's opinion of the men."

"Oh, I didn't mean Mr. Hugh, ma'am, God forbid; but those ould fools, there's no standing them. 'Why don't you put manners on Sam Ginty?' he says,—just for all the world as if I could be helping what the silly ould fellow would be up to;—why didn't I keep him from annoying respectable people,—going round the country;—but sure, ma'am, I couldn't say it like him, with the big words—but he said something like that Sam was making love where he wasn't wanted, and to keep him at home—at home, mind you, ma'am—and then he gave a long rigmarole about fools going where angels wouldn't go, and about buckling something on himself to fight, and that if

Sam was even—but sure I couldn't tell you right, ma'am—that if he was like, I think, a hurrican tiger, he'd give him a shrift or something like that."

"Short shrift," said Nora smiling.

"The very words, ma'am ; the very words ; and then he said something about allspicing a cup to give him a lasting wink ; but he hadn't it all for nothing, and if he comes back again it's the boiling water he'll be getting, as sure as I'm a living woman."

"I think you're done with him now, Mrs. Durcan. Come, Hugh," and, with difficulty restraining herself, Nora went forth.

Hugh accompanied her to Father Tom's and then proceeded towards the old mill to bring home the legacy, but had not gone far when he met old Malachy.

"Good evening, Mr. Hugh," said Malachy, "sure it's a cure for sore eyes to see you lately ; but small blame to you, boy."

"Why, Malachy, is that you? what's the latest?"

"Nothing fresh, Mr. Hugh. I was over at the forge, but Donal isn't working to-night."

"So you held no session," said Hugh with a smile.

"No," rejoined Malachy, with an air of resignation, "we'll have to wait for Monday now. We're hoping he'll be better then."

"Is Donal ailing?" enquired Hugh anxiously.

"Well, now, Mr. Hugh, I've my doubts ; he wasn't

working, and the missus said he had to go to bed early ; that he wasn't feeling well."

"I'll have a look in as I'm passing, Malachy," said Hugh.

"Do, Mr. Hugh. I'd just like to know what the lad is up to," and the old historian passed on his way.

Hugh in a short time arrived at the blacksmith's dwelling, and as he approached the door he fancied he heard some commotion within. With a cheery "God save all here," he entered, and was astonished to find only Donal's wife, who was rocking "the youngest one" and singing an Irish air.

"Ah, then, Mr. Hugh, is that yourself?" and the young woman welcomed him cordially ; "you frightened the life out of us ; we thought it was old Malachy back again. Come down, Donal," she said, going to the room door, "it's Mr. Hugh."

The bolt was withdrawn and Donal stepped into the kitchen.

"Well, but you knocked the run out of me, Mr. Hugh ; sure I thought it was the ould historian back again."

"I met Malachy on the way," said Hugh, who was somewhat mystified, "and he told me you were ailing ; so I called in on my way to see how you were."

"No more ailing than yourself, thank God, but I didn't want the cross-examining, and to be found out in the lies by old Malachy."

"What's the matter with the hand, Donal?" enquired Hugh, who noticed that the blacksmith had a cloth tied round one of his fingers.

"This is how it was, Mr. Hugh. Young Dermott had an ould fowling piece of Paudraic's hid around the house these years, and thinking he might have an odd shot down the bog he brought it over for me to rise my hand over. I patched it up, and was feeling so proud of the job that I wouldn't be satisfied till I had a 'go' with it;—so Cormac McHugh and myself went down the bottoms;—but the old thing was rotten, and as I was letting her off, what did she do but go in smithereens? Look!" and he removed the bandage, "I came off safe enough; that bit out of the finger—it isn't as bad as it looks; but I was afraid Malachy would see it and suspect, and I promising him I wouldn't do anything with the ould gun; he was afraid Dermott would get into trouble over it."

"That looks ugly enough," said Hugh. "Why didn't you have it dressed by the doctor?"

"That's just what the wife was saying when you came on us," said Donal. "I might go over on Monday if it's not healing."

"Won't you be resting yourself, Mr. Hugh?" said Donal's wife; "and how is Mrs. O'Donnell?"

"She's very well, thank you, Mrs. O'Loughlin,—but I won't be delaying, I'm going over to the old mill, Donal. Meehaul Henry left me a legacy there."

“A legacy!” exclaimed Mrs. O’Loughlin; “the Lord save us; had the ould man money after all?”

“Oh, a different kind of legacy, Mrs. O’Loughlin,” said Hugh smiling; “’twas an old fowling piece he left me; the one he called Highland Mary,—Donal.”

“Well, well,” exclaimed Donal, “’tis often I heard my ould father—God be good to him—talk of Meehaul’s Highland Mary. And you tell me he had it in the ould mill all along.”

“Yes,” replied Hugh, “and oiled it nearly every day.”

“I’ll walk over with you, Mr. Hugh.”

“Nonsense, Donal; don’t be going out in the cold.”

“Ah, sure it’s only a scratch, and the walk will do me good.”

“Do, Mr. Hugh, let him go with you,” said Mrs. O’Loughlin; “he’ll be company for you.”

“Very well,” said Hugh. “Good night, Mrs. O’Loughlin,” and himself and Donal proceeded to the old mill.

The Manor lay on their way, and as they approached the front entrance they saw two persons standing at the gate; but when Hugh and Donal reached the spot there was no one to be seen.

“Strange!” said Hugh, when they had passed on, “how one is sometimes deceived. I’d have sworn one of those was Mr. Howard himself.”

“’Twas him, sure enough,” rejoined Donal.

"He's not at home," said Hugh.

"That was him, anyway," replied Donal, "and 'twas Shaun was with him; and the ould villain must have something on foot when he's paying him a visit at this hour."

They shortly afterwards reached the old mill, and it was not long before they had unearthed Highland Mary. The flagstone was concealed by a growth of weeds, but when it was removed—there,—snugly packed in a box—and wrapped in an old woollen cloth, was *the legacy*.

Hugh took the gun in his hands and examined it carefully in the light of the moon.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed, "to think that it should—after all those years—be in such preservation."

"Wonderful, beyond a doubt," said Donal; "do you know, Mr. Hugh, I wouldn't be surprised if the ould man's spirit was somewhere around."

A slight noise as of the parting of branches was heard, and the two instinctively started.

"Didn't I tell you, Mr. Hugh?" said Donal, who would not be a whit surprised if old Meehaul had suddenly appeared before them, "that the ould chap wasn't far off."

"Nonsense," responded Hugh; "rats, most likely," and having replaced the flagstone the two proceeded on their way home.

"Be me sowl, Donal wasn't far out after all," and

our old friend, Shaun, emerging from a growth of underwood, smiled sardonically,—“the ould chap wasn't far off. No, Donal, me boy, and I'm thinkin' 't isn't Shaun that'll be ridin' to the divil—*this time*; and Mister Hugh, faith I'm thinkin' 'twon't be tellin' you the sovereign, me boyo; but 'tis a pity we're missin' the ring-layder; 't isn't one sovereign I'd be givin' if I could only trap him; 'tis then he'd know who the ould reptile was in airnest; 'tis then he'd regret robbin' a poor ould man. But I musn't be delayin'.”

Shaun, notwithstanding the rheumatism, was not long in reaching the Manor.

“Thanks be to God,” exclaimed the old villain, as Mr. Howard met him on the avenue, “yer honor's safe yet. I thought I'd never be back in time, and that they'd have you murdhered.”

“So they were, as you thought, on some devilish game,” said Mr. Howard.

“Didn't I tell yer honor what they're up to, and if something isn't done at wanst yer a dead man.”

“A dead man!” exclaimed Mr. Howard, somewhat startled.

“A dead man, and no mistake. Where were they now, do you think? Over at the ould mill—diggin' up arms—guns, yer honor.”

“Guns! then they must surely mean mischief!”

“Mischief!” repeated Shaun. “Murdher, yer honor—murdher. Didn't I tell you there was quare

goin's on while you were away. The blacksmith isn't forgettin' his ould uncle; and every night there's a big meetin' at the forge. And O'Donnell is no better. He's a kind of under-man for Father Pat."

"Under-man for Father Pat!" repeated Mr. Howard, enquiringly.

"Firing the balls, yer honor, firing the balls. No later than last week, just bekase yer honor wasn't at home, I'd to pay a sovereign to bury the ould woman that was in the bog beyond; they're buildin' on keepin' you to Herbert's ways."

"I never suspected O'Donnell was mixed up in this damned conspiracy," said Mr. Howard.

"Didn't I tell yer honor you're too confidin' entirely, Wasn't it enough to see how the fellow took you in, and me warnin' him that he daren't get married without yer honor's consent; and civil-spoken he was too,—civil-spoken entirely. 'You can't get married,' says I to him, 'till you get his honor's lave.' 'You and his honor can go to the divil,' he says; 'I've me laise, and I'm defiable to the both of ye.' 'Aisy now,' says I, 'maybe you think bekase yev Father Pat to yer back, and that his honor is middlin' great-like at Father Tom's, you can do as you like, just as the Brennans were thinkin'.' 'You can tell yer master,' he says, 'that Miss O'Rorke wouldn't look the side of the road he'd be.'"

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Howard in a rage, "did

the ruffian dare to associate my name with that of a country girl?"

"She wouldn't look the side of the road you'd be; them's his words. 'And don't forget to tell yer master,' he says, 'that if he doesn't take himself aisy he'll be hearin' from some of the boys one of these days. It isn't ould Darby Monahan he's dalin' with now'; and it looks damn like it, yer honor, seein' as they're diggin' up the guns."

"By heavens, I shall have the rascals arrested immediately," exclaimed Mr. Howard, white with rage.

"Aisy now, yer honor, aisy; there's no good in hurryin'. They're off to the forge. I'll take the near-cut across the demesne, and be out before them, and then we'll see what they're up to—and maybe ketch the ring-layder, too,—and if ould Shaun isn't able for them,—they're the divils entirely," and the old villain went off, and, taking the "near-cut," came out near Donal's residence just as Hugh and his companion were entering the house.

They found Dermott Brennan awaiting them. He had come over to see if Donal had finished the gun, and had just heard from Mrs. O'Loughlin of the catastrophe.

"Good night, Mr. Hugh," he said as they entered; "Donal, how is the hand? I'm sorry I brought over the ould gun at all."

"I'm all right, Dermott; just a scratch and nothing more, and sure 'twasn't your fault. But this is the

real jewel entirely. Do you know, Mr. Hugh, there's a charge left, and we might as well have a slap at the duck; there's plenty of them in the little turlough behind the house."

"It may not be safe," said Hugh, recollecting the fate of Dermott's gun.

"Safe? why, man, she's as fresh as a daisy," and, before anyone could gainsay him, he had the little jewel loaded and was ready to start.

"Do you know what it is, boys?" he said, as he shouldered the little jewel; "we'd do worse than have a slap at Shaun while we have our hands in the business; 'twould be good enough for the ould scoundrel,—after his being the cause of my uncle Darby's death."

"Now do you hear him, Mrs. O'Loughlin?" said Dermott.

"Ne'er a one of me would begrudge the ould villain a few of the grains," said Mrs. O'Loughlin laughing.

"Come along," said Donal, "and if we miss the duck, you couldn't be telling but we'd have a slap at the 'ould drake'; and with a merry laugh he went forth followed by the others.

A quarter of an hour had elapsed when Mrs. O'Loughlin arose, opened the door, and looked out.

"Take care," she said, "would anything tempt him?" and she returned to her seat by the cradle, apparently ill at ease.

After some time the three returned to the house.

“Where’s the duck?” questioned Mrs. O’Loughlin.

“Down in the bottoms, ma’am,” answered Donal.

“Take care,” she said, “did anything tempt you to fire at ——?”

“The ‘ould drake,’ ma’am ;—no, ma’am, we didn’t get a chance of Shaun ; but that’s all the information you’ll get. Didn’t I tell ye?” he continued, turning to Hugh and Dermott, “’twas in prime order,—and a sweet little tool ’tis too.”

“What about the old gun, Donal?” enquired Dermott. “I’d like to be keeping it anyway on account of the father.”

“Faith, then, that’s all it’s good for now, Dermott ; but, to be sure, you can bring it with you” ; and going up to the little room he returned with the remains of poor Paudraic’s fowling piece.

“’Tis lucky you were entirely,” said Dermott, “that it didn’t blow out your brains.”

“Lucky I hadn’t any, you mean,” laughed Donal ; “my ! my ! what a scatter there would be if Mr. O’Halloran had the misfortune to let her off” ; and the merry blacksmith laughed heartily, and bidding Hugh and Dermott good night, he returned to his place by the fire.

“Be talkin’ of miracles,” said our old friend Shaun, “but God is workin’ on our side for wanst ; be me sowl they’ll find there’s a quack in the ould drake yet ; yes, we’ll bag the whole three ; but ’tis aggravatin’

intirely that we havn't the ring-layder"; and he sighed disconsolately, as, creeping from Donal O'Loughlin's little window, he made his way quietly along in the shadow of a hedge.

Dermott arrived home with the remains of the old gun and found Dr. Mullaney before him; he had called in to see the old woman.

"Why, Dermott, my boy," he enquired, "is it moonlighting you spend your time?"

"Yes, Doctor?" replied Dermott with a laugh, "but the ould gun didn't do the work for us."

.....
Meanwhile Nora was having a unique experience. Father Tom was from home when she arrived, and she found Mrs. Dillon in anything but good humour. Father Pat had the misfortune to suggest, in kindness no doubt, that his servant would—on Sunday, give the old woman a hand with the cooking, but that young lady took time by the forelock and had already given Mrs. Dillon a call.

Now, though Mrs. Dillon resented to some extent the introduction of outsiders, she would have been willing enough to accept such help as was available when the stress of cooking was on; but to have a "hoity-toity poking her nose in the day before—just for all the world as if nobody but herself knew nothing," required more equanimity than Mrs. Dillon had at command.

"You're a wonderful old woman, Mrs. Dillon,"

said Nora, when she had been shown round; "you have everything in apple-pie order."

"Now, ma'am," said Mrs. Dillon, impressively, "will you just listen to me for one minute? Father Tom will sit there"—indicating the head of the table—"you over here, and Mr. Hugh there; is that right?"

"Yes," said Nora—and with a smile—"we, you know, are supposed to be the distinguished guests."

"Well, I'm better pleased of that than I could tell; sure I knew all along she wasn't much with all her chattering."

"Who?" enquired Nora.

"Delia—Delia Dempsey, ma'am."

"I'm sure you'll manage all right, Mrs. Dillon," said Nora.

"Well, you see, ma'am, I was kind of mixed in my mind. I didn't like to put Father Pat 'out' when he told me about her; and still I couldn't be sure she wouldn't be doing any damage with her new-fangled notions. But all the same, I could put up with her very well if she hadn't come cross-examining me to-day; 'had I this? and had I that?' just for all the world as if she was a born cook,—and then nothing would do her but torment me about that young scamp, Tim Reilly."

"Oh, that's the young fellow at the Manor," said Nora. "I think Tim is rather a good sort, Mrs. Dillon."

“Oh, he's right enough, ma'am ; but she thinks there isn't the likes of him in the country.”

“So Tim is paying his court to Delia, Mrs. Dillon.”

“Well, now, ma'am, that's what's troubling her ; and sure, right enough, the poor thing is to be pitied.”

“Why ?” enquired Nora, somewhat mystified.

“Well, you see, ma'am, they were awfully great, and he'd come over every evening to have a chat with her—and jolly he used to be,—but lately he hasn't a word out of him—but answering just as he was spoken to.”

“Why doesn't she try the tongs, Mrs. Dillon ?”

“Ah, now, ma'am,” said Mrs. Dillon with a pout, “I get enough about the same tongs from Father Pat.”

“But you have been using it again lately, Mrs. Dillon,” said Nora archly. “Now, don't be denying it. I met the disconsolate hero not long since.”

“Well, ma'am, dear, you're nothing short of a witch. To think you could find that out, now ; but maybe the ould fool was telling you.”

“How did it happen, Mrs. Dillon ?” enquired Nora, innocently,—disregarding the old housekeeper's query.

“Well, now, ma'am, there's one thing you must promise me, and that is, that you won't breathe a word of it to Father Pat.”

“Oh, Mrs. Dillon! do you think I’d abuse your confidence so?” pleaded Nora, in as virtuously indignant a tone as she could command.

“Oh! you needn’t be getting huffed, ma’am. I’m not alluding anything to you,—but Father Pat is a regular tease. Well, ma’am, since you left us, Mr. O’Halloran came in as usual, and of course I used to treat him just like you used yourself; never thinking of nothing but Father Tom’s orders; but being a little lonely-like I fell in on the habit of listening to him, and ne’er a word of the gibberish ever he spoke; and with that he began calling of an evening, and everything was going on grand till to-day when ould Sam Ginty, the horse dealer, called to see Father Tom’s little mare that wasn’t ‘chewing her oats.’ Sam was sitting over there on the stool—telling about all the miracles he worked on horses—and I was fair sick of listening to him, when who comes in on the door but Mr. O’Halloran.

“He was nice and mannerly indeed to me, ma’am, bidding me good evening and hoping I was well,—but the minute he spied Sam sitting in the corner he changed colour—ne’er a word of lie I’m telling, ma’am—and then he looked at me,—then looked at Sam,—and then back again at me.”

“‘Foine dee, Mr. O’Helleran,’ said Sam.”

“‘Sir,’ said Mr. O’Halloran,—but sure I couldn’t tell you what he said, ma’am,” and Mrs. Dillon burst into a hearty laugh,—“but his grand talk meant that

only he was stopped from spouting out of that ould book of his, he'd drown Sam in a jiffy. Sam was flying too high, he said, or something like that,—and that it would be fitter for him to keep his blarney for Mrs. Durcan, and not to be looking to them above him ; and the end of it was that Sam wasn't long taking his hook.

“ Well, what did the ould fool do then, but sit down on the stool, and look at me out of the corner of his eye,—*just for all the world like poor Barney did*,—God be good to him.”

“ ‘ What do you mean, you ould humbug ? ’ says I, vexed enough ; and with that he fell on his knees and began muttering something about idles, and angels, and something shaping out something else, and before I rightly knew what I was doing, I up with the tongs and gave him three ‘ mulvadhars ’ as hard as I could, and off he went as quiet as a lamb ; and mind you, ma’am, no more vexed than if it was with a feather I was after thrashing him.”

“ The tongs will be your undoing, Mrs. Dillon,” said Nora with a merry laugh.

“ Botheration on you, ma’am, but you think everyone must be thinking of marrying ; but do you know, ma’am ? I was sorry sure enough for the poor fellow,—*he took it so gentle*.”

“ History repeating itself,” said Nora ; “ it only remains now to draw up the deeds,”—and Hugh arriving at this moment, she continued,—“ just as I

thought, Hugh. Mrs. Dillon and Mr. O'Halloran are about following our example."

"Don't be heeding her, Mr. Hugh," said Mrs. Dillon, not displeased; "she thinks everyone has the young notions of herself,—a nice time of day for an ould woman like me to be thinking of marriage."

"But sure you cannot help it, Mrs. Dillon;—that's the peculiar virtue of the tongs," pleaded Nora.

"Warmest congratulations, Mrs. Dillon," said Hugh; "it's your turn now to be merciful."

"How, Mr. Hugh?" enquired Mrs. Dillon.

"By removing your own interdiction, Mrs. Dillon, now that you've substituted the tongs for the rolling-pin."

"You're just as bad as any of them, Mr. Hugh," said Mrs. Dillon;—"but any chance at all he has,—it's by leaving the gibberish behind him."

"Poetry and love-making go hand in hand, Mrs. Dillon,—and I wouldn't be surprised to hear yourself quoting Shakespeare one of these days."

"Come, ma'am," said Mrs. Dillon, "for mercy's sake be bringing him with you—he's worse than Father Pat."

"But he's only telling you what's likely to happen, Mrs. Dillon," said Nora roguishly, "and sure no one could blame you."

"Mr. Hugh!" said Mrs. Dillon appealingly, "like a good man, bring her with you—she's the worst of the whole lot."

“I was thinking you'd find worse than myself, Mrs. Dillon,” said Hugh, “but, by the way, Father Tom was anxious to see this. I'll leave it here with you,” and he laid Meehaul's legacy on the table.

“Oh, glory be to God!” exclaimed Mrs. Dillon, “leave it with Father Tom's—and don't be throwing it about like that. I'm never easy when one of them things is round.”

“There's no danger, Mrs. Dillon, but I'll leave it with the other one—just to show there's no coolness between us”—and having deposited the legacy in the little niche where Father Tom's fowling piece was, he and Nora bade Mrs. Dillon “Good night,” and proceeded on their way home,—Nora reciting Mrs. Dillon's troubles for Hugh's edification.

As they approached the garden gate a man crouched low among the bushes, but they passed up the path unconscious of his presence.

“No! I couldn't be mistaken; he hadn't it with him;—now I wonder where was the wife? at Father Tom's as sure as I'm livin'. Why man!” he apostrophized, “that'd just suit to a T”; and our old friend, Shaun the bailiff, quietly slunk away.

Half an hour later the old villain was interviewing Mr. Howard at the Manor, and it was evident from the manner in which that worthy received his suggestions that he was much impressed with a sense of Shaun's peculiar cleverness.

“By gad, Shaun,” he exclaimed, when the bailiff

had fully propounded his views, "you're a born genius."

"Janius or no janius," said Shaun, "we're bound to bag the whole three, and that'll put an end to the conspirin'."



CHAPTER XIX.

THE THUNDER-CLAP.

SUNDAY found a quiet little gathering mustered in Father Tom's dining-room, and to Mrs. Dillon's delight, Nora and Hugh occupied the respective places she had—in her controversy with the "hoity-toity,"—assigned them;—a circumstance which she was not slow to bring under the notice of the now-vanquished Delia.

Father Tom occupied pride of place; Father Pat was in charge of the minor joints; while Doctor Mullaney and his sedate little wife, with Miss McNulty, Father Pat's sister, completed the circle.

And whether in consequence of Delia's superior knowledge of the culinary art, or of Mrs. Dillon's care in preventing her "doing any damage with her new-fangled notions," the cooking was perfection

personified,—and the dinner as enjoyable as well could be. Father Tom was happy as a child with a new toy, while Father Pat kept the company in roars of laughter with his sallies at the expense of Hugh's poetry.

"Now," said Father Tom, when the cloth had been removed, "I think we'll insist on the ladies remaining"; and in a felicitous speech, rich in encomiums of Nora, he toasted the health of the fair bride and the happy bridegroom; and when Father Pat and Dr. Mullaney had contributed their tributes, and Hugh had suitably responded, Nora declared she couldn't recognize herself in her new feathers.

"You must allow for the imagery," said Father Pat with a smile. "I noticed that even Father Tom fell into the poetic strain."

"No," said Father Tom, "no figurative language for me. Nora's abilities take even a wider range than I touched on. If things went amiss she had them righted before one had time to realise that anything was wrong. If myself and Mrs. Dillon lost our tempers—which, by the way, occurred pretty frequently—she always said something which dispelled the storm clouds."

"She has a coaxing way with her, surely; eh, Hugh?" said the Doctor with a merry laugh.

"I don't know that Nora was wholly to blame," responded Hugh.

"Capital!" said the Doctor, "there must be, accord-

ing to Hugh, what the lawyers call a '*particeps criminis*'. I wonder who the accomplice is?" and the Doctor laughed heartily.

"Perhaps that song of Hugh's would enlighten us," said Father Tom.

"It probably voices his sentiments—so we shall be able to judge for ourselves," said Father Pat.

"Charming!" said the Doctor, who, by the way, was a bit of a poet himself,—but as he took care to make known—more a rhymster than anything else; "that will be the tell-truth. When an unfortunate fellow so far forgets himself as to break forth into poetry, all is up with him."

"Doesn't the Doctor speak from experience, Mrs. Mullaney?" said Nora smiling.

"He broke forth occasionally, no doubt," replied Mrs. Mullaney, "but I fear you wouldn't call it poetry."

"There you are," said the Doctor; "a man is never a prophet in his own country—or a genius among his friends."

"You have my sympathy, Doctor," said Father Pat; "but I'm all curiosity to hear my friend Hugh's rhapsody. Now, Mrs. O'Donnell, if you please?"

Nora blushed, and hoped Father Pat would not press her, but as Mrs. Mullaney expressed a wish to hear the song, she graciously complied; and there was a world of tenderness in her sweet, rich voice, as she sang:—

HUGH ASTHORE.

I ramble o'er the meadows green,
 I linger near the fairy dell,
 And mem'ry, decked in sunny sheen,
 Brings back the scenes I love so well.
 With vision bright,—with rapture wild,
 I gaze and gloat on days of yore,—
 Those happy days when Nora smiled,—
 A smile of hope for Hugh Asthore.

I muse on pleasant scenes gone by,—
 The evening walk,—the trysting tree ;—
 The light and love from Nora's eye,
 The merry laugh so gay and free.
 I dream again of sunny climes,
 And sunlit hours I spend once more ;—
 And feel the smile of olden times,—
 A smile of love for Hugh Asthore.

The sun shines gloriously and bright,
 All earth is gladdened by his ray ;
 And songsters pour their hearts' delight,
 In one long gushing roundelay.
 And my lone heart with sunshine fills,
 But Oh ! what brings it joy galore ?
 'Tis not the cadence of the rills,—
 But love's sweet whispering,—Hugh Asthore.

And Nora ! love ! till death shall end
 My span of life,—I pledge thee now—
Mavourneen oge—my best-loved friend !
 To shield from grief thy youthful brow.
 To love thee with a burning love,
 More ardent still than that of yore ;—
 To guard my gentle, priceless dove
 Shall be the aim of Hugh Asthore.

“ I heartily congratulate you, Mrs. O'Donnell,” said the merry Doctor, when the applause had subsided, “both on your magnificent voice, and on your acquittal. I think Hugh stands condemned—solely—solely.”

“You must make allowance for the circumstances, Doctor,” said Father Pat ; “that was probably written in the ‘interdiction days,’ when he was roaming the countryside—a knight errant.”

“Or a modern Rapparee,” laughed the Doctor.

“Probably,” said Father Pat ; “but he certainly looked more like Don Quixote after one of his unsuccessful escapades. I have often wondered you hadn’t thought of immortalising him in song, Doctor.”

“That reminds me,” said the Doctor, “that I have lately taken to rhyming again, and if you’ve no objection I’ll let you have the product.”

“Glorious !” said Father Pat. “Hugh, you will require all your stoicism. Come ! Doctor, give us the creation.”

The doctor finished his glass, cleared his throat, and in a deep, rich voice, sang :—

TRUE CHIVALRY.

Tho’ ’tis told in song and story,
 To our everlasting glory,
 That where shot and shell fall thickest in the fray,—
 There—amid the cannons’ rattle,
 In the clash and clang of battle,
 Erin’s sons have ever nobly led the way ;—
 On to death—or glory—hieing,—
 Each with each in courage vying ;—
 Still, kind friends, I think, with me you will agree,
 There are men in every station,
 Who’re a credit to our nation,—
 Who possess—not less than those—true chivalry.

Tho' our knights of old were noted,—
 As has oftentimes been quoted,—
 For their gallantry—to maidenhood distressed,—
 And we still with untold pleasure,
 Sing their praise in tuneful measure,—
 As the champions of the poor and the oppressed ;—
 Shielding e'er the weak and lowly,
 From a tyranny unholy ;—
 Still, kind friends, I think, with me you will agree,
 We have still in saintly Erin,
 Men as faithful and as darin',
 As the knights of old—with all their chivalry.

Tho' resplendent thro' the ages,
 In our country's history's pages,
 Shine the deeds of Erin's sons afar and near ;
 Still where danger's most a-sharing,
 You will find but few comparing
 With our gentle, kindly Soggarths—ever dear ;
 Yet tho' famed in song and story,
 Burnished o'er and o'er with glory,
 Still, kind friends, I think, with me you will agree,
 That tho' just a mere beginner,
 Father Pat came out the winner,
 When, right manfully, he acted Rapparee.

There was a thunder of applause, and the merry Doctor was being congratulated by Hugh, who, by the way, was not a little relieved at not being the hero of the piece, when a rather imperative knock at the outer door startled the company.

"A sick call," said Father Tom, "and most probably an urgent one. Well, Mrs. Dillon," he asked as the housekeeper entered the room, "any one wanting me?"

"No, Father Tom," she replied ;—"this man" ;—

she paused, and the man referred to entered the room, and addressing Father Tom, said—

“You’ll excuse this intrusion, Father, but duty demands it. *Hugh O’Donnell, you are my prisoner*”; and he laid his hand on Hugh’s shoulder.

“*Prisoner!*” exclaimed Father Tom; “what’s the meaning of this outrage? Merciful goodness! she has fainted”; and he hurried to Nora’s side.

Dr. Mullaney was on his feet in an instant, had her laid gently on the sofa, and was soon bringing his medical skill into requisition.

Father Tom was distraught; he seemed to have lost sight of the impending danger to Hugh in the presence of Nora’s pitiable condition; while Father Pat—turning to the constable, said:—

“Pray, sir, by whose authority do you enter this house to effect an arrest which could, as effectually, be accomplished at another time and place?”

“Pardon me, Father; but my orders are imperative; the warrant empowers me to search here for arms which, it is alleged, he concealed here last night.”

“Concealed arms here!” exclaimed Father Tom, roused from his stupor; “this is monstrous. He left this here last night that I might see it”; and he walked over to the corner and brought forth Meehaul’s Highland Mary; “it is a present he got from a friend.”

“Just the very thing I require,” said the constable; “of course, you’ll let me have it.”

"Certainly," replied Father Tom, "there's nothing to conceal."

"Thanks," replied the constable, taking the gun; and walking over to Hugh, who was kneeling by the sofa, he continued, "Hugh O'Donnell, you are my prisoner, and you must come with me at once."

"What?" cried Father Pat, facing the constable; "go with you—and his wife in that condition,"—and he pointed to the prostrate form of Nora.

"The duty is a painful one," said the stern law officer, "but it must be performed."

"*Duty*," echoed Father Pat, raising his eyes heavenward. "Merciful Providence! whither have justice and mercy flown from this oppressed and persecuted country? *Duty!*" he repeated, as he cast a scornful look at the man before him; "why prate of duty in the presence of such a scene. *He shall not go. No!*" he continued, and his voice had a manly ring in it, "Hugh O'Donnell shall not leave this house till his wife regains consciousness—except it be across my dead body."

Brave, generous, noble-hearted Father Pat—true type of the beloved Irish Soggarth—the friend of the afflicted and the shield of the oppressed. His words awed the officious law-officer and he slunk into a corner to await developments.

And Nora? poor faithful heart! her's was a bitter woe. Just at the very moment her happiness seemed complete, this awful announcement came to her like

a thunder-clap ; the gaunt form of a dread something loomed up before her like a storm-cloud athwart a sunlit sky—presaging sorrow and suffering ; just when her cup of bliss was filled, even to overflowing, it was thus rudely dashed from her lips ; poor faithful heart ! pierced in a moment of ecstatic bliss—little wonder if it should have ceased to beat.

“ Hugh ! Hugh ! ” she gasped when she had regained consciousness, “ are they going to take you from me, darling ? ”

Like a flash it dawned on all that they had not the remotest idea of what the charge was.

“ All a misconception, Mrs. O’Donnell,” said Father Pat, who alone retained equanimity ; “ it is merely a matter requiring explanation.”

“ But what do they say he did, Father Pat ? ” she enquired.

“ Oh, that legacy of old Meehaul’s has caused all the trouble,” replied Father Pat. “ Father Tom,” he continued, “ Mrs. Mullaney and my sister will remain with you to cheer up Mrs. O’Donnell. The Doctor and I shall go with Hugh. Now, ma’am,” he said sternly to Nora, “ no worrying ; we shall be back soon ” ; and the next moment they were gone.

“ Did ever anyone hear the likes ? ” exclaimed Mrs. Dillon when she had somewhat cooled down ; “ to think of Mr. Hugh having to go away with a fellow like that ” ; and she bustled round the kitchen,—indignation in every motion.

“Did anyone, I say?” she repeated to Miss Delia Dempsey, who was strangely silent since the arrest of Hugh; “do you hear me talking to you, I say?”

“Ma’am?” said Delia from her seat by the fire, evidently aroused from a day dream.

“Did anyone ever hear the likes of it?” repeated Mrs. Dillon.

“Of what ma’am?” asked Delia absently.

“Of what, ma’am? what, but Mr. Hugh’s arrest”; and Mrs. Dillon cast a look of profound scorn on her companion.

“That’s what has me thinking, Mrs. Dillon,” replied Delia; “you know I was telling you before about Tim; but last night he came over, darker and queerer than ever, and while we were standing at the little gate, who comes down the road but Mr. Hugh and the blacksmith; and Mr. Hugh had a gun in his hand; and just that’s what I was thinking of, Mrs. Dillon; if Mr. Hugh had any hands in it.”

“Any hands in what?” asked Mrs. Dillon.

“Oh, then, amn’t I stupid? just as if you could know what happened. One of the policemen was telling me the big house was fired into last night.”

“The big house fired into,” exclaimed Mrs. Dillon, “but, my God, surely no one could think of bringing Mr. Hugh into such dirty work. Do you mean to say Reilly was hinting at Mr. Hugh?”

“Sure you don’t understand the case at all, Mrs. Dillon,” said Delia; “isn’t that what has me worried.

Look at how Tim was for the week; and then the house fired into last night. Do you know, Mrs. Dillon, what I was laying out? Tim was put up to it, as sure as I'm sitting here; he knew they were coming, and that's what had him troubled."

"Well, Miss Dempsey," said Mrs. Dillon, with an emphasis there was no mistaking, "if it's pleasing to you, there's one thing you won't be forgetting, and that is, to be 'laying out' Mr. Hugh's name when you're talking of Tim and his dirty work"; and Mrs. Dillon went on with her work in utter silence.

"My God!" exclaimed Father Pat when he had ascertained the nature of the charge against Hugh; "this is monstrous"; but he was subjected to a fresh shock, when, on reaching the local barracks, he learned that Dermott Brennan and Donal O'Loughlin had also been arrested on the same charge.

"Matters are beginning to look serious," said the Doctor to Father Pat in an undertone, as a voice from an adjoining apartment caught his ear,—“our mutual friend does not purpose resting on his oars.”

Father Pat nodded.

"Yes!"—came from the apartment, and the voice was unmistakably that of Mr. Howard—"these, no doubt, are an important factor in the case, and clearly point to the guilty party,—but I should have been glad if the revolver were found."

"We'll make another search," said the person addressed.

The constabulary were courtesy and reticence personified; the parties had been arrested on information and would be brought before a magistrate next morning, so Father Pat and the Doctor had, perforce, to leave without learning the details.

“I wonder what Howard meant by his reference to a revolver?” enquired the Doctor as they were proceeding homewards; “could it be possible he has any clue?”

Father Pat was strangely silent.

“Doctor,” he said, as they were passing the Doctor’s gate, “come in; get out the gig; we must get at the root of this.”

In a few minutes they were cross-examining Mrs. O’Loughlin, whom they found in tears; and it was then that the Doctor recollected the return of Dermott with the remains of the gun; a circumstance which he related to Father Pat.

“Cheer up, Mrs. O’Loughlin,” said Father Pat, “all will be well; come, Doctor”; and in a few moments they were away once more, and in a short time drew up outside Hugh’s cottage.

They found the old housekeeper, Mrs. Durcan, in a rage. The police had had the audacity to invade her territory in the absence of her master—and had ransacked the place upside down.

“But with all their cuteness,” she said, “they missed it after all.”

“Missed it, Mrs. Durcan,” said Father Pat,—
“missed what?”

“Oh, troth, I’ve an inkling of what brought them, and I wouldn’t be surprised if you had hands in it yourself, Father Pat.”

“Hands in what, Mrs. Durcan?” asked Father Pat mystified.

“Oh, troth, you’re not so innocent as you pretend, Father Pat; but if you knew the whole story you wouldn’t be so hard on a body.”

“You astonish me, Mrs. Durcan. I thought you were one of my most staunch supporters.”

“So I would, your reverence; but it’s ‘donny’ I’m keepin’ entirely. The pledge is all very well for them it suits, *but I’d be a dead woman long since only for the little drop.*”

Father Pat was in roars of laughter in an instant, while the merry Doctor had to sit down to avoid a total collapse.

“I think Father Mathew himself allows a little drop—when taken medicinally,”—said the Doctor, when he had somewhat regained his composure. “You do right, Mrs. Durcan; look after your health; look after your health.”

“And, so, Mrs. Durcan,” said Father Pat, “’twas after the little drop the constables came.”

“What else, your reverence? and cute as they were they didn’t find it; ’twas in that ould taypot on the dresser all along; and though they ransacked the whole house they never once touched it.”

“Did they bring anything?” asked Father Pat.

“A few ould duds,” replied Mrs. Durcan, “but ne’er a one of them was satisfied; and I’m thinking they’ll be back again, your reverence.”

“But they won’t find the ‘little drop,’” said the Doctor with a laugh.

“Do you know, Doctor?” said Mrs. Durcan, “you’d be doing the charitablest thing ever you done in your life if you’d give me one of your own bottles to lave for the vagabones; *they wouldn’t be troubling me afterwards.*”

“Capital!” said Father Pat, and both he and the Doctor were literally convulsed at this unexpected sally of the widow. “Come!” he said to the Doctor when he recovered breath, while his companion was still shaking with laughter;—“we’ll be back again, Mrs. Durcan.”

“God bless you, Father Pat,” said the widow fervently; “but don’t let him be forgetting the medicine.”

“*Quot it,*” said the merry Doctor, mimicking Mrs. Durcan’s admirer, Sam Ginty,—“*quot it—for—’evan’s saike—quot it—or—o’ill doie!*” and the next moment he was gone.

They drove to Father Pat’s house, and after a short stay returned to Hugh’s cottage. Father Pat then gently broke the news of Hugh’s arrest to Mrs. Durcan; made some suggestions as to what had best be done under the circumstances; and having accomplished the object of his visit, they both left; Father

Pat going on to Mrs. Brennan's,—and the Doctor returning to Father Tom's.

“No magistrate till morning, Mrs. O'Donnell,” said the Doctor cheerily; “we left Hugh smiling at the difficulty he finds himself in; he'll have to put up with one night's solitary at all events;—a sort of Crown duty on the legacy”; and he indulged in a hearty laugh.

“I'm afraid 'tis no laughing matter, Doctor,” said Nora sadly.

“Well, surely, you wouldn't expect we'd all be weeping salt tears because the Crown exacts a tribute on treasure trove,” and the Doctor laughed heartier than before.

“You're unbearable, Doctor,” said Nora pettishly.

“Then I'd better be making myself scarce. Come, Maria—and you, Miss McNulty—we'll leave you at home. Of course, Father Tom, you'll be able to accommodate Mrs. O'Donnell for the night.”

“Of course! of course!” said Father Tom.

“Sick call”—said the Doctor unblushingly. “Good night, Mrs. O'Donnell; don't be fretting. Come, ladies!” and all three were soon speeding homewards.

CHAPTER XX.

HER SON'S HERITAGE.

MR. REGINALD LEVINGTON was rather ill at ease. For some time he had been guardedly making enquiries concerning the whereabouts of the former Miss Gracie Forsythe, and his efforts had been so far unsuccessful. True, he had gone about the business with a delicacy which did him credit, for though desirous of ascertaining some account of her, he was unwishful to do anything which might be construed as the result of curiosity,—or an undue interference in a matter in which he had, as it were, no *locus standi*. He was not without his doubts that the young lady herself had, by this time, come to realise the unenviable position in which she had been placed, and he felt that the innate delicacy, which prompts the supersensitive to “let concealment, like the worm in the bud, feed on the damask cheek,” might be accountable for her disappearance. And to think that he, who prided himself on what he deemed his integrity, should, to all appearance, have lent his name to a deception as mean as it was cruel. Would to heaven he had known the man's intention in time. But of what avail? Had he not himself striven with the might of an unselfish nature to win her love? Had he not seen in her the one woman

whom he regarded as his *beau ideal* of all that was charming and good. And to think that his quondam friend—his associate at the time—should have, with a baseness the most evil-minded would not have dreamt of—proved himself a contemptible cad—and though he might have conscientiously acquitted himself of any responsibility in the deplorable state of affairs, still it was not without a pang of remorse that he dwelt on the saddening circumstances.

“A lady to see you, sir!”

“What?” he exclaimed, wheeling round in his chair and confronting the servant who had broken in on his meditations,—“a lady—to—see—me.”

“Yes, sir, a lady!”

“Who is she? What does she want?”

“Don’t know, sir; shall I show her up?”

“I suppose so. I wonder who she is?”—and, nervously shifting his position, he prepared for the unwelcome and unexpected interview.

“Pardon me, Mr. Levington,” said a soft musical voice,—and the next moment a young lady stood within the room. She was rather below the average height, with a sweet innocent-looking face—singularly delicate and beautiful—deep-blue eyes with a soft but serious expression—hair of a light golden sheen, and a bearing unmistakably lady-like.

“Is it possible Mrs. ——” and Levington paused, endeavouring to hide his confusion while he warmly grasped his visitor’s hand, and led her to a seat. “My

dear madam, I am extremely glad so see you. Well, well, so you've been hiding from your friends all this time;—too bad, too bad."

"Mrs. — *what*—Mr. Levington?"

"Madam," he replied confusedly, "you take me by surprise. Might I respectfully request why you ask?"

"Mr. Levington, you will, I am sure, forgive my intrusion and my seeming impertinence,—but, really, you have been so kind, and I've no other friend to turn to in my distress"; and tears filled the sad, blue eyes. "You'll excuse me, I know,—but it was to seek this very intelligence I came here;—to enable me, Mr. Levington, to correctly register the birth of my boy."

"Great God!" he exclaimed, wincing the while, "and to me."

"Yes. Mr. Levington,—to you who should know. Won't you please tell me who I am?"

"My dear madam," he replied, and his eyes were dim with tears, "I am truly sorry if you have suffered through the fault of one whom I had looked upon as a friend. You were married in my presence to Mr. Stanley Hunter."

"And, Mr. Levington," she asked quietly, taking a parchment from a small pocket-book, "could you explain how it is that the name in the marriage certificate is Hunter Stanley?"

"Please don't ask me that, madam."

“Then you knew it was so?”

“Not when I signed the document, madam. Believe me, I should rather have cut off my right hand than sign it, had I known. I’ve learned it since I saw you last.”

“From?” she questioned.

“Is that necessary, madam?”

“Yes,” she replied firmly, “if you please, Mr. Levington,—to show me where I stand.”

“Then I regret to have to say ’twas from your husband.”

“Then you’ve—you’ve seen him since—your—your act of kindness to me.”

“Yes, but I’m afraid I cannot touch on the interview, madam;—he reminded me that it was private.”

“Then my mission fails,” she said sadly. “I had hoped that you might be in a position to acquaint me where I should find my husband; but, of course, your promise precludes you.”

“But I warned him that should you make enquiries I would not deceive you. He is at present acting as agent on his father’s property, somewhere in County Sligo.”

“Thank you, Mr. Levington. I owe you a debt of gratitude. You, at least, believed in me—and”—with tears in her eyes—“respected me.”

“Great God! madam, why not; who could do otherwise?”

“Who?” she echoed, and there was a ring in her

voice which had previously been wanting, "who? Yes, Mr. Levington, who? Were there nobody but myself concerned I could bravely bear my cross—patiently endure the mortification—but now I have to look to my boy—to see that he is not robbed of his heritage."

There was a long pause—both were deeply affected.

Levington's thoughts were truly sad ;—the sight of this poor neglected creature, who but a short twelve-months ago had won the hearts of himself and his *confreres*, flooded his soul with vain regrets, and caused him to sigh for an opportunity of in some way relieving the pain that was hers ; while hers,—ah ! who can fitly say what feelings of woe haunted the despairing soul ?

"Now," said Levington, feeling that something should be said, "perhaps you will allow me to ——"

"No ! Mr. Levington ; I have, fortunately, been able to provide for my son till something is done—and something must be done. 'Twas all very well so long as the insult and ignominy attached to myself alone,—but now I have my son's interest to safeguard. Yes, I would rather suffer death than seem to curry favour on my own account, or seek to have my legal rights acknowledged ;—but my boy—my innocent darling—has come to shape my destiny for good or ill. He must suffer no ignominy ; the finger of scorn must never be pointed at him. Come what may, Mr. Levington, he must have his birthright."

There was such a noble dignity about her as she uttered the words that Levington marvelled how any man could so demean himself as to be the means, directly or indirectly, of placing her in such a position. And to think that he was powerless in the matter. While admiring the spirit which prompted her precluding him the pleasure of ministering to her requirements, he was not without his fears that she was pursuing a policy which must necessarily entail suffering.

“And now, Mr. Levington,” she said with an artlessness that was truly pathetic, “there is one favour I would fain beg.”

“My dear Mrs. Howard,” he replied with earnestness, “you will compliment me highly by requisitioning my services, now, or at any time.”

“Thank you, Mr. Levington. What I would beg of you is, to hold this packet in trust for my boy,” and she handed him an envelope which she had just closed; “it contains my marriage certificate—such as it is—and an account of my boy’s birth properly attested. I was fortunate enough to know the matron of the hospital,—she is an old friend of my poor father. The boy is under her care, and his comfort is secured. His birth I shall register immediately.”

“But,” said Levington, as he took the envelope from her, “why do you leave them with me?”

“To safeguard my honour,—and secure the heritage of my son. God alone knows what may befall me,—

and, if the worst should happen, I feel convinced that my darling will be in safe hands."

"You honour me with the assurance," said Levington, bowing. "I shall deem it a sacred duty; but you'll excuse me, madam; could I prevail on you to ——?"

"No, Mr. Levington; I have put my hand to the plough and shall not turn back."

"Then," he said, "in return for what you consider a favour on my part, could I venture to request one on my behalf?"

"With pleasure," she replied frankly, "provided it leaves the case in my own hands."

"The favour I would beg," he replied, "is that, should you at any time need a friend, you will, irrespective of time or place, accord me the privilege."

"Yes, Mr. Levington, I give you my sacred promise; you deserve it. Good-bye—and God bless you!"—and the next moment she had gone,—while Levington was tortured with mingled thoughts of the stern reality—and the might have been.

CHAPTER XXI.

FATHER PAT'S THEORIES.

CONSTERNATION reigned supreme when it was learned that Hugh O'Donnell, Donal O'Loughlin, and Dermott Brennan had been arrested, and that the charge preferred against them was that of firing into the Manor.

At first the report was regarded as a canard, some wild story circulated by a wag; but when enquiries were made it was found that the report was but too true. An outrage had unquestionably been committed. But why associate the names of these three with such a calamitous occurrence? Surely no sane man would,—at such a time, when everything, so to speak, depended on maintaining friendly relations with the new agent,—countenance such a proceeding; and Hugh, above all, whose counsel was ever for conciliation, and whose recent marriage,—one would naturally expect,—would be almost proof in itself that the whole thing was a nightmare.

But facts are stubborn things,—and when it was ascertained that all three had already been lodged in jail,—bail having been refused,—matters began to look serious.

The Crown was very reticent ;—the ends of justice would best be met by merely asking for a remand ;—there was evidence sufficient, the authorities thought, to substantiate the charge,—but they were hopeful of obtaining additional evidence, which might incriminate others, and had no doubt the magisterial investigation could then be held.

“Why, Nora, dear,” said Father Tom, as with Father Pat and herself he was seated in the little parlour ; “the matter has only to be enquired into to establish Hugh’s innocence,—indeed I should say the innocence of all three,—for I am confident that neither Donal nor Dermott had any hand in the diabolical outrage. There can be no evidence against Hugh, at all events ; it is most probably a case of mistaken identity—or perhaps mere suspicion. Shaun, of course, would do anything ; but Mr. Howard would not, I think, be a party to any intrigue of his.”

“Oh, Father Tom,” exclaimed Nora through her tears, “you don’t know all. I feel it is the evil work of Mr. Howard” ; and she told him of the incident of some weeks ago, and of the escapade by the river bank.

“Sneak !” cried Father Tom indignantly ; “vanity—vanity, pure and simple, Nora ; but, thank God, my dear, he had to deal with a true woman. Gentlemanly, that ! Father Pat,” said Father Tom with an irony there was no mistaking.

Father Pat, who was strangely silent, merely nodded.

“Why did you not speak about the occurrence before, Nora dear?” enquired Father Tom, who, in his excitement, was pacing the floor nervously.

“Well, Father Tom, I did not wish to annoy you with the matter, and though I was indignant enough at first, I began to console myself with the reflection that he was only endeavouring to amuse himself.”

“But then the occurrence on the river bank?”

“I found out afterwards from young Reilly that it was after supposed poachers they were on that night. I had at first hoped Hugh did not recognise Mr. Howard; but I am almost sure he did.”

“Who is Reilly?” asked Father Pat.

“Tim Reilly from the cross roads, Father Pat. I nursed a little sister of his over the measles, and he’s a great friend of mine ever since.”

Father Pat nodded.

“And you never told Hugh?” said Father Tom.

“No,” replied Nora. “I merely suspected he had recognised Mr. Howard, and thought it better to say nothing about the matter.”

“You did everything for the best, Nora,” said Father Tom, resuming his seat; “but keep up a brave heart, dear,—we shall have the best available counsel for Hugh—for all of them in fact—and shall sift the whole business to the bottom; and now, my dear, you need rest;—do, like a dear child, go to your room”; and Nora, ever obedient, retired to seek a much-needed rest.

“Do you know Reilly?” enquired Father Pat, when Nora had left.

“Yes,” rejoined Father Tom. “he’s a son of the widow Reilly at the cross roads;—a quiet chap, I think. He was a boy to Mr. Herbert, and Mr. Howard kept him on.”

“Oh, is that he? I know him,” said Father Pat. “I think Delia and himself are pulling a cord.”

“The very chap,” said Father Tom with a smile; “but why do you ask?”

“I was trying to establish a theory of mine,” replied Father Pat. “By the way, matters don’t look good at present.”

“Nonsense,” replied Father Tom; “why, sure, ’tis preposterous to think of accusing any of them of such a crime.”

“But they are already charged with the crime,” said Father Pat calmly; “so that we have now to consider the pros and cons—not with regard to what we feel—but with regard to how they will appear to an unsympathetic tribunal.”

“True,” said Father Tom; “but surely there can be no evidence brought forward to connect them with the regrettable occurrence.”

“I don’t know that,” said Father Pat seriously.

“What do you mean?” enquired Father Tom anxiously.

“Well, in the first place,” replied Father Pat, “the outrage occurred on Saturday night—it is alleged

about seven o'clock. Hugh had previously called here and left Nora ; he was going for the legacy, he said. He met Malachy on the way, who told him Donal wasn't well. Hugh called in to see Donal, and found him in the little room with the door bolted. Donal came down when he heard it was Hugh, and showed him his hand,—recently injured with a gun explosion. Donal told Hugh he had repaired an old gun for Dermott ; had tried it down the bottoms with Cormac McHugh ; and that it had exploded."

"I fear an unsympathetic tribunal won't credit that, Father Pat," said Father Tom.

"Hugh told him where he was going," went on Father Pat, overlooking Father Tom's comment. "Donal went with him ; they brought back the little jewel, as Meehaul called it, and found Dermott before them ; he had called over to see if Donal had mended the gun, and had heard from Mrs. O'Loughlin of the explosion."

"So Donal's wound was caused by Dermott's gun, after all," said Father Tom, somewhat relieved.

"Donal insisted on trying the little jewel," said Father Pat, "and it went off beautifully. Hugh came on here for Nora, and, knowing you wished to see the legacy, left it here ; and, as you are aware, it was taken by the constable."

"That's delightful !" exclaimed Father Tom ; "that clearly establishes their innocence, and accounts for their movements at the very time the outrage was committed."

"Yes, so far as we are concerned," rejoined Father Pat; "but what about an unsympathetic tribunal?"

"Why," said Father Tom, "is it not plain——"

"But look at the facts," said Father Pat. "An outrage has been committed. Hugh and Donal and Dermott have been arrested on the charge; all were from home at the particular time; they had at least two guns,—one burst, injuring Donal's hand—the Crown has the remains, found in Dermott's, where Dr. Mullaney saw them. Hugh was careful not to bring his own gun lest, on examination, it should show signs of having recently been discharged; he had a gun he alleges he got by legacy some time before; but though he professed to esteem this token of regard on Meehaul's part, he did not go for the legacy till this night;—and why on this particular night?—and though it was some twenty years out of use, it will probably show signs of having been recently discharged; what for? then he takes care not to bring it home with him; leaves it here with you, considering that yours would be the last place suspected."

"But, Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Father Tom, "surely you don't mean to suggest that there is even a possibility of their having committed the outrage."

"I am merely giving you the Crown case," replied Father Pat, complacently.

"And putting it strong," said Father Tom.

"Not so strong as I might," replied Father Pat;

"there are circumstances connected with it which I trust may not reach the ear of the Crown."

"Are you serious?" enquired Father Tom.

"Quite serious," rejoined Father Pat. "After Donal had loaded the little jewel, he said, as they were about starting for the bottoms, that they'd do worse than have a slap at Shaun; that 'twould be good enough for him and he the cause of his uncle's death."

"Poor old Monahan," said Father Tom; "but you see, Father Pat, the fact that Shaun wasn't fired at shows that it was merely a joke."

"So far, so good," replied Father Pat; "but though Mrs. O'Loughlin, too, took the thing as a joke, she was uneasy they were so long away, and when she questioned Donal on his return he told her that they didn't get a chance of Shaun,—*but that that was all the information she'd get.*"

"My God!" exclaimed Father Tom, "would Hugh allow Donal to do such a calamitous thing?"

"Well," rejoined Father Pat, "if he did, he certainly deserves to find himself where he is. Donal, I knew all along, was a sort of a firebrand; and though he likely meant well he was rather impulsive; and I know myself that he attached as much blame to Mr. Howard as he did to Shaun, with regard to the death of his uncle."

"But, surely," said Father Tom, "you yourself are convinced that they had nothing to do with the outrage."

“ Oh,” said Father Pat, “ I am merely showing how the Crown could put the case, were it in possession of all the particulars I was able to get ; but of course there are many of these which the Crown cannot possibly be aware of ; the fact that Donal mentioned anything about Shaun is known only by Mrs. O’Loughlin, the Doctor and myself ; and the Doctor warned Mrs. O’Loughlin not to mention it to another soul.”

“ But,” said Father Tom, “ what do you think—honestly ? ”

“ That they have committed the outrage——”

“ What ? ” interjected Father Tom.

“ Or,” continued Father Pat, “ there is a devilishly planned conspiracy to convict them of it. The circumstances fit in so neatly that, to my mind, either the whole three actually took part in the outrage, or the outrage was planned to suit the circumstances. The outrage was committed, that’s plain enough ; the three who are accused were from home under questionable circumstances on that particular night ; and it seems to me either a case clearly pointing to their guilt, or, as I said before, a devilishly contrived conspiracy,—and by those who must have been familiar with the movements of the accused on that night.”

“ But what is to be done ? ” enquired Father Tom anxiously.

“ Well,” rejoined Father Pat, “ so far as I can judge,

I think the wisest plan is to allow matters to mature ; then we may be able to put our fingers on the conspirators."

Dr. Mullaney called to see how Nora was bearing the strain, and learned that, in obedience to Father Tom's request, she had retired to seek rest.

"Very good," said the Doctor ; "she could not do better" ; and he went over and closed the parlour door.

"I'm afraid," he continued as he returned to his seat, "that my warning was of little avail."

"Why do you think so?" asked Father Pat anxiously.

"Well," said the Doctor, who was never happier than when he was reciting his adventures, "I'll just tell you an experience I am after having. I was down at Mrs. O'Grady's attending a lady ;—strange case,—met with accident—most respectable person, name unknown,—English evidently,—and on my way home, just at the cross roads, I overtook Shaun. Thinking I might be able to succeed in drawing the old villain, I slowed down the little mare. Shaun was staggering along the road, much the worse of drink, singing a stave of a song with a refrain like, 'When a fellow's in whiskey he's frisky' ; but perhaps that's one of your temperance ditties, Father Pat?" asked the Doctor innocently.

"I'm not familiar with it," said Father Pat with a smile ; "but go on, Doctor ; one would imagine 'twas

a consultation case you were on, and that you were paid by the hour."

"' Good morning, Mr. Regan,' I began," continued the Doctor,—“in my blandest tones, ‘I hope you’re feeling well.’ The old fellow wheeled round, and, looking at me with one eye, said :—

“‘ Now, Doctor, aren’t we the lyin’ villains? I was just thinkin’ of sayin’ the same thing to yerself.’

“‘ How is that, Mr. Regan?’ I asked.

“‘ *Hope yer feelin’ well!*’ he repeated with sarcasm ; ‘it’s no use, Doctor,—you’ll be gettin’ no information from me ; but do you know, Doctor,—*there’s a quack in the ould drake yet*’ ; and puckering up the lips, the old rascal staggered on.

“I saw there was no use trying any further, so I rode on here. I’m afraid, Father Pat, Mrs. O’Loughlin hasn’t been careful.”

“’Tis strange, no doubt,” replied Father Pat.

“What did he mean by ‘the old drake’?” enquired Father Tom.

“The Doctor will explain” said Father Pat, rising from his seat. “I’ll have a walk over as far as Mrs. O’Loughlin’s.”

CHAPTER XXII.

HAMLET WITHOUT THE PRINCE.

'T WAS pitiable to behold the change. A few evenings before, the local Parliament, rich in a glory peculiarly its own, had throbbled with life and activity,—and while the senators' deliberations, be-times, embraced matters of grave moment, a vein of humour was never absent;—even when Malachy's pronouncements demanded a seriousness beyond the common, the witty shafts of the blacksmith would cause a ripple of laughter, that, though disturbing the equanimity of the old historian, contributed in no small measure to mellow,—to soften,—and to refine, ay! even when despairing hearts were filled with a sorrow begotten of a fear of impending privations, the cheery words of the merry blacksmith, while grating for the time being on those whom grief had rendered supersensitive brought hope and consolation and comfort in their train. And when weighty matters had been discussed, and hope eternal had resumed her throne,—what mirth and fun prevailed?—flashes of wit—bright as the glowing sparks from the anvil.

But now no flash illumed the dark and desolate senate house. The council chamber where the affairs of nations had been debated,—if not with statesman-

ship,—with at least no lack of epigrams;—where problematic theories on the vagaries of the curlews and their relations to meteorological phenomena had been advanced with a confidence and an earnestness worthy of a sounder thesis;—and where might be found—some “village Hampden”—some “mute inglorious Milton,”—some unpretending hero who bore unawares a glory that hath not been crowned,—was now, like even unto the chamber of death. Gloom,—a deep-seated gloom,—seemed to fill every nook and cranny;—a gloom which had, so to speak, transformed countenances, which erstwhile had shone like a bridal veil, to visages of funereal melancholy.

The neighbours had congregated to sympathise with Mrs. O'Loughlin in the sorrow that had come to her heart and home; and while the female portion tried every art to cheer, the leaders of thought had instinctively sought out the scene of their forensic triumphs;—and so we find most of our old friends collected in Donal's forge—Hamlet without the Prince—discussing the all-absorbing topic.

“I don't know what came over them at all,” said old Shemus. “I can't make it out anyway.”

“Can't make out what?” asked Malachy.

“Well, then, I don't know what, to tell you the truth, Malachy. I'm bothered entirely. Don't you see, if the big house wasn't fired into, we'd know the taking of the three was all a mistake; but knowing as it was, I don't know what to say.”

"You don't mean you suspect Donal and the others?"

"Oh, God forbid; but 'twas done anyway,—and who done it?"

"The *crucial* point," said Mr. O'Halloran solemnly from his place in the corner.

All eyes were on the learned man in an instant,—but all were disappointed. *The thing was unique.* For thirty years some of them had known the old philosopher, and during that long span, history failed to record a single pronouncement of his that was confined to three words; or one uttered outside Mrs. Dillon's domain that had not contained a quotation from his favourite author. Possibly his utterance was a quotation, but still the incongruity remained.

"Yes," acquiesced Malachy, who loved to accept as his own,—expressions above the heads of the auditors, quite irrespective of whether he understood them or not; "that's the crucial point, surely, Mr. O'Halloran."

But Mr. O'Halloran uttered never a word.

"Well," said old Roderick, who had a turn for "law points," "what I'd like we'd be doing, is, not to be arguing over little matters, when we might be getting at the root of it."

"*Cruix a cross*," interjected Mr. O'Halloran, who was evidently in a reverie.

"Yes," said Malachy, unblushingly, "cruix a cross; but Roderick dear, if only you'll let us, we'll be getting to the bottom of the whole busines."

"That's what I'm waiting for, all along," said Roderick.

"Well," said Malachy, "I'll tell ye what I know. I was over here on Saturday, but didn't see Donal; the wife said he wasn't feeling well, but I'd my doubts; and now it turns out that he got the hand hurt with Dermott's ould gun, and me warning him not to do anything with it."

"Yes," said Roderick, "and the wound will tell against him; and the ould gun was got at Dermott's; did they find anything at Mr. Hugh's?"

"An ould hat that had a hole in it, just for all the world as if it got a shot; and that's what's troubling me entirely," said Malachy.

"They say Mr. Howard or Shaun fired on the crowd," said old Terence O'Gara.

"Repeat that, sir!" interjected Mr. O'Halloran. Old Terence repeated the intelligence.

"Do you tell me that?" said Malachy; "then, if Mr. Hugh wasn't there, how in the world did the hat get injured?"

"Another thing that'll tell against them," said Roderick, with an eye to the law points.

"Yes," said Terence, "and ye didn't hear the whole news yet"; and the old musician looked around to see if all were duly impressed with the seriousness of the impending revelations.

"And what might that be?" asked Malachy.

"Well," said Terence, "I was over at Mr. Hugh's

a while ago, and I found Mrs. Durcan as merry as if she had taken Sam for life. The constables had searched the house last night, but they weren't satisfied it seems; so they came again to-day and rummaged everywhere,—and when she thought they were going again without finding anything, they came on it.”

“ ‘Why,’ said Mrs. Durcan, ‘I could scarcely keep from laughing when they seized on the taypot.’ ”

“A taypot,” said Roderick, quick to see that no incriminating point disclosed itself; “that won't be against them.”

“That's all you're good for, Roderick,” said Terence;—nettled at having been thus, as he thought, unnecessarily interrupted,—“that's all you're good for—collecting evidence; troth ye're well met,—yourself and the police,—*you do the evidence, and they do the taypots.* But about Mrs. Durcan, Malachy; she told me, 'twas one of Dr. Mullaney's bottles was in the taypot; and that that'd put them from annoying people in future.”

“Mrs. Durcan thinks herself a smart woman, but this is no time for making jokes,” said Malachy, who resented somewhat the introduction of a light vein into their deliberations, and who took this method to snub Terence for his infringement of etiquette;—“but you frightened me, Terence, when you said we hadn't heard the whole news. I thought 'twas something damaging you heard.”

“Ne'er a one of you a bad guesser,” said Terence.

“Faith, then, if he isn't,” said Roderick, “I'm thinking it's a poor chance they stand.”

“*The devil choke you!*” exclaimed Terence, losing all patience at this fresh interference on Roderick's part; “you're like one of them ould paycocks at the Doctor's—croaking for rain—and just when we want the dry weather most.”

“Roderick doesn't mean any harm,” said Malachy; “he's only collecting the law points.”

“Then he'll do the collecting himself,” said Terence. “I'll not be helping him out with it.”

“But about the news?” said Malachy, appealingly.

“Oh, the devil a word you'll hear from me about it; you've them blackened enough already.”

“Just as I was thinking myself,” said Shemus; “but where are ye drifting to? Ye know well enough they weren't mad enough to have anything to do with the shooting, and ye're doing yer best to convict them after all. What do *you say*, Mr. O'Halloran?”

“*I——merely——think,*” replied Mr. O'Halloran, significantly tapping his forehead.

It was painfully evident that there was something troubling the old philosopher. What could have affected him so? What mesmeric influence had weaned him from his allegiance to his life-long friend? What simoom had dried up the fountains? Was it grief at the catastrophe in their midst—or could it be that the tongs had effected another miracle?

"I don't know rightly what to do," said Malachy ; "the years must be telling on me, Shemus. I'm puzzled entirely."

"Do you know," said Terence, "we'll lay the whole case before Father Pat ; here he's up the boreen."

"*Eureka ! Eureka !! Eureka !!!*" exclaimed Mr. O'Halloran, bounding to his feet—stroking back the hair from his forehead—making for the doorway, and steaming down the boreen.

"I knew it'd come," said Terence ; "he was saying so little, I knew he couldn't stand it long. Them cries he let out of him was very like a paycock's. I wonder was it the talk of them upset him ?"

"I don't know," said Malachy ; "but he's in one of his tantrums, surely ;—he's talking to Father Pat."

Mr. O'Halloran met Father Pat coming up the boreen, and the two were engaged in earnest conversation. Fully ten minutes elapsed before the conference ended. Mr. O'Halloran steamed down the boreen and Father Pat came on to the forge.

"Well, Malachy," he said, "so you've come to sympathise with Mrs. O'Loughlin."

"Yes, your reverence," replied Malachy, "and sorry we are for the sad news ; but we're pitying poor Mr. O'Halloran."

"Why?" enquired Father Pat."

"He was queer-like, your reverence,—never once giving us a quotation ; and just before you came he got up of a start and began crowing like a paycock—*yoorica—yoorica—yoorica.*"

“Eureka,” said Father Pat, smiling; “well, Malachy, the crowing must have done him good, for ’twas then he made up his mind. He was in what he calls a dilemma. It appears he saw the deed committed,—was present in fact,—and knowing a little law, he was under the impression that he might be amenable under the head of what he terms ‘principals in the second degree.’ He went to some considerable trouble explaining to me the difference between ‘a strict actual immediate presence’—and ‘a constructive presence’”—and Father Pat could not repress a smile.

“If the thing gets wind,” said Roderick, shaking his head, “it’s the worst point yet.”

“His chief fear,” continued Father Pat, overlooking Roderick’s legal pronouncement, “was that,—though not a participator—he might be held responsible since he made no attempt to prevent the felony, or to apprehend the felon.”

“Wasn’t it lucky he thought of you?” said Malachy, who was delighted that the news had come to Father Pat’s ears first, as he felt sure that his reverence, who took a special interest in the three accused men, would see that no harm came to them through Mr. O’Halloran’s indiscretion. “I wonder what put it into his head, Father?”

“’Twas quite accidental,” replied Father Pat. “He told me he was pondering over the subject—but the solution would not come till Terence mentioned my name, and then, like Archimedes of old,—well”—

said Father Pat, smiling—"I suppose we'll have to accept Malachy's simile, *he began crowing like a peacock.*"

"I hope he won't be blabbing about the matter," said Roderick, who, with his legal eye, saw dangerous potentialities.

"Of course," said Father Pat, calmly, "I told him that though not bound,—legally,—he was morally under the obligation of attesting to what he knew—'Fiat justitia, ruat coelum';—'Let justice be done though the heavens should fall,' is an old saying; and personally, I think the guilty party should be made amenable."

All were thunderstruck—but none could gainsay the virtue of Father Pat's philosophy.

"How does he account for being near the Manor that night?" asked Roderick, who now—that the old philosopher had, as it were, gone over to the Philistines—brought his intellect to bear on a scheme for elucidating the untrustworthiness of evidence such as his.

"Satisfactorily, to my mind," rejoined Father Pat, and he went in to see Mrs. O'Loughlin.

"Glory be to God!" exclaimed Malachy,—“the world is turning upside down;—there, boys, the very man I'd the most dependence on, and he not alone says the three of them are only getting their due, but advises ould O'Halloran that he's bound to give evidence against them.”

“Father Pat mightn’t understand the law points,” said Roderick.

“My! oh! my!” exclaimed Malachy, grief-stricken; “and ’twas Donal had the good word for Father Pat always.”

Silence reigned for some time. All seemed to think that,—rest, as it were, of Father Pat’s help,—the accused were doomed men. To whom could they turn for support and sympathy, when one in whom all of them had the utmost confidence had so expressed himself.

“Good morrow, boys,” and our old friend, Shaun the bailiff, stood in the doorway. He was much the worse of drink, and his maudlin condition added, if possible, to his aggressiveness;—“so ye’re come to Donal’s wake before the hangin’s done at all; but were ye thinkin’ of the widow and the orphans? There’s that poor woman inside, she’ll be wantin’ a few pounds, and not a mother’s son of ye would come to her relaise; no, all the charity work is left to Shaun”; and he staggered into the forge, evidently to get a better view of those “at the wake,” staggered out again; stood at the door, and, with a leer, said,—“maybe it’s a temperance meetin’ ye’re havin’ this time; where’s the tin whistles, boys? and where’s the ring-layder? Eh, Malachy! see what ye got for following Father Pat’s plan; so that was the plan, Malachy; that’s what the ould gun was a-mendin’ for; oh, yes, Father Pat’s plan was the best;—but

he took damn good care to keep out of the danger himself."

The sound of a familiar footstep fell on Shaun's ear, and, tipsy as he was, he recognized it. Quick as thought he wheeled round,—dropped on his knee,—removed his three-quarter caroline with one hand,—saluted Father Pat with the other,—and, in a suppliant voice, said,—“*The pledge,—yer reverence,—the pledge.*”

“The pledge,” echoed Father Pat, eyeing the old villain with disdain; “the pledge—to you;—you old sycophant—you—you—reptile”; and leaving Shaun in his reverential attitude, he passed on his way.

“My seven curses——”

But Honor Marren's pail of water—coming as a second deluge—arrived with a special appropriateness as to time and place—and, like a half-drowned rat, Shaun slunk away.

Father Pat proceeded homewards,—seemingly at peace with himself and the world.

“Yes,” he soliloquised, “old Malachy was thunder-struck, and little wonder since the Parliament's law-adviser had pronounced Mr. O'Halloran's evidence conclusive.”

“Good day to your reverence, and glad I am to see you”; and old Mrs. O'Grady came out from her trim little cottage to meet the priest. “I was just thinking of going over to see your reverence.”

“Why, Mrs. O'Grady, what's the matter?” enquired Father Pat.

“Well, your reverence, I didn’t like to have anything to do with her,—and still couldn’t have the heart to refuse her the shelter.”

“Who?” asked Father Pat.

“Now, amn’t I stupid, your reverence; just as if you could know what I was talking about. It’s the lady that was hurt I mean. She was driving by—and a purty ‘*shanderandan*’ she was on,—when ould Johnny Holmes let the mare fall, and down they all came. I was looking at it all, your reverence, and thought the poor creature was killed; but she came off safe enough,—a sprained ankle—the Doctor said; but ne’er a stir she can stir from the chair.”

“Oh, by the way,” said Father Pat, “Dr. Mullaney was telling me he was attending an English lady at your place.”

“And no lie, your reverence,—a lady every inch of her; but”—and Mrs. O’Grady lowered her voice—“she won’t tell any one her name,—and that’s what’s puzzling us.”

“Possibly she has reasons for so doing,” said Father Pat. “I hope she’s improving.”

“Won’t your reverence come in to see her?” pleaded Mrs. O’Grady, who, if the truth be told, had hopes that Father Pat would elucidate the mystery.

“Perhaps I might be intruding?” said Father Pat.

“Intruding!” echoed Mrs. O’Grady, “ah, sure you couldn’t intrude on her, your reverence; she’s just like a child. She’s sitting in the little room, and

she'll be delighted to have someone to talk to. Do, your reverence, come in."

"Very good," said Father Pat. "I may possibly be of some help to her"; and, preceded by Mrs. O'Grady, he entered the little cottage.

"You were quite right, Mrs. O'Grady," said Father Pat, as after a half hour's colloquy with her visitor, he was leaving; "she is every inch a lady. Some private business in the neighbourhood she's concerned in. Take good care of her. I shall drop in occasionally to see you both"; and leaving Mrs. O'Grady in a quandary he went forth.

After a short walk he met Mr. Howard, who was on his way to town. The gout—or that old fossil, Potter—had triumphed. Old Mr. Howard, who for years had successfully combatted the attentions of both,—had at length succumbed to the strain; and the intelligence, conveyed through Messrs. Dunscombe and Dunscombe, had reached that young hopeful at a rather awkward time.

"Exceedingly sorry to learn the sad news," said Father Pat, when Mr. Howard had acquainted him of the circumstance.

"And fancy my having to return for this damned shooting business,—and within a week."

"Rather unfortunate occurrence, that," said Father Pat.

"Yes," rejoined the other with a suggestive nod, "and I fear some of the dupes will pay for their intermeddling."

"Dupes!" echoed Father Pat.

"Yes," said Mr. Howard; "surely, anyone of intelligence must know that those three ignorant men would not, of their own initiative, think of thus expressing their dissatisfaction at not having fixity of tenure."

"Possibly," rejoined Father Pat, who saw that Mr. Howard was having a "shot" at him for his theories regarding the rights of property; "but I was not aware that there is any reason for connecting the outrage with such a theory."

"You may take it from me, Father McNulty; and though their action was as cowardly as it was mean, it compares favourably with the action of those who, while encouraging them, take good care to keep out of the line of fire."

"So Shaun was saying," rejoined Father Pat calmly. "I overheard his remark that Father Pat's plan was the best,—but that he took d—— good care to keep out of the danger himself."

"Shaun is pretty blunt," said Mr. Howard.

"The only good quality he possesses," rejoined Father Pat; "and whatever may be said of the comparison in the other case, his action compares favourably with that of those who, 'willing to wound,—yet afraid to strike,' make use of insinuations—to quote your own words—which are as cowardly as they are mean."

"I don't think I mentioned your name in reference with the matter, Father McNulty," said Mr. Howard wincing.

"*That's where Shaun scores,*" said Father Pat calmly "sycophant though he is,—he is not entirely unprincipled."

"You forget yourself, Father McNulty," said Mr. Howard with warmth.

"Possibly," rejoined Father Pat, "when I associate principle with my traducers."

"You insult me," said Mr. Howard, and a fierce light came into his eyes; "do you wish me to understand that you consider me capable of stooping to anything unbecoming a gentleman?"

"Respect for my sacred calling precludes my entering on that," said Father Pat, looking the other straight in the face. "*Gentleman,*" he echoed, as if he had been thinking the matter over; "you must have very peculiar notions of the import of the word."

"What?" cried Mr. Howard, in a rage, "do you dare thus to lecture me on my conduct? *you—you—*who, not content to shelter yourself and your designs behind those ruffianly marauders, *now seek to claim immunity on account of your office.* By heavens, I shall have an explanation——"

"At the investigation," interjected Father Pat, as he proceeded on his way.

"At the investigation!" echoed Mr. Howard; "what does he mean? Ha! ha! he little knows what he's doing. Yes, Shaun is right;—'squeeze them when you have the chance'—and, by heavens, I shall have no scruples now."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CROWN CASE.

THE great day had come. The magisterial investigation into the circumstances connected with the outrage on the Manor was to be held in the local courthouse,—and all was speculation and anxiety.

The three prisoners had been brought from Sligo Jail under escort, and the officers of the Crown, weighted with a responsibility above the ordinary, assumed a seriousness of expression and a gravity of tone well calculated to impress the unsophisticated. A prosecution such as this was as momentous as a State affair,—and as rare as the Greek Calends. To a people whose only acquaintance with legal procedure was that derived from their experience of the visit of the Sheriff, the crowbar brigade, and the *posse comitatus* of police, with the consequent suffering and misery,—the law appeared a hydra-headed Gorgon. To them, rights of property were rights divine;—arbitrary use, or misuse, of absolute power, a social necessity,—a burden which they, as mere serfs, were doomed to bear so long as life lasted;—while the mere enunciation of a doctrine advocating the concession of essential rights would by them be regarded as a blasphemy.

And now three of their fellow men were to be arraigned on a charge, the gravity of which was alone equalled by their dread of the consequences. Outrage, under any shape or form, would, they felt, be punished with a rigour inspired of a desire to enforce respect for law and order ;—but an outrage such as this—a revolutionary movement, so to speak,—whose aim was to dethrone a system fondled and sustained by that same law which had been so ruthlessly contravened, had, in its very essence, all the elements of a regicidal tendency,—and they were convinced the punishment would be commensurate with the heinousness of the crime.

To say the court was crowded but feebly expresses its congested state. The leaders of thought were duly represented, and old Roderick, anxious to observe how the trained legal luminaries would “handle the law points,” had—at no inconsiderable trouble—secured a point of vantage.

Everywhere bustle and alertness prevailed. Officials in all the sacred dignity of office buzzed about, seemingly for the sole purpose of buzzing,—till at length the curtain was rung up—the Court was open.

The three prisoners looked startled at first ; the great sea of faces somewhat unnerved them ;—but as they here and there picked out acquaintances and nodded to them, the feeling wore off, and they were once more their usual selves. Nora, Mrs. Brennan, and Mrs. O’Loughlin had been accommodated with

seats near the counsel, and as their eyes met those of the prisoners, they were dim with tears.

The presiding magistrate exchanged a few words with the clerk, and the next moment the Crown Prosecutor, Mr. Meldon, was on his feet.

“Your worship,” he began, adjusting his *pince-nez* at a particular angle, and arranging and re-arranging some documents, “this is a case in which the accused are charged with firing into a dwelling-house—that of Mr. Howard—the present landlord and the then agent. The accused are tenants of his. For some considerable number of years, a Mr. Herbert—now deceased—acted as agent on the estate, and he, in his wisdom or otherwise, elected to forego carrying into effect certain rules incidental to the estate—and I may mention parenthetically—rules sanctioned by law. After Mr. Herbert’s death, the present owner, wishful to become familiar with the wants of his tenants, and anxious to ascertain how he could help to improve their condition, took over the management of the estate. All went well for some time; Mr. Howard not alone received his tenants graciously, and treated them humanely,—but actually allowed an extension of time for the payment of the rent in some cases. But your worship,—as not unfrequently happens,—there were in the district a few malcontents, who, had they been given their land free, would still fancy they had a grievance, and those thought the time opportune for organizing a conspiracy.”

Mr. Maloney, who represented the accused, intervened. He felt sorry to have to interrupt his learned friend—but he understood that though it was optional for the Crown to have made this a conspiracy charge, it had elected to do otherwise; and he was sure his worship would not allow extraneous matter to be introduced.

The Court felt that though Mr. Maloney was right in law, still a little latitude in opening a case was not unfrequently accorded counsel, and the Court would be able to sift what was evidence.

“My learned friend,” continued the Crown Prosecutor, readjusting his *pince-nez*, “who has thought well to interrupt, seems somewhat wroth that he has not to meet a conspiracy charge;—while if the Crown had included conspiracy, we should, no doubt, be treated to a scathing criticism, with thundering references to Juggernauts, etc.;—and while I am on the question of conspiracy, perhaps your worship would allow me to explain the action of the Crown, who, if it erred in the matter, erred on the side of clemency. That a conspiracy did exist, there can be no question;—meetings were held in the local forge—matters were discussed—schemes debated—and a general course of action agreed upon. My learned friend knows as well as I that those who procure, counsel, command, or abet another to commit a felony, even though absent at the time the offence was committed, are accessories,

before the fact, and as such amenable to the law. But was the offence the direct result of such a conspiracy? possibly;—but facts within the knowledge of the Crown led us to believe that, though a general conspiracy was on foot, this particular offence—personal, so to speak, to the three accused—was one carried out, not in pursuance of the general plan of the conspiracy, but on the spur of the moment, when the opportunity presented itself,—and the Crown, erring possibly on the side of clemency, elected to bring the personal charge. To proceed with the details. Mr. Howard, through his bailiff, distrained the goods of one Monahan, since deceased. This was a perfectly legal process. Monahan was uncle to the local blacksmith, Donal O'Loughlin, one of the accused. Shortly afterwards, this O'Loughlin and another of the prisoners, Hugh O'Donnell, go to an old mill, unearth a fowling-piece—return to the house of O'Loughlin—there meet the other prisoner, Dermott Brennan—and all three, after O'Loughlin has loaded the gun, leave the house. Where were they? what did they unearth the gun for? Subsequently it transpires that O'Loughlin's hand has been injured by a gun accident, and a gun, which had evidently burst, was found in Brennan's. I shall not labour the matter;—the circumstances connected with the actual attack on the house you shall have in direct evidence, and I have no doubt a *prima facie* case will be made out."

Mr. Howard stepped into the box and assumed the air of one who was somewhat bored with the proceedings.

He deposed to the taking over of the management of the estate, etc. He recollected the night the Manor was fired into; he was reading in his library at about 7.30 p.m., having returned from London that day, when he was startled by a terrific sound; gunshots and the breaking of glass co-mingled. He bounded up—seized a small revolver,—which, fortunately, was loaded,—and rushed to the door, which he opened. Outside, were three or four persons. He discharged one cartridge,—whether with effect or not he could not say. A rush was made for the door, and one of the attacking party seized him by the throat; he, in turn, seized him by the coat collar, and fired point blank at the man. He could not swear that he would recognise him, but O'Donnell was of similar stature. The revolver was wrenched from his hand, and carried away. He closed the door. Subsequently the bailiff came on the scene. The revolver now produced was the one which had been carried away on the night the house was attacked. He had ordered a distraining of the crops of the uncle of one of the accused, and he had heard ——”

“We won't mind that, if you please,” politely interjected Mr. Maloney; “you possibly heard a great many things.”

Some few hours previous to the outrage, Mr.

Howard went on to explain, he was standing at the Manor gate with the bailiff and saw two of the accused—O'Donnell and O'Loughlin—go past in the direction of the old mill; the bailiff followed them, and some time after returned, and went on towards O'Loughlin's house, through the demesne. He returned subsequently, after the outrage.

"Tell me, Mr. Howard," began Mr. Maloney, as he rose to cross-examine, "have your relations with the tenantry been harmonious?"

"Yes, and would probably continue so if the tenants had been left to themselves."

"Then you think some intermeddlers have sought to disturb this happy state of affairs?"

"Yes. I am aware that some persons hold very new-fangled ideas as to the rights of property,—and promulgating those ideas tends to make the tenants refractory."

"Quite so," acquiesced Mr. Maloney. "Would you mind giving me the names?"

"I've no objection," said Mr. Howard, who was delighted that Mr. Maloney was, as he thought, making a mess of the defence, "if you have none."

"Should be delighted," said Mr. Maloney.

"Father McNulty has so expressed himself, to myself," said Mr. Howard.

"I thought Father McNulty and yourself were fast friends."

"So I had hoped—till quite recently."

"You disagreed on some matter?"

"He insulted me," replied Mr. Howard, warmly; "in fact, had the audacity to say that my conception of the import of the word 'gentleman' was rather peculiar."

"Possibly, Father McNulty had his reasons."

"Then he should have had the manliness to state them."

"Quite so. Tell me, Mr. Howard, where were you when the outrage was committed?"

"In the library, reading."

"Eight o'clock—I think you said."

"No, sir—7.30."

"I beg your pardon; you are very exact."

"I am attesting on oath, sir."

"Quite so; I appreciate the point. Now, it could not possibly be eight o'clock?"

"No. I noticed the time when the bailiff arrived, and it was then not quite eight."

"Then we shall fix the outrage at 7.30 sharp."

"You will be quite safe in that," replied Mr. Howard, who congratulated himself on not having been caught napping when the wily lawyer suggested eight o'clock."

"Received quite a shock," said Mr. Maloney.

"Well, not exactly,—and fortunately did not lose my presence of mind."

"Wife and family much upset, I presume."

"Your worship," interposed Mr. Meldon, "my

friend is evidently wool gathering. Mr. Howard has not had the happiness."

"My learned friend speaks from experience, I hope—as to the happiness,"—blandly replied Mr. Maloney,—“but evidently objects to my rather informal mode of procedure. Well, I shall humour him and stick more to formality. Am I to understand that you are unmarried, Mr. Howard?”

“Certainly.”

“You have not yet tested hymeneal bliss?”

“No, nor am I likely for some time,” said Mr. Howard sharply.

“Then I can take it that the wife and family were not disturbed—being non-existent. Will you please take that revolver. Is that the one which was taken from you on the night of the outrage on the Manor?”

“Yes.”

“Certain?”

“Nothing more certain. I bought it while I was on the Continent. It is, as you see, a peculiarly small one; and my name is engraved on it.”

“But you might have had two.” remarked Mr. Maloney.

“No, I never had another.”

“No getting over that,” said Mr. Maloney plaintively.

“No, I swear positively that this *is* the revolver which was taken from me on the night of the outrage on the Manor.”

“Thank you, Mr. Howard; that will do,” and Mr. Maloney resumed his seat, and looked around the court, as unblushingly as if he had accomplished great things.

His Worship, the Crown Prosecutor, old Roderick, and even Mr. Howard himself, were dumbfounded. They had expected a brilliant—an exacting cross-examination; a forensic thunderbolt which would, as it were, shake to the foundations the legal edifice which the Crown had so carefully put together. *Was* Mr. Maloney wool-gathering?

Shaun the Bailiff was next examined, and deposed in detail to having been with Mr. Howard at the Manor gate, and to having followed O'Donnell and O'Loughlin. He saw them unearth the gun; he returned to the Manor, and went on to O'Loughlin's by the near cut, across the demesne. He heard O'Loughlin say in the presence of the others that they might as well have a slap at the 'ould drake'—meaning himself, that he deserved it for being the cause of his uncle's death. He followed them at a safe distance, thinking they intended attacking his house; but they went straight towards the Manor. When quite close O'Loughlin and Brennan fired—each having a gun,—the door opened; he heard another shot; saw O'Donnell rush to the door,—there was a scuffle—another shot—and shortly afterwards the three returned the way they had come; he went up to the Manor. He had no hesitation in

swearing that it was O'Loughlin and Brennan, the accused, who fired into the house on that night, and O'Donnell was present at the time. This was about 7.30. It was he, as bailiff, who carried out the distraining in Monahan's case, and Monahan was an uncle of O'Loughlin's.

"O'Loughlin had the audacity to call you 'the ould drake'," said Mr. Maloney, rising, and beaming on Shaun.

"Yes," said Shaun; "and he'll find there's a quack in me yet."

"No doubt," acquiesced Mr. Maloney. "And he further maligned you when he said you were the cause of old Monahan's death."

"He did so," said Shaun; "he thought he was ridin' the winnin' horse when he got up the hue and cry agin his honour and meself, and it's that same that made them put their foot in it."

"In what, Mr. Regan?"

"Don't you know damn well 'twas that made them fire into the big house; didn't the blacksmith himself all as much as say 'twas us that killed him."

"Yes," said Mr. Maloney, "but I wouldn't mind what the blacksmith says. I've no doubt you regretted the old man's death as much as anyone. Weren't you one of the chief mourners at his wake?"

"*Me!*" said Shaun, somewhat surprised; "ah, then, now, who tould you that?"

"I think it was Father McNulty," replied Mr. Maloney, unblushingly.

"'Twould be fitter for him," said Shaun, vindictively, "to be mindin' his own business—as I was on the same night."

"Oh, that was the night ye were after the poachers."

"Yes," said Shaun, "and I'd enough to do without attendin' wakes."

"The night Mr. Howard lost the revolver?"

"Yes," said Shaun, "the very night."

"Thank you, Mr. Regan, that will do"; and Mr. Maloney sat down, and gazed around the court as unblushingly as before,—while our old friend Roderick shed salt tears as he dwelt on the incompetency of the so-called legal luminaries. Oh! that his were the privilege of pulverizing Shaun.

The local constable was next examined. He arrested the accused men on information; they made no statement. O'Loughlin had his hand bandaged, and on examination the wound showed to be the result of a gun accident—the powder stains were quite discernible. He found, on the top of a press in Brennan's the gun (produced) which had evidently recently burst; in O'Donnell's he found the hat, the coat, and the revolver (produced). The hat was perforated evidently by a pistol bullet, and the coat was torn at the collar. O'Donnell was not at home when he went to his house to affect his arrest; he found him subsequently in Father MacDermott's; had information that O'Donnell had concealed a gun there; got the gun from Father MacDermott; the gun (pro-

duced) had evidently been discharged lately. He had visited the old mill, and under a flagstone in the corner he found the box (produced) containing an old cloth saturated with oil.

“When did you search O’Donnell’s, constable?” asked Mr. Maloney.

“Before I effected the arrest—and again next day.”

“What did you find on your first search?”

“The hat and coat produced.”

“And next day?”

“The revolver.”

“Where?”

“In a teapot on the dresser.”

“Did you search Brennan’s twice?”

“No.”

“Or O’Loughlin’s?”

“No.”

“Can you explain why you returned to O’Donnell’s next day?”

“Yes; when Mr. Howard saw the hat and coat in the barracks he recollected that his revolver had been carried off, and he expressed the view that the revolver was where the hat and coat had been found.”

“So you heard nothing about the revolver till the coat and hat had been found?”

“No.”

“You made a thorough search the first time in O’Donnell’s?”

“I would say so.”

“And as far as you know, personally, there was nothing to prevent any person—either in the interest of the Crown or otherwise—placing the revolver in the teapot in the interval?”

“Your Worship,” said Mr. Meldon, “the Crown repudiates the suggestion that has been made ;—that some one on its behalf placed the revolver there for the purpose of strengthening the chain of evidence.”

“Excuse me,” said Mr. Maloney,—“I made no such suggestion. I ask the constable what seems a self-evident fact. Now constable.”

“It was, of course,” said the constable, “possible to have placed the revolver there in the interval.”

“Thank you, constable,” said Mr. Maloney, “that will do” ; and he resumed his seat, having, the court thought, signally failed to shake the policeman’s evidence.

This closed the Crown case,—and the Court,—with a wisdom that was commendable—would test the merits of luncheon first—and those of Mr. Maloney’s eloquence afterwards.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEFENCE.

WHEN the Court re-assembled, everyone was on the tip-toe of expectation. Mr. Maloney, noted for oratorical powers of a high order, would make up for his rather common-place cross-examining.

“Your worship,” he began, in a sort of apologetic tone, which damped the enthusiasm of his admirers, “I do not purpose taking up your valuable time with a speech. (A murmur of disapprobation went round the crowded court.) I shall enter on the rebutting evidence at once. Father McNulty, please.”

Father Pat stepped into the box. Old Roderick looked at Malachy,—and Malachy looked at old Roderick. Was Maloney, not alone wool-gathering,—but mad? Fancy the idea of putting up, for the defence, a man who had already expressed himself as satisfied of the guilt of the accused!

“Do you recollect the night of old Monahan’s wake, Father McNulty?” asked Mr. Maloney.

“Yes,” said Father Pat.

“Will you please tell his worship what occurred on that night?”

“I attended the death bed of old Meehaul Henry, your worship. He commissioned me to tell Hugh O’Donnell that he left him his old gun, which he

would find under a flagstone in the mill. I went to Father MacDermott's afterwards, in company with Dr. Mullaney. I met Hugh O'Donnell and told him of the legacy. Dr. Mullaney, Hugh and myself left together. Hugh told us of an adventure he had that night on the river bank."

"Is this evidence?" asked Mr. Meldon.

"Possibly," said his worship, "he may show connection. Go on, Father McNulty, please."

"To shorten matters," went on Father Pat, "he said he was fired at by Mr. Howard. He showed us——"

"This is preposterous," said the Crown Prosecutor.

"He showed us," repeated Father Pat, "his hat, which was injured—his coat, the collar of which was torn,—and a revolver."

"Is that the hat Hugh O'Donnell showed you that night?" and Mr. Maloney handed Father Pat the hat produced by the Crown.

"Yes; this is the hat."

"And is it in the same condition as it was on that night?"

"Precisely," said Father Pat.

"Does the same apply to the coat?"

"Yes."

"Very good. Kindly take that revolver. Is that the revolver Hugh O'Donnell showed yourself and Dr. Mullaney on that night?"

"Yes."

“Certain?”

“Absolutely.”

“Now will you please tell his worship what occurred with regard to that revolver?”

“When I got it from Hugh O'Donnell, your worship,” said Father Pat, “I had it in my hand examining it when Father MacDermott came on the scene unexpectedly. I put it in my pocket, as Hugh had pledged us to secrecy. Father MacDermott brought me back to the house to arrange some parochial matter and the others passed on.”

“Do you know where that revolver was on the night of the alleged outrage?”

“Yes; *it was locked in my own cabinet.*” (Sensation in court).

“How did it come to be found in O'Donnell's, in a teapot?”

“I placed it there myself.”

“When?”

“To be exact,—about an hour after Hugh O'Donnell's arrest.”

“Is your evidence to the court, Father McNulty, that you had that particular revolver in your possession from the night of the 25th of November till one hour after Hugh O'Donnell's arrest on the night of the 3rd of December?”

“Precisely,” acquiesced Father Pat.

Mr. Maloney quietly resumed his seat.

“You and Mr. Howard are on rather unfriendly

terms," ventured the Crown prosecutor, as he rose to cross-examine.

"I wouldn't so characterise the existing relations," said Father Pat.

"You implied on a recent occasion that his conception of the import of the word 'gentleman' was rather peculiar."

"Yes, after I had had reasons for so considering."

"Perhaps your reasons may not satisfy other people, Father McNulty. Would you mind stating them?"

"Should much prefer not to be asked."

"Don't you think it unworthy of your sacred office to base conclusions—especially as to one's character—on local gossip or old women's twaddle?"

"I regret that you have considered it necessary to introduce my sacred office into the matter, for it, and the insinuation, compel me to explain; which I do with reluctance. Your worship," he continued, "when I was betrayed into this unhappy remark I was after having a rather painful interview with his wife."

Mr. Meldon held a hurried conference with Mr. Howard.

"With one who claims to be his wife, possibly," said the Crown prosecutor with a covert sneer.

"And one who—as I was careful to ascertain,—can substantiate that claim. She is in court at present and available as a witness, at your discretion," said Father Pat calmly.

"Thank you, Father McNulty; we shall take it

that you were somewhat upset after your painful interview with the supposed wife of Mr. Howard. So much for that. I understand you hold rather strange views as to the rights of property, and freely give expression to those views?"

"Recognizing with Milton," said Father Pat, "that of all liberties, no liberty is so great as to think, to believe, to speak, and to utter with conscience."

"And you have no qualms of conscience—now?"

"None whatever?"

"Very good. Now as to this legerdemain business with the revolver—I presume you were careful to follow the professional 'technique' and 'effect the pass' unobserved?"

"No," said Father Pat unruffled, "'twas quite the other way about. I was careful to secure the services of what is known in the profession as a 'confederate,'—Dr. Mullaney was present at the time."

"What induced you to introduce the revolver into the case at all?" asked Mr. Meldon, who had apparently begun to realise that he had missed the expected hit in the 'legerdemain' business.

"A conviction that it would—if found—be used against the prisoners."

"Telepathy?" sneered Mr. Meldon.

"Not exactly that," said Father Pat; "it was more an evolutionary process."

"Would you mind detailing the gradual development, Father McNulty?"

“I went to the barracks with Hugh O’Donnell,” said Father Pat, “and there heard Mr. Howard’s remarks about the revolver—I then went on to Mrs. O’Loughlin’s, and, after hearing from her what did actually take place, I felt convinced that the outrage was organized to fit in with the circumstances. I next visited O’Donnell’s, and while there the thought flashed across my mind, that, possibly, the organizers would now make use of the hat and coat in connection with the alleged outrage,—and it was then I conceived the ‘legerdemain’ idea,—that of introducing the revolver into the case.”

“Very good,” said Mr. Meldon. “Knowing, as you did, that the hat and coat had been injured on a former occasion,—and believing, as you state, that the organizers were contemplating introducing them as a new strengthening element,—by what scientific mode of reasoning did you consider it necessary to introduce the revolver?—realising, as you must have, that you would be able to satisfy the court that the coat and hat had previously been injured.”

“The science whose chief aim is to ascertain the principles on which all valid reasoning depends. There was nothing, so far as I was aware, to establish the fact that the hat and coat had not been used at the alleged outrage; but with the revolver it was different. ’Twas in my possession on that night, and its inclusion in the charge would confirm the soundness of my reasoning,—which I have no doubt you begin to realise yourself.”

"It does not necessarily follow, Father McNulty, that those who fail to see eye to eye with you suffer from impaired vision."

"No," rejoined Father Pat, "but none are so blind as those who will not see."

Dr. Mullaney corroborated Father McNulty's evidence. He saw Father Pat put the revolver in the teapot, and the revolver produced was the one.

"Could you tell me, Doctor," asked Mr. Meldon, who rose to cross-examine, "where this revolver was at the time of the outrage?"

"No."

"Then, so far as you know, it was possible for Hugh O'Donnell to have given Father McNulty this revolver after his arrest."

"No," said Dr. Mullaney. "I went with Father McNulty to his house. When we arrived in the parlour he opened a cabinet which was locked, took out this revolver and put it in his pocket,—and I saw him place it in the teapot. This was after Hugh O'Donnell's arrest."

As the Doctor was stepping down, Father Pat whispered, "bring in Mrs. Dillon."

Mrs. Dillon was accordingly brought in, and, to the astonishment of all, was accommodated with a seat beside the counsel.

"Now Mr. O'Halloran, if you please," said Mr. Maloney.

Mr. O'Halloran arose—expanded his chest to its

fullest capacity—carefully brushed back the hair from his forehead, and strode into the box. He cast a triumphant look around the court—pent-up excitement and excess of Shakespearean lore seemed to swell within him—and while old Terence was momentarily awaiting the “paycock’s crow”—the fact was, Mr. O’Halloran was back in the hallowed past;—his worship, the learned counsel, ay! even the walls of the legal edifice had vanished into thin air;—visions of the Roman Forum, with all its splendour, caused his breast to heave with pardonable pride; his was the privilege and his the duty, to show to the world that oratorical power had not degenerated;—and his would be for evermore the proud boast that the mantle of Mark Antony had not fallen on unworthy shoulders. But—alas!—his eyes rested on Mrs. Dillon—and his day-dream was o’er.

Examined by Mr. Maloney, he deposed that he recollected the night the outrage was said to have been committed; he was on that night suffering from an attack of what he might call neurosthenia. At about eight o’clock he found himself listlessly wandering in the Manor grounds; the Manor was then intact. He lay down under one of the spreading beeches, communing with the wonder-wounded stars. At about 9.30 or 10 p.m. he saw a person approach the Manor; he had a gun which he discharged—shattering a window; the individual reloaded the gun and again fired—shattering another window; he then

left; the person who fired was Shaun Regan, the bailiff.

"You were suffering from neurosthenia on this particular night?" said Mr. Meldon.

"Yes, sir."

"When did you thus suffer before?"

"Have no recollection, sir."

"You were roaming about the demesne grounds at ten o'clock on this particular night."

"Yes, sir."

"When were you thus roaming before?"

"Have no recollection, sir."

"Could you explain the coincidence—how it was under this neurosthenic mania, on this particular night, and on this particular night alone—you happened to be roaming in the Manor grounds?"

"Unfortunately my lips are sealed, sir. Chivalry demands that I bear whatever misrepresentation be attached to my conduct,—rather than forget what becomes a gentleman and a man of honour."

"Then you decline to account for your presence in the Manor grounds on this particular night?"

"Most respectfully, my good sir."

"Very good," said the Crown Prosecutor, "the Court will know what importance to attach to evidence such as that."

"One moment, Mr. O'Halloran, if you please," and Mr. Maloney rose to re-examine. "My friend, Mr. Meldon, not knowing the circumstances—is

under the impression that you have invented this story."

"A most outrageous hypothesis," protested Mr. O'Halloran.

"While you merely wish to follow the canons of chivalry," said Mr. Maloney.

"Most unquestionably so."

"Well, I have consulted the interested party,—and she assures me she has no objection to have her name mentioned. Now, Mr. O'Halloran, is it not a fact that you entertain a warm affection for my friend, Mrs. Dillon here?"

"Having her gracious permission to advert to the matter," said Mr. O'Halloran, bowing to the idol of his affections, "it is my proud privilege to own the soft impeachment."

"And on this particular night—some of those trifles light as air—disturbed the harmony; and if I may be permitted to disclose purely amatory matters, she—affectionately—requisitioned—the tongs."

"Quite so,—most appropriate term—*affectionately*—but, unfortunately, I had not then so known."

"And you—to soothe your weary soul—sought companionship with the wonder-wounded stars."

"Conjured them, so to speak."

"And this is your explanation as to your presence in the Manor grounds on that night?"

"Yes, sir; given in deference to the expressed wish of the interested party"

"Thank you, Mr. O'Halloran, that will do."

"Timothy Reilly," said Mr. Maloney, and as the young man advanced to take his seat he was the cynosure of all eyes. He was a good-looking chap of some twenty years of age, with a pleasing cast of countenance; his general appearance tending to impress, rather than otherwise. He entered the box with something approaching apprehension, and cast a furtive glance at Mr. Howard.

He deposed that he was in the employment of Mr. Howard; he recollected the night of Monahan's wake; was down on the river on that night with Mr. Howard and the bailiff. Mr. Howard sent him to search for a revolver; he did not find it; he recollected the night the Manor was fired into.

"Did you hear any shots?" asked Mr. Maloney.

"Yes, sir, two."

"Could you say what time it was?"

"About ten o'clock, sir."

"Where were you when the first shot was fired?"

"At the back of the house, sir."

"What did you do, then?"

"I ran to the front, sir."

"What happened then?"

"Another shot was fired."

"Did you see anyone there?"

"Yes, sir. I saw a man with a gun."

"Who was it?"

"Mister Regan, sir."

"That's the gentleman known as Shaun, the bailiff?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good," said Mr. Maloney. That will do."

Mr. Meldon, who was engaged in conversation with Mr. Howard, did not cross-examine.

Cormac McHugh deposed that on the day of the alleged outrage he was in O'Loughlin's forge; the blacksmith had a gun; they went down the bottoms; the gun burst, injuring the blacksmith's hand; this was about three o'clock p.m.; the gun produced was the gun which had burst on that occasion.

Mr. Levington, an aristocratic young man, stepped into the box.

"You were present when Mr. Howard was lawfully married in London?"

"I object," said Mr. Meldon.

"Your worship," said Mr. Maloney, "I propose to show that Mr. Howard is not a credible witness."

"I must rule against you, Mr. Maloney," said his worship. "Evidence to contradict Mr. Howard—on a collateral topic—such as his alleged marriage—being irrelevant to the issue—is not admissible.

Mr. Levington stepped down.

"Your worship," said Mr. Maloney,—seemingly for the first time rousing himself,—“I do not purpose entering on a Demosthenic harangue—with thundering references to Juggernauts, etc.—an expression I borrow from my learned friend. I shall merely go over the evidence as briefly as I may.

“What is the specific charge against the accused? that they did, on the night of the 2nd of December, fire into the dwelling house of Mr. Howard. The accused are tenants of Mr. Howard, and naturally anxious that most friendly relations should exist;—still, you are asked to believe, that, without any provocation, except the distraining of the crops of an uncle of one of them, they go and fire into this man’s house. A scuffle is alleged to have ensued;—a revolver is carried away—and a revolver produced here is sworn to positively as the revolver which was carried away that night.

“Now, where was this revolver on that night?—in Father McNulty’s cabinet. Father McNulty swears to that, positively,—and Dr. Mullaney saw him take it out of that cabinet on the following night. An incident occurred some time previously in connection with this revolver. Hugh O’Donnell, one of the prisoners, gave it to Father McNulty?—where he got it does not concern me,—though I would remind your worship that Reilly swears he was ordered back to search for a revolver, some time before the alleged outrage, and Shaun the bailiff admitted that a revolver had been lost on that particular night. A coat and hat are found in O’Donnell’s, and Mr. Howard, in Father McNulty’s hearing, said something about a revolver,—never imagining that Father McNulty knew about the occurrence on the river bank.

“Father McNulty’s theories about the concoction

of the crime to fit the circumstances ;—the strategic methods adopted by him to afford the conspirators an opportunity of using the revolver in the case, are so manifestly conclusive that comment would be superfluous.

“ Now, we come to Mr. Howard’s evidence. He swears, positively, that the outrage occurred at 7.30,—a time when we admit the accused were from home—and under circumstances which at first sight look suspicious. When I suggest eight o’clock, he indignantly resents having fixed that hour, and on my reminding him that he is very exact, he rebukes me by saying he is attesting on oath. He swears, definitely, that he never had another revolver ; that the revolver produced *is* the revolver which it is alleged was carried away on that night. Then this gentleman (?)—who is so virtuously indignant at having his conception of the word ‘ gentleman ’ questioned,—within one minute after he had the audacity to remind me that he was attesting on oath, swears that he is unmarried,—and this while his wife and the gentleman who was prepared to swear that he assisted at his marriage are present in court. What is this man’s oath worth ? this so-called gentleman whose honour is on a level with his oath. Would it not be an insult to your intelligence to labour the point ?

“ Then there is Shaun the bailiff. This ruffian swears point blank that he saw the outrage com-

mitted, and that it was the accused who committed it. Was any one who saw him in the box surprised? I could, your worship, if I so desired, have shown you that this leech—I can call him nothing else—is utterly devoid of every vestige of humanity;—an intriguing sycophant—a blood-sucking gombeen-man—a sacrilegious marauder;—but I dismiss him with the contempt he deserves.

“The constable admitted that it was on the second search—the day after the arrest—they found the revolver in O'Donnell's; and agreed with me that it was possible for any one to have placed it there in the interval.

“Mr. O'Halloran, a gentleman and a man of honour, as we all must admit, swears positively that it was Shaun who fired the shots which did the damage at the Manor,—and mark the time, 9.30 or 10 p.m. Reilly, who, I must say, appears to be a rather decent sort of chap, gave his evidence very fairly; he heard the shots—and immediately afterwards saw Shaun, the bailiff, with a gun in his hand.

“Father McNulty explains about old Meehaul's legacy. Hugh O'Donnell went to procure it. O'Loughlin, who had his hand injured—and Cormac McHugh accounts for that—went with him. Mr. Howard and Shaun saw them. Shaun followed them. Why? He saw them unearth the gun; he followed them on to O'Loughlin's; the blacksmith suggested that they would try the gun down the bottoms—but

Shaun is careful not to mention this. O'Loughlin said, in a joking mood, that they should try a slap at 'the old drake'—Shaun,—which we don't deny;—and this is served up here in all its crimson glory—Hugh O'Donnell went on to Father MacDermott's, and knowing the priest was anxious to see it, left the gun there; and then we have Father McNulty's theories working out to the letter.

“Here were three men found under very questionable circumstances. Shaun was cognizant of their movements, and—I think I may assume—so, subsequently, that night, was Mr. Howard. All the elements of a grand circumstantial case were present,—it only remained for something to be done to lend them colour,—and hence we have the outrage—organized and carried out long after the circumstances, on which it is now sought to convict three innocent men, occurred.

“I say, without hesitation, that in all the annals of crime no greater crime has been perpetrated,—and I charge the conspirators in this concocted case with that crime;—and if the Crown wishes to emerge from this case with unsullied hands;—if it would impress the people with a sense of its impartiality;—if it would foster a reverence for that law which it expects us to venerate and obey;—if it would demonstrate that though Justice may appropriately be symbolized by the blind Goddess, it is not so blind as not to see when an injustice is sought to be perpetrated;—I

say it is the Crown's manifest duty to withdraw this charge—seeing, as it must see—that it is a nefarious attempt on the liberty of three respected and respectable law-abiding subjects, who expect, and deserve, and demand that the principle, *Fiat justitia ruat cælum*, be extended to them, and that the ægis of the Constitution shield one and all—quite irrespective of whether it be peer or peasant.”

Mr. Meldon rose to reply, and all eyes were on the representative of the Crown—on whose action, many felt, much depended.

“Your worship,” he began, “I—representing the Crown—knowing that the Crown seeks only to have justice done,—and seeing the complexion the defence has put on the case, do not wish to make any comment. I leave the matter entirely in your worship's hands.”

His worship refused informations—intimating that an order would be made to have the depositions forwarded to the authorities, who could then pursue whatever action they deemed advisable.

What need to dwell on after details. Happiness reigned supreme. One incident, however, cannot be overlooked.

“Boys,” said Donal, when he had recovered breath after the affectionate mauling he received from the assembled multitude, “I was right all along. *I knew there was good stuff in Father Pat if it was drawn out.*”

That night brought the realization of old Monahan's prophecy. Shaun—seeking solace for blighted hopes in the flowing bowl—was so “out of tune” with himself and his surroundings, that he mistook a neighbouring dyke for his cosy couch, and morning's dawn disclosed a piteous spectacle ;—the corpse of the erstwhile bailiff—livid and stark and cold.

A few weeks later, the Metropolitan papers, in a few lines, recorded one of those items incidental to Monte Carlo. An accusation—an altercation,—and a pistol bullet sent Mr. Howard to his—reward.



CHAPTER XXV.

ESTO PERPETUA !

SIX months have passed away, and June roses are once more blushing into blossom.

Hugh O'Donnell and his charming wife look the embodiment of content, as, seated outside their little cottage, now resplendent with its wealth of bloom, they view with pleasure the approach of Dr. Mullaney and the familiar grey mare and gig.

“Charming weather, Mrs. O'Donnell,” said the Doctor, as after throwing the reins over the gate pier

he strode up the garden path, "a paradise, ma'am, a paradise. We've fixed the hour, Hugh—two o'clock. He has to be leaving shortly afterwards. Don't forget; rather pressed for time; good day"; and with a parting salute to Mrs. O'Donnell he was gone.

"Come Nora," said Hugh, "we have not much time to spare"; and proceeding down the path they walked in the direction of Father Tom's.

At the cross-roads they were joined by Tim Reilly and Delia Dempsey.

"Congratulations at last, Tim," said Hugh; "no getting out of it, this time."

"No, Mr. Hugh," said Tim, smiling; "since Sam Ginty threw her over for Mrs. Durcan, Delia thinks it as well to make the best of a bad matter. 'When all fruit fails, welcome haws.'"

"So you're going to make Tim happy," said Nora.

"Yes, ma'am, you know the poor fellow wants looking after."

"He deserves it, at all events," said Nora. "His action in exonerating Hugh and the others was as manly as it was Irish."

"Now, ma'am, will you give over," said Tim; "what did I do but what any fellow would do?"

"I don't know that," said Nora. "Many a one in your position would have kept silent. I admired your pluck immensely, and you can always count on me as a friend."

"It isn't now I am finding that out, ma'am. Sure

if it was nothing but little Maggie's case I'd go through fire and water to serve you."

"You think too much of what I was able to do, Tim."

"No, ma'am ; and it's glad I was to be able to put a spoke in Shaun's wheel."

"Shaun was certainly a clever old rascal," said Hugh ; "a master hand at——"

"Devilment !" interposed Tim ; "the greatest scoundrel that ever breathed the breath of life—a regular ould bloodsucker."

"The tenants would certainly have given a bargain of him," said Hugh, "and don't seem to very much regret that he has shifted to other quarters."

"Warmer quarters," said Tim,— "and bad and all as he was—*I don't begrudge them to him.*"

Arrived at Father Tom's they found the whole countryside assembled. There was, evidently, some big enterprise on foot. Outside the hall door was a small table on which was a peculiar little casket. Father Tom was fluttering through the crowd with a look of mingled grief and pride,—while smiles and tears alternately lit up and bedewed the faces of the assembled throng.

"May God's blessing go with him," said old Malachy, as usual the centre of an animated group.

"Amen! amen!" fervently ejaculated our old friend, Shemus.

"Amen!" echoed old Nelly Murphy, wiping away

a tear ; “ though it’s the sad day for all of us, in one way—may the seven choirs bless the good Bishop that’s giving him the parish.”

“ It’s well he knows what he’s doing,” said old Roderick, whose legal mind discerned “ diplomacy ” in the Bishop’s action ; “ and sure it’s a consolation he’s not sending him far.”

“ Sh ! sh ! ” said old Malachy, “ here’s his reverence and the Doctor,” and the next moment the little gig drew up outside Father Tom’s.

“ What ? ” exclaimed Father Pat, “ is it possible that I’ve got to bring the whole parish with me ? ”

“ The Heavens bless you, Father Pat,” and many a tear was shed as the heartfelt invocation was echoed by all.

“ I propose Father Tom takes the chair,” said our old friend the blacksmith—the same merry twinkle in his eye—the same roguish smile illuminating his pleasant countenance.

“ And I have much pleasure in seconding the proposition of my erstwhile fellow-prisoner,” said Hugh.

Father Tom thanked them for the honour conferred ; Father Pat, meanwhile anxiously awaiting the elucidation of the mystery.

“ Reverend Chairman,” said the Doctor, “ I never made a speech in my life, and I’m not going to try now. My friend, Donal here, once remarked of Father Pat, ‘ he doesn’t say much but there’s a good deal in what he does say when he talks.’ Well, so far—at least—

as the first part is concerned, I'm going to follow the noble example; but I'm afraid you'll be disappointed in the other. My friends here,—sorry to be losing Father Pat,—but glad that his Lordship recognises his worth, are anxious that he would carry away with him, not alone their good wishes and blessings, but a little souvenir,—and I think you will agree with me that they could not present him with a more appropriate one than this,”—and the Doctor, opening the case, disclosed to view a beautifully chased silver teapot. “I have, therefore, much pleasure in presenting it to our late curate, and, as I hope, our friend, now and always,—assuring him, at the same time, that thirty thousand teapots would not hold the golden shower of blessings that go with him.”

Father Pat—amazed—took the teapot, and suspecting from its weight that the intrinsic value of the gift was concealed inside, he raised the lid,—looked within,—nodded his head,—then, with tears in his eyes, he looked around the multitude, and, foregoing formality, said,—“My heart is full—full as your cherished gift;—full of gratitude—gratitude as unalloyed as its golden store. I can only say, may God bless you, now, and for ever!”

“Doctor,” said Father Pat, subsequently, as they were assembled in Father Tom’s parlour, “you have a great deal to account for.”

—“Kindly direct your wrath against Mrs. O’Donnell,

said the Doctor,—“she is the originator—instigator—and perpetrator—all rolled in one.”

“’Twill at least be a souvenir of our Temperance days, Father Pat,” said Nora with a smile.

“And more,” said Father Pat; “it will always remind me of the happiest hour of my life,—that in which an inspiration was instrumental in preserving unsullied the good name of my dearest friends;—but the enclosure—it pains me to accept such a magnificent gift from a people who are so poorly circumstanced.”

“Who *were*, Father Pat,” corrected the Doctor;—“now that Hugh as agent will have absolute control till young Howard comes of age, we cannot very well complain.”

“No doubt,” said Father Pat, “and the tenants will always have a guardian angel in Mrs. O’Donnell.”

“A flatterer, still,” said Nora laughing.

Half an hour later the little gig drew up outside Mr. O’Halloran’s door. The learned philosopher—in shirt sleeves—was seated on a stool outside, while the former Mrs. Dillon was busily engaged within.

“Musing?” said Father Pat as he stepped down to bid the old man adieu.

“Yes! your reverence,” said our classic friend—in a tone which had lost its old-time vigour, “on the vanity of human wishes. Man wants but little here below—nor wants that little—*long*.”

“I wonder,” said Father Pat, as they drove off,

“is it his being precluded quoting Shakespeare that has so depressed him?”

“Possibly,” rejoined the Doctor, “aided by a too frequent—even though affectionate—application of the tongs.”

“And what of Sam?” asked Father Pat.

“The good woman rules the roost there, too,” said the Doctor;—“but Sam is more of a philosopher than our Shakespearean friend. He makes up for his lack of domestic bliss by devoting the greater part of his time and attention to the colts. Sam, it appears, was wishful to secure his present better-half in her maiden days;—some said it was the ‘nest egg’ he was after. He requisitioned Jimmy Durcan’s services in the matter, but the result demonstrated the truth of the proverb that it is a dangerous policy to send a bare-footed fellow looking for shoes. I happened to meet the disconsolate Sam shortly afterwards, and wishing to take a lift out of him, said, ‘Why, Sam, you missed the opportunity of your life. Jimmy Durcan is the richer by a cool thousand.’ ‘Oh! my God!’ exclaimed Sam; ‘*how I envy him!*’”

“Changed times!” said Father Pat.

“No,” said the merry Doctor, “Sam is at the old refrain—in *deadly earnest*—now.”

Dermott Brennan’s had just been reached. The young wife, who had been bustling around the kitchen, and Dermott, who had returned from the presentation meeting, welcomed them cordially,—while old

Mrs. Brennan—seated in the familiar place—was rocking the cradle.

Theirs had indeed been a long night of woe ; but with hope characteristic of the Gael they felt all along that not a tear of sacred sorrow would be lost, —and that though the time might be delayed, and the manner unexpected, God's answer would be sure to come—in God's own time and way.

“ Well, Mrs. Brennan,” said Father Pat, advancing to where the old woman sat, “ I called in to bid you good-bye.”

“ God and the Virgin go with you, Father Pat,—morning, noon and night. Come Donal ! *avourneen !* come *asthoreen machree !* we'll have to get his blessing before he goes ” ;—and, stooping over the cradle, she lifted up a fine bouncing boy—the little Donal whose coming had enthroned her reason once more,—and affectionately fondling her grandson—the living image of Dermott, who was the living image of Paudraic—she,—joined by Dermott and the young wife,—knelt down to receive the soggarth's parting benediction.

GOD'S ANSWER HAD COME—tears of sacred sorrow wafted back in clouds of mercy,—and,—conscious that the elements of a God-like union characterise the scene, typical of Our Grand Old Land in storm and in sunshine,—old age reverently bowing its silvered head,—youth and beauty happy in its holy motherhood,—stalwart manhood, proud of its responsibility, and hopeful of its accomplishment

—innocent childhood, crowing with a delight that knows no bounds,—while over all stands the young Soggarth, invoking a blessing that is to last for aye, —little wonder that WE,—wishful not to break the spell—should silently retire,—respectfully bowing to our readers, and breathing fervently the while—
ESTO PERPETUA!



“FAITHFUL EVER; AND OTHER TALES.”

By D. C. DEVINE. Dublin: DUFFY & Co.

PRESS OPINIONS.

IN “Faithful Ever ; and Other Tales,” Mr. D. C. Devine has given us a little collection of Irish stories which, on their merits, should win for themselves a very wide circle of readers. In the collection now brought together Mr. Devine displays a fine humour and liveliness and a characteristic Irish feeling that attracts the reader, and sustains his interest in the stories from beginning to end. There are no less than eleven tales altogether in the collection, each one of which is exceedingly well constructed, well told, and gives promise of much more, but it could hardly be said, much better from his prolific pen. In all respects these tales are admirable—alike in the conception and the telling—and such will be the verdict of those who secure the collection and judge it for themselves. They are all racy of the soil, full of tender pathos, and true to the letter in the doings of every-day peasant life that they so gracefully set off. The dance and the pattern and the love-making in the old countryside are all familiarly brought before the reader, with the many touches that give Irish life its charm, and, despite occasional hard fate, make it, somehow, always joyous and happy. The reader will find all this excellently re-echoed in the courtship of Phil Dalton, in the Story of Knocknashea, one of the best in the collection, who became blessed with as loving a wife as could be in Kathleen O'Connor, a characteristic colleen, one will not say Irish, as it is understood, for to the maids of what other land but Ireland does the term “colleen” apply? Interspersed through the tales are a number of ballads fit to take rank in any collection of Irish minstrelsy. The stories, it may be repeated, should find favour with many readers. As a book suitable for parish libraries it may be well recommended. It is published at 2s. by Messrs. Duffy & Co., the well known Dublin firm.—*Freeman's Journal*, Dublin.

PRESS OPINIONS.

GOOD, wholesome reading, with the true Irish ring of romance in every page of it, is D. C. Devine's "Faithful Ever; and Other Tales," a copy of which James Duffy & Co., Dublin, have sent us. There are eleven stories in the volume, the perusal of which brings us into mental contact with almost every phase of Irish character, and with almost every human emotion. Hardly necessary is it to analyse the several stories in detail; that would to some extent mar the pleasure of reading. But with love, adventure, "the tear and the smile," abounding from opening to close, the reader is hard to satisfy who will not derive keen pleasure from the book.—*Sydney Freeman's Journal.*

MR. D. C. DEVINE, of Tubbercurry, County Sligo, is to be congratulated very sincerely on the result of a literary experiment which must be reckoned bold in the Ireland of to-day, though it had many precedents at an earlier date of our history. He is the author of a series of interesting stories, and he has collected them to the number of just one short of the round dozen, and published them in the neat volume under the above title through the famous firm of James Duffy & Co., 38 Westmoreland Street, Dublin, the price being 2s. Mr. Devine is one of those rare and happy individuals who can proudly boast themselves as prophets in their own country. When his book was issued the "market" was ready. Subscribers to be counted by hundreds had forwarded their orders from the author's native county; and the result of this public spirit and patriotic desire to encourage Irish and local literature on the part of the Sligionians was that the success of the book had been assured before its publication. We do not suppose that this could have been said of any Irish literary venture for many years. Mr. Devine is a facile and racy writer. His tales are full, in parts, of the humour of the West. Whether his fancy turns to 'grave or gay,' or lively or severe, he can gallop over the hedges and fences that baulk a storyteller as well as any modern writer of romance. The long tale from which the book takes its name is a really dramatic bit of work, and "Taking the Bull by the Horns" supplies the reader with plenty of adventure and love-making, while, at the same time, it is a rattling

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story of '67. But a tale that the reader should make a specially early start at is his "Meehaul M'Cann's Wooing," which is certainly one of the truest specimens of real Irish humour that has recently been given to the public. The story is ingeniously constructed and delightfully told in a fine rollicking style, perfectly suitable to the theme.—*The Irish News*, Belfast.

THE literary productions of Mr. D. C. Devine, of Tubbercurry, have already won for their author golden opinions. This side of the Shannon, at all events, he needs no introduction to the reading public. Those who deplore the deluge of loose and lascivious literature which threatens to obliterate the old landmarks of Truth and Honour will hail the advent of a book which is at once entertaining and of a healthy strain. The author incidentally, as it were, conveys some moral lesson, dexterously interwoven with the story. It is, indeed, obvious to the most cursory reader that a high and ennobling spirit permeates the book. The work consists of about a dozen Irish stories wherein we see the joys and sorrows, the mirth and pathos, the chivalry and weakness of our kith and kin. There is no intricate highly-elaborate plot. Perhaps the author believes the sensational is already overdone. But the book abounds in thrilling incident, and we get a true presentiment of many phases of real Irish life. The stories are constructed in many cases within the setting of some well-known historical event, and the author catches up with rare success the spirit of his environment. The author, "a native of the old sod," is quite at home in his delineation of Irish character, and the physical features of his scenes are gracefully portrayed. The author seems pre-eminently successful in the domain of his humour. Mark Twain lives again in the writer who can condense into two dozen pages the rollicking story of "Meehaul M'Cann's Wooing." It is a magnificent tale. "Meehaul," we are told, "was a bachelor, and to do him justice a bachelor of long standing." And the story of his efforts to find a wife, aided by the redoubtable Teige is replete with the very essence of genuine Irish humour. The style of the author is clear and simple, rich in poetical illusion, rich in familiar Irish phrases. The characters are described with

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great minuteness. We are refreshed with the fine long list of M'Mahons, M'Carthys, O'Dohertys, O'Donnells, Daltons, O'Loughlins, O'Hallorans, and the reader is borne on from page to page with increasing interest. "Faithful Ever" will furnish interesting reading to many a household.—Literary Critic in *Western People*.

MR. D. C. DEVINE, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, deserves most hearty congratulations for his charming addition to Irish literature in the English language—"Faithful Ever ; and Other Tales." The book abounds with romantic and patriotic passages that positively grip the attention of the reader and hold him spellbound. Almost all the scenes are laid in the author's native Sligo, and surely no one can tell stories as well as one who knows every rock, stream and hill of the places in which he sets his characters. The treatment of characters shows a deep knowledge of human nature, gained after many years of close and diligent study. Irish manners and customs are handled in a deft and pleasing manner—in such a way, in fact, as makes you think you were once again among the scenes of your childhood. You seem to live, act, think and speak with "Meehaul M'Cann" and "Mollie Mulcahy." The fair and the dance are ever present in your mind—you see Darby and Sheela do the "double shuffle"; you hear the jigs and reels rolling melodiously off the fiddle; you remember the famous fiddler of your own district, who sat in the corner and rattled off rollicking airs apparently without ever getting tired.

Some of the descriptive passages in "Faithful Ever" are particularly fine and show literary merit of high order.

With what depths of beauty and imagination he envelopes the gray crumbling walls, that have stood the test of ages—symbols of our former greatness—there, as children, care-free and untrammelled as the winds of heaven, we roamed and played in nooks and crannies, and climbed in search of nests—or mayhap as feats of daring. The memory of those abbeys and castles becomes green in our minds and we long to see them again.

The Irish public in America are unhesitatingly recommended to include "Faithful Ever ; and Other Tales" in their collection.

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It will stand reading and re-reading—it will serve as one of the links that bind us eternally to the characteristics of the “Isle of Destiny”: it will in a peculiarly seductive manner bring to our minds the scenes we knew and loved so well, and it will have considerable effect in destroying that evil and slanderous literature written by enemies of our race with the object of holding up to scorn our land and our people. Published by Duffy and Co., Dublin; on sale at P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 5 Barclay Street, New York.—*American Review*.

THE tales are very well written, and with an Irish flavour decidedly refreshing. For pleasant family reading, giving a glimpse of true Irish character, Mr. Devine's book is specially recommended to Hibernian readers.—*National Hibernian*, Washington.

THE work consists of some eleven tales, all of which reflect the author's characteristic power of graphic and sympathetic description. The title story, “Faithful Ever,” is a splendidly written one. The characters are full of idealism—steadfast loyalty to their friends, and true Irishism, entirely devoid of that “stagey” burlesque which so frequently spoils a well-meant exposition of the peculiar characteristics of the Irish peasantry; while the dance at Paudraic O'Hegarty's, at which the famous Donal O'Loughlin, the Paganinni of the district extracts melody divine from the “weeny strings,” must be read to be properly appreciated. “The Nobler Choice,” an exquisite poetic rendering is a masterpiece in itself. “Meehaul M'Cann's Wooing” abounds in humour from start to finish. Taken altogether, the volume shows the work of a facile, graceful and able pen, combining pathos, humour, and feeling. We have no doubt the work will command a ready sale and be welcomed, not alone at home, but by our kindred beyond the sea, more especially the exiles from our own county.—*Sligo Champion*.

PRESS OPINIONS.

THE volume of tales by Mr. D. C. Devine, Tubbercurry, will be welcomed by all on account of its inherent literary excellence.

Those who are familiar with Mr. Devine's style need no words of ours to commend his work. The several tales are well told, the plots skilfully developed, the language pure and high-toned, by times pathetic and humorous, ever choice and mellifluous.

One has merely begun "Faithful Ever," when he is impressed with the "poetic ring" which pervades the whole, as for instance :—

"Those halls which, in the days of our country's pristine glory, re-echoed the soul-stirring strains of the harp, whose chords under the wizard touch of the flaxen-haired Ollamh awaken melodies that linger in the memory of the heart ; those halls were now deserted and in ruins—deserted I—no, thank God, not wholly, for the faithful ivy—like true friendship—clung to them in their hour of desolation, and mantled them in verdant vesture."

We could multiply examples did space permit.

For humour commend us to "Meehaul M'Cann's Wooing" and "Molly Mulcahy's Matchmaking"—as original as they are entertaining.

The Tale of '67 is skilfully set, and "Crossing the Bar," an Enniscrone adventure, almost "tragic."—*Western People*.

WE are pleased to see from advance copy of "Faithful Ever ; and Other Tales" by Mr. D. C. Devine, Tubbercurry, that our anticipations have been more than realised. The general turn out of the volume is excellent, the binding is in first-class style, and the letterpress throughout the 280 pages all that could be desired. It was, as we foreshadowed, expected that the literary effort would be a high-class one, and we have not been disappointed. From a cursory perusal of the work we note the tone throughout is of a high standard."—*Sligo Times*.

"Faithful Ever ; and Other Tales."—In this book Mr. D. C. Devine, of Tubbercurry, County Sligo, gives a very interesting collection of short stories. The tales which are told in a delightful,

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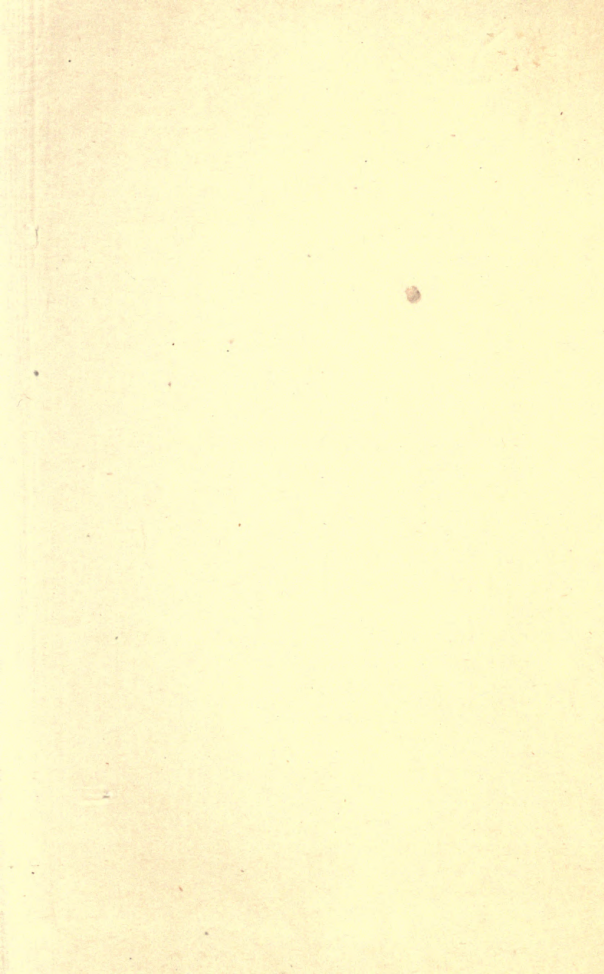
homely fashion, characteristic of the author are perfectly charming. As could only be expected, there has been a great demand for the book, about which there is a freshness and originality that is truly captivating. Mr. Devine is a facile and racy writer, and a gleam of humour permeates his work. Where all the tales are so delightful it would be invidious to state preference, but if you want a rattling story with plenty of adventure and love-making described in a pleasing and vivacious style, read "Faithful Ever,"—the tale from which the book takes its name. Particularly fascinating, and certainly one of the truest specimens of real Irish humour that has been given to the public in recent times is the tale entitled "Meehaul McCann's Wooing." It is most enjoyable, and the setting is admirable in being so true to nature. No one can rise from reading any of the series with other than feelings of undiluted pleasure. The gifted author is genuinely to be congratulated, and we hope that little time will be allowed to intervene before he provides us with more entertainment of a similar sort."—*Derry People*.

OF the stories it may be said that they are all of them interesting. "Faithful Ever, or United in Death," though it ends happily as regards the principal pair of lovers, has that tinge of romantic sentimentality so marked a characteristic of the writers at the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, which gives it an old-world flavour. Indeed, the same may be said of some of the other stories. "Knocknashea" is a pretty little idyll, in which treachery, tragedy, and romance are skilfully blended, and "Roses and Thorns" is another dainty story of the same description.—*Cork Examiner*.

THIS is a collection of tales of Irish life, written by one who has studied it with sympathy and shared the joys and sorrows of an Irish countryside. There are pages of fun and frolic and pages full of the pathos that is rarely quite absent in real Irish life. The author tells his tales well, and his book is worthy of a place amongst our too slender Irish fiction.—*Dundaik Democrat*.

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general
 consideration of the subject. It is shown that the
 theory of the subject is not yet complete, and
 that there is still much to be done in this
 respect. The author then proceeds to a detailed
 examination of the various theories which have
 been advanced, and shows that they are all
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