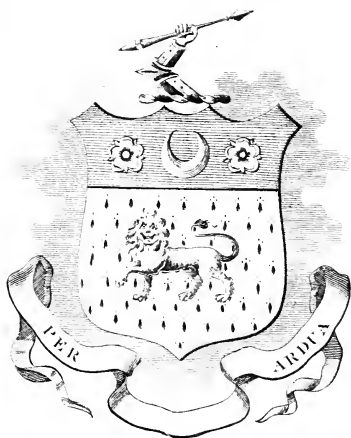


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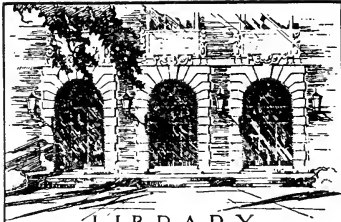
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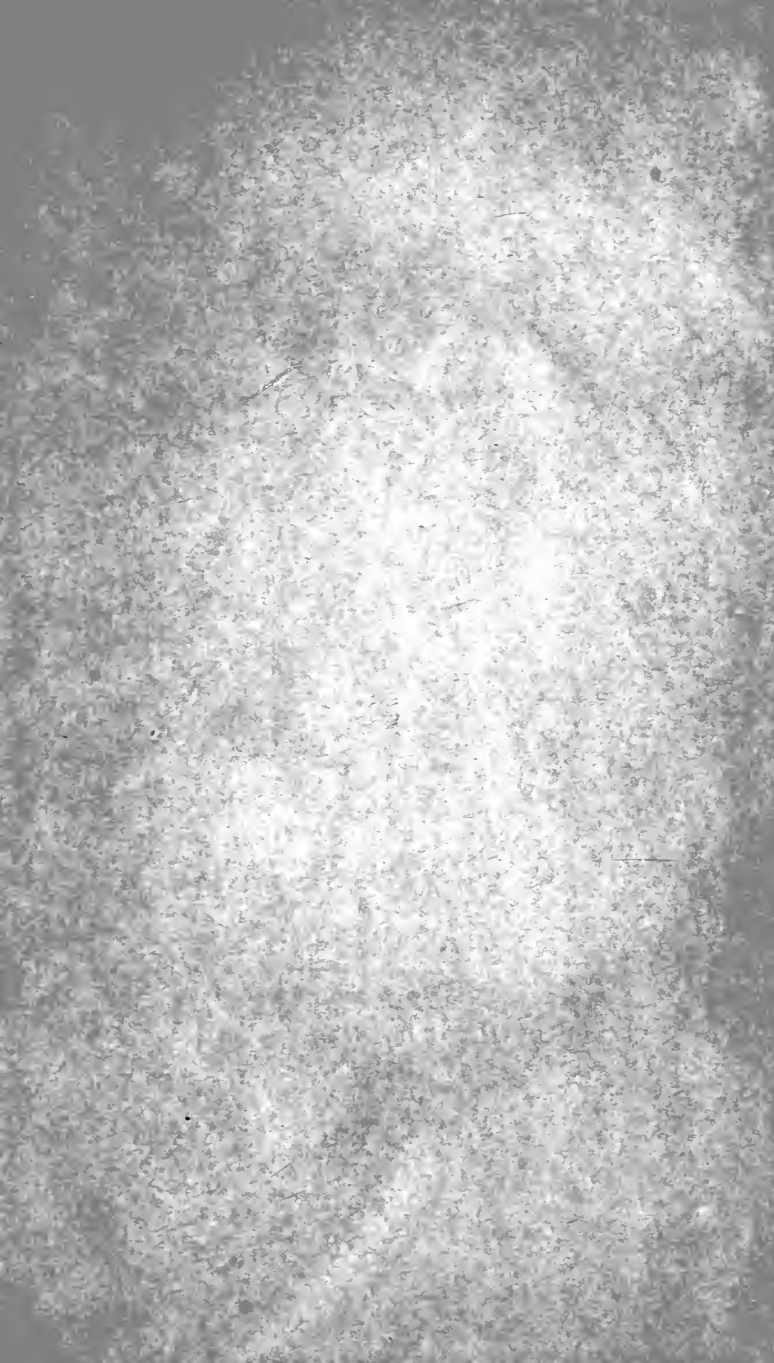


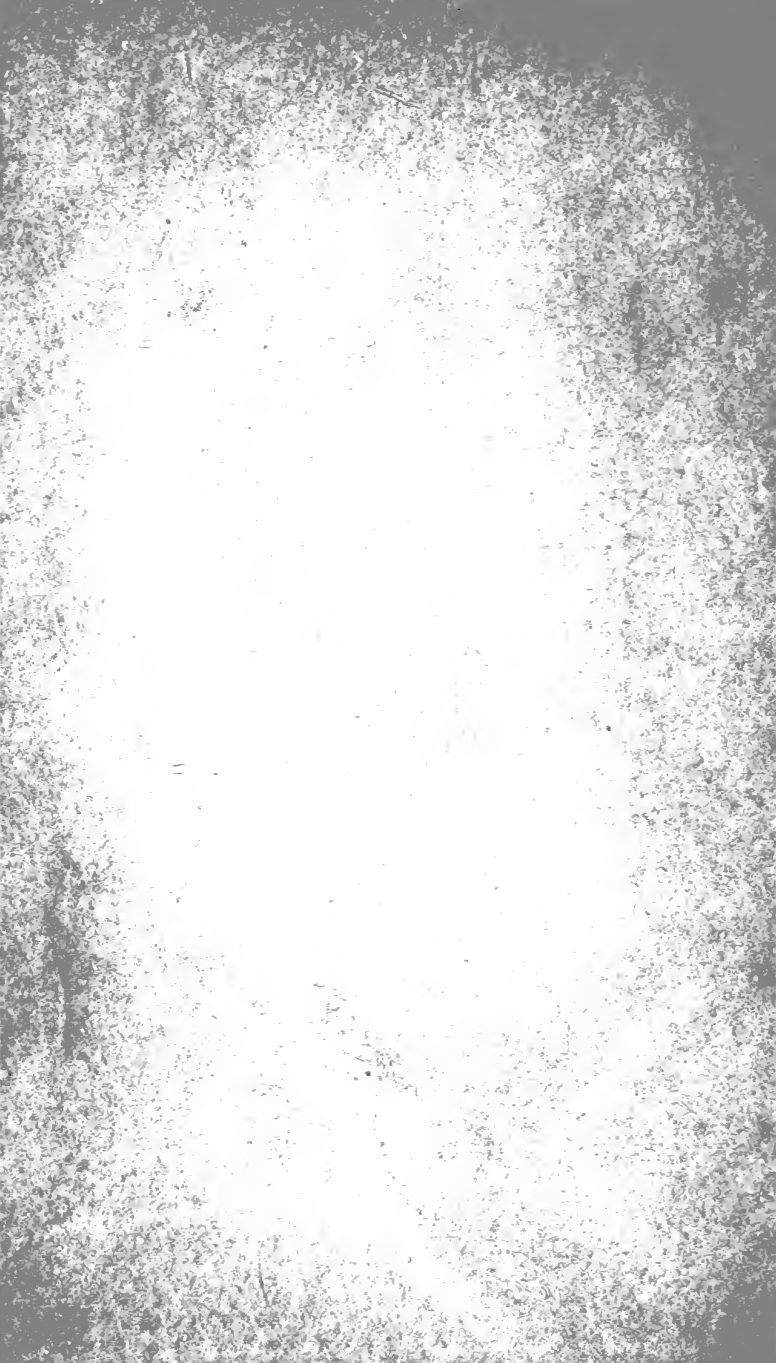
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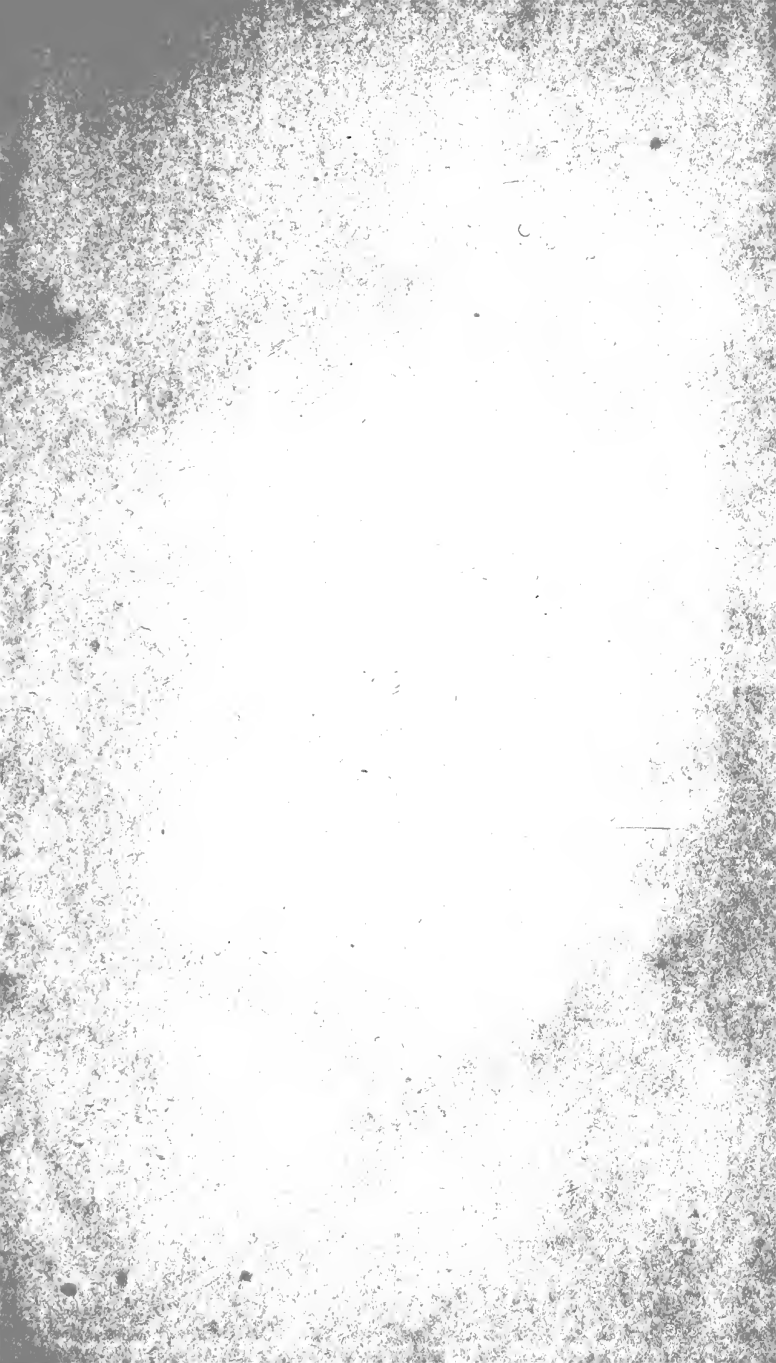
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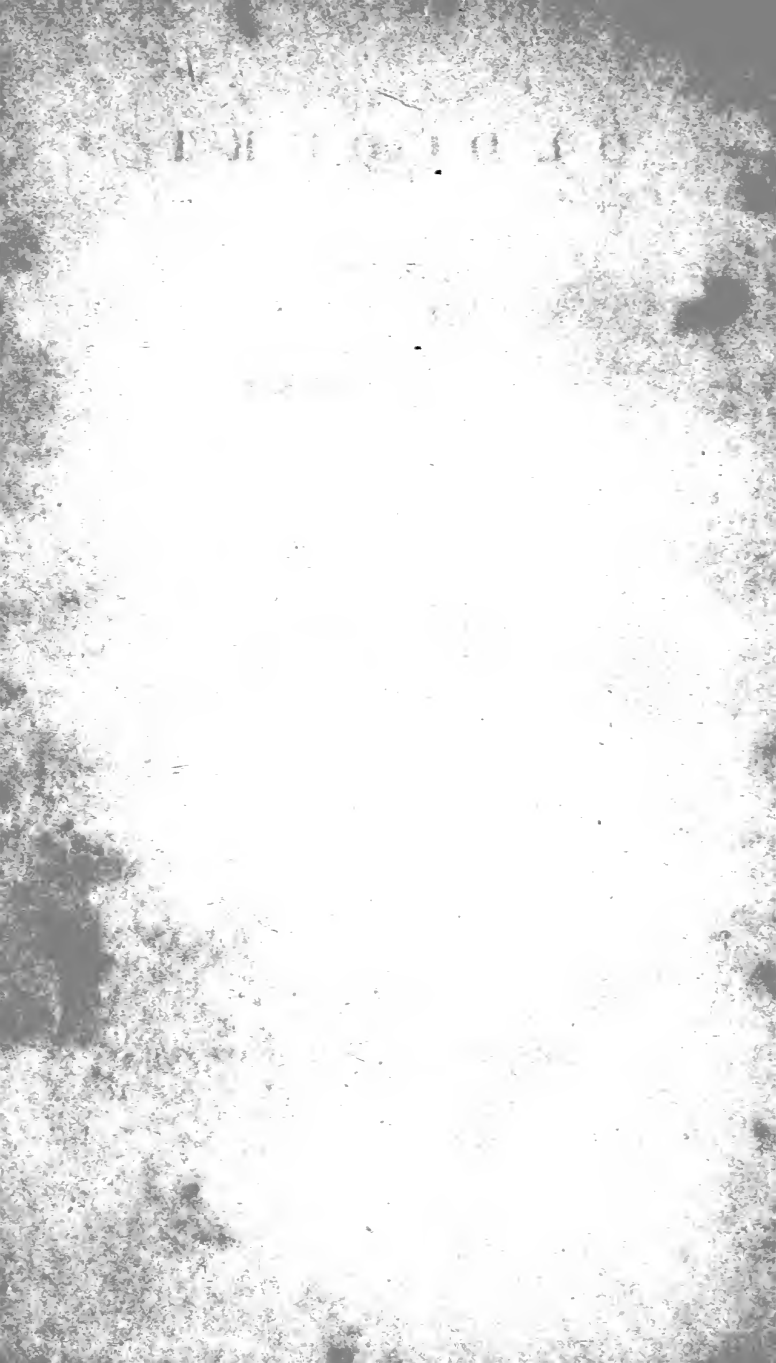
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O L D C O U R T ;

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

“ By Taste and Fashion swayed, despotic leaders,
We 're novel-writers all, or novel-readers.
The dull historian now no more prevails ;
In vain the traveller tells his idle tales.
The poet's lyre no more attention meets ;
The Muses may sing ballads in our streets.
What 's now the rage for subjects gay or grave O ?
---A novel, in three volumes, post octavo.”

Pursuits of Taste.---Canto II.

VOL. III.

LONDON :

HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1829.

LONDON :

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LEICESTER SQUARE.**

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OLDCOURT.

CHAPTER I.

THE cottage in which the widow Conolly resided, was somewhat superior to the cabins by which it was surrounded. Her husband had been a kind of small farmer, who cultivated a few acres in his own hands. He was, therefore, raised a little above the common peasant; and the tenement which he built for himself, boasted the aristocratic distinction of a chimney, the convenient arrangement of three rooms, and the luxury of two glass windows, consisting of a couple of panes each. The pig and the chickens, also, though very frequent visitors, could not be said to be domiciliated in the best apartment;

as a sty and a hen-roost were wattled off in a picturesque slope, from one of the sides of the principal edifice.

I am sorry to say, that while the family mansion was under the superintendence of my friend, Billy Conolly, it suffered some dilapidation ; the thatch was a little discomposed, and a wad of hay or straw occasionally performed the office of a pane of glass. The little embarrassments of love and war, in which he had been so un- luckily involved, had very much disturbed his domestic arrangements ; and at the period when he took the field under the command of the " ugly divil of a drill-serjeant," Castle Conolly would have been pronounced by any responsible architect of our time, as by no means in tenant- able repair.

As Conolly now approached the house of his father, he was not a little surprised at the improvement which it had undergone since he had seen it. The spirit of decency and decoration, through the agency of Biddy Farrell, had indeed done much for its exterior respectability, as well as its interior comfort. The walls looked as neat as white-wash could make them ; and sweet-briar and honey-suckle trained to over- hang the door way, gave it a look of ease and happiness, which strongly impressed the pas-

senger ; because, when there is distress within, people never think of adorning the outside of a house.

Conolly's heart acknowledged the presiding genius of Biddy Farrell, while it throbbed with emotion as he approached the ever open door. For a moment he stood unobserved, to calm his feelings, before he entered under the roof that had sheltered him so long, and that " somethin' so often tould him he should never see again."

His mother was seated in a large wicker chair, in her old place, the chimney-corner, though it was summer. She was neatly dressed in her holyday gown ; and, according to the long established costume amongst old women of her class in Ireland, with a clean coloured handkerchief, formed into a kind of cap or hood on her head, and tied under her chin. Her hands were occupied by her beads, and she seemed intent upon her prayers, by the motion of her lips, evidently repeating them to herself. A large tabby cat sat purring at her feet, with that blinking look of satisfaction which those feline favourites wear, when, like other pampered animals, they are allowed to slumber out their lives in a sinecure.

The apartment which served for kitchen and parlour was altogether well ordered and provided ;

with some attention to objects of convenience, beyond the ordinary exigencies of rustic life in Ireland. The dresser made a respectable show of delph, and well scoured wooden platters. There was a cuckoo clock ticking in a corner ; and some sweet pea, myrtle sprigs, and stock gilly-flowers, diffused their fragrance from a window, where, with their stalks in water, they leaned their heads gracefully over the brim of a brown earthen-ware mug.

Conolly, at first sight of his mother, was surprised to find she was so much shorter in stature, than when he last saw her. At an advanced period of life, the spine (from causes which, if the reader will only step into St. Thomas's Hospital, for a few minutes, Mr. Abernethy will clearly explain to him,) begins to be shortened through its whole length ; and such a general drying in of the whole system takes place, that many persons who have been tall, portly, and respectable in early and middle life, are found to degenerate sadly, and become little, shrivelled up, withered old men and women, before they die.

Now a process of this kind had been going on for a long time with the widow Conolly ; and a very considerable reduction, during her son's absence, was the consequence. Not being much

of a natural philosopher, however, he was by no means prepared for the change; and when the diminutive anatomy of his once portly parent first struck his eye, an involuntary exclamation burst from him, but luckily in an under tone, to the following effect:—

“ O blessed Saviour ! why there isn't the half of the poor woman there ! ” He was, nevertheless, satisfied of his mother's identity, though upon a smaller scale than he expected; and after a moment's pause of filial emotion, he crossed the threshold, and addressed her:—

“ Would there be one widow Conolly, ma'm, living any where here about, I wonder ? ”

To this question Mrs. Conolly, without altering her position, quietly replied:—

“ Why, then, indeed, yes, and many's the long day she has borne that name, for want of a betther; but ” putting on her spectacles and turning round, “ who is it axes for her now ? ”

The moment her decayed vision discovered the garb of a soldier, she exclaimed, starting in her chair, with a countenance of anxiety and eagerness:—

“ The heavens purtect my poor boy ! but sure a sodger's news has life or death in it for me, now ; ” with clasped hands adding, “ Oh, tell me ; tell me of my child ! ”

Conolly, at first, thought that his mother recognised him ; but, perceiving his mistake, and somewhat alarmed at her agitation, he at once allayed her apprehensions by saying,—

“ Why, then, if Billy Conolly is your boy, you may make yourself asy; for I can tell you, he is as well as I am.”

“ The blessin’s of heaven on you ! night and day, for that word of comfort to the widow’s heart,” exclaimed the poor woman ; “ the Lord be for ever praised for all his marcies !” dropping on her knees and praying aloud.

Conolly was so much affected at the evidence of his mother’s love for him, which her agitation betrayed, that with difficulty could he persevere in the part which he had assigned to himself ; and, indeed, if age had not dulled a little the “ very faculty of eyes and ears,” she must have discovered him in his emotions. But he was anxious to prepare her, in some degree, for his wooden leg, before he made himself known to her.

“ Then,” said his mother, rising from her knees, and turning to Conolly, “ you knew my poor Billy, did you, sir ?”

“ Knew him,” replied Conolly, “ faith then that you may say—as well as I know myself ; why we were always together, and sure I’d go any where to sarve him.”

“ Then, God reward you for it !” rejoined the old woman ; “ and sure I’m for ever obliged to you.”

“ Deed, then, you need’nt, at all, Mrs. Conolly,” replied her son ; “ because it’s for his own sake I’d do it, and a good right he has to expect it from me.”

“ And how” continued she, “ has the poor boy come off in those terrible wars? I’ve often been afeard of him, because I knew, when there was fightin’ goin’ on, he’d never be asy ’till he was in the thick of it ; for that was always his way, though he was as paceable and sweet timpered a boy as ever lived. Oh ! then, was he pure an’ hearty, sir, when you left him ?”

“ Oh ! yes, indeed, bravely,” replied Conolly ; “ all alive an’ kickin’ ; though to be sure, as to kickin’, I can’t say much, because he’s not in such very good foot-ball trim as he used to be ; indeed, we’ve been mighty lucky sure enough, considerin’, and have no rason to complain any how.”

Now, the widow Conolly having observed the wooden leg of her visitor, with the patch over one eye, and the scar over the other, had conceived a notion, that he had very great reason to complain, and was by no means, so fortunate as he seemed to consider himself ; she was, therefore, rather alarmed than assured, by his expression of self-

congratulation ; and, as the fears of affection are easily roused, she fell back in her chair, and exclaimed,—

“ Oh God! my child is wounded—I’m sure my child is wounded.”

“ Wounded!” rejoined Conolly; “ why, then, didn’t I tell you this minit, he was quite brave an’ hearty ; an’ as for a bit of a wound, what signifies that ? A sodger ought to have a wound, to show he has done his juty. On’y think of a sodger coming home from the wars without a wound ! why he ought to be ashamed of himself. Whin the officers have their stars an’ their meddles, the laste a sodger can have, is his wound to show for the honour of the cloth.”

The widow Conolly groaned aloud ; and, looking down sorrowfully at the wooden leg before her, said,—

“ Oh! tell me, for the love of Heaven! if he has all his precious limbs safe and sound ?”

“ His limbs?” replied Conolly, with some hesitation ; “ Oh yes, indeed, his limbs are all purty safe, on’y just except one ; but he doesn’t mind it at all, and walks quite as well as I do.”

Though Conolly rather obscurely hinted at his misfortune, his mother understood him, and wringing her hands, exclaimed,—

“ Oh, Merciful Father ! my poor boy ! my poor

boy! his leg is gone, I know his leg is gone. Oh, how shall I ever tell Biddy!—the cruel murderin' villains! The curse of Crum'ell light on 'em that robbed my poor boy of his leg! an' a nate an' a purty leg it was. Oh, what a shock for poor Biddy!"

Conolly was surprised to find, that his cautious mode of breaking his misfortune to his mother, had not been more successful in softening her sense of it. But, when she spoke of the shock which it would give Biddy Farrell, it seemed to be such a confirmation of all his fears, that he felt as if sentence had been pronounced upon him; and almost bursting with a mixed emotion of grief, mortification, and pique, he observed, his lip quivering as he spoke, and tears starting from his eyes,—

"May be then, ma'm, Billy Conolly had betther not come home, since he can't bring his two legs along with him. He doesn't want to shock any body, I'm sure, any how."

"O then!" replied Mrs. Conolly, "will he ever come home to his poor ould mother, whose heart bleeds for him, and who'll on'y love him the betther for his cruel misfortune?"

"Why, then, you're mighty unreasonabell," added Conolly; "sure, I thought I was bringin' you home news of your boy, that would plase you,

entirely, instead of your takin' on in this way for nothin', on'y becuse one of his legs walks upon stilts. I wondher how you'd like if your son came home to you without his head, let alone his leg, like poor Tom Waters of our regiment."

"Oh, Christ save us and bless us!" said Mrs. Conolly, crossing herself.

"Ay," continued Conolly, "an' as clane a lad as you'd see in a mile's ridin'; an' though an Englishman, one that liked his joke as well as if he had been born with a praty in his mouth. There we were, altogether, before the inimy, and they a firin' away at us, like smoke, an' we not suffered to budge, to get at one of 'em; when in a minit', before you could say Jack Robison, comes a thumpin' shot, an' clips one of poor Tom's wings. 'Never mind, lads,' says the brave fellow, lookin' at the stump. 'D—n my eyes,' (an Englishman always d—ns his eyes an' limbs) 'd—n my eyes if they haven't made a mistake, an' taken the wrong arm; for I've got the *right* one still;' but the words were hardly out of his mouth, when the leg was knocked from under him, an' shortened by a foot. "Why, then," says poor Tom, "you can't expect me to stand that, any how;" and down he went sure enough.

Well, we didn't like to lave the poor fellow

there, to be mashed to a mummy, by horse and futt, may be, the next minit'; because we all liked him, an' so we whips him into an ould baggage cart, an' yokes a couple of drum-boys to it, to bring him to the doctor. Tom gave us a hurra! goin' off, sittin' up in the cart, and said, "God bless you, boys, if I don't see you again;" an' sure enough, when they came to lift him out of the cart for the doctors, they found that poor Tom had left his head behind him on the way."

"Oh," continued Conolly, affected by his own story, and dashing a tear from his eye, "he was a true-hearted Englishman, and wou'd stand up for ould Ireland, just like any boy of us all."

This little military memoir was well calculated to reconcile Mrs. Conolly to the comparative good fortune of her son, and accordingly, after listening to it with the deepest interest, and divers ejaculations of horror, she piously exclaimed:—

"The Lord's will be done! and sure, it 'ill be a great marcy if ever I see my child alive at all, after such murtherin' work."

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Conolly," said her son, "whin a sodger brings home his head upon his shoulders, he's a mighty lucky fellow, and his friends ought to be very glad to see him. But your son tould me he behaved very badly, and

desarted you in your ould days, and may be, that's the rason he's not so welcome with a wooden leg as a gold chain."

"Oh, welcome, welcome will he be to me as the flowers in May,—as the life's blood to my heart!" exclaimed Mrs. Conolly; "he was the best of sons. But the poor boy was heart-broken entirely, and he left me on'y when he thought to run away from himself."

"Then you'd be glad to see him," said Conolly, "even with such a timber-toe under him as this?" tapping his wooden leg with his stick.

"Glad to see him!" ejaculated the poor woman, bursting into tears; "it's all I ax of Heaven in this world—it's my prayer night an' mornin', that I may be spared till my darlin' child comes home to close my eyes, an' lay me in my grave."

"May be, then, you'd see him sooner than you think," said Conolly, turning away to wipe the tears from his eyes, pulling off his hat with the patch that was attached to it, and resuming his own voice, which he had endeavoured to disguise; then dropping on his knee, and overcome with emotion, he sobbed out,—“Look at me, dear mother! see your poor crippled boy before you, an' take him again to your heart, for he's had neither luck nor pace since he left you, till this blessed minit.”

The sudden surprise and emotion of his mother, deprived her for a moment of speech ; she looked earnestly in his face, as if to recal his features to her recollection, and suddenly exclaiming,—

“ My child, my child ! ” she fell upon his neck, and they mingled their tears in mutual embraces.

CHAPTER II.

THE first emotions of joy, sorrow, or surprise, upon any sudden occurrence, calculated to excite those feelings, are of a nature too interjectional and exclamatory, to be detailed with much advantage. I have not, therefore, allowed myself to dwell on the interesting position in which Billy Conolly and his mother were placed, at the close of the last chapter ; nor shall I attempt what must be a feeble description of their mutual delight in meeting again, after so long a separation.

As soon, however, as the first ebullition of feeling on both sides had in some degree subsided, and they were sufficiently calm to talk connectedly of their concerns, Mrs. Conolly proceeded to inform her son, of the more than filial attention and regard she had met with from Biddy Farrell ; the narration, occasionally in-

terlarded with divers asseverations, that "she was a jewel of the world," "a saint upon earth," and lastly, "an angel from heaven."

Mrs. Conolly further declared, that "next to her own dear boy, Biddy Farrell was her darling child; and blessed be the name of the Lord! her boy was now come home to make Biddy her daughter in real earnest, and reward her for her long attachment to him."

Here, poor Conolly sighed heavily, and casting a melancholy glance at his wooden leg, hinted to his mother his apprehensions, that his altered appearance might produce a change unfavourable to him in the mind of Biddy Farrell, and convert her love into pity, or even dislike; "because," said he, "you know, mother, I am not the same man I was afore, for a girl's eye; and you tould me yourself how shocked she'd be to see me."

"Oh! not to see you," answered his mother, with eagerness and surprise; "but to know of your misfortune, and sorely shocked she'll be, poor thing, like myself; but not for her own sake; oh! not for her own sake, Billy, but for your's."

The good woman now earnestly expatiated on the long and unshaken affection which Biddy Farrell had shown her son; the many good offers

which she had rejected for his sake ; for, “ ever since the poor father’s death, there was not a boy of any pretensions in the village, nor for five miles round, that was not makin’ up to her, not on’y for herself, but the *spolien* that was left to her, and which she was every day spendin’ to make her (the widow Conolly,) comfortable in her ould age.”

Conolly was equally delighted and cheered by this account of his mistress; but his conscience smote him, when he reflected how unworthy he was, when compared with her ; and he felt her conduct to his mother doubly, from the contrast it afforded to his own desertion of her.

Mrs. Conolly almost resented the suspicion that any personal change in her son could shake Bidly Farrell’s affection for him. “ Ah ! Billy, dear,” said she, “ that’s the differ bechune the man’s love and the woman’s ; and a very great differ it is. A woman’s eye may like, but ’tis her heart that loves ; and ’tis the heart alone she loves ; the true and generous heart, and not the poor clay that covers it ; for kindness wins her more than comeliness, and words will wheedle her, when looks would fail.”

The widow Conolly had just entered on her favourite topic ; and as her side of the question

was incontestibly the strongest, and she had at her command the most agile instrument of controversy, she, without doubt, would have produced a powerful effect upon her son, and proved to him the superior purity and disinterestedness of the passion of love, in the female breast, if the course of her observations had not been interrupted, by the sudden entrance of Jenny Burne, who came, according to her promise, to give timely notice to Billy Conolly of Bidley Farrell's approach.

This intelligence threw poor Conolly into great agitation, and renewed all his apprehensions, just at the moment, when his mother's eloquence had nearly convinced him that they were wholly unfounded.

After a hurried deliberation, (if I may be allowed the use of so contradictory a phrase), it was determined, that Conolly should withdraw into the adjoining apartment of the mansion; a comfortable bed-chamber, in which he could overhear every thing that passed, and wait till Bidley Farrell should be apprised of his return, and of the peculiar circumstances, which he so much feared might influence her feelings with respect to him.

This arrangement had scarcely been agreed upon, when Jenny Burne, peeping out, cried,

“Hush, hush, be quick, Mr. Conolly, or you’ll be catch.” He had just time to disappear with his knapsack, when Bidy Farrell entered the cottage.

Though Mrs. Conolly had resumed her ordinary position in her wicker chair, and Jenny had endeavoured to assume that unruffled, everyday aspect, which is suited to the dull monotony of life, yet there was a flush in the old woman’s countenance, and a sort of half-suppressed *fluster* and busy embarrassment about them both, which indicated the occurrence of something unusual. Mrs. Conolly, too, was rather more delighted to see her darling, than appeared absolutely necessary, after so short an absence.

Jenny was a great friend and favourite in the cottage, and her presence was nothing extraordinary; but she seemed so much to overdo demureness, a quality of manners, by no means natural to her, that Bidy Farrell was struck by something she could not understand in their appearance. Taking off her neat bonnet and cloak, and looking inquisitively from one to the other, she said,—“Why, then, you look mighty quare, both of you: it’s my belief, mother, there’s somethin’ bechune you and Jenny that I’m consarned in, she looks so sly; but may be, I’d have my sacret as well as other people; and

I've a great mind not to tell you, tho' I'm so plased, I can't well keep it to myself."

Now, the widow Conolly and Jenny Burne, being quite full of their own secret, took it for granted, that no other could possibly be alluded to by Biddy; and as they could by no means account for her having any information on a subject, which they thought safely confined to their own keeping, they both together, with uplifted hands, and eyes wide opened, exclaimed,—
“ My gracious! then, Biddy, have you heard it?”

To this question, with a corresponding stare of surprise and wonder, Biddy replied,—“ Heard what?” Then, with a half-upbraiding look at her friend,—

“ Ah, then, Jenny! is it mad you're goin' entirely? Why, goodness me! what could I hear, but what Father Cassidy tould me; an' what do you think that was?” Her hearers having acknowledged their inability to guess, and their eagerness to be informed, Biddy proceeded:—

“ Well, the ould gentleman is gettin' purely again; an' when he was takin' his tay, he says to me, quite pleasant, ‘ Well, my good child, have you heard from your scapegrace of a lover lately?’ An' so I says, ‘ No, indeed, your riverence, not for many a long day, an' we're gettin' quite unasy; for, indeed, he's not a bad boy, an' you

know I takes the blame of his goin' away on myself entirely; an' sure if your riverence would on'y say a prayer for him to come home to us safe an' sound again, I'd be for ever obliged to you.' 'Well, well,' says the good, kind soul, laughing, 'I see how it is, Biddy; I must pray for him amongst all sinners; and may be, I may live to marry you to him when he returns, since you are resolved to have nobody else.' Oh! it cheered my heart to hear him talk so kindly of poor Billy; an' now, my dear mother, you've *my* sacet, put me out of pain, for I'm sure you've got somethin' to tell me."

With all due caution and mystery, Biddy was now informed, that by means of a soldier, who had called in her absence, intelligence had been received, that Billy Conolly was not only well, but on his road home; and so far advanced on his journey, that he might be expected to arrive in a day or two at the village.

This news the kind-hearted girl received with every manifestation of joy, that is natural to pure affection and unsophisticated feelings; she ran through the whole gamut of ejaculations, and poured forth her thanksgivings, through all the parts of speech.

There is no doubt, indeed, if she had moved in those superior circles of society, where such

an exhibition of sensibility appears to be appropriate, that the elegant affection of the nerves, called hysterics, would not have been wanting in the diversified display of her emotion.

In the first impulse of her delight, she threw her arms round the old woman's neck, and wept, and laughed, and sobbed, exclaiming, "that her prayers were heard at last, and that her dear mother would be happy again." Suddenly, however, as if recollecting herself, in the midst of her congratulations, she said, in a serious and half-dispirited tone, as if communing with her own thoughts; "But this is no place for me now; and, Jenny Burne, you'll let me in with you for a little while, I know." Jenny looked surprised; and Mrs. Conolly, in a voice of alarm, exclaimed,— "Oh, then, Biddy, jewel, wou'd you be lavin' me that way, jist at the time when I thought you'd never quit me more, and I'd have somebody to help me to reward you for all your kindness?"

"My dear Mrs. Conolly," said Biddy—

"Oh call me mother again, if you hav'n't a mind to kill me," said the old woman, with great emotion.

"My dear mother, then," continued Biddy, "Mr. Conolly is coming to his own home, an' it's not proper for me to set myself up as a fix-

ture in it, without so much as sayin' 'by your lave.' Besides," added she, with a sigh, "you know he has been to foreign parts, an' seen other guess folk than we are; and may be, he's a very different man now from what he was when he thought of the likes o' me."

The tears stood in her eye, at the close of the sentence; and, excited by her previous emotion, she again sunk upon the old woman's shoulder, and repeated,—“Yes, my dear, dear mother! he may be a different man to me now; and you wou'dn't have me force myself upon him, any how.”

The effect of poor Biddy's observation was more powerful than she supposed, on all the parties who heard it; and, confident as Mrs. Connolly was of the generous character of the poor girl's affection for her son, she felt a sort of superstitious apprehension, from the peculiar terms she made use of in speaking of him. Shaking her head mournfully, then, she said,—

“Oh, my darlin' child, it is he that has cause to fear that you may find *him* a different man from what he was; and sore it grieves him for your sake. The wars have changed him sadly, Biddy, and they say, he's not the likely boy that left us fresh and bloomin'; but sure he needn't fear; you're not the girl to value him the less,

because he bears the marks o' bleedin' for his country."

During this speech, poor Bidly appeared to undergo the greatest agitation; she turned pale—she trembled from head to foot. Struck by the altered aspect of the old woman and Jenny Burne, who seemed to be almost as much moved as Bidly herself, she clasped her hands, in an agony of apprehension, and exclaimed, "O God! for what do you prepare me!—What am I to think? Answer me, dear mother! answer me; does he live, an' does he love me still? What else on earth do I regard?"

They now explained to her the nature of Connolly's disaster; and it seemed a relief to her to find it was no worse.

"Oh, my poor Billy," she cried, "my brave, my generous soldier! an' have I to answer for this, as well as the rest of your misfortunes?—Will he ever forgive me, and can I ever forgive myself? On'y let him bring his heart home to me,—his kind, his honest heart, it's all I ask."

Then starting from her seat, as if a sudden thought had struck her, she exclaimed,—

"But where is he? I'm sure he's come home; an', Heavenly Father! does he suspect me of such summer love as that comes to?—me; who'd lay down my life for him this minit;—who'd go

through fire an' water for him ;—who'd watch for him an' work for him ;—who'd lead him from house to house if he was blind ; or beg with him, in rags, from door to door.”

This passionate expression of her attachment was too much for Billy Conolly ; he could restrain himself no longer. Throwing open the door of the room to which he had retired, he advanced, exclaiming,—

“ Oh, Biddy, Biddy !”

She gave a loud scream—in a moment they were locked in each others embrace, and she fainted in his arms.

It is related of a celebrated painter of old, that despairing to represent, with full effect, the passion which the principal figure of his groupe ought to express, he had recourse to the expedient of covering the face with the hands, and leaving to the imagination of the spectator, to supply the deficiency. Now, though much controversy has taken place on the question, whether the precedent established by the artist, in this instance, be, or be not, a legitimate resource of the art ; and though I am inclined to think that this ingenious mode of getting over the difficulty, and inducing the spectator to take up the pencil, and finish the most important part of the picture, according to his own fancy, is not very creditable to the

skill of the painter or the powers of the art ; yet, I fear, I must follow the example of Timanthes on the present occasion, and leave the reader to conceive the various modes in which the sweet passion of love betrayed itself, in the joyful looks and affectionate words which distinguished the meeting between Billy Conolly and his mistress.

Certain it is, that he very soon felt relieved from all apprehensions, as to any unfavourable effect from his personal deficiency.

The mutilated state of her lover seemed only to render the generous girl more ardent in her attachment to him, and more unreserved in the avowal of her love. Her heart told her, that any backwardness or unnecessary delicacy, under such circumstances, might possibly be mistaken, and would certainly be unkind.

She declared, with great energy, “that the brave fellow who gave one leg to his country, might stand boldly on the other, even before the king himself ; and for her part, she took more pride in the wooden leg, than in the leg of flesh and blood ; though she would say, there was not such another nate ankle to be found in the whole barony.”

Indeed, after a few day’s rest, the influence of happy feelings so brightened up and reanimated the whole man, that when the honours of his

head had been restored to their natural state, the civil costume resumed, and, as far as possible, those rural graces recovered, by which, he had first found favour in Bidley Farrell's eyes, it was universally acknowledged, that Conolly was "almost as likely a boy as ever; and on'y for the wooden leg, wouldn't be at all the worse for wear."

As soon as his arrival became generally known in the village, all his early friends flocked around him; and he was now too much pleased himself, to recollect, with displeasure, the mortifications to which he had been at first exposed. Jock Casey was restored to favour; having taken the sting out of his satire, and propitiated his old school-fellow by declaring, "that he knew him at the first cock of his eye, and on'y thought to have a bit of fun with him for trying to disguise himself." Even the miller's man, now no longer viewed as a rival, Conolly, in the fulness of his heart, cordially shook by the hand; though it was said to be some time before he could quite forget "the ould fogie."

Father Cassidy was soon solicited by the lovers, for the sanction of the church to their attachment. The virtuous conduct of Bidley Farrell had excited in the mind of that worthy clergyman, a strong interest in her favour; and he had, from some little irregularities in Conolly's early

proceedings, which have been before alluded to, taken a prejudice against him; but a highly honourable certificate and discharge from his colonel, with a strong recommendation from Sir Walter D'Arcy, placed Conolly's character in such an advantageous light, that the reverend gentleman no longer hesitated to perform the office required of him. The lodge at Killorgan Hall, was, by order of his master, fitted up for Conolly's residence; to which he, with his wife and mother, removed immediately after the marriage. An allowance from Sir Walter, the out-pension of Chelsea Hospital, and the *spolieene* of Bidley Farrell, united, formed an income more than equal to their wants. The widow was rewarded for all her cares, by seeing her children so comfortable and contented; and Billy Conolly himself, declared, that "something always tould him, he'd be happy at last with Bidley Farrell."

CHAPTER III.

HAVING placed Billy Conolly in circumstances so much to his satisfaction, and left him and his better half in the enjoyment of as much felicity as love, competence, and content, can be expected to produce in an humble station, it is necessary now to return to his master, whose position, when we last observed him, appeared to be by no means congenial to his feelings, or flattering to his hopes.

After a very impatient inquiry into his affairs, Sir Walter D'Arcy discovered, that his father's extravagance and his own, with the aid of the law, (an ever ready instrument for such a purpose,) had succeeded in reducing a very large estate to a very small income; and that the various ingenious devices by which bad landlords are enabled to rack their tenants, and elude their creditors, were so completely exhausted,

that his only resource appeared to be, the practice of a virtue which he had never exercised in his life, and which was totally incompatible with his habits and pursuits—economy.

Though disposed to be quite as extravagant, he was not so unprincipled as his father; there was nothing mercenary in his character: he even entertained some general notions that it was proper for a gentleman to pay his debts, if he had the money; a point, upon which Sir Patrick, if we may judge from his practice, appeared to have formed a very different opinion. He was, indeed, a true patron of the legal profession, and would never pay a debt, if he could help it, but through a process of law.

But our hero, though as one of the *nati consumere fruges*, he belonged to a class who complacently take it for granted, that, according to the natural order of things, they and their posterity are privileged to be idle, useless, and luxurious, to the end of time;—though, as one of the lords of the soil, and partaking of the spirit which actuates many of that body, at least in Ireland, he looked upon a tenant as little better than a slave; whose business it is, to make the land as productive as possible to his master, with the least possible benefit to himself;—though he had never troubled his head to consider the

structure of human society, or the duties which belong to the different ranks and degrees of which it is composed; yet, he had a natural generosity of sentiment,—a lofty sense of what is due to the dignity of a gentleman of ancient family, which made him revolt against the chicanery of law, and the artifices by which the resources of extravagance are too often replenished.

His own money he would squander with the most thoughtless profusion; or he would run in debt, so long as he had even a vague conviction that, at some future time, he would be able to pay; but he had too much pride to adopt the mean shifts and evasions, which are sometimes resorted to, even by those who call themselves persons of honour; but who, in pursuing their profligate habits at the expense of the honest and industrious part of the community, show themselves to be not only spendthrifts, but swindlers.

When, therefore, D'Arcy had clearly ascertained that the encumbrances on his estate had diminished his means so much more than he expected, he at once laid aside, for the present at least, all thoughts of keeping up the expensive establishment of his family in Dublin. In this resolution he was strengthened by his mother

and sister, who desired nothing more in this world, than the country, tranquillity, and prayer.

The harpies of the law, however, by whom he was surrounded, and who expected to continue the feast which his father had so long provided for them, were equally displeased and disappointed at his projected scheme of retrenchment. D'Arcy had been, indeed, surprised to observe, from the first, that the utmost ingenuity of his legal advisers was invariably directed to one end;—how he could most successfully resist the claims of his creditors. Friends, agents, attorneys, stewards, *et hoc genus omne*, seemed to take it for granted, that he could have no other object; and that his great ambition must be, to spend as much, and pay as little, as possible.

But, when they found that he had less taste for law than for justice, and heard him declare, with great warmth, on being teased with some suggestions of litigious delay in the adjustment of his affairs, that “the only bill he was resolved never to pay, while he could avoid it, was a *bill of costs*,” they began to consider him as degenerating from the spirit of his ancestors, and wholly insensible to the advantages of a system, by which law is made a luxury for the

rich, and a terror to the poor,—a system, which entangles truth in the mazes of sophistry, and renders justice at once unintelligible in its jargon, and unattainable in its delay.

Entertaining, therefore, very little respect for “the perfection of human reason,” and determined to extricate himself and his affairs, if possible, from the toils of litigation, he at once assigned the principal part of his income for the payment of his encumbrances, and retired with his mother and sister to the family mansion.

Though he was desirous to avoid all parade and expense on his arrival at Killorgan Hall, yet, he was rather surprised, and very much mortified, to find how little interest his presence there excited. There were no greetings of good will amongst the tenantry—no manifestations of joy or hope, on the part of the surrounding population, usually warm-hearted and enthusiastic on such occasions. He was allowed to indulge in the most undisturbed privacy, and was evidently regarded by his dependents, as an object of apprehension and distrust, rather than of respect or affection.

Billy Conolly, who had been just established in his post at the lodge, was still more provoked than his master, at the apathy which prevailed

among "the boys of the barony," on an occasion which he considered so important. He loudly declared it was "a sin and a shame, that Master Maurice should come home to the sate of his ould ancestors, with no more noise nor the muffle of a dead march, at a sodger's berrin; and that not a shout or a shilelah should be raised to his honour, nor the blaze of a bon-fire to welcome him, no more nor if he was the parson of the parish."

D'Arcy had been, by no means, aware of the extent of his father's unpopularity, and was ignorant how far his desire to "work his interest in the county" had prompted him to the adoption of measures for that purpose, which involved him in the double discredit of an apostate and an oppressor.

Clinging, themselves, with a desperate fidelity, to their long persecuted faith, the lower orders of the Catholics looked with little indulgence on a deserter from their ranks, even of the humblest degree; but, when the representative of an ancient race—a chieftain of the old stock, was tempted to adopt the state religion, they regarded him as a traitor, not not only to his creed, but to his country: they considered him as dishonouring the ashes, and denouncing the souls of his ances-

tors ; as disgracing his name,* and degrading his family to the vulgar level of an upstart and puritanical generation.

The rustic population of D'Arcy's neighbourhood looked upon him as professing sentiments similar to those of his father ; and as they took it for granted, he would be equally desirous to "work his interest in the county," they were led to apprehend consequences more injurious to their interests from his sway amongst them, than from that of his predecessor, in proportion as his time of life was more vigorous, and his ambition, probably, more energetic.

But though even the appearance of kindness will draw from the Irish peasant the warmest demonstrations of gratitude and attachment, the apprehension of enmity, or the danger of oppression, can never extort from him any flattering marks of reverence or respect. The young baronet, however, saw with regret, that he was looked upon as an enemy ; and that although he

* When a descendant of the ancient, or Milesian race, such as the O'Briens, the O'Connors, the O'Gormans, the O'Shees, or the O'Shaughnessy's,—deserted from the national faith, it was a common expression of contempt and reprobation amongst the people to exclaim : "Why, then, that's a mighty purty name to go to church with !"

could alarm the fears, he had no hold of the affections of those amongst whom, from the warm and generous feelings of youth, he would have liked to be popular.

Lady D'Arcy perceived the mortified feeling which his reception amongst his tenantry, had excited in her son; and her piety took the opportunity of introducing some observations referring to the unhappy cause of their alienation from the interests of the family.

“ His poor father,” she said, “ had made great sacrifices to worldly views, and had thrown away the hearts of his own people, not to mention objects of much higher interest, without obtaining any thing in return, which could benefit him here, or hereafter. She hoped and trusted, her dear son would weigh matters well, before it would be too late, and not set too high a value on the perishable goods of this life.”

With many more observations, equally pious and persuasive, to all of which the young baronet listened with the most patient and respectful *inattention*, considering the old lady's anxiety for his spiritual welfare, as an amiable weakness, which was excusable at least, if not entertaining.

But though very little impressed by the religious considerations which his mother presented

to him, D'Arcy felt very deeply, the loss of that gratifying homage and general estimation, which, as the head of an ancient family, he regarded as belonging to his state, and not the least valuable part of his inheritance.

The pride of ancestry possessed a strong influence on his character; and all the associations connected with patriarchal authority, and high hereditary claims, were interwoven with the earliest impressions of his childhood. For the first time of his life, therefore, he entertained a doubt of the policy of his father's conversion to the established church, and his own adoption of the same sentiments.

He had been too ardent in the pursuit of pleasure, to trouble himself much with religion or politics; and his principles hung sufficiently loose about him in each, to make him regard, with ridicule and contempt, the controversies of both. But he was very reluctant to be shorn of those beams of popularity, which, in Ireland, glow round the head of him who inherits the honours, and adheres to the faith of his ancestors. He began to think, that in forsaking the ancient creed of his country, the dignity of his family was impaired; that he had lost caste, as it were, and could no longer lay claim to that lofty pre-eminence—that untainted antiquity,

which characterised the religion, as well as the rank of his progenitors.

In short, under the influence of the disappointment and mortification of the moment, he had nearly persuaded himself, not, with Lord Chesterfield, that the Catholic is "the only religion in which God Almighty is worshipped like a gentleman;" but that it is the only religion which it becomes the character of a gentleman to profess; and that a new faith, like a new family, however pure and respectable, can have no claim to that high dignity, and reverential homage, which must ever be associated with the blood and the belief of an ancient race.

In this sensitive state of contention between the pride of the Milesian, and the policy of the Protestant, his adherence to the new church would have been in some danger, from his patriotism, at least, if not from his piety, if the open profession of the ancient faith, did not threaten him with two consequences which he particularly deprecated:—religious dissension with his friends, who were all Protestants, and much personal inconvenience to himself.

He was a little irritated, too, at what he conceived the over-hasty prepossession entertained

against him by his Catholic neighbours ; for as he had really no prejudices against them, and no intention whatever, to prosecute any interest of his own at their expense, he thought they ought not so readily, to have taken it for granted, that he was as much their enemy as his father.

To say the truth, if D'Arcy could be said to have any religious bias at all, it was in favour of popery. His mother was, what is called in Ireland, a *voteen*, or devotee ; a character which is to be found amongst the pious and enthusiastic part of the fair sex, in all religions ; but, perhaps, more frequently amongst women of the Catholic communion than any other.

A *voteen* is, amongst female religionists, a person over devout ; whose religion is rather a matter of feeling than of reflection,—who, in addition to the strictest performance of her essential duties, lays more stress than is necessary, upon the forms and unimportant observances of her creed ; and looks upon a priest with a reverential deference and submission, somewhat beyond that enlightened measure of respect, to which the sanctity of his profession entitles him.

To Lady D'Arcy's character as a devotee, however, no discoverable evil in her conduct as a wife or a mother could be traced. Her over zeal appeared to have no other effect, than that of

stimulating to the highest Christian purity, a naturally amiable disposition; and placing her under the spiritual direction of a clergyman, whose exemplary life, and disinterested benevolence, rendered the authority which was conceded to, rather than assumed by him, a blessing to those over whom it was exercised.

Lady D'Arcy early anticipated the consequences of her husband's laxity in religion and morals. As far as it was in his power, he had sacrificed his fortune to his pleasures; and she knew, he would sacrifice his faith to his interest, the moment he conceived the hope, that he might restore his finances by the change. She was anxious, therefore, beyond all ordinary solicitude, to impress on the minds of her children, such sentiments, as were most likely to fix them in the faith which she thought so essential to their welfare.

Her son, in particular, as most likely to be influenced by his father's example, she diligently attended to, while under her care; and placed him as soon as possible in Father Cassidy's hands, to receive, at his knee, those lessons of morality and virtue, which thus early inculcated, can never be wholly forgotten in the conflicts of the world.

The practical effects, however, of those early

precepts, were soon destroyed by the subsequent neglect of his education, and his unrestricted intercourse with those who delight to inflame the passions, and corrupt the principles of their young associates. The nursery notions of the Papist, were soon laughed out of school, and the moral impressions of the Protestant, as speedily expelled from college.

D'Arcy had never made any formal renunciation of the Catholic faith. As his father called himself a Protestant, he adopted the same religious designation; but nobody had ever taken the trouble to point out to him the difference between the old and the new creed, and he never felt the smallest disposition to inquire.

Religious controversy, indeed, was not a favourite topic amongst the choice spirits with whom he associated at Oxford; but, from the echoes of orthodox revelry, which resounded on the banks of the Isis, he soon became conversant with the ordinary common-places that enriched and enlivened the symposial polemics of the day. "The glorious, pious, and immortal memory,"—"Popery, slavery, and wooden shoes,"—"The man of sin,"—"The beast with seven heads,"—"Antichrist,"—"The triple alliance between the Pope, the devil, and the Pretender." All these flowers of religious rhetoric

were familiar to him ; and he could listen without a blush, to the vulgar revilings of theological detraction, even under the very roofs of those gorgeous structures and magnificent establishments, for which, the bigots who uttered them, were indebted to the religion that they libelled, and the ancestors whom they defamed.

Occasionally, indeed, in the midst of his dissipations, when he found himself a party to such orgies, he has felt something like remorse ; and when he recalled to his memory the lessons of piety, and virtue impressed upon his childhood by the amiable parent, and benevolent priest, who were the only persons that ever seemed to take an interest in his moral welfare, his heart would whisper to him, that he was meanly conniving at an injustice done to the creed and the character of his forefathers ; and then, in a spirit of generous indignation, and rational revolt, he would exclaim :—

“ If this be Christianity,—if mutual rage, rancour, and malevolence be its fruits,—if it teach Papist, Protestant and Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Muggletonian, to persecute each other here, and damn each other hereafter,—if it convert those who ought to be the ministers of the God of benevolence and peace, into the

foaming blood-hounds of war, running in full cry of carnage and desolation, to lay waste all the charities of life amongst friends, neighbours, fellow-subjects, and fellow-citizens,—if this be Christianity,” he would say, “ which, in the face of it’s own tenets, violates all the virtues of the earth, and anticipates the judgments of heaven,—then give me, in preference, the comprehensive benevolence of the Pagan, the mild credulity of the Hindû, or the creed of Confucius !”

But let us not, like D’Arcy, suffer the harpies that hover over, and defile the feast of Christianity, to turn us with disgust from the wholesome food which it provides for us. Let us rather endeavour to chase the foul fiends from the sacred banquet, and direct our reprobation to the system that engenders, and the policy that protects them.

CHAPTER IV.

THE chagrin which D'Arcy experienced at Killorgan Hall, and the *sombre* character of the society which it afforded, determined him to shorten his residence there as much as possible. When, therefore, he had arranged a suitable establishment for his mother and sister, and adjusted such affairs with his tenants and dependents, as more immediately pressed upon his attention, he returned to the metropolis.

He had, however, but just begun to taste the social delights of Dublin, for which his long absence had given him a keen relish, when he was rather disconcerted by receiving orders to join immediately the *depôt* of his regiment, then stationed at Galway, where it was intended, that the skeleton of the corps lately returned from America, should be re-clothed with military

muscles and sinews from the brawny Milesian stock.

As D'Arcy did not propose to give up the army, he was reluctantly obliged to obey; and he found in Galway, a reception as cordial as hospitality could make it, and rather more convivial than he could desire.

Our hero's personal qualities were so prepossessing, that he soon became a favourite; not only with the principal inhabitants of the town, but also with the most distinguished gentry of the neighbourhood.

Amongst the latter, was Major Ogle, a gentleman who held a commission in a regiment of fencibles,—a species of military levy, which held a middle place between the troops of the line and the militia; but which, possessing neither the martial dignity of the one, nor the local consequence of the other, enjoyed very little respect among the people.

Major Ogle was a man of some fortune, a magistrate, and of course, a Protestant, or rather I should say, of course, not a Papist; for the qualification was negative only with respect to popery. He resided within a few miles of Oldcourt Castle, the mansion of the family of that name, which was introduced to the reader in the early part of this work.

In the house of Major Ogle, D'Arcy was, occasionally, a resident for a few days; and on one of those visits, when riding out with his host, on a Sunday morning, through the village of Oldcourt, during the time of divine service in the Catholic chapel of that place, the major, aware of his guest's devotion to the fair sex, suggested, that they should wait till mass was over, and D'Arcy would be then gratified by the sight of one of the most distinguished belles of that neighbourhood, Miss Oldcourt; who, from her religion, and her loveliness, was commonly designated as "the pretty Papist."

D'Arcy had frequently heard Grace Oldcourt spoken of amongst his Galway friends, as one of the finest girls in the county; and he had even, on more than one occasion, paid to her health, the convivial homage of a bumper. His curiosity was, therefore, much excited, and he gladly assented to the major's proposition.

While they walked their horses backwards and forwards in view of the chapel, D'Arcy's host drew his friend's attention to the appearance which it presented. The structure, to which, in the village of Oldcourt, Christian charity, and brotherly love, had consigned the ancient worship of him who preached "peace and good-will to man," has been already described. Its inadequacy to

contain within its barn-like limits, one half of the congregation that resorted to it, has also been mentioned, as well as the custom of the country people, when there was no room within the edifice, to kneel down in the road-way leading to its different doors, and perform their devotions with uncovered heads, in all weathers, under such inconvenient circumstances.

On the present occasion, the crowd of outdoor devotees was so numerous, as in some measure, to obstruct the way; and the major, alluding to it, observed to his companion, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders, and a look of contemptuous commiseration,—

“What a degrading spectacle to the eye of a rational Christian! to what a state of mental debasement does popery reduce her slaves, for I will not call them her votaries. There is not one of those poor wretches, now, that will not return home perfectly satisfied, that he has heard the word of God, and performed the duty which he owes to the Sabbath-day; although he has not been within hearing of any thing more than the tinkling of the bell, that announces the most idolatrous act of Romish superstition.”

Now, as Major Ogle's religion consisted entirely in an abhorrence of popery; and as he was

known to be sufficiently Latitudinarian in his life and manners, to have no particular claim to the reputation of a saint, the puritanical cant of commiseration with which he uttered this remark, excited some little disgust in D'Arcy, who hating hypocrisy above all things, replied rather sarcastically :—

“ Why, major, these poor people do their best to fulfil their Sabbath duty, as you term it ; and so far, you must allow, they have the advantage of you and me ; for here we are, lounging about, idly commenting on their mode of performing a religious duty, which we ourselves should be ashamed to neglect.”

Major Ogle, though he loved dearly to have a fling at the Papists, and seldom missed any occasion that offered for that purpose, was not very well qualified to follow his blow. A little disconcerted, therefore, by this home-thrust of the *argumentum ad hominem*, he had recourse to the usual mode of turning aside its point, and replied,—

“ My good friend! that is quite another thing. What you or I do, has nothing to do with the question. Is it not lamentable, that a people should be so brutified by their priests, and the monstrous absurdities of their faith, as to satisfy their consciences, that they are joining in the

ceremonies of divine worship, while they are thus practising their mummeries, their grimaces, and their genuflections, in the public road? Is not such a practice a disgrace to a civilized country?"

"It is, indeed," said D'Arcy, with a peculiar emphasis and expression.

"What?" resumed the major, "what would a stranger, a foreigner, unacquainted with the unfortunate delusions of our people, think of us, or say of us, if he saw such a spectacle?"

"Why," replied D'Arcy, coolly, "if he were a popish stranger, he would *probably* say, that the most ancient church of Christianity was very unworthily treated by the heretical ascendancy of this country; and that we Protestants, were the persecutors of the faith which we pretended to reform. If he were an enlightened, and a liberal stranger, he would *certainly think* whatever he might *say*; that such a spectacle is, as you have said, a disgrace to a civilized country."

"Yes," triumphantly interposed the major, "and it should be put down by law."

"An enlightened stranger would agree with you there, also," continued D'Arcy; "for what can be more disgraceful to a civilized country, than, that any denomination of Christians should be so insulted and oppressed in it, as to be driven to perform their devotions to our common

Creator in a hovel like that; or compelled to bend their knees to Heaven in the mire of the common high-way, for want of even that wretched accommodation,—that they should be driven to this, too, by those who call themselves Christians—the worshippers of the same God—the God of mercy and peace,—whose word enforces brotherly love to man! Yes, my dear major, the sooner such oppression is put an end to the better.”

The major was so surprised, and, as the sailors say, “taken aback,” at finding his own words thus turned against him, that for a moment he was confounded; but in a half-mortified, half-jocular tone, he replied:—

“By heaven! D’Arcy, I sometimes suspect that you have a leaning to the c’ld faith.”

“No, my good friend,” rejoined D’Arcy; “but I hope I have a leaning to common sense, and common justice. I would give the Papist his due, as well as the devil. Surely it is too bad, after having wrested from him, or destroyed all his churches—after having driven his altars for shelter to mountains, woods, and caverns—after having made it death for him to preach, and damned it as idolatry in him to pray according to the practice of seventeen centuries,—it is too bad, that even now, when you begin to relax a little in your persecution—when you allow these

poor people once more, to erect their ruined altars, in such temples as the miserable barn now before us,—it is too bad, that you should abuse them, for attempting to say their prayers in the public path, when you have deprived them of all means of procuring better accommodation.”

“ Why, my friend,” sarcastically observed the major, “ you are eloquent in the cause. I could not have heard any thing much more popish, if I had been one of the congregation in the barn, as you call it; and, by the bye, if the government were ruled by me, even that barn should not be allowed to them for such a purpose.”

“ Then, major,” replied D’Arcy, with some little warmth, “ I candidly acknowledge to you, that I hope you will never have any influence in the state, while you hold that opinion. I have seen many of those poor fellows spilling their blood for their country, like brave soldiers; and, to say the least of them, as honest men as their Protestant comrades; and, in my judgment, they who serve their king according to their duty, should be allowed to serve their God according to their conscience.—But I hate the subject;—it seems to sour the milk of human kindness in every breast, and turn the blood to gall.”

I confess, I have some pleasure in recording this sentiment of the young baronet, because it

is in accordance with my own : and I think it creditable to him, as a man of sense and humanity. In tracing his irregular career, I have shown no indulgence to his defects, and I am desirous to do justice to his merits. As a boy, he was bold and mischievous—as a youth, he was turbulent and disorderly—as a young man, he was thoughtless and extravagant. But there were many good points in his character, which the reader must have observed in the progress of this narrative; and he had one redeeming quality, which was more rare in his day, than even in our own, and which, in my opinion, like charity, covers a multitude of sins: he had an honest, heart-glowing abhorrence of bigotry and intolerance, whether Papist, Protestant, or Presbyterian; or in whatever form of fanaticism, the folly and knavery of his time thought fit to display those besetting sins of the Christian world.

With a contempt, which would have betrayed itself in ridicule, if it had not blazed into indignation, he beheld that rancorous little reptile, that crawls upon a point of space hardly discernible in the wide scope of the creation—that puny insect in the great garden of nature—that mere grub and worm of the earth, called man, presuming, in his arrogance, to point the thunders of the Omnipotent; and, in the name of that

benevolent Being, who wills the happiness of his creatures, pushing his ambitious atrocity to the utmost limits of that mischief, which his pigmy powers enable him to perpetrate on the wretched race to which he belongs.

With this detestation of religious animosities, it was not surprising, that D'Arcy had no taste for those subjects in which they were commonly displayed. But if he were tired of the Catholic Question in his day, what would he say to it now?—when it occupies all tongues, agitates all hearts, and threatens to turn the heads of the whole community,—when the old and the young, the great and the little, the grave and the gay, are engrossed by it;—when dandies expatiate upon it at the Opera, ladies discuss it in a quadrille, and dowagers drop their cards, to canvass it at a rout:—when it rolls in theologic thunders from the pulpit, and roars in typographic tumult from the press:—when it froths and foams on the rabid lips of conventicle charlatans and clerical incendiaries; and drivels, in dull malevolence, through the prostituted pens of renegado priests, regenerated Jews, and apostate jacobins.

“What guides to lead us to the blest abodes!
What decent priests, where monkeys were the Gods!”

But it is gratifying to those who would culti-

vate peace and harmony in the Christian world, to see the churches of England and Scotland rescued from the discredit of such virulent and vulgar bigotry, by the enlightened efforts of men, whose liberal sentiments recommend their creeds far more effectually, than volumes of angry controversy and acrimonious abuse. Amongst this generous band of truly Christian divines, it is impossible not to distinguish the names of the Rev. Dr. Chalmers, the Rev. Sydney Smith, Edward Stanley, — Montgomery, and — Hamilton, as peculiarly entitled to the gratitude and veneration of every friend to the sacred cause of religion and liberty.

When D'Arcy rather emphatically expressed his dislike of the topic upon which Major Ogle had descanted, he added, accompanying the proposition with a movement which marked his intention of carrying it into effect :—

“Suppose we approach, and inquire if the service be nearly over.”

The major, who seemed as little pleased with the argument as his opponent, now advanced with him to a part of the road, where the people were kneeling; and D'Arcy, perhaps with a view to recover his character with his friend, and show him that he entertained no popish reverence for the religious ceremony then going

forward,—addressing an old man who seemed deeply engaged in his devotions, said, in a flip-pant tone :—

“ Hark ye, my old boy !—will this affair be soon over ?”

The person spoken to, raised his head slowly, and looking at D’Arcy with an expression of surprise, as if he did not understand him, answered, by proposing a question in his turn :—

“ What affair does your honour spake about ?”

“ What affair !” repeated D’Arcy, “ why, this praying business, that you are all so long engaged in.”

The old man’s cheek became tinged with anger ; and in a tone of indignation he asked :—

“ Why, then, is it the blessed mass that you mane to talk of, in that undacent way ? By my sowl ! my young gentleman, it’s fitter for you to go to your own place, whatever that may be, whether for swaddlin’ or swearin’, than come here to disturb honest people a-prayin’ like their fathers afore ’em.”

The dialogue began to attract attention, and D’Arcy, laughingly, observed :—

“ Why, my old boy, you seem disposed to be saucy ;” at the same time manœuvring his horse, so as to excite the alarm of an old woman, who, on her knees, or rather indeed, sitting on her

heels, was busy with her beads, in his neighbourhood, and who apprehending some danger from his advance, cried out lustily.

At this moment, a young countryman, who had somewhat impatiently observed what he thought irreverent conduct on the part of D'Arcy, and who was farther irritated by his mother's exclamation, darted forward, and with a stick, corresponding in character to Billy Conolly's "bit of a switch," struck the horse a violent blow on the nose. The poor animal was stunned, and reared up so high, that he lost the centre of gravity, and fell backwards, with his rider under him.

All parties forgot their resentment, and rushed to the assistance of D'Arcy, who lay apparently senseless; and the termination of the mass brought Mr. Oldcourt and his family to witness the scene of confusion, which the reader will recollect to have been described in an earlier part of this work.

CHAPTER V.

HAVING now, *per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum*, safely conducted the reader back to the Castle of Oldcourt, it may be expedient to recal to his recollection the state of affairs in that venerable mansion, at the moment when we last left it.

For the necessary development of a character of no small importance to the most interesting individual of our family biography, we thought proper to proceed in a retrospective excursion, which, to use a common but expressive phrase, has "led us a dance of some length by sea and land." And as, after a long dance, however agreeable your partner, or lively the music,—even though Rossini should be vilified in waltzes, and cut up in quadrilles, every body feels a little fatigued, except perhaps a Highlander in a Scotch

reel, or a hoyden from a boarding-school, at her first ball,—so, after this long literary *divertissement* or *pas de deux*, in which we have been engaged, the reader may be disposed to breathe a little, from such vigorous exertion, and sit down quietly to a family dinner in the hospitable parlour of Oldcourt.

It will be recollected, that after the village Esculapius, Mr. Phelim M'Cabe, had exhibited his skill in the operation of phlebotomy on Sir Walter Maurice D'Arcy, that experienced practitioner retired to exercise his art in the humbler department to which it was most commonly devoted—the stable. Before he left his house-patient, however, he, contrary, I believe, to the usual policy of the profession, pronounced, that there had been very little need of the lancet, and that there was no danger to be apprehended from the accident.

In this opinion, however, his great rival, Mrs. Oldcourt, did not agree; and as her medical authority was of much higher repute than Doctor M'Cabe's, at least in her own family, so, in this instance, it carried the greater weight.

Like a learned lawyer, as well as a sage physician, she brought forward many cases to prove that 'appearances were fallacious on these occasions—that internal injuries were not always evident

at first, after an accident—that concussions of the brain, and diseases of the back, were often the result of such casualties, when they were little apprehended; and that Buchan pointed out the fatal consequences which frequently followed the imprudent neglect of precautionary measures, in such circumstances.”

Cogent reasoning like this was not to be resisted. The medical alarmist will, indeed, always be the favourite with the weak and hippish portion of society; that is to say, about ninety-nine out of every hundred of those who have occasion, or who think they have occasion, to consult the faculty.

The physician who shakes his head, compresses his lips, and looks grave and mysterious, after he has examined your tongue—who enlarges learnedly on lurking tendencies, organic aptitudes, and contingent remainders of disease, will always be thought to see farther into the mill-stone, and to have more feeling, as well as more skill, than he who has no quackery about him, who makes light of your complaint, and laughs at your apprehensions.

The former, also, has another advantage in this—that if your indisposition should turn out to be of a trifling nature, his skill has prevented the dangerous results with which it might have been

attended; and should your fears, co-operating with his physic, and his fasting system, work up a slight attack of cold to a fever of tolerable typhus importance, he has had at least the sagacity to foresee the distemper, though he may not have been able to cure it.

Mrs. Oldcourt's opinion was, therefore, decisive; and she recommended to the patient to go immediately to bed, and live on barley water for a day or two, to prevent an access of fever.

The young baronet, however, who, if patients were ever allowed to know any thing about their own health, might be supposed to be a tolerable judge in this case, was by no means pleased with the prescription, though he had too much politeness to dispute the matter with a lady, whose kindness was still more apparent than her skill.

As Major Ogle saw his friend in such good hands, and in what the faculty call "a satisfactory state," he now prepared to take his leave; but his intentions were no sooner announced, than they were vigorously opposed by the worthy squire, who, when the hour of refection approached, never willingly suffered any man to depart, without as good a dinner as he could give him, and "his skin full of wine to wash it down."

He declared that "Major Ogle and he had long

been neighbours, but that they had never yet cracked a bottle together ; which he thought not much to the credit of either party ; and he could not let slip the present opportunity which fortune threw in his way, of drinking a bumper to their better acquaintance.”

Though the major's dislike of Catholics disposed him very much to avoid their society, yet, considering the kind attentions that his friend had received, and might still find it convenient to accept, from the Oldcourt family, he found it impossible to resist such pressing solicitations ; and his servant was dispatched, accordingly, to acquaint his household that he should not return to dinner.

There were few days in the week, on which the convivial chief of the Oldcourts could be said to be reduced to what he considered the solitude of his domestic circle. There were generally some visitors in the house ; and there was always at hand, an accommodating variety of hangers-on—honest, hard-drinking, hospitable fellows, who, like Lackland in the play, would go and live a month with any man who would entertain them. Those choice spirits, however, Mrs. Oldcourt had contrived to dislodge from their occasional quarters in the castle ; and, through her

influence, they were obliged reluctantly to restrict their jovial visits to the inroad of a day. Many of the more intemperate and disreputable, she succeeded in banishing entirely from the house, by remonstrance with her husband, and a dignified repulsion of manner, which even the most shameless and profligate do not like to encounter, in the reproving demeanour of purity and virtue.

A sufficient number of the convivial crew, however, still remained on the free list; who had the *entrée* during good behaviour; and who, in a kind of periodical succession, contrived to drop in, to inquire after the squire's health, just at the time when he was about to ascertain the state of his appetite, and they thought it possible, they might be invited to try a similar experiment.

But though the week days were left, in a great measure, to chance customers, Sunday was invariably provided with a more regular supply of guests, by judicious selection and express invitation. The parish priest was always in requisition on that day; and any stranger with a decent coat on his back, who appeared at mass, and whose name was known to his reverence, was sure of a summons "to pot-luck, with a *cead mille fal-tagh*." The gauger and the attorney of the district, also, were frequently of the party; and lat-

terly, an English Protestant clergyman, who had recently been appointed vicar of Oldcourt, was occasionally found in cordial association with the Sabbath circle at the castle.

But the character of this excellent man requires more than a cursory notice in this place, from an impartial pen;—a pen that would willingly do justice, without regard to creed or country,—a pen that presumes not to impugn the principles, or question the belief of any Christian community; but that would reprobate, without reserve, those illiberal prejudices which disgrace all religions, and tend to bring discredit on Christianity itself.

Persons of a different faith, were taught by the precepts and example of the Vicar of Oldcourt, that piety and goodness are not the exclusive possessions of any sect;—that human virtue does not depend on mysteries inscrutable to man, or dogmas which may reasonably admit of a doubt, as long as they admit of a dispute. They were taught to distinguish between the candid, sincere, and benevolent believer, who practises what he professes, and the sanguinary fanatic, who would steep his creed in the blood of his fellow-creatures;—the mercenary hypocrite, that takes up his religion as a trade—who enters

the church as he would the Exchange, to transact the business of bigotry, and speculate in the commerce of creeds.

Doctor Bowen, the Vicar of Oldcourt, was an Englishman, and had passed through the ordinary course of education at Eton and Oxford, with considerable credit. At college, he was distinguished for the regularity of his habits, the severity of his studies, and his judicious avoidance of that class of students in a university, who go there, not so much to learn, as to break loose from the restraints of parental authority.

He was destined for the church ; consequently, theology became a principal object of his attention. His mind was clear, ardent, and inquisitive ; and as he conceived it to be one of the duties of a clergyman to examine the basis of his creed, and as he was told it was his privilege to exercise his judgment, and decide according to its dictates, he plunged at once deep into the ocean of controversy.

He had the mortification to find, however, that his faith was not strengthened as he proceeded. He perceived, that truth was a matter which the philosophers and the fathers talked of, and disputed about, in all ages ; that mysteries and miracles were not reducible to any mathe-

matical certainty ; and that his belief was not subjected to his will, or under the control of his reason.

Disgusted, also, by the acrimonious spirit, the *odium theologicum*, which has raged through the disputations of the pious professors of brotherly love, from the days of Origen and Celsus, down to the Billingsgate lucubrations of Luther and Bellarmine, — disgusted to find, that instead of an honest, disinterested search after truth, conducted with kindness, candour, and good faith, the field of religious controversy, for the most part, presents only an arena of rancorous combatants, regardless of the laws of civil warfare, and ready to enlist the whole tribe of savage passions on their side, to cut down their adversaries with temporal tomahawks and spiritual scalping-knives ;—shocked at the display of such fiend-like animosity and sanctimonious malevolence, his mild and generous nature was repelled from a cause, the sacred character of which, he began to doubt, from the unholy squabbles of its defenders ; and, after vibrating for some time, from side to side, through all the oscillations of the controversial pendulum, he found himself fixed in the heartless and hopeless gloom of infidelity.

He now considered himself unfitted for the

church ; and he determined to adopt some other mode of life, in which his opinions would not interfere with his duties, and might be retained without offence or hypocrisy. But he had too much of the *mens divinator* in his composition, to rest long tranquil and content with a system that cramps and cabins up the human intellect within its tenement of clay, and levels man with "the beast that perisheth."

After some time, he determined to enter on a more systematic and vigorous investigation of the great question of eternal life; and his erudition enabled him to trace to their source, the springs of human knowledge, and search all the stores of evidence that are to be found in the records of the Christian world. The result of this more mature and comprehensive inquiry was, a settled conviction of the great truths of Christianity, and an acquiescence in the doctrines of the established church, as, in his opinion, on the whole, its purest and most liberal form.

A recollection, however, of the errors and perplexities which had obstructed his own theologic progress, made him look with indulgence on the efforts of others, who, with equal zeal and integrity, encountered similar difficulties, and either arrived at a different result, or pursued the same great object by a different path. He was,

therefore, averse to controversy, and mounted the pulpit, not as the fierce polemic, denouncing all who disputed the dogmas of his church, but as the mild and benevolent Christian pastor, persuading to charity and peace.

It will be readily believed, that such a man had but little chance of preferment. He was long left to rust in his college; his orthodoxy aspersed, and his sincerity suspected, because his principles were liberal, and his piety was neither exclusive nor austere.

At length, an Irish Viceroy, who had been his pupil at the university, recollected the virtues of his tutor, and rewarded his services by a living in Ireland, which gave him ease and independence for life.

The vicarage of Oldcourt afforded him an affluent income, with the opportunity of doing a great deal of good, and very little duty; for, though his parish was one of the largest, his congregation was one of the smallest in the county. When he first took possession of his living, he was surprised to find how few attended the service which he was so well paid for performing. The agent of an absentee nobleman, with his wife and daughters, Major Ogle sometimes, and some of his servants, together with the families of the attorney, the gauger, and the

grave-digger, formed his whole auditory, even on the most solemn occasions.

He did not relax, however, in the zeal or eloquence of his discourses, though he sometimes jocularly observed, that “ although his church was not large enough to contain his parishioners, the pulpit would hold his flock.” Thus circumstanced, he did not confine his services within the narrow circle of his own religious sway, but was ever ready to confer temporal, if not spiritual benefits on those who contributed to his support.

He had succeeded a man, whose life had been spent in a tithe-proctor warfare with the unfortunate peasantry around him ; and whom Father Clancy’s generous, and sometimes effectual interference in their defence, had exasperated to the most rancorous hatred and spiteful hostility. The new vicar determined to adopt a line of conduct more becoming a Christian minister ; and having ascertained the general estimation in which the worthy priest was held, he addressed to him the following letter :—

“ REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

“ Having been placed, through God’s providence, as a pastor of the Protestant church

in this parish, I am, I confess, anxious to cultivate the good will of a gentleman, whose personal and professional character must make me regard his acquaintance as a pleasure, and his friendship as a valuable acquisition. I would not, however, intrude upon you personally, without first soliciting permission to wait upon you, through this respectful overture towards an intercourse which, I trust, may be mutually agreeable, and perhaps beneficial, to those who are placed respectively under our care.

“ We do not, reverend sir, agree in some particular tenets of our creeds, but we are both of us Christian ministers, and members of the great church of Christ. We both agree in those divine moral maxims which may be said to include both “ the law and the gospel,” as the great rule of life: “ To do unto others as we would be done by,—and love our neighbour as ourselves.” Maxims, which, though they have, unhappily, so little influence on our contentions, no vain controversialist has ever dared to dispute; and without a just observance of which, faith is but a barren credulity, and the forms of religion a mockery amongst men.

“ Let us then, reverend sir, live in peace and charity; and allow me to add—in friendship;

that those whom we are appointed to lead into the paths of righteousness, may respect our principles in our practice, and benefit by our example.”

It would be difficult to describe the satisfaction with which Father Clancy received this liberal address from a personage with whom, judging from the conduct of his predecessor, he expected nothing but supercilious civility, and systematic opposition.

The good old man could never read the letter, without a tear starting in his eye; and he preserved it to the last moment of his life, as a document of Protestant liberality, and true Christian benevolence.

He lost no time in paying a visit of respect to the worthy vicar; and the interview was so mutually satisfactory, that the foundation was then laid of a friendship between them, which withstood the violence of that religious animosity which raged around them, and continued unimpaired till it was dissolved by death.

They soon discovered, in amicable communication, that they were both deep in the erudition of their faith; and they respected each other's principles and powers too much, to attempt to produce any change in the one, or obtain an idle triumph over the other. With equal zeal and

effect, they long and cordially co-operated for the benefit of the communities over which they were placed. Often has the Protestant pastor addressed the Catholic congregation, from the altar of their chapel;—often, by the side of his reverend colleague, has he seconded his exhortations, in times of agitation and oppression, and soothed the angry passions to peace, within the charmed circle of their parochial sway, while surrounding districts were convulsed by turbulence and discontent; thus affording to statesmen and churchmen, a lesson from which they might learn the influence of a spirit of benevolence and toleration, in harmonising the discordant opinions, and moderating the violent passions of men.

In person, the two reverend gentlemen were strongly contrasted. Father Clancy has been already described: in stature he was short, negligent in his dress, and even grotesque in his general appearance. The vicar was tall and thin, —well formed, and dignified in his demeanour; observing the clerical character in his costume, and always dressed like a gentleman. His complexion was fair,—his countenance open, cheerful, and prepossessing,—the soul of kindness peeping forth in his eye, and irradiating his evangelical aspect, unclouded by a frown.

His whole physiognomy of figure and face was such, in short, as might well have become one of the early preachers of the Gospel, in times of apostolical purity.

The virtues of his heart, the qualities of his mind, and the amenity of his manners, reflected credit on the religion which he professed ; and it is impossible to contemplate his sacerdotal character, without being forcibly struck with the prototype of his virtues, which our own day presents to our admiration, in the person of that truly Christian prelate, and ornament of the Protestant church,—the venerable Bishop of Norwich.

CHAPTER VI.

THE liberal intercourse which took place between the religious representatives of the parish, soon produced a corresponding effect upon their constituents; and through the introduction of the priest, the parson became acquainted with the most respectable of his Catholic parishioners. At the Castle of Oldcourt, in particular, he was cordially received, and sincerely respected; while he, on his part, felt grateful for the attentions, and took an interest in the character and welfare of a family, that bore upon it so strongly the stamp of the Milesian stock.

The approach of age, and the gentle influence of an excellent wife, had gradually weaned the squire from many of his bad habits. For several years he had not dined out of his own house; and his hospitality there had become more temperate in its rites, and more select as to the objects to-

wards whom it was exercised. Whenever the vicar was his guest, he was always particularly decorous in his conviviality, and the company was assorted with some discretion.

On the Sunday when Sir Walter D'Arcy's accident placed him so unexpectedly, as an invalid, in the Castle of Oldcourt, Doctor Bowen paid a morning visit to the family, prompted by a benevolent desire to ascertain the state of the sufferer from an occurrence, which had been reported to him with all the exaggerations which usually attend the narratives of village events.

The squire no sooner saw the good vicar approach, than anxious to secure such an accession to his Sunday circle, he grappled him with all the hooks of hospitality; and assisted by his coadjutor, Father Clancy, reduced him to a surrender at discretion, for the day. When he found, much to his surprise, that Major Ogle was expected to be of the party, Doctor Bowen was the more readily induced to yield; for the worthy man was desirous to countenance and encourage, on every opportunity, a social intercourse between the Protestants and Catholics of his neighbourhood.

The company, as far as it was now made up for the festal board, besides Major Ogle, and the two clergymen, consisted of an elderly widow lady, Mrs. Burton, who resided a few miles from the castle,

with her son and daughter. The young gentleman, who was much smitten by the charms of Grace Oldcourt, inherited from his father, the property and the profession of an extensive grazier, or breeder of fat cattle, for sale at the different fairs of Ballinasloe and other places.

The grazier is considered in Ireland a person of very respectable calling; and holds in society, a middle place, between the man of landed property and the farmer. The young man in question, might also be said, in manners and appearance, to vibrate, in a sort of pendulous uncertainty, between a buck and a bumpkin; exhibiting the assurance of the one, and the awkwardness of the other; claiming the character of a gentleman, and often betraying the coarseness of the clown.

He was, what, in the country, is commonly called, good looking—roundfaced, and ruddy complexioned—broad shouldered, and robust; and as he was rich enough to please himself in a wife, he had no suspicion that he should fail to please any young lady as a husband.

Grace Oldcourt he fixed upon for his first matrimonial experiment; and his mother, who was very anxious that he should dignify his race, by an alliance with the ancient blood of the Oldcourts, laboured assiduously to recommend her son's pretensions to the favour of the family; as

she was shrewd enough to suspect, that parental influence might not be unnecessary to second that young gentleman's merits, in the attainment of his object.

Mrs. Oldcourt, who began to think her daughter rather too difficult to be pleased, was very anxious to see her well settled, that is to say, married to a rich husband; and as she knew the young grazier answered that description—was also a Catholic, and esteemed to be a respectable man, she rather favoured his addresses. Those modes of bringing the young people together, were, therefore, resorted to, which mothers, by a mutual tact, so well know how to manage, on such occasions.

Miss Arabella Burton was a giggling girl of seventeen, fresh from a fashionable provincial boarding-school, and adorned with all the graces which are usually acquired in a second-rate seminary of that description.

She had passed through the regular routine of those intellectual treadmills, to which domestic cruelty consigns young ladies to labour for years without advancing; their minds undergoing all the drudgery of toil, without the benefit of exercise.

She knew just enough of many things, to give her confidence without knowledge, and tempt her to betray her ignorance, where it would not other

wise have been suspected, or where it would have been excused, if it had not assumed the airs of information.

She spoke a little very bad French, with which she was fond of interlarding a good deal of not-much-better English. In history, she was so skilled, that she could enumerate the different sovereigns of England, from Alfred to Anne, making allowance for a little confusion amongst the roses.

As a geographer, she knew, by heart, the names of the different quarters of the globe, and would tell you all the capital cities of Europe ; that is, if you put no cross questions ; but like the *cicerone* of Greenwich Hospital, she was always obliged to begin again, if you interrupted the regular routine of her information.

The use of the globes, began, about that period, to be considered as a prime object of boarding-school accomplishment. Every young lady you met with, if there happened to be a terrestrial globe within her reach, immediately set about showing you our antipodes ; and insisted upon telling you, by scientific process, what o'clock it was in Jamaica. This latter demonstration, however, generally happened to fail, whenever Miss Arabella Burton undertook to perform it ; though always in consequence of some defect in the in-

struments upon which her skill was to be displayed.

But it would be tedious to enumerate the various matters upon which she was studiously astray, and fashionably misinformed. She played the spinet without much inconvenience to her hearers; for, as Mr. Logier's system had not then reduced music to a mechanical operation, she could not inflict upon her friends, thirty closely printed pages of what is called execution, without stirring from her seat.

She could dance the Minuet *De la Cour*, and jump through a cotillion, to the tune of "Jackson's Morning Brush." Her studies of poetry and polite literature, consisted in a regular exertion of her ingenuity upon the charades and rebus's of the Ladies' Magazine; and an occasional cultivation of her sensibilities, in the pathetic pages of Sterne's Maria, Sydney Biddulph, and the Sorrows of Werter.

In short, Miss Arabella Burton was considered, by her mother and brother, a very accomplished person; and in return for their partiality, she estimated the one as quite uneducated, and thought the other little better than a booby. By domestic cultivation, this young lady might have been manufactured into a good-humoured specimen of plain, home-spun understanding; but worked in the

tambour-frame of a boarding-school, the ground of her character was so covered and disfigured by flaring colours and fantastic forms, that it lost the virtue of utility, without acquiring the grace of ornament

The squire, his lady, his daughter, and three sons, with Miss Matty Malone, an elderly maiden relative, and young Doran, the foster-brother of Grace Oldcourt, who was always treated as one of the family, completed the party.

Mrs. Oldcourt, indeed, seldom could tell, till the dinner was actually on the table, how many guests were to sit down to it; for every casual visitor, up to the last moment, was sure to be invited to family fare, by the good-natured master of the mansion. The scale, however, upon which hospitality was conducted at the castle, prevented any embarrassment to the arrangements of the lady of the house, from such a practice.

The company having paired off in procession to the dining-room, headed by the old squire, in a hobbling exhibition of gouty gallantry and antediluvian glee, leading the portly and well pleased widow Burton, all took their places at the social board. The two clergymen sat on either side of Mrs. Oldcourt, who looked rather fat—rather

hot—and rather anxious; the presence of the Protestant gentlemen exciting in her some little housewife solicitude for the credit of her establishment; as the Catholics of that period were considered by the supercilious ascendancy caste, to live in a comparatively coarse, *hugger mugger* style.

The widow was deposited between Doctor Bowen and Major Ogle; and Miss Oldcourt, giving an intelligent nod to young Doran, who was immediately at her elbow, glided in between him and her father; Miss Burton, placing herself on the other side, declaring, “she must sit next dear Mr. Oldcourt, who was always so good to her;” though some persons suspected that the true reason for preferring that place, was, because the young gentlemen of the family were always in its neighbourhood.

Miss Matty Malone flanked Father Clancy; and Mr. Bob Burton, rather disconcerted, and somewhat huffed, by the unexpected manœuvre of Miss Oldcourt, took his seat next the antiquated spinster; an arrangement, of which, by their looks, the two mammas appeared by no means to approve.

A judicious location of the young Oldcourts now balanced both sides of the table, and completed its symmetry, as far as numbers were concerned.

Grace having been said by the Rev. Doctor Bowen, as representative of the established church, the great business of refection was just going to begin, and Mrs. Oldcourt observing, with an apprehensive smile, while looking towards Major Ogle, "Gentlemen, you see your dinner, so I hope you'll make the best of what's before you," had just darted a fork that would have made a tolerable sized trident for a diminutive Neptune, into that magnificent emblem of plenty and hospitality—a round of beef, when an additional guest was announced, whose presence appeared to be neither expected nor desired by the family.

With his head steaming like a hard-ridden post-horse, and his forehead marked by a red ridge from the pressure of his hat—with a bending, half-cowed, half-confident air of familiarity, and a "God save all here;" and "sure I thought I'd catch you just in pudd'n' time," now sidled into the room, Mr. Denny Burne, or, as he was commonly called in his neighbourhood, "*Donacha Diaoul*;" *Anglicè*: Dennis the Devil; an appellation intended, no doubt, to convey some general idea of his peculiar reputation.

Mr. Denny Burne was an old crony, and had always been an humble follower of the squire. He was one of the very few of that class, that had

not been quite routed from the establishment by its mistress ; but as there was nothing absolutely disreputable about him, except his face, which bore,—

“ In purple pride the bacchanalian hue ;

and as he was gifted with the peculiar faculty of appearing perfectly sober, even after he had drunk all his companions under the table, so, he was tolerated as an occasional week-day visitor, with whom the squire could talk of old times, and old triumphs. But, Mrs. Oldcourt had given him pretty plainly to understand, that Sunday was to “ shine no Sabbath-day” for him at the castle ; and, certainly, if the fatigue of a long walk, and a hot day, with the temptation of a good dinner, had not got the better of his discretion, he would not have ventured to present himself there at such a time.

In most families, however, according to the common observation, “ every thing happens unluckily,” in such matters ; and Mr. Denny Burne could not have chosen any Sunday in the year, when his appearance would have been more mortifying to the good lady of the mansion, than on the present occasion ; for, neither in person nor reputation, was he calculated to do much credit to a respectable dinner-party.

In the embarrassment of an *entrée*, which he was conscious would be considered unseasonable, Denny had made his first salutation to the company, without particularly observing the strangers who were present ; but, when he looked round, and perceived the two clergymen, and Major Ogle, he felt not a little abashed ; for, he was well aware, that between him and them, there existed no social sympathy, and he would gladly have made good his retreat ;—but it was too late.

In a sufficiently humble style of address, therefore, he ventured to say :—

“ God bless your reverence !” to Father Clancy ; and, “ Your humble servant, sir,” to Dr. Bowen.

“ So, Dennis,” said the priest, with a nod.

“ Your most obedient, Mr. Burne ;” said the minister, with a more formal bend of the head.

Major Ogle looked repulsion ; and Denny hazarded no approach to recognition in that cold quarter.

“ God bless me ! how provoking !” exclaimed Mrs. Oldcourt, in a *mezzo voce* style, half to herself, and half to her neighbours.

In a bustle of chairs at the bottom of the table, young Doran got up to make way for the unexpected guest, who declared, “ He was mighty sorry to disturb the good company in that way !”

“Come, come, Denny,” cried the squire “no ceremony; sit down here by me. Grace, my dear, move up a little, and make room for my old friend.” “Andrew! a plate for Mr. Burne.”

Order having been thus restored, the edible operations of the party were allowed to proceed without farther interruption; and, certainly, those who had good stomachs, and liked to see the table groan under a substantial dinner, had great reason to be satisfied. The provision for the day would have supplied the officers' mess of a marching regiment for a month. It would have been thought a satisfactory feed at a meeting of the Farmer's Club; and, under the culinary skill and amplification of a Jarrin or an Ude, might have stopped the clamours of fashionable voracity, at the breakfast of the Horticultural Society.

Major Ogle examined the abundant board with a kind of commiserative shrug, and gave an expressive look to the doctor, who either did not, or would not understand him.

“Had not you better cry the game, my dear?” said the squire; “Major Ogle may be reserving himself for the second course, if you don't put him on his guard.”

“I have already warned our friends, Mr. Oldcourt,” replied his lady. “They see what they have to depend on; a plain family dinner.

No second course I assure you. Nothing to come but a green goose, and some sweets for the young people."

"Madam," answered Major Ogle, "you have so amply provided for your friends in the first course, that the idea of a second would be distressing to a moderate appetite."

Doctor Bowen, who thought there was something like a sneer in the major's observation, immediately said:—

"My dear Mrs. Oldcourt, the palate must be as perverted as the temper of the man, who could be otherwise than pleased with the excellent dinner which you have set before us?"

"For my part," observed Mrs. Burton, "whatever my fare may be, I like to have it before me at once; and so it was with the late Mr. Burton. Though he was the poorest eater in the world, yet, little or much, he must always have it on the table from the first. Though, to be sure, with some things it does very well to have them up hot and hot; as a good beefsteak—but I can't abide to be taken by surprise, and find a better dinner in the second course, than I have had in the first."

"Aye, by Jove," added the young grazier, who was a bit of an epicure; "and perhaps not be able to eat it, into the bargain. I've some-

times been deucedly taken in, that way, I assure you."

"A long meal," said Father Clancy, "leads to excess; and a good dinner for the palate, is often a bad dinner for the constitution."

"'Egad! Father Clancy," observed the squire, "you remind me of what I used to think when I was boy,—that if you believed the doctors, every thing that was nice was unwholesome."

"Boys, my good friend," replied the priest, "think many things nice, with which a physician or a parent may reasonably refuse to gratify them."

"Yes," said Doctor Bowen, "boys are always gluttons, and often epicures, too, in their own way. There is nothing that should be so anxiously repressed in young folks, as a disposition to pamper their appetites. The boy who is always thinking of what he eats—who hoards an apple or a plum-cake from his fellows, will become a selfish, miserly hunk, in after life."

"Eating," added Father Clancy, "is necessary to satisfy the cravings of hunger. The desire of food is a want which we should be content to supply, and not study to stimulate."

Here, Major Ogle, who was notorious for his devotions to the culinary department, and piqued himself on the *recherché* character of his table,

turning with a rather supercilious air to the priest, observed :—

“Hunger, sir, is a sensation not very commonly experienced amongst people of condition ; and I trust, without being considered sensualists, we may please the palate, as well as satisfy the appetite. Nature has furnished us with the sense of taste, and, therefore, I should think we have a right to attend to its gratification.”

Doctor Bowen saw that his reverend brother was a little hurt at the contemptuous tone of Major Ogle’s remark, and he interposed before the priest could reply.

“That, my dear major, is what we, at college, call a *non sequitur*. Nature furnishes us with many passions and propensities, which we not only have no right to gratify, but which, under the pain of punishment, we are bound to repress. The more or less of indulgence is the sole question here, and moral and social good the only criterion by which it can be decided. Nature is a vague term, that every body uses, and nobody defines. A friend of mine flatters himself that he lives according to nature, while he drinks double-distilled water, and feeds on vegetables cultivated by art, and cooked in all the savory varieties supplied by culinary skill. But I tell him, if he would live according to

nature, in any intelligible sense of that word, he must satisfy his hunger with a feast of acorns, from the next oak tree, and slake his thirst, at the first puddle he finds in the neighbourhood. We may please our palates at Mrs. Oldcourt's hospitable board without censure; but there is nothing more true, than the trite proverb: that "we should eat to live, and not live to eat."

"I can't help thinking too, doctor," rejoined Father Clancy, with a little more emphasis than was usually discoverable in his manner, "that if persons of condition, as they are called, were occasionally to feel a few twitches of hunger, it would do no harm to their health, and might, perhaps, make them a little more considerate of those persons of a different condition, who suffer all the miseries of that passion, without the means to appease it."

"It would be a salutary lesson, indeed," now observed Miss Matty Malone, with a sly reference to the major, who was a great epicure, and not very generous to his tenantry; "for I am sure, it's quite shocking to think, how the poor people are left to starve, by those who seem to believe that they are brought into the world for no other purpose than to pursue their

wild pranks, and pamper their perverted appetites."

"Matty, my dear," said the squire, who began to be somewhat afraid of the good spinster's garrulity, when once set a going; "Father Clancy wants to take a glass of wine with you. Major Ogle, a glass of Madeira—'tis Ferns's best. He assures me it has been a great traveller, and has not only doubled the Cape, but visited the coast of Coromandel.—Doctor, you'll join us—you have no objection to a glass of good wine, I am sure."

"Assuredly not," replied the doctor; "taken in moderation, it is agreeable and healthful."

"Come, Denny, my old boy," said the squire, turning to that gentleman, "*you* never fail me; *you* never flinch."

"Not when there's any thing good a goin', squire," replied Mr. Denny Burne; "and sure you would'nt have me refuse a glass of good liquor? For what's good in itself, can't be bad for any body, you know."

Mr. Burne gave the last part of the sentence with a kind of half-suppressed chuckle, as if he was not quite sure of his ground.

"Toper's logic, Denny," exclaimed the eldest son, Barry Oldcourt, with whom Mr. Burne

was no favourite; "and quite convincing at a tavern."

"To which place," said Father Clancy, gravely, "Mr. Burne would do well to confine it."

Denny was a little abashed; but Mr. Oldcourt, good-naturedly interposing, said:—

"Come, come, you are too hard upon my old friend; but nobody stands a joke better than Denny, I will say."

"Except when the bottle stands, sir;" slyly observed the youngest son.

"But that is no joke, Master Phil.," smartly retorted Denny; "and was always enough to vex the squire himself."

This last sally produced a general laugh, and set Denny on his legs again.

The squire now desired the Champagne to be handed round; and having himself taken a bumper, he smacked his lips with the air of a connoisseur, and observed:—

"Well, I do like French wines; but I hate their cookery. I always set my face against their kickshaws and fricassees. Give me a table well furnished with good plain fare, and well filled with hearty friends to partake of it:—that's my notion."

And a very good one, Mr. Oldcourt," said

the doctor; and I am sure you must be much gratified to-day in both respects."

"I own I like a good dinner mightily," said Mr. Bob Burton; don't you, Miss Oldcourt?" addressing that young lady, for the first time since they had taken their places at table.

"That is rather an awkward question to put to a lady before company, Mr. Burton," answered Miss Oldcourt, with a blush. If I say 'no,' you will think I have no taste; and if I say 'yes,' you will set me down as an epicure. But, in truth, I am very indifferent about what I eat."

"Now, that's just like me!" exclaimed Miss Arabella Burton. "Eating is quite a masculine operation. I assure you it was thought a very unseemly process* for a young lady, at Mrs. Fillagree's academy."

"By Jove!" said her brother, "that's politic doctrine at a boarding-school. But I'll engage you were all ravenous enough when you got in a corner."

"For shame! brother," rejoined Miss Bur-

* In Wadd's pleasant work on Corpulency, Doctor Beddoes is quoted as relating, in one of his Essays, that, in a certain seminary, an elegant delicacy of appetite had been so successfully inculcated, that forty girls were fed, for two days, on a single leg of mutton!

ton, with a toss of the head, and a very contemptuous curl of the lip; "how can you talk so! You know I never have the least appetite."

"Egad, that's good! ejaculated the young grazier; "when you know, Bell, that you never have patience to wait for dinner, but always make interest with the cook for a stay-stomach.

This authentic evidence, that her organs of digestion were in a sounder state, than she thought consistent with the refined delicacy to which she laid claim, so utterly confounded poor Miss Burton, that it was with the utmost difficulty she could refrain from bursting into tears. The word "brute" was heard to issue from her lips; she coloured up to the eyes, as the saying is, and her confusion was not a little increased by an ill-suppressed laugh amongst her young friends, as well as by an observation of the squire's,—who, good-naturedly intending to relieve her embarrassment, made the matter worse, by saying:—

"Never mind, my dear young lady!—a good appetite is not a thing to be ashamed of; it is a proof of good health: and whatever Mrs. Fillagee, or any other silly body of a school-mistress may say, it is a great blessing to man or woman; and I hope your brother may long have to accuse you of it."

A very expressive look from his mother, indicating present displeasure, and future expostulation, gave Mr. Bob Burton to understand, that his discretion had very much failed him ; and he was silent for some time.

The dinner now went on, and went off, like most dinners in the country, with much wise disquisition on corn and cattle, the weather and the Assizes ; the old ladies keeping up a cross-fire of conversation, in mutual details of domestic economy, and culinary grievance : the young ladies talking of balls, and thinking of beaux ; the young gentlemen, most ungallantly engaged in discussing matters connected with hounds, hunters, and handicaps.

The two reverends were cordial and communicative ; Major Ogle, pompous, cold, and supercilious ; their host facetious, hospitable, and happy ; as, to do him justice, he always was at his own table, when he had what he called, " his friends about him ;" that is, every body whom he could persuade to cut his beef and drink his claret.

During the progress of the dinner, he made divers attempts to have such food and refreshments conveyed to the apartment of the invalid, Sir Walter D'Arcy, as he thought would comfort that young gentleman, in a state of seclusion and restraint, for which the worthy squire several times

expressed the greatest possible commiseration. But Mrs. Oldcourt was absolute in resisting all his propositions for such dangerous indulgence to her patient; and her medical authority was too well established to be effectually opposed, even by her lord and master.

CHAPTER VII.

IN all well regulated families, where the bottle may be said to bear sway, as the most important object of festal enjoyment, there is generally a signal established between the master and the mistress of the establishment; by means of which, when the former becomes impatient for a more rapid circulation of the liquids, the latter is instructed that the time has arrived when she is to draw on her gloves, and, by a gracious nod of the head round the table, to collect the female part of her company and retire.

The master of the house now rises in solemn dignity, and moves to the head of the table, where he takes his seat between the most important guests of the day, who are always complimented with the post of honour next the lady of the mansion. A considerable bustle among the chairs now takes place; the scattered baccha-

nalian files immediately take close order, those previously at the bottom of the table moving up in succession ; the presiding chief pulls a string, which, for greater convenience, is attached to his seat ; the butler makes his appearance with a fresh supply of the purple grape, from the favourite bin of Barnes, Adamson, or Carbonel, cooled down, by Reaumur and Fahrenheit, to the most exact temperature of palatable vinous refrigeration ; all obstacles to the easy progress of the little fleet of coasters round the board are removed ; olives, walnuts, and other stimulants, are put in requisition ; and the great business of the evening begins.

But, thank Heaven ! this is a description more applicable to past than to present times. Your six bottle men—indeed the whole bacchanalian race are nearly expelled from civilized society, and tipplers are now to be found only in taverns, alehouses, or country clubs.

The house of Oldcourt, however, had not, at the time of which I write, departed from the ancient usage of convivial life in Ireland. There was an established signal which regulated the motions of its mistress ; and when that benevolent sentiment, “ May the single be married, and the married live happy,” was given by her hus-

band, in a bumper, his amiable better half knew her duty and obeyed.

On the present occasion, this telegraphic toast having been repeated through the whole line of guests, Mrs. Oldcourt, "hoping soon to see the gentlemen in the drawing-room," retired with the other ladies to such insipid communion as, I am sure, the less selfish and more truly social spirit of the fair sex, cannot much enjoy, where man is absent.

This, however, was not an evening for a regular set-to. The presence of the two clergymen forbade excess; and the difference of political and religious sentiment, which prevailed between some of the parties, indisposed them to a long delay in the dining-room. Great caution had been used on all sides, to prevent the introduction of any topic which might create unpleasant feelings.

Major Ogle was, indeed, the only string that was likely to jar in the company. He was known to be what was then termed a blue Protestant; an appellation analogous to that of the Orangeman or Brunswicker of the present day; and the Oldcourts were anxious that, as their guest, he should experience nothing to offend his prejudices, or render ineffectual that approximation

to a liberal intercourse with their neighbour, which chance had so unexpectedly brought about.

Doctor Bowen, too, though he detested the rancorous spirit of bigotry which distinguished the major, was pleased to meet him at the castle; hoping, in the benevolence of his heart, that social intercourse would lead to mutual conciliation.

With the exception, therefore, of the little gastronomic skirmish, which occurred at the outset of the entertainment, no particular colloquial animation had been displayed on any topic; though the American war, then drawing to its mortifying close,—the administration of Lord North,—back-stairs influence,—the combined fleets, the riots, and the Whiteboys, had been successively adverted to.

Mr. Denny Burne, however, at last, inadvertently disturbed the harmony of the evening. Immediately after dinner, he had solicited to be indulged with “a taste of the native; the prettiest tippie in the world, of the mistress’s own brewing;” the spirituous, being more palatable than the vinous fermentation to the taste, as well as more familiar to the stomach of that habitual soaker.

Mrs. Oldcourt, in addition to her housewife

skill in the preparation of pickles, preserves, cordials, *liqueurs*, waters, wines, and all sorts of home-made stimulants, medicaments, and tinctures, was celebrated for her currant whiskey; a copious and judicious infusion of black currant juice, communicating to that indigenous liquid a peculiarly rich and agreeable flavour.

With this potent spirit, as the basis of her operations, by a scientific admixture of other congenial ingredients, aqueous, saccharine, and acetous, in nicely adapted proportions, she, by a frequently repeated effusion of the liquid compound from one capacious vase or jug, into another, had the art of brewing a potation called punch, which was in the highest repute among the general run of visitors at the castle. It was always prepared before dinner, placed ready on the side-board, and was much in favour with the squire himself; but never brought forward, unless by very particular desire, when any stranger of consequence was present.

Mr. Denny Burne having been copiously supplied with his favourite beverage, very diligently filled his glass, giving a most obsequious simper of assent to all opinions and propositions, from all quarters; and sending forth a peculiarly applausive chuckle, in sound some-

thing between a cough and a quinzy, to express his admiration of every thing uttered by the squire.

He happened, however, upon one occasion, to take a more active part in the conversation ; and not being at all aware that there was any person present connected with the circumstances, he, in the communicativeness of the moment, acquainted the company, “ that the poor old woman who had been that morning run over by the young officer, was not expected to live.”

Mr. Denny Burne not being the most exemplary Catholic in the parish, had said his prayers at home that day, and knew of the affair only by report,—in general, a very apocryphal narrator of events ; and the reader will have perceived, that on the present occasion, the version of the story, which reached Mr. Burne, had, as usual in such cases, very much improved upon the original incident.

It must be acknowledged, however, to the credit of that gentleman, that he contributed nothing to the accumulating interest of the tale, but the slight additional circumstance, “ that the poor woman was not expected to live ;” for having heard that one of her legs had been broken, and that Mr. Phelim M'Cabe had been called in, he very naturally concluded, that death

was the probable result to be expected from such combined dangers, as the fracture, and the physician.

Certain it is, that if Mr. Burne had been aware that the only sufferer from the accident was then in the house, he would have kept his intelligence to himself; and he was surprised, almost to a state of consternation, at the eager burst of denial, and evident disapprobation, with which it was received; his attention being at the same moment rather painfully excited, by a smart application to his toes, under the table, from the heel of the old squire's gouty shoe, as a hint, that the ground Mr. Burne had touched upon, was as tender as his corns.

When he recovered breath, from the double infliction which he had so unwittingly drawn down upon himself, he, in a tone of great humiliation and regret, declared, that "he only repeated what he was *tould*, as he came along, for, as he hoped to be saved! he knew no more about it, himself, than the man in the moon."

"Then, sir," sternly observed Major Ogle, who seemed eagerly to seize upon the opportunity afforded him, as a favourable vent for letting out the hoarded dissatisfaction of the whole day; "give me leave to tell you, you should be cautious how you propagate such vile

and vulgar fabrications, which can have but one object, and that, one which no honest man, or good subject, can observe without indignation."

The squire, who was evidently surprised, and a little hurt, at, what he thought, the unnecessary heat, and, as he suspected, pointed acrimony of his guest's manner, in a half jocular, half serious way, said,—

"Pooh! pooh! my good sir! it would puzzle your sagacity to discover any object worthy of a serious remark, in the gossiping exaggerations of a country village. My friend, Denny, meant no offence to church or state, I warrant him. Eh, Denny?" turning to that gentleman, and clapping him on the back.

Mr. Denny Burne now began to establish his innocence of all such disloyal intentions, by divers asseverations, such as "I declare to God!"—"as I hope for mercy!" and "may this be my poison!" when father Clancy, with an expressive shake of the head, repressed his objurgatory exculpation, and added,—

"Fie, fie! Mr. Burne, we can believe you, without any such indecorous attestations."

And Doctor Bowen, wishing to turn the current of observation from the already overwhelmed culprit, asked Mr. Oldcourt,—

“ How the accident originated, for he had not heard the particulars ?”

Major Ogle immediately took upon him to answer the question ; and said, with the same warmth of manner which had distinguished his former observation,—

“ The accident, Doctor Bowen, from which my friend has suffered so severely, and which has put Mr. Oldcourt and his family to so much inconvenience, originated, I am sorry to say, in the barbarous and preposterous practice of the wretched peasantry of this country, which you must have observed, and which must have shocked your English ideas ; I mean their habit of surrounding their chapels, and squatting in the public roads, obstructing the way, under pretence of attending their devotions ; a practice which, with all due deference to the respectable gentleman in whose presence I speak,” (bowing to Father Clancy) “ it would well become those who have such influence over their flocks to prevent.”

To this unexpected attack, the priest, calmly, but somewhat sarcastically, replied :—

“ If you will enable me, sir, to enlarge the miserable barn which is assigned to me for the performance of divine worship in this parish ; I shall be happy at once to shelter my poor flock,

and remove the evil of which you complain, perhaps, a little unreasonably. The peasantry of this country, Major Ogle, are, indeed, wretched, as you describe them; but in nothing are they more degraded, than in being reduced to the necessity of offering their homage to their Creator and yours, in the way which appears to give you so much offence."

The gallant major was a little disconcerted; and before he had prepared his rejoinder, Barry Oldcourt, addressing Doctor Bowen, observed,—

"It is very true, doctor, that the accident so far originated from the practice which has been objected to,—that, if the congregation could have been all included within the chapel, it probably would not have occurred; but I have the best authority for stating, that on this occasion, the accident did not arise from any inconvenient obstruction of the public road, or any misconduct, whatever, on the part of the people."

"Give me leave to say, young gentleman," interrupted the major, with some sharpness, "that I was present, and that you were not."

"I have only to add, sir," continued the young man, mildly, but firmly, "that I have been authorised by Sir Walter D'Arcy to declare, that he himself, and he only, was to blame for what has happened."

This was a knock-down blow to the major's argument: rallying, however, a little, he rejoined:—

“ I think, sir, when we consider Sir Walter D'Arcy's present circumstances, we may fairly suspect that such a declaration was prompted rather by his politeness, than his candour.”

Young Oldcourt, irritated at what he considered the indelicate proceeding of the major, with a glowing cheek, replied,—

“ It might not be amiss, perhaps, if Major Ogle would allow himself to be influenced, on the present occasion, by a similar sentiment.”

Major Ogle coloured, and bit his lips; an awkward feeling of embarrassment and mutual dissatisfaction began to manifest itself in the company. The squire evidently found it difficult to keep up the usual good humour and facetious demeanour, with which he conducted himself towards his guests; and the doctor, anxious to dissipate the clouds that were collecting over the conversation, jocularly addressed Father Clancy.

“ Really, my reverend friend, I must say, I think you do not use me well. You contrive to gather about you the whole population of the parish, in that strange structure which you dignify by the name of chapel, and even fill the highways with your friends; while you leave me,

who, as a stranger, have some claim on your kindness, to pray in solitude in my stately temple, and, like Dean Swift, in St. Patrick's Cathedral, address myself to my 'dearly beloved Roger,' for want of better company."

Father Clancy laughed heartily at this sally, and replied,—

"My excellent friend, I am more afraid of the influence of your life than your religion on my flock; and your liberality may convert those who would not be shaken by your learning."

"Don't you think, Mr. Oldcourt," continued the doctor, turning to that gentleman, "that it would be but neighbourly in Father Clancy, to hand over to me a few of his supernumeraries, for whom he has no accommodation, just to cheer my Sabbath solitude a little, and people my deserted pews; I will promise him, that they shall hear no homilies of conventicle cant, or pious persecution."

"My worthy sir," emphatically replied the squire, "I am no great judge of doctrines; but I am quite sure that your conduct and sentiments would do honour to any church."

"What say you, Major Ogle?" facetiously and somewhat sily, resumed the doctor; "don't you think we could accommodate some of my friend's

out-door devotees, in our unfrequented tabernacle? There are some happy countries, where Protestant and Catholic succeed each other in worshipping their common God, under the same roof. You would relinquish your pew, I am sure, major, for such a liberal purpose: it is not often occupied."

The major, who, notwithstanding the cordial attention with which he was received and treated by the Oldcourt family, had sat, during the whole evening, like a porcupine with all his quills out, seemed to be provoked beyond endurance, by the double edge of point and pleasantry in the doctor's appeal to him. His lip quivered, and summoning up all his dignity, with a haughty air and hurried utterance, addressing the reverend gentleman, he said,—

"I do not recognise, sir, in Doctor Bowen, any privilege, personal or professional, which should authorise him to take a liberty with me, or indulge his ill-timed levity at my expense."

The worthy doctor was not more surprised than offended at this pompous rebuke; but unwilling to sharpen farther the illiberal asperity which his opponent displayed, he bowed, and mildly observed,—

"Really, Major Ogle, I should think a moment's reflection must satisfy you, that you are

not called upon to take up this matter so seriously."

"Sir," retorted the major, with increased vehemence, "I must always consider myself called upon to assert my feelings when I am treated improperly; and give me leave to say, that this is not the time, the place, or the company, which a judicious Protestant clergyman would choose, as a fit opportunity to lecture any respectable member of his church, for an imputed inattention to his duties."

Doctor Bowen's sense of the dignity of his profession was now aroused; and in a stern and impressive manner, he replied,—

"My allusion, sir, to your absence from church, was made in a spirit, which any dispassionate person would consider as intended to allay, rather than create irritation. But as you have thought proper to make it a pretext for an unbecoming assault upon my conduct as a clergyman, I shall take the liberty to set you right upon the subject, and tell you, that whenever you unnecessarily, unhandsomely, and, as in this instance, most wantonly take upon you to reprobate as barbarous and preposterous, the conduct of your fellow-Christians, who endeavour to perform *their* duties, I shall always consider myself authorised, as a

clergyman, an honest man, and a gentleman, to comment on the way in which you neglect *yours*."

The mortified major here endeavoured to interpose, with an interjection of some sort ; but the doctor, with a still firmer accent, proceeded.

"In one word more, sir, I would suggest to your calmer consideration, that if good feeling does not operate, good sense and common discretion, should induce you to be silent respecting a practice, which, however it may be regretted, as inconvenient and mortifying to your Catholic countrymen, is disgraceful only to those who have, by their bigotry, rendered it necessary."

The major now, with an agitated effort to be cool and sarcastic, replied,—

"I thank you, sir, for your suggestions ; but whatever respect I may pay to your doctrines in the pulpit, I must beg leave to protest against them here. But I presume they are calculated for the company and the occasion," (bowing to Father Clancy).

"By my honour ! major," emphatically exclaimed the squire, "you cannot pay the company a higher compliment."

"And allow me," added the priest, with a very significant return of the major's bow, "to thank you, sir, for the occasion which called forth sen-

timents which do so much honour to a Christian minister."

"I am much mistaken, sir," rejoined the major, "if those sentiments will do the reverend gentleman much credit or service amongst his profession; but perhaps he meditates a change. Indeed, if I might presume to offer a suggestion, in my turn, to Doctor Bowen, I should say, he cannot do better than to quit a church which he is so ready to censure."

"Why, really," retorted the doctor, addressing himself, with the most provoking coolness, to Father Clancy; "if Major Ogle's opinions were to prevail in it, I should tremble for my orthodoxy;—I don't think a mitre would bribe me to conformity."

The major, now, in a state of great irritation, rose from his chair, and pulled the bell, at the same time addressing his host:—

"Allow me, Mr. Oldcourt, to order my horses. I would put an end to an altercation which I regret to have been engaged in, in this house. I beg, sir, to acknowledge my obligation to your hospitality, as well as my sense of your kindness to my friend."

The old squire, rising from his seat, with much dignity, replied,—

"Major Ogle, it has been the wish of this

family to treat you with every possible attention and consideration ; and I very much regret that any subject should have occurred to hurt your feelings, or diminish the pleasure of the day.”

Barry Oldcourt, who had observed, and could with difficulty refrain from resenting, the haughty, captious, and supercilious demeanour of their new guest, here eagerly interposed, and addressing himself to his father, said, with some warmth,—

“ My dear, sir ! I must, on my part, disclaim all apology. Major Ogle has chosen his own topics, as well as his mode of discussing them, and must have anticipated the result.”

The servant here announced, that the horses were at the door ; and Major Ogle, affecting not to notice the last observation, with a stiff, general bow to the company, immediately withdrew.

It may be supposed, the party felt relieved by his retirement. But poor Denny Burne was so distressed at having been the person who threw the apple of discord among the company, that he was obliged to absorb a double portion of Mrs. Oldcourt’s “ pretty tipple,” to keep up his spirits ; declaring, that he’d “ bite off the tongue in his head, afore he’d say a word to breed ill blood at the squire’s table, where every man found good cheer, and hearty welcome.”

Doctor Bowen owned that he was surprised

and disappointed; for though he knew Major Ogle had often manifested ill temper and illiberality, he never supposed he could display those qualities so offensively, as he had done on that evening. The young men expressed their delight at the manner in which Doctor Bowen had *squashed* the ill-mannered prig; and Barry Oldcourt lamented, that, at his father's table, he could not satisfy his feelings, and punish such impertinence, as it deserved.

The two reverends now proposed to join the ladies; a motion to which all parties assented, except Mr. Denny Burne, who "just wanted to spake a word to the squire." This was an intimation which always made the worthy host mechanically button up his pockets; for he invariably found it to be the prologue to an application, which was intended to relieve them of some of their contents; and his meat was much more at his friend's service than his money.

On the present occasion, however, Mr. Burne had no pecuniary views; he merely proposed to himself two advantages of no small consequence in his estimation. In the first place, he gained time to finish the jug of "pretty tippie," which he had not quite exhausted; and in the next place, he avoided the company of the ladies, who, he

knew, were not very partial to him, and whose society, indeed, was not more suited to his taste, than the delicious beverage which circulates at the social board over which they preside; a beverage for which we can never be too grateful to the children of Fo-Hi, and the celestial empire; which refreshes, without fevering, the exhausted spirits, and exhilarates without intoxication; which, by enlarging the limits of female dominion at home, has established sobriety as a domestic virtue, and effected more for the temperance, morality, and good manners of society, than all the denunciations against drunkenness that have ever proceeded from the bar, the pulpit, or the press.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE the ceremonies of deglutition were carried on with considerable activity in the family refectory of Oldcourt, Sir Walter D'Arcy, in the apartment assigned to his use, was suffering under all the privations of an invalid ; a position disagreeable enough at any time, but particularly mortifying when the sounds of good cheer tantalize us with savoury associations, and convivial sympathies are unimpaired by the presence of any real indisposition. The baronet, in fact, in accordance with the unprofessional declaration of Doctor Phelim M'Cabe, and in opposition to the strictly medical anticipation of his fair rival, Mrs. Oldcourt, found himself in a state which, as far as he could judge, required only a few of those nutritives to be administered to him, which are usually prescribed as specifics in that parti-

cular affection of the stomach, called—a good appetite.

He had, indeed, so completely recovered the effects of his accident, that nothing remained to remind him of it, but the bandage on his arm ; and he thought it particularly unlucky, that while he felt competent to do justice to the very best display of his fair hostess's culinary department, that good lady, in her character of physician, should condemn him to solitude, a sick chair, and a water-gruel diet.

Without manifesting, however, an ungracious disregard of injunctions, which were evidently dictated by kindness, if not by skill, he could not help himself ; and he determined, for the present at least, to submit.

He had got just a glimpse of Miss Oldcourt from the window of his room, as that young lady returned from a walk in the garden, before dinner ; but the slightest glance was sufficient to convince him, that she was not an every-day person, and that rumour had not done her more than justice. His impatience, therefore, under his present restraint, was not a little increased by his desire to see her again.

Having, through mere hunger, dispatched a large supply of water-gruel, made somewhat pala-

table by the addition of a little wine, nutmeg, and sugar, and having solicited from his attendant a second edition of the delicately sliced dry toast with which it was accompanied, he sat for some time picking his teeth, through habit, as if he had had any occupation for them; and indulging in some philosophical ruminations on "the various turns of chance below," and that particular instance of the casualties of this life, which had placed him, that day, in circumstances so peculiar, and so little anticipated.

He felt no displeasure against any one on account of his accident; he was conscious he had himself occasioned it, by provoking the feelings which he ought to have respected, and idly affecting to ride over the old rustic who had so justly rebuked his flippancy.

On the whole, as he apprehended no other ill consequence from it, than a day's abstinence, and the loss of a little bood, which he could very well spare, he was rather pleased with an occurrence which bore such a romantic air, and held forth the prospect of so interesting an acquaintance.

The family he knew to be ancient and respectable—the squire most hospitable; his sons had the character of being amongst the most gentlemanly young men of the county; and what was by far the most attractive object of speculation to a man

of our hero's particular taste, the daughter was a beauty, a toast, and a universal favourite.

Having walked about the room till he had nearly exhausted his powers of reflection, he had recourse to those of observation, and began to examine the apartment in which he was invalided. It was evidently one of the state dormitories of the castle. The bed, adorned with dingy damask curtains, and a somewhat tangle-fringed canopy top, was deposited in a recess or alcove: the chimney-piece, large, ponderous, and projecting, looked like an altar erected for the worship of fire—the expanded aperture for the grate, shining with scripture history, detailed in the enamelled magnificence of Dutch tiles. There was an altar-piece, too, which was a stiff family portrait of a lady, in an ebony frame, with a gilt edge next the picture—the fair subject of the painter's toil, simpering in all the prim complacency of conscious loveliness, like my Lady Pentweazle about "to call up a look;" her head turned one way, her eyes looking another, with long lappet-sleeves, covering her arm half-way below the elbow, and a parrot perched upon her wrist.

The rest of the furniture was equally substantial and old fashioned; more conformable to ideas of ancient magnificence, than modern convenience. The chairs and tables were cut, carved

and curved into all sorts of knots, knobs, and notches, like irregular rows of gingerbread nuts, twisted into every awkward variety of spiral shapes, spindle proportions, and curvilinear projections; the whole having a sombre air of dilapidated dignity, and long established discomfort, which, while it is suffered to prevail in a mansion, pretty plainly indicates, that the proprietor has either not inherited the wealth, or has much degenerated from the taste of his ancestors.

The baronet's attention was attracted by a small corner-cupboard kind of book-case, in one of the angles of the room, between the chimney-piece and the window, of modern construction; which seemed recently fitted to its place, and corresponded to an object similar in appearance, at the opposite angle, masking a wash-hand bason, water jug, &c.

On drawing aside a green silk curtain, a small collection of books, neatly bound, was presented to view; and, as D'Arcy was of opinion, not unreasonably, that a great deal of the character of its inhabitants is to be collected from the books that are found in a house, he was glad to have an opportunity of trying, by this test, the intellectual pretensions of the family of Oldcourt.

The volumes that appeared to have been most

used, were "Prayer-books," "The Manual of a Christian," and "The Life of St. Francis Xavier." He next took up a French work, in a very handsome binding, "Télémaque;" and in one of the blank leaves was written, in a small beautiful hand, "Grace Oldcourt, her book; the gift of her reverend and revered friend and instructor, Father Clancy." A volume of Tasso next presented itself, from which, as he opened it, a manuscript fell out. D'Arcy, from his knowledge of Latin, immediately discovered it to be an exercise of translation into prose, from that poet, written in the same beautiful hand, with some few corrections in a very different character. Some volumes of history, voyages, and travels, Pope's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, Tooke's Pantheon, the Sermons of Massillon and Bourdaloue in French, Robinson Crusoe, and Sir Charles Grandison, made up the rest of the collection.

The baronet immediately concluded, that this small selection of literature was particularly appropriated to Miss Oldcourt; and he formed from it a very favourable opinion of her taste and attainments. She evidently understood French, and had some knowledge of Italian. Her handwriting he particularly admired; and good penmanship was, at that time, by no means so common an accomplishment amongst young

ladies, as at present. Though he had not so much faith in graphic indications, as the autograph-fanciers of our day, he could not but augur favourably, from her striking proficiency in an art, which so many practise, and in which so few are found to excel.

His various speculations on the probable personal and mental qualities of Miss Oldcourt, occupied him very agreeably for a considerable time; till at length, the sanguine impression which was their result, co-operating with the vision of beauty, which had burst upon his view just before dinner, conjured up in his ardent imagination, such a paragon of female perfection, that he resolved to break through all restraint, and satisfy his curiosity immediately.

Having, therefore, ascertained that the ladies had retired from the convivial board, he looked in the glass, adjusted his somewhat deranged *coiffure*, and thought that a little paleness, the consequence of Mr. M'Cabe's operation, became him. A rich silk handkerchief, tied gracefully round his neck, supported his wounded arm; and, on the whole, appeared to him to give an interesting air to his figure. After concerting a few complimentary apologies to Mrs. Oldcourt, for being so much better than she had anticipated, or indeed, than he ought to be, ac-

ording to all judicious medical forecast, on such occasions, the gallant baronet proceeded forthwith to present himself in the drawing-room.

When the gentlemen adjourned to the ladies' apartment, they were not a little surprised to find the invalid, whom they supposed to be in bed, or languidly reclining upon a sofa, established in the female coterie before them, and apparently quite at home.

The conversation had evidently been of the most animated character on the baronet's part ; and the manner in which he was encircled by his fair auditors, together with the subsiding glow of vivacity on every countenance, indicated at once, how successfully he had exerted himself for their entertainment.

On his entrance, Mrs. Oldcourt had absolutely started with astonishment, and uttered divers exclamations of alarm for the consequences of his indiscretion. But he had the address to turn aside her dissatisfaction at his neglect of her injunctions, by ascribing to the regimen and the repose which he had resorted to, through her kind advice, the restoration of that strength, which made him so impatient to offer her his acknowledgments. D'Arcy had too much self-possession, and was too well trained in fashionable life, to suffer any embarrassment in such

circumstances : with the grace and tact of a man of the world, he set all parties at their ease with him, by appearing to be at his ease himself.

The ladies of the Oldcourt party, were, therefore, soon influenced in his favour ; and he had so effectually recommended himself to their good graces, by his politeness, his pleasantry, and information, before the guests from the dining-room broke in upon their *entretien*, that the old ladies, as well as the young, tacitly acknowledged, he was the most agreeable man in the world.

As the squire remained in the dining-room, listening to Mr. Denny Burne's "one word," Mrs. Oldcourt was obliged to do the honours ; and she introduced the baronet to Doctor Bowen, Father Clancy, and the young men of the party. With the eldest son of the family, D'Arcy had already established a little intimacy, which they seemed mutually desirous to cultivate.

Barry Oldcourt had a decided predilection for a military life. A soldier, therefore, was always to him an interesting personage ; and there was an open, spirited air about the baronet, that was peculiarly congenial to the disposition of his young acquaintance.

Mr. Bob Burton beheld the baronet with no friendly eye. He had often heard that the influ-

ence of a red coat was all-powerful with the fair sex; and as, in this case, it appeared to be strengthened by the formidable auxiliaries of such a person, title, and fortune, as D'Arcy possessed, even Mr. Burton's confidence in his own pretensions could not entirely prevent a little sinking of the spirits, in a foreboding apprehension of the consequences.

When the young grazier entered the room, the baronet was seated between Grace Oldcourt and Miss Burton, describing, with great humour, a fashionable party in the back settlements of America, and a *conversazione* among the Cherokees; while the young ladies listened with every expression of delighted attention, and involuntary admiration.

Mr. Burton, to use an appropriate expression, was "struck all of a heap." Macbeth, himself, on seeing, in Banquo's glass, the succession of his race, was hardly more disturbed. Sidling up to his sister, in an awkward meander of ill manners, he angrily asked her, "What she was grinning at?"—sulked, as vain and vulgar people generally do, when they find other persons more agreeable than themselves, and slinking into a corner, sat shaking one of his crossed legs, and fiddling diligently with his watch-chain, for the greater part of the evening.

But, to no individual of the party was the presence of the baronet more unacceptable, than to Pierce Doran. This young man, the foster-brother of Grace Oldcourt, and an humble friend of the family, had long looked upon that beautiful girl with an admiration, which, in him, amounted almost to idolatry; and latterly, with the sanguine infatuation of a lover, he had begun to conceive hopes, and speculate on possibilities, which, in his more rational moments, he dared scarcely to confess, even to himself.

The avowed attentions, and confident expectations of Mr. Bob Burton, excited in him no alarm. Grace Oldcourt was not a girl to be favourably impressed by such a suitor, even though parental influence should back his pretensions. But though he did not fear the grazier, he disliked him very much; for that arrogant and ignorant young gentleman had always conducted himself towards Doran, with the unfeeling disregard which upstart wealth is generally pleased to manifest towards dependent merit.

D'Arcy was a rival of a different description; and poor Doran's heart sunk within him, as he contemplated the brilliant qualities of the young soldier. That he was an admirer of Miss Oldcourt, was immediately evident; that he should not become her lover, was impossible; and that

he might be successful in his suit, was but too probable. Such conclusions, rushing upon his mind with almost the force and rapidity of intuition, at once dissipated some flattering visions which had begun to float in Doran's imagination, and darkened his hopes to the deepest hue of despondency.

Before Doran could take a seat, Grace Oldcourt beckoned him to the groupe in which Sir Walter D'Arcy was included, and laughingly said :—

“ Oh, Pierce, we have been so entertained with an account of your favourites! I wish you had been here.” Then turning to the baronet, she added,—

“ Mr. Doran is a great admirer of the Americans.”

“ Indeed?” replied the former : “ but that may be. We sometimes admire, at a distance, what a closer inspection would lead us to disapprove.”

“ My admiration, Miss Oldcourt,” said Doran, gravely, “ is not of the people, but their cause.”

The mortifying state of the American contest, at this period, made every officer who had served in the colonies, a little sore on the subject ; and D'Arcy thought this open avowal of Doran's opinion, rather indelicate towards him. With a good-humoured smile, however, he observed :—

“ Mr. Doran, I dare say, will not expect me to agree with him in sentiment on that subject. “ In this coat,” looking at his uniform, “ I cannot advocate the cause of the Americans ; and, perhaps, in mercy to me, the young gentleman will postpone their defence.”

“ Most readily, sir,” replied Doran, with a stiff bow ; “ they seem so well able to defend themselves, that they have no need of my assistance.”

D'Arcy reddened at this retort ; but before he could trust himself to comment upon it, the speaker had turned upon his heel, and moved to another part of the room. Suppressing his irritation, therefore, in one of his most engaging smiles, he said,—

“ I fancy I shall have a better chance with the ladies than the gentlemen on this subject. The fair are always loyal and true.”

“ Papa and my brothers are all on your side, Sir Walter,” eagerly observed Grace Oldcourt. “ Pierce Doran is the only friend the Americans have in the house, I assure you ; and, poor fellow ! we lead him a sad life about it. But he promises that I shall convert him.”

“ Convert him !” exclaimed the baronet ; “ your doctrines, Miss Oldcourt, must be irresistible to all men. For my part, were you to preach up a new revolution in church and state,

I would not answer for my loyalty, or my religion."

"Bravo, young gentleman!" exclaimed Doctor Bowen, coming up at the moment, while the fair object of the baronet's compliment was covered with confusion, at the warmth with which it was expressed.

"But," continued he, "I am sure you are too good a Christian, and a subject, to sacrifice either to your gallantry."

The baronet bowed, and Miss Arabella Burton, who appeared to sit by no means easy on her chair, after so decisive a manifestation of his homage to her friend, with a pretty pouting lip, now said:—

"My ma and me can't abide the Americans; though my brother Bob is always taking their part. But I'm sure, from every thing one hears of them, they must be little better than savages."

"There are certainly savages in America, Miss Burton," replied D'Arcy; "but they are to be found only amongst the native Indians. The colonists are very far from deserving that appellation."

"From the amusing description you have just given us of them, sir," remarked the widow Burton, "I should suppose they can be little better than brutes."

“ If I have said any thing to justify such an inference, my dear madam,” rejoined D’Arcy, “ I must beg to retract the statement. The description to which you did me the honour to attend, was merely a ludicrous relation of the habits prevailing amongst a few rude stragglers of the American woods, who approach, in some degree, to the barbarism of the wild tribes that wander in their neighbourhood ; but the Anglo-American people resemble ourselves in their laws, morals, and manners. Though we are unfortunately enemies, I should be sorry to misrepresent them. They are good soldiers and enlightened citizens ; and the only drawback on their character, which I shall take the liberty to suggest, is included in the expression of my regret that they are not also loyal subjects.”

Well, sir,” said the widow Burton, “ to be sure, you must know best, as you have been so much among ’em ; and I’m sure you have good reason to bless your stars that you are safe at home again, out of their cruel clutches.”

This, rather unhappy mode of congratulating a soldier on his escape from a successful enemy, excited a general laugh, in which the baronet and the well-meaning widow good-humouredly participated.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. OLDCOURT began to look rather anxiously for the appearance of the squire, who, to her great relief, now joined the party. From long experience of what commonly took place on such occasions, that good lady had been rather uncomfortably apprehensive, lest Mr. Denny Burne's company, or the nectar of her own brewing, which, her husband always declared, "was a liquor for the gods," and to which he was generally accustomed to resort, at the close of a wine party, "just to settle the claret in his stomach,"—she had been, I say, for some little time, apprehensive, that under the influence of these two seductions, her good man might be tempted to delay longer in the dining-room, and indulge himself in a more liberal allowance of his favourite sedative, than would be decorous, or respectful to his guests.

The squire, however, was as steady and sober, as the gout and his good humour would permit. He immediately began to express his regret to the baronet, that his friend, Major Ogle, should have deserted them so soon ; and under the influence of feelings so unfavourable to that social intercourse to which, it was hoped, the dinner of the day would have been the happy introduction.

The baronet, who, to do him justice, had never once thought of his friend, was quite shocked, when he discovered, from the obscure and delicate hints of his host, the nature of the misunderstanding which had taken place ; and he knew the major too well, not to guess easily at the cause. He expressed the greatest mortification at his friend's conduct ; he said " he was aware that Major Ogle held strong party opinions on some unfortunate subjects ; but he hoped Mr. Oldcourt would do him (D'Arcy) the justice to believe, that he did not share in such prejudices."

The squire shook him heartily by the hand, and declared he was quite sure, he had no opinions that would not do credit to a soldier and a gentleman. " He had frequently met his father, Sir Patrick, in former times ;—he was of a noble old stock, and he often regretted ——"

Here Mrs. Oldcourt broke in upon the course of the squire's observations, which she feared was about to take an awkward direction; and touching his arm at the precise point, where the baronet began to have recourse to a little cough, which sometimes comes to our relief, when we desire not to hear something ourselves, or would prevent others from hearing it,—she observed:—

“ My dear Mr. Oldcourt, we are going to have a little music. Miss Burton will be so good as to favour us with a tune on the harpsichord.”

Miss Burton here declared, in a way which indicated that she did not think her powers sufficiently appreciated,—that she never played tunes; and indeed she did not know a tune in the world.”

This again was too much for Mr. Bob Burton. He did not at all understand why his sister should depreciate her musical, any more than her digestive powers; and, therefore, bouncing up from his seat, to that young lady's great embarrassment, he exclaimed:—

“ By Gemini! why, Bell, you rattled away last night with ‘ Money in both Pockets,’ and ‘ Patrick's Day in the Morning,’ till you made my head ache.”

“ Robert, my dear,” observed the widow Bur-

ton, with some displeasure, "how can you distress your sister in that manner?"

"Why, mother," replied that indiscreet young gentleman, "I don't see the use of Bell's strumming away her whole day, if she won't play when she's asked. I'll engage Miss Oldcourt won't refuse to oblige her friends."

This complimentary contrast, so much to Miss Oldcourt's advantage, somewhat disconcerted both young ladies;—and Mrs. Burton, in a serious tone, desired her daughter to "try if she could not recollect something, to show she was willing to gratify the company."

To say the truth, however, it is but justice to Miss Arabella Burton to acknowledge, that so far was she from feeling any reluctance to comply with the entreaties of her friends, that she was actually burning, all the time, with a desire to indulge them by a display of her powers; and merely meant, by a little politic coyness, to enhance the value of the favour. With the most amiable, but apparently distressed condescension, therefore, she at length yielded to the general solicitation; and moved gracefully to the instrument, conducted by Barry Oldcourt.

But such a gratification as a performance of Miss Burton's, was not to be obtained, with-

out farther preliminaries. All Miss Oldcourt's music was now to be turned over, to see if some piece could not be found, with which she was acquainted, as she said she never played without book.

Here Mr. Bob Burton again interposed, with his usual indiscretion, and his favourite exclamation:—

“ By Gemini!—Why, Bell, how can you say that?”

An expressive look from his mother, however, whose eye he happened to catch at the moment, checked the progress of his expostulation, and he contented himself with assisting in the search, which occupied his sister and young Oldcourt for some time.

“ My gracious, Pierce! how pale you look!” said Grace Oldcourt to young Doran, as she passed near him, while the *rummage* was going on. “ I am afraid they have made you take too much wine.”

“ Do I appear as if I were tipsy, Miss Oldcourt?” replied the young man, in a tremulous voice.

“ Oh dear, no!” was the answer; “ but I am afraid you are ill.”

“ Oh! Grace,” rejoined he, “ you are too

good to me. If I am ill, it is because I am getting sober. I have been intoxicated too long."

He turned off to conceal his emotion; and Grace, surprised at his unusual manner, said to her youngest brother, who just approached her, at the moment,—

"I am sure, Phil., something is the matter with Pierce Doran, he seems to be so out of spirits."

The examination of Miss Oldcourt's music-books having proved fruitless, Miss Burton expressed her surprise to find nothing but songs; and at length sat down to the instrument, declaring that she was quite sure she could not recollect a note of any thing in the world. She now also discovered that the instrument was a spinet,—“and she could not abide playing upon a spinet. Her instrument was a harpsichord, by one of the first makers; a present from her poor pa, who gave such a sight of money for it: and she wondered Miss Oldcourt didn't get a harpsichord.”

She now, however, with a shrug of resignation, expressive of her distress at being obliged to exhibit her powers under such disadvantages, proceeded to divest her delicate hands of her gloves; and where does my fair reader think she depo-

sited them? Not, as is the practice with young ladies of the present day—with her fan and her pocket-handkerchief, on the instrument before her,—but absolutely in—her pocket! For, incredible as it must appear to an age which tolerates on the figure of a fashionable *élégante*, no such lateral appendages, at the period when Miss Arabella Burton flourished, two little pouches or wallets were regularly suspended, one on each side even of the most delicate and sylph-like forms; and under cover of an encircling frame-work, or projection of vast circumference, called a hoop, they formed a most convenient *depôt* for purses, pocket-handkerchiefs, pin-cushions, smelling-bottles, thimbles, scissors, tooth-pick cases, rouge-boxes, patch-boxes, and *billets-doux*. In short, in those capacious receptacles, were commonly to be found, a complete assortment of all the various and then deemed indispensable articles, which, in a portable shape, could administer to the personal ease or accommodation of the fair sex; and of which, I should fear, they must now, on many occasions, very sensibly feel the want.

Miss Burton, however, having consigned her fan and gloves to one of the little depositories in question, adjusted the numerous rings on her rather rosy fingers, and was about to begin;—but the process of preparation had been so long, that

the company were obliged to draw upon their own resources for amusement during the delay ; and though Miss Oldcourt, two of her brothers, the widow Burton, her son, and Pierce Doran, were all attention—standing close to the fair performer, in a half-circle of the most placid expectation—the baronet was engaged in a conversation with Mrs. Oldcourt and Miss Matty Malone, which, to judge by the frequent exertion of their risible muscles, those two ladies appeared particularly to enjoy. Doctor Bowen and Father Clancy were deep in parish politics ; Garret Oldcourt, the second son, was busily employed in tickling his favourite spaniel, that lay on his back on the carpet ; and the squire, in his usual corner, had given some sonorous indications that Miss Burton might expect an accompaniment to her music, for which she was not prepared.

That a fine performer should proceed under such circumstances, was not to be expected. Miss Burton, therefore, just struck a chord of the instrument, as a preparative, and turning round, by a most significant look towards the parties, expressed her displeasure at the colloquial buzz that prevailed in the room ; her mamma most ably seconding her rebuke, by a dignified toss of the head, and a still more dark and

angry glance at the offenders, which at once reduced them to shame and silence.

But the peculiar interruption that Mr. Oldcourt seemed disposed to indulge in, was not to be suspended by signal. His good lady was, therefore, obliged to "run alongside," as the sailors say, and slyly twitch his elbow, before he could be regulated to that pacific state of repose, which characterizes the decorous somnolence of the elderly amateurs at the Ancient Concert.

"Now for it, Bell!" said Mr. Bob Burton; and that young lady, perceiving a general pause of expectation,—squaring her elbows, and gracefully waving her head from side to side, in the true professional taste, immediately set off in a dashing prelude, which was intended to flourish through the whole range of the instrument, and wind up with a startling succession of semi-tones from the bass to the treble. But, alas! it turned out to be a nondescript jumble of confused chords, hobbling arpeggios, and inarticulate discords.

She boldly proceeded, however, to rattle through the "Battle of Prague"; but, breaking down in the middle of the engagement, like many other great performers in a different field, she lost her head,—became utterly confused, and looked like a full-dressed doll in the scarlet fever.

At length, jumping up from her seat, she declared the instrument was in such wretched order, that it was impossible to play on it ; then, flouncing into a distant chair, she sat pouting, panting, and fanning herself, in that unhappy state of mortification, which generally and justly attends the injudicious efforts of an ambition, which, unsustained by talent, is stimulated only by vanity.

Poor Mrs. Burton was terribly disconcerted by her daughter's failure ; and her brother Bob swore, " by Gemini !" he often heard Bell play that piece down to the ' Turkish Quick Step,' without missing a note."

Dr. Bowen now requested that Miss Oldcourt would indulge him with his favourite air. " He professed to be no judge of music ; but he delighted in the ancient melodies of Ireland and Scotland, which spoke to the heart rather than the ear, and pleased as much by sentiment as sound."

Miss Oldcourt, with a blush, declared her willingness to comply with the doctor's request ; and the baronet was alert in handing her to the instrument, taking post himself behind her.

Grace Oldcourt neither possessed, nor affected to possess any particular musical power—vocal or instrumental. She had little opportunity of

cultivating her talents in either department. Her skill on the spinet was, therefore, limited to a neat and tasteful accompaniment of her voice; and her songs were all of that simple unambitious character, in which her peculiarly sweet tones, natural sensibility, and good ear, always pleased, sometimes delighted, and often affected her hearers.

She felt that she had never before attempted to sing, under such strong feelings of embarrassment, or with so much doubt of her success; and she attributed her more than ordinary trepidation, to the presence of a superior judge, in the person of the baronet. Turning to him with a smile, while a glow of diffidence heightened her complexion to the richest hue of beauty, she said:—

“ I fear my humble effort will require great indulgence, from Sir Walter D’Arcy’s cultivated taste.”

“ I will not,” he replied, “ offend Miss Oldcourt’s delicacy, by premature compliment, or anticipated admiration; but if a cultivated taste be necessary to appreciate her strains, there can be no value attached to my praises; for, I am sorry to say, I am quite an ignoramus. Like most young men who move in a certain sphere,

I diligently attended the Opera, when in London ; but to confess my barbarism, I prefer the ballad style to the bravura."

" I fear you must now," rejoined Grace, laughing, " prepare for the rustic style."

" Which will, I dare say, supersede both in my estimation ;" said he.

Doctor Bowen's favourite air was the long-celebrated strain of the Irish harp, called " Molly Astore ;" rendered subsequently familiar to the English ear, as adapted to Sheridan's words in the " Duenna," and more recently, by Moore's muse in the Irish Melodies.

This exquisite song was then commonly associated with poetry of an ancient date ; and " Banna's Banks," may compete in pathos, if not in poetry, with the rival effusions by which it has been superseded.

For her performance in this song, Grace Oldcourt had obtained a good deal of local celebrity : and though labouring under considerable embarrassment, at the outset, she certainly sang it, on the present occasion, with a sweetness and simplicity, which must have gratified any unperturbed taste. There was just enough of ornament for grace, and of emphasis for feeling,—without violating the character of the song, to display the powers of the singer.

Doctor Bowen was delighted ;—Father Clancy told Mrs. Oldcourt, whose good-humoured face beamed with maternal joy and affection, that “ he never heard Grace sing so well ;”—and the baronet was eloquent and enthusiastic, if not learned, in his raptures.

The Burton’s declared, “ it was mighty pretty ;” and they were quite sure, if Miss Oldcourt did but practise, she would sing “ very nicely.” They perceived, however, that it was getting late ; rang for the carriage, and took their leave.

Miss Oldcourt, at the urgent entreaty of the baronet, went through some other plaintive melodies, of ancient renown amongst the bards of Erin, conducting herself through the whole with that sensitive delicacy of deportment, which preserves the happy medium between an affected confidence on the one hand, and an awkward shyness on the other.

In the devotedness of his attention, D’Arcy betrayed the impression she had made upon him. He seemed captivated alike through his eye and his ear. The two clergymen, however, having retired, Mrs. Oldcourt insisted that Grace should no longer co-operate in detaining Sir Walter D’Arcy from the repose, which was so essential to his invalid state. She could not

answer to her medical responsibility, if she allowed him to extend an indulgence which, she feared, had been already carried too far for his health ; and the party accordingly broke up, with the most profuse expressions of gratification and gratitude, on the part of the baronet, and the most cordial manifestations of hospitality, on the part of his kind hosts.

CHAPTER X

THE presence of Sir Walter D'Arcy at the Castle of Oldcourt, produced a sensation which contributed not a little to disturb the slumbers, not only of its inhabitants, but also, of some of those who had been that day its guests.

The widow Burton saw very clearly, that the baronet was quite captivated by Miss Oldcourt, and likely to prove rather a formidable rival to her son, who, she feared, had made no sort of progress in that young lady's good graces. The match, therefore, to which she had looked with so much anxiety, and towards which she thought she had propitiated Mrs. Oldcourt, appeared to her to be now in a very unsatisfactory state.

Mr. Bob Burton himself, began to suspect that the fair object of his choice (for he had taken it for granted, he had but to throw the

handkerchief,) was by no means so sensible of his attractions, personal and pecuniary, as she ought to be; and before his troubled spirit had subsided into that happy state, in which visions of horses and hounds, fairs and fat cattle, usually occupied his fancy, he had nearly determined to transfer his attentions to another quarter, where he had some reason to think they would be more favourably received.

Poor Miss Arabella Burton had suffered so many mortifications, in the course of the evening, that they haunted her imagination even in her sleep, and mingling with her dreams, produced a kind of musical night-mare, under the influence of which, her fame and her feelings were still more cruelly discomfited.

She thought she was in the midst of a large circle of envious belles, enamoured beaux, and provincial *dilettanti*, whose admiration she was about to excite, by a triumphant display of her powers. But, to her horror, while professing to play Handel's Water Music, and Bach's Grand Overture, as if bewitched, she produced no sounds but those of "Moll in the Wad," and "Stoney-Batter," rattling their piperly peculiarities with an involuntary vigour, that astounded the company, put herself out of temper, her harpsichord out of tune, and her hearers out of patience.

The pillow cogitations of Mrs. Oldcourt were not less busy, though rather more agreeable than those which prevailed amongst the Burtons. Her opinions, indeed, had undergone a sudden change with reference to that family. Mr. Bob Burton did not by any means appear in her eye, so good a match for Grace as she had been previously disposed to consider him; and she “wondered how she ever thought of such a thing. Though he was rich and respectable, he was vulgar and absurd; and she was sure her darling might do much better.”

There is very little doubt that the baronet was mainly instrumental in producing this alteration in Mrs. Oldcourt's sentiments; and a train of speculations arose in her mind, all of which were more or less connected with his appearance at the castle, and its possible consequences.

A baronet, certainly, was not a fish to be caught in every water; and though not much accustomed to throw her line in that way, she knew enough of matrimonial angling, to prevent a doubt of securing him with such a bait as Grace Oldcourt; “a girl, she would say, that would become any rank or station.”

She several times repeated to herself the name of “Lady D'Arcy,” with an exulting glow of maternal anticipation; and thought how much

better it sounded than the plebeian appellation of Mrs. Bob Burton.

There was one reflection, however, which tended to cloud these bright prospects ;—the baronet was a Protestant. To be sure, a difference of religion was not an insuperable objection ; for she had, in her father's family, an instance, that the wife and daughters might be very good Catholics, while the husband and his eldest son secured their property by, at least, an outward conformity to the established church. She thought it very probable, that the baronet's father, in professing the new faith, had been actuated by a similar policy ; and, therefore, Sir Walter might not object to an arrangement which would leave Grace in the full enjoyment of her own creed.

To a feverish succession of such maternal ruminations, did the excellent mistress of the mansion devote a great portion of her night. She, however, judiciously confined her hopes and wishes to her own breast. The squire, she knew, was by no means a safe confidant, or prudent co-operator in such delicate matters ; and, moreover, the fatigue arising from the zealous performance of his convivial functions during the day, had contributed to place him so fully and so audibly under the sonorous sway of

the drowsy god, that the idea of a curtain colloquy was quite out of the question.

Pierce Doran had retired to his humble couch in the barrack department of the castle, where a whole regiment of dependants, might be, and sometimes were, accommodated, under such a depression of spirits as he had never before experienced. From what had occurred in the course of the day which had just closed, the lynx-eyed penetration of a lover's fears saw quite enough to convince him, that he had allowed himself to indulge in a wild delirium of hope, from which he was about to be awakened, to the sad and sober certainty of disappointment.

Long he walked about his room, in a tumult of emotion, which he could neither calm down, in any rational estimate of his present position, nor reconcile to any justifiable consideration of his future prospects. At length, exhausted and desponding, he threw himself on his bed, without divesting himself of his clothes ; and the morning found him unrefreshed, irresolute, and wretched.

The baronet had been conducted to his room by Barry Oldcourt, who, after kindly supplying whatever assistance the disabled state of his friend's arm rendered necessary, left him to his repose.

The excitement of the day, however, precluded immediate sleep; and for some time, in his recumbent position, our hero was engaged in a busy retrospect of scenes and occurrences, in which Grace Oldcourt was, as may be supposed, the principal figure.

D'Arcy was not a man to fall in love at first sight; and though, in his intercourse with the fair sex, he had often been influenced by that sort of feeling which is usually called love, in the language of men of gallantry, yet his heart had never been touched by the true passion.

The only sentiment, indeed, at all approaching to what should be termed love, that he had ever experienced, was that which poor Agnes Hartley excited in his breast; and certainly, the admiration he felt for the innocent simplicity and unostentatious virtues of her character, contributed to refine and dignify the feeling with which he had regarded her.

In Grace Oldcourt, D'Arcy had been struck by a beauty more peculiar and *piquante* than that of any female whom he had hitherto seen. Her person has been already presented to the reader, as far as the writer's pen could describe, those charms which the most skilful pencil would be inadequate to display. To the witchery of

her manners, it would be still more difficult for either instrument to render justice.

Though not exactly conformable to any conventional standard,—though not cast in a fashionable mould, or bearing the current stamp of character which it impresses,—there was a natural ease, an unstudied, unaffected elegance in her demeanour, which it is the ambition of art to imitate, even in its most arbitrary refinements; and to a sensibility so easily excited, that it seemed to breathe in her every accent, and live in every look, there was associated a vivacity so graceful and engaging, that, in the moment of its influence, she seemed formed only for mirth and joy.

D'Arcy had become sufficiently *blasé* in society, to be rather insensible to the ordinary allurements of female manners. The sweets which sagacious mammas prepare for the matrimonial feast, according to the common receipt-books of fashionable education, had lost their effect upon him; but for a character so pure and artless as that of Grace Oldcourt, he had a high relish; and his taste acknowledged the attraction of innocence unallied to ignorance, simplicity unaccompanied by coarseness, and grace unspoiled by affectation.

He had never seriously thought of matrimony;

nor was there any thing in his present feelings, which required him to meditate on that subject. He was sensible that Miss Oldcourt was altogether the most interesting girl he had ever met with; but her station in society, and the family by which she was surrounded, put the views of ordinary gallantry quite out of the question. Without any ulterior object, therefore, our hero determined to cultivate diligently his intercourse with the castle, as a social resource from which he might expect to derive the highest gratification, during his residence in the neighbourhood; and having thus settled the matter for the present, he resigned himself to rest.

But of all the parties whose slumbers were disturbed by the occurrences of the day, Grace Oldcourt was the most surprised at the *insomnie* with which she was visited. Generally speaking, those three great promoters of repose—innocence, exercise, and good spirits, were quite successful in her case, and precluded all necessity for narcotics.

She no sooner placed her head upon her pillow, than Morpheus attended with all his poppies,

“To steep her senses in forgetfulness;”

and the only complaint she ever made against

him, was, that by his potent spells, the progress of time seemed to be arrested, and such a suspension of her existence took place, as rendered her insensible to that lethargic luxury of conscious somnolence, when, after a sound nap of half the night, you are sufficiently awake to be aware that you have only to turn on the other side, and indulge in a similar delight till morning.

There are, I believe, few persons who will not acknowledge that this enjoyment is not to be despised; and in town, it is considerably enhanced by the music of the watchman, who, if he should chance to be himself disturbed in his repose, by some roaming reveller, contrives to give you a rather more accurate idea of the hours which yet remain to be devoted to your downy comforts.

Grace Oldcourt, in the seclusion of her chamber, felt not, this night, the calm which usually there succeeded to the excitements of her day. She was restless and apprehensive, without knowing why, or wherefore. Every thing she had said or done, in the course of the evening, passed in review before her; and she never was so little pleased with herself, because she had never before been so desirous to please other people.

But, however amiably anxious she was to make herself agreeable to her friends in general, it appeared, through the whole course of the scru-

tiny to which she had subjected her conduct on this occasion, that the baronet's judgment was the only tribunal to which she, in fancy, referred the merits of the case; and his decision in her favour, the only verdict which she particularly wished to obtain, or which could at all satisfy her ambition.

She feared, however, that the sanction of his taste was not reasonably to be expected: "how, indeed, could a country girl like her, who had never been out of her own county, appear otherwise than awkward, and even ridiculous, to a man who was conversant with the most elegant and fashionable circles, in so many different parts of the world? He must regard her as a mere rustic, deficient in all those graces and accomplishments which characterized the more fortunate objects of his admiration, in the brilliant sphere to which he was accustomed.

"But why should she be so anxious about the opinion of a stranger, introduced to her only by an accident, whom she had seen and associated with but once, and whom, after the next day, she probably would never see again?" With a heavy "heigh ho!" she declared she was "a very silly girl;" and resolving to banish the subject from her mind, she, according to the pious prac-

tice of her life, proceeded to her nightly prayers, as the best means of effecting that object.

She had nearly finished those effusions of innocence and virtue, which, from such pure spirits are wont to ascend, and breathe a fragrance round the throne of Heaven, when she perceived that her thoughts had not accompanied her words; and, therefore, with much self-reproach, she began to repeat them again. The second effort, however, was but little more successful than the first. The events of the day had made a lodgment in her imagination, from which they were not so easily expelled; and the baronet still disturbed her devotion.

She now repeated her orisons aloud, with great energy of zeal, and resolute concentration of thought; hastily taking refuge afterwards in bed, from that mental distraction which seems to grow in proportion as we struggle to restrain it; and which, interfering with poor Grace Oldcourt's repose, as well as her prayers, produced evidence, in the somewhat diminished lustre of her complexion, the next morning, that Somnus had not been as kind to her as usual.

Grace Oldcourt, about this time, had nearly completed her twentieth year. From the age of sixteen, when, in a manner so picturesque and

unexpected, she was introduced to the Kilboyne Hunt, as before related, she had been an object of universal attraction to the surrounding neighbourhood. Protestant and Catholic united in worship at her shrine; for the prejudices of sect or party cannot interrupt the homage which the heart of man must ever pay to beauty; though they too often interfere with the reverence which his understanding ought to pay to virtue.

Even the most powerful of all the drawbacks which exist on the attractions of the fair—the want of fortune, did not chill the admiration she excited; though it checked the ardour of those, who bow at Hymen's shrine, only when they can profane his altar by the worship of Plutus.

The squire was known to be a gentleman of ancient family and fortune; but an old estate, like an old man, is commonly distinguished by decay, and too often affected by certain chronic distempers called incumbrances, which produce a gradual waste of the solids, and a general exhaustion of its powers.

The fiscal vigour of the house of Oldcourt had been, for some generations, in a consumptive state; and the treatment of the patient by the present operator, seemed so little of a restorative character, that it was suspected rather to have aggravated the disorder.

To keep up the hospitality for which his family had been distinguished in the olden time, and to supply the current expenses of the establishment, were the only objects of the squire's ambition ; and as long as his children could live in ease beneath his roof, and participate in those pursuits and pleasures, which he himself regarded as the only good below, he considered all their claims upon him to be discharged with the most unimpeachable propriety.

Notwithstanding, however, that she was known to have no fortune, and could not even pretend to that prospective and contingent dowry of "good expectations," which, in Ireland, so frequently supplies the want of a present portion, yet, Grace Oldcourt had received many of those matrimonial overtures, which prudent parents designate as "very good offers ;" that is, a number of persons, of competent wealth and station, who were very little calculated to contribute to her happiness, in any other way, had signified their willingness to supply her, in the character of her husband, with meat, drink, washing, and lodging, for the remainder of her natural life.

But Grace had formed to herself a *beau idéal* of a Benedict, to which the squirearchy of her county, Protestant or Catholic, bore not the least resemblance. The habits, manners, and

accomplishments of the hunting, drinking, fighting, and horse-racing heroes of that period, were but little to her taste ; she had no sympathy with their pleasures or pursuits ;

“ And each successive bumpkin ‘ bowed in vain.’ ”

While her country Corydons pleaded their passion in a rivalry of rent-rolls, and reinforced their awkwardness by their acres, she amused herself with their gallant *gaucheries*, without encouraging their addresses. In a style of playful vivacity, which turned aside all serious expostulation, she contrived to disconcert the conubial negotiations that were actively carried on, by the different parties, at the congress of Oldcourt, and matters still remained in *statu quo*.

The old squire seldom interfered in such concerns, farther than by the frequent expression of a hope, “ that his dear girl would not be carried away from him, one of those days, by some of her scapegrace lovers ; for the castle would be very dull without her.”

Mrs. Oldcourt would, indeed, often sigh and look sad, as she enumerated the various matrimonial recommendations of each discarded swain ; and expatiated on the beauties of the mansion and the demesne, the income and the equipage,

which seemed to have so little influence on her daughter.

In reply to some lively picture drawn by Grace, of amorous *étourderie* amongst her votaries, the delighted mother, after having involuntarily joined in the laugh, would shake her head, take a pinch of snuff, and pathetically observe,—

“ Ah ! my dear Grace, we may be too nice, and sport with our happiness till it slips through our fingers. Believe me, my child, when the substantial of worldly comfort are provided, the surest foundation is laid for rational felicity. You can't expect an angel to descend from heaven for your accommodation ; and, for my part, I don't see what you can desire in a husband, more than a plain honest man, who can support you in ease and affluence. I'm sure, my darling, if you wait till you find somebody like yourself, or worthy of you, in this part of the world, you'll out-stay your market, as the farmers say.”

“ But, my dear mamma,” Grace laughingly observed, in reply to some of those long established maxims of parental policy, which mothers so diligently inculcate, and daughters so generally disregard ; “ is not a state of single blessedness

better than a life of married misery? How can I, who live only in the affections of my family, and desire no other enjoyment—who have all I want in your tenderness, and all I wish for in your approbation; how can I quietly resign myself to the coarse communion of any of those lively swains, who look at me, as they would examine a horse at a fair, and bid, and bargain for me, only as an appropriate addition to the stock on the farm, and the other goods and chattels of their establishment?”

If Grace generally failed to convince her mother by her reasoning, she always succeeded in diverting her by her pleasantry; and the discussion was sure to close in cloudless good humour, and mutual endearment.

In her eldest brother, Barry Oldcourt, his sister always found a powerful supporter of her side of the question. He was handsome, high-spirited, and ambitious; full of that elevation of sentiment which springs, in generous natures, from a consciousness of a superior descent; a source of dignified feeling, and a stimulus to honourable conduct, which constitute at once the best defence of family pride, and the only compensation for the evils of aristocratic insolence and pretension.

He felt deeply the degradation of his country

and his religion ; and was indignant at the torpid and apparently contented state of subjection, in which the descendants of the ancient race submitted to the yoke of their oppressors. Under these impressions, he regarded the Protestant grandees of his neighbourhood with a proud hostility, and the Catholic gentry with contempt. He mixed but little in their society, and had no pleasure in their coarse pursuits, or bacchanalian revelries. His sister he almost worshipped ; he entered into all her feelings, sympathised in all her tastes, and sharpened, by sarcasm and satire, her natural disrelish to the Nimrods and Tony Lumpkins by whom they were surrounded.

“ Good God ! my dear mother,” he would say, in private, when one of her “ good offers” began to set her maternal solicitude in motion,—“ how can you think of sacrificing our dear Grace to a clod of a country squire, who is wholly incapable of appreciating her value, and who has no other claim to respect, but a fortune, which, with him, she cannot enjoy, and which, in all probability, he will soon squander in low dissipation, and senseless extravagance !”

“ Oh ! Barry, my dear,” would the kind-hearted mother reply, “ do not encourage your sister to look down upon those with whom it must be her lot to live. It would be a sad re-

sult of my anxiety to give her those refinements in which I have felt my own deficiency, if she were, by that means, unfitted to enjoy the only kind of happiness which is placed within her reach. God knows, my son, that my sleeping and waking thoughts, my wishes and my prayers, are all directed to one end; to see her well settled; established in her own house, secure from the caprice and casualties of a cold and unfeeling world. You know your poor father is not a man to lay up against a rainy day, and has no notion of limiting his present enjoyments, for the advantage of those whom he may leave behind him."

"That is very true, my dear mother," rejoined the generous young man; "but Grace can never want protectors while her brothers live: and sure, you would not consider her well settled, but rather cruelly sacrificed, if her gentle nature, her lively, delicate, and sensitive spirit were coupled, in coarse alliance, with a clown who has not three ideas,—who lives only with his dogs and horses, and wants a wife, not as a companion, but as a housekeeper."

"Well Barry," said the anxious mother, "you may say what you will, but it went to my heart, I confess, to see Garret Byrne of Balinahinch discarded; and young O'Mealy, of

Monkstown, sent about his business with so little ceremony. Grace may depend upon it, such matches won't occur every day in the week ; both of them fine young men, of her own religion too, and ready to settle half their incomes on her."

"My dear mother," replied Barry, "to my knowledge, half their incomes may be said to be already settled on their creditors, by bill, bond, and custodiam ; the other half, believe me, is fast travelling the same road. Besides, after all, what are their merits, to recommend them to such a girl as Grace ? They are good-looking, I grant you ; a couple of well-built, brawny boobies, swaggerers at feasts, fairs, and horse races ; whose highest ambition it is, to triumph at a drinking-bout, and rival their own grooms and gamekeepers."

Amused by the caustic severity of her son's remarks, the good-humoured matron generally allowed herself to be vanquished on these occasions, if not convinced ; for she was too amiable and affectionate in her intercourse with her children, to call in the force of authority, to put down the freedom of argument. Giving up the point, therefore, with a feeling, the expression of which fluctuated between a sigh and a smile, she would often say :—

“ Ah ! Barry, your notions, I am afraid, are too refined for your happiness, in such a world as we country-folks are doomed to live in. But God direct you ! my dear children ! What He wills is always for the best.”

Under the influence of sentiments thus unfavourable to the beaux of her neighbourhood, Grace Oldcourt completed that period of her existence when “ Miss in her teens ” is usually a little romantic in her notions of life and love. As yet, however, though so many country Cupids had taken aim at her heart, that little *dépôt* of every female virtue remained apparently untouched, and provokingly impenetrable to the whole amorous armoury of the county, which, in successive assaults, had been brought against it.

An insensibility so persevering was quite unusual amongst her fair rivals in connubial speculation, and appeared most extraordinary to those who had manifested their sense of her merits, and entertained no doubt of their own.

An impression began to prevail, that to solicit Miss Oldcourt’s favour, was to court rejection ; and Mr. Bob Burton was the only gallant, whose confidence in his own pretensions had recently encouraged him to proceed upon such a forlorn hope.

When daughters have turned the corner of twenty summers, prudent mothers begin to look about them: and though Mr. Bob Burton was not exactly the kind of husband she could have wished for her darling Grace, or whom she could hope to be acceptable to her too fastidious brother, yet, as he had more money, more religion, and altogether more morality than most of the young men of the county, Mrs. Oldcourt was disposed to favour his views, and give him an opportunity to urge his addresses.

To this line of conduct she was prompted, also, by two other considerations. The number of those from whom advantageous proposals might be expected, was rather alarmingly diminished; and rumours had reached her, that it was supposed, a long-subsisting attachment was the cause that closed Miss Oldcourt's heart against the homage of her suitors; and that those smiles, for which the best blood in the county had sued in vain, were reserved for an humble dependant of the family, in the person of Pierce Doran.

At the first suggestion of this idea to the mind of Mrs. Oldcourt, that good lady was thrown into a state of surprise and consternation. The statement seemed to flash conviction upon her, and at once to furnish a clue, by which might be explained the extraordinary indifference with

which her daughter rejected "such offers as no girl in her senses, without fortune, whatever might be her beauty, would have been mad enough to refuse." She lamented the folly of allowing any young man, with good looks, good sense, and good manners, to associate in the same house with her daughter, and upon such an intimate footing; and though she had long looked upon Pierce Doran as one of the family, and the worthiest creature in the world, she now regarded him, for the space of half an hour, at least, as little better than a monster of wickedness and ingratitude.

But when the fever of alarm began to subside, and the angry feelings which it created, had been somewhat calmed by reflection, the lovely form of Grace Oldcourt, in all her innocence,—her unstained purity of thought,—her open, artless, ingenuous simplicity of character, appeared before her; and, in a remonstrance of generous feeling, rushing to a mother's heart, rebuked her hasty suspicions, and banished all her unfounded apprehensions.

Overcome by her previous agitation, and her remorse for the momentary injustice she had done her darling Grace, the kind-hearted parent threw herself on her daughter's neck, and burst into tears. She determined to keep to herself

what she had heard, and therefore satisfied Grace's alarmed inquiries, by ascribing her emotion to an hysteric affection, for which she could not account.

Prudence, however, she thought, dictated the propriety of some change in Doran's position, to put a stop to all such absurd rumours as those which had so strangely disturbed her. She knew Pierce Doran was too sensible of his situation, to be guilty of such presumption; and he was incapable, she was sure, of abusing the confidence reposed in him: but his removal from the castle, which she would devise some mode, advantageous to him, of effecting, was now expedient for all parties.

Such were the reflections of Mrs. Oldcourt, and the position of affairs, when Sir Walter D'Arcy made his first appearance at the castle. How Pierce Doran became so long established an inmate there, it shall be the business of the next chapter to unfold.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE is, perhaps, no country in the world where parents are actuated by a stronger affection for their offspring, than they are in Ireland ; yet, strange to say, there are few countries in which, amongst the better, or rather, the richer classes of society, that first great duty of a mother, to nurse her own child, has been so systematically neglected.

At the period when the characters of this veracious history strutted and fretted their hour upon the stage, few women in the sister kingdom, whose rank placed them above the level of mechanic life, ever thought of fulfilling a duty which seems so morally and physically imperative ; a duty, for the performance of which, nature has so expressly provided, and the propriety of which is so strikingly enforced, by the example of the whole animal creation.

That a mother should resign to a mercenary breast, the tenderest and most endearing office of the maternal character,—that she should voluntarily submit to the inconvenience, and even danger, which frequently ensues from such a sacrifice, is the more surprising, when we reflect, that, in all ages and countries, an impression has prevailed, which would seem to be sufficient, however ill founded, to alarm the anxiety of a parent, and put an end to such a practice.

Amongst the ancients, more perhaps than amongst the moderns, a belief prevailed, that not only the health, but the disposition of a child, might be materially influenced by the qualities of the nurse, from whom its sustenance was derived. Thus the cruelty of Nero was ascribed to his nurse; and the common expression of our day, which says of a man's prejudices and propensities, that "he sucked them in with his mother's milk," affords strong proof that a similar conviction is so far impressed on our own times, as to have settled into an expression of idiomatic familiarity and proverbial circulation.

But without philosophising very deeply on the subject—without considering it either medically or morally, it may be safely assumed that Nature speaks pretty plainly to the fair sex respecting it. That a mother should nurse her own child is in-

deed a position, for the truth of which, we may appeal to every female breast; and there the maxim must be acknowledged, however the obligation which it includes may be violated or evaded.

But as in almost all other cases in which woman appears to deviate from the natural amiability of her character, the fault may be justly attributed to man; so here it is but justice to the Hibernian ladies to acknowledge, that if they are, or perhaps I should rather say, have been too generally unmindful of that particular maternal duty, to which in the preceding observations I have ventured to allude, the neglect of it must, in a great measure, be ascribed to the evil influence of the other sex.

An Irish husband has, generally speaking, a great dislike to see his wife officiating in the character of a nurse; the details which are necessary in the management, and cradle economy of an infant, are distasteful to him: he feels uncomfortable amongst pap-boats, corals, and caudle-cups; indeed, he regards it as a kind of effeminacy, to be at all cognizant of nursery affairs. The infant

“ Muling and puking in the nurse’s arms,”

forms one of the seven ages, of which he willingly

permits no practical illustration under his own eye.

Thus it is, that the affectionate mother, whose bosom may be said to teem with tenderness for her new born babe, is obliged, in conformity with the wishes of her husband, to surrender the interesting charge for which nature has rendered her responsible, to the care and kindness of a stranger.

As the three great injunctions of the matrimonial vow on the woman's part, to "love, honour, and obey" her husband, are no where observed with a more scrupulous fidelity, than among the married fair in Ireland, so the good pleasure of the husband is a law to the wife in the regulation of her maternal, as well as of all her other duties; and as before stated, the practice almost universally prevailed amongst respectable people, of putting their children out to nurse.

Amongst the higher orders of society, the nurse was commonly engaged to reside in the house; but in families where the domestic arrangements would not conveniently admit of such an inmate, the children were invariably confided, not only to the care, but to the cabin of the humble substitute which the mother had provided, to supply her own place.

Thus removed from under the anxious eye of its natural guardian, and left to the protection of purchased love, and hireling hospitality, the child, for the first two or three years of its existence, has, not unfrequently, been known to its parents only through their occasional visits to its nurse.

But the extraordinary fidelity with which the delegated trust in question, is almost invariably executed, by the warm-hearted deputies of parental duty in Ireland, contributes not a little to encourage the practice which employs them; and if it cannot entirely justify that practice, it obviates, in a great degree, the ill consequences that might be reasonably expected to result from it. The nurse, in almost all cases, becomes much more an object of attachment to the child than its mother; and its final removal from the humble roof which has been so long the home of its affections, is felt, in its grateful little heart, as the first calamity of life.

The house of Oldcourt afforded no exception to the general custom above stated; and numerous, therefore, were its cradle connexions among the surrounding peasantry, all of whom considered themselves entitled to the *entrée* of the servants'-hall, and the privilege of the pantry

—expected promotion in the menial department of the establishment, and looked confidently, on all occasions, for that kindly countenance and protection, from every member of the family, which they were at all times ready to repay, by the warmest and most devoted attachment.

The present possessor of the castle yielded to none of his predecessors, or his contemporaries, in his aversion to see his wife a nurse; and though Mrs. Oldcourt's affectionate heart prompted her to the performance of every maternal function, she was obliged to conform to the prejudices of her lord and master.

Her children were, therefore, all nursed abroad; for though the castle was large enough to accommodate a whole colony of infants, she could not prevail so far as to have one of her little babies kept at home; the squire always declaring "he would not live within ear-shot of squalling brats, nurses, and gossips, or suffer any such troublesome cattle under his roof. A hale, hearty peasant was the best nurse, and her cabin the best cradle that any child could have. Such was the cradling he had got himself, and he did not see that he was any thing the worse for it;—he would engage to hunt, drink, or shoot with any man in the county; and if he had been coddled, petted, and pampered on his mother's

knee, the case would have been very different, and he might have been a puny whipster,—a mere Miss Molly all his life.”

The matter having been thus decided, upon such sound principles, and by an authority from which there was no appeal, Mrs. Oldcourt's privilege was limited to the choice of those persons to whom her infants were to be confided. When, therefore, after the birth of three sons, little Grace made her appearance, her delighted mother felt a more than ordinary anxiety, as to the selection of a nurse; and the wife of one of the most respectable tenants, who officiated as a steward on the estate, having been previously qualified for such an office, by presenting to Mr. Brian Doran a fine chopping boy, was fixed upon as most worthy of the treasure that was to be placed in her hands.

Mrs. Doran was proud of so near a connexion with “the family,” and acquitted herself in her trust, with a vigilance of love and care, which few persons can well conceive, who have not had some experience of those affectionate feelings which throb in the heart of an Irish nurse, towards “the child whom she has warmed in her bosom.”

So manifestly, indeed, did little Grace continue to thrive in all respects, in the comfortable

cottage of this excellent woman, that the squire would not suffer her to be removed from it, till she had nearly completed her fifth year. The result of this long residence there, however, was, that with a true poetical taste, Miss Grace preferred the cottage to the castle, and her mammy to her mamma. The experience of habitual kindness, so far superseded the influence of occasional caresses, and what is called the instinct of nature, that successive attempts to wean her from her nurse, so agonized the sensitive spirit of the child, as to throw her into convulsions that threatened her life.

It was impossible, however, with any propriety, to leave her longer in Mrs. Doran's cottage. The only remedy, therefore, the case seemed to admit of, was to induce that good woman, who dreaded the separation almost as much as the child did, to take up her residence, for some little time, at the castle.

To this measure, the squire was at length brought over, by the interest which the beautiful little sufferer began to excite in his breast; and the presence of the nurse succeeded in pacifying the child's emotions, though it was a long time before its mother's endearments could reconcile it to its new residence, or prevent its urgent entreaties to its mammy to "go home."

The temporary sojourn of Mrs. Doran in the castle, rendered unavoidable the introduction of another guest there, in the person of Master Pierce Doran, the chubby young gentleman before mentioned, whose *entrée* into the world had preceded by almost six weeks, that of Miss Grace Oldcourt; and whose divorce at once from his parent and his play-fellow, had been attended by results too boisterous and embarrassing, for any fond mother to disregard.

A lodgement was, therefore, effected for him in the family, which eventually proved of a much more permanent nature, than had been at first contemplated by any of the parties. The little fellow was delighted to be allowed again to associate with his early companion; and he was so nearly her own age, and she had been so much more accustomed to him, than to any of her brothers, that Grace gave him decidedly the preference as a playmate, upon all occasions.

He was, indeed, even in his childhood, well calculated to make friends for himself; with an honest, open, and agreeable countenance, glowing with health and good humour, he united a disposition particularly docile, and manners so gay and engaging, that he soon became a prime favourite with the whole establishment.

When at length Mrs. Oldcourt's maternal ten-

derness had awakened, in the breast of her child, that attachment which Nature has so wisely made a consequence of kindness, rather than an impulse of instinct, and when little Grace was sufficiently reconciled to her mother and her mansion, to be able to bear the absence of her nurse, Mrs. Doran was allowed to return to her own home.

But her son Pierce had become too important a character in the play-ground of the juvenile circle, to be spared. The most distant proposition of his departure was received with a loud and general remonstrance; and he appeared to contribute so much to enliven their amusements, by his extraordinary animal spirits, that Mrs. Oldcourt, who really felt a regard for the little fellow, persuaded his mother to let him remain; a measure to which that good woman consented, with more pain than difficulty, under that vague impression of advantage, which the opportunity of placing our children in situations above their sphere so often excites, and so rarely realizes.

Such an addition to the establishment of Oldcourt, could make no perceptible difference in point of expense; and as to the squire, the more the castle was peopled, the better he was pleased with it; and he swore "Pierce Doran was a fine, manly little fellow, that would box the boys' heads

about famously by and bye ; for he showed more spunk than any of them."

Pierce himself, as may be supposed, though fond of his mother, was not displeased with an arrangement which left him still the associate of his favourite Grace, and gave him the additional advantage of so many play-fellows of his own sex ; and as his father claimed to belong to the respectable rank of farmer, the boy was so far admitted upon a footing of equality in the castle, as to be withdrawn from all association with the servants, and treated as one of the family.

When Mrs. Oldcourt's anxiety for the education of her children, had prompted her to rummage the long neglected library of the castle, and when, with the co-operation of Father Clancy, she had succeeded in extracting from its mouldering remains, a little collection of valuable and useful books, that excellent clergyman, who was a distant relative of their mother, was induced to undertake the tuition of her children. An office, which, contrary to the usual motive that actuates the ordinary tutor tribe, he assumed the more readily, because, like most of his duties, he knew it was to be attended by no other remuneration than the pleasure of performing it.

Another reason, also, equally extraordinary, influenced the good priest on the occasion ;

which was the consideration, that if *he* did not interfere, by an endeavour to educate the children, it was more than probable, from the peculiar carelessness of the squire in such matters, they would not be educated at all; and so much did he appear to be gratified in "teaching the young idea how to shoot," that instead of objecting to the trouble of an additional pupil in the little academy of Oldcourt, he highly applauded the benevolent conduct of the family towards Pierce Doran, and made no difference whatever in his instruction, between him and his other scholars.

Thus, time passed on for some years at Oldcourt Castle; during the lapse of that period of life which young people are so glad to get over as tedious, irksome, and unpleasant, and which old people too often find they must look back to, as the only happy portion of their existence.

Grace Oldcourt, the idol of her family, improved every day in beauty of person, and refinement of mind. Under the happy influence of her mother's virtues, and the zealous superintendence of Father Clancy's religious care and classic taste, the excellent qualities of her heart, as well as those of her understanding, were developed to their full perfection; and her acquirements in literature and languages, were far above the female level of her day.

Barry, the eldest brother, had no particular literary turn; but he was ambitious of being distinguished by the manners and principles of a gentleman; and he, therefore, anxiously sought to attain such accomplishments as he conceived to be essential to that character. Considering that circumstances did not greatly favour him, his success was extraordinary.

Garret, the second son, was inferior to his brothers, both in person and mind. He was dogged and dull, ungovernable and ungracious; he preferred the stable to the study; delighted in mischief and mean company, and never was happy or easy, but when engaged in the sports of the field, or buried deep in the erudition of horse dealing, amongst jockies and grooms.

The youngest son, Philip, was the smallest in stature, but the most full-grown in understanding of the three. He was full of taste and talent, accompanied by a great deal of levity, and very little application. There was a quaint humour about him, which made him pass for a wit in the family; and he was called "the counsellor" amongst his companions, because he was always fond of laying down the law in their games, and never easily assented to any proposition that would admit of dispute.

His industry, however, increased as he ad-

vanced in years, and at the close of their academic course, Father Clancy acknowledged, that he was his most assiduous student, and his best scholar.

Pierce Doran manifested good natural faculties, and as he was more undeviating in his attention to his instructor, so he was more regularly progressive in his improvement. One of his school-fellows, however, greatly disturbed his studies. Grace Oldcourt occupied his imagination too much for the health of his memory. The pursuits in which she was associated with him, were those in which he ever took the most delight, and made the least progress; for a book was a bore in her company, and in looking at her, he always forgot his lessons.

From their first acquaintance, in the cradle and the cottage, she was the great object of all his thoughts and attentions. As a child, he was her protector, as well as her playfellow; and in his most sportive and frolicsome humours, he seemed to consider it as much his business, as it was his pleasure, to amuse her.

As he grew up in the family of the castle, the same feelings characterized him, the same ardent devotion to the wants and wishes of his favourite. No out-door sports or boyish occupations could seduce him from her side, whenever she desired

his presence, or he thought his co-operation might contribute to forward any of her mirthful projects.

The sweet disposition and engaging vivacity of Grace Oldcourt, made her so much an object of affectionate attention to all her brothers, that Pierce Doran's assiduity in her service, was, in consequence, the less particular; and whenever it became a subject of remark, it was considered by Mrs. Oldcourt, Miss Matty Malone, and the other members of the establishment, only as affording a grateful instance of that devoted attachment which the peculiar relation of fosterer, in Ireland, at once authorizes and exemplifies.

Grace herself, accustomed as she had been from her birth, to such manifestations of Doran's regard, received his assiduities without surprise, and was the less likely to see in them any thing extraordinary, as she considered him the brother of her cradle, and treated him with almost as much confidence and kindness, as if he were the brother of her blood.*

Frank, open-hearted, and familiar, she had no reserve about her to Doran; for it never entered her head, that reserve could be necessary where

* "Fostering," says Sir John Davis, "is considered in the opinion of the Irish, a stronger alliance than blood."

regard might be unbounded, and was always considered as pure.

But the period had now arrived when a boyish attachment must either subside to indifference, or be converted into a sentiment of much more passionate character. Hitherto, Pierce Doran had looked upon the Castle of Oldcourt as a kind of Elysium, in which he found every gratification of which he had formed any idea, or for which he entertained the least desire.

He studied, he played, he walked, he rode with Grace Oldcourt every day, and sometimes all the day; and how long such felicity was to last, or what it might lead to, were speculations which, if ever they occurred to his imagination at all, certainly did not oppress it with any cloudy forecast of thought.

By degrees, however, his happiness began to assume a somewhat less calm and serene character. Though all surrounding circumstances seemed to be unchanged, he could not but perceive that there was some alteration in himself. He became restless and uneasy, without being aware of any definite cause, which could reasonably make him so. In the presence of Grace, he found himself anxious and apprehensive; in her absence, irritable and melancholy.

He was now generally dissatisfied with himself;

and diffident and distrustful of all his proceedings, where she was concerned. He was disposed, also, to be discontented with those marks of her confidence and regard, which heretofore exceeded the full measure of his expectations; and he every day felt more and more curious to investigate their nature, and ascertain if they did not disclose a feeling somewhat different from that which influenced her, in those manifestations of attachment, which she used towards her brothers.

In this state, matters remained for some time after the incident which occurred at the Kilboyne hunt. But the rumours of Grace Oldcourt's beauty, which the glowing representations of its members, had spread through the county, were soon followed by their usual effects. Admirers were warmed into suitors, and such approaches were made to the castle, as indicated designs to carry off the treasure which it contained, by a regular assault of love, and a *coup de main* of matrimony.

The first serious attack of this sort operated on Pierce Doran, like a mine sprung under his feet. His eyes were now at once opened to the true nature of his feelings, if he were not before sufficiently clear-sighted on the subject. The world seemed about to be blown up around him—he appeared to wake from a delicious dream; and

the future, as if to avenge the little prospective attention he had hitherto bestowed upon it, now rushed upon his startled fancy, in a crowd of fearful anticipations, from which he recoiled with horror.

He was now but too well aware, that neither the relation of foster-brother, nor that of any other brother, was the one in which he wished to stand towards Grace Oldcourt; and he was shocked and alarmed when he was obliged to confess to himself the discovery, and found that he had been not only willing, but anxious to be deluded on this subject.

The ingenuity of self-deception which masks our feelings to ourselves, and leaves the visor on as long as possible, from the fear that we should not like the aspect its removal would present to us, had lulled poor Doran into a state of half-apprehensive security, in which he would not allow himself to think, lest his reason should rouse his resolution, and force his integrity to disturb a state of enjoyment which, however dangerous to his future repose, no present evil appeared to render culpable.

Doran's general principles would have done credit to any station in life; and though, influenced by the common frailty of our nature, he had not the firmness to withstand the insidious approaches of a passion, which the wise and power-

ful of all ages have attempted in vain to resist, yet, he was incapable of concerted misconduct, or premeditated wrong.

Besides the attachment which never fails to sway, with a sort of religious force, the hearts of those who, in Ireland, are connected with a great family, by ties similar to that which bound Pierce Doran to the house of Oldcourt, he was impressed, also, by the deepest feelings of gratitude for the favour, and even paternal kindness he had experienced from them: a sentiment which Father Clancy early cultivated and established in his breast.

Though placed upon a footing of such unreserved familiarity with the young Oldcourts, he never was seduced to forget his situation for a moment, or depart from that respectful demeanour, which a proper sense of it should lead him, without servility, to observe. In his eyes, they were all beings of a superior order; and when the veil was so completely removed, that he could no longer conceal from himself the fact of his being desperately in love with the all admired, only daughter of his patron and protector—the head of the ancient house of Oldcourt, he was not so much confounded at his folly, as he was ashamed of his presumption.

To worship her as an angel, in distant homage,

was a privilege which belonged to his station ; but to love her as a woman, and indulge, even for a moment, the thought of exciting in her breast a reciprocal sentiment, was villainy, ingratitude, and madness.

Hitherto, he had never been able to discover any peculiarity of emotion in Grace Oldcourt's manner to him, which indicated more than a modification of that kindness, which she felt towards her brothers, and manifested, in different and appropriate degrees, to all who approached her. She was easy, familiar, and even affectionate with her old play-fellow ; and, in every respect, seemed to confide in him, as in a person from whom she, of right, and of course, expected regard, attention, and protection. But she was too much at her ease—too unembarrassed and unreserved in her deportment with him, to warrant the presumption that any warmer sentiment than friendship was concerned in it.

In a state of perplexity, arising from these agitating considerations, poor Doran saw time pass on at the castle, without being able to form any reasonable hope, or to fix upon any decisive line of conduct. His general impression was, that he ought to fly from a scene of danger, to the consequences of which he was now so fully sensible. But where could he fly ?

Unfitted as he was, by his education, to assist in the laborious pursuits of his father, to return to him as a burthen was quite out of the question. He was entirely dependent on the family into which he seemed to have been adopted; and the squire considered him so useful, and appeared to depend so much on his services, in various ways, that to leave the castle, without assigning a sufficient and satisfactory cause, would be justly regarded as no common instance of ingratitude.

The squire had often held out vague hopes of advancing him in life, and talked of making him his agent, in place of the person who filled that office; a functionary with whom Mr. Oldcourt was very much dissatisfied, for not having discovered a mine upon his estate, or fitted the amount of his income more exactly to his expenditure.

But year after year passed on, in languid expectation and dilatory indifference; there seemed to be no more reason for hurry to-day than yesterday, and to-morrow would always be time enough for exertion. Thus it was that "the thief of time," who never pursued his chronological pilferings with more success than in the house of Oldcourt, was always ready to retard the interests, and disconcert the measures of its members.

There seemed, indeed, to be no feasible means of escape for poor Doran ; and, to do him justice, he never appeared less disposed to be obstinate, than in his resistance to that conviction. If his firmness were too easily vanquished, however, in reasoning this matter with his feelings, he was not altogether without excuse ; a ride or a walk with his mistress—a look—a smile of gracious regard, would interfere and reinforce the argument in favour of remaining in the castle, with a strength that no lover's logic could be expected successfully to oppose.

In a feverish alternation of delight and despondency, without hope in remaining, or resolution to depart, he continued, through a sort of delusive necessity, to await the course of events ; alarmed at the approach, and rejoicing at the rejection, of every new suitor, as if he himself were personally interested in the result : while every day added strength to the passion that consumed him, by the experience of some new fascination in its object, which rendered the struggle to conceal his feelings still more difficult than before. In the hourly observance of a beauty and amiability, which no heart “ made of penetrable stuff ” could be expected to resist ; and treated with such a sweet and cordial kindness, as, no doubt, vanity would have hoped to

convert, if it did not actually construe, into love, the task of cooling down the fervour of his admiration to such a temperature of regard, as might do justice to his devotion, without alarming her delicacy, or discovering his secret, required a degree of vigilance, circumspection, and virtue, which few young men, in such circumstances, would have been found to display.

But the struggle was too much for his strength, either of body or mind. His spirits became dejected, and his health impaired: constant restraint, and frequent agitation produced a state of nervous excitement, which sharpened every emotion to agony or rapture. The former feeling, indeed, was too generally prevalent in his mind, not to tinge his temper; and the family observed the melancholy which appeared to prey upon him. They ascribed it, however, to a growing sense of his dependent situation, and uncertain prospects; and he rather favoured that impression, as a means of diverting conjecture from the real cause.

Frequently, when, struck by the alteration in his manner and appearance, Grace Oldcourt, like a pitying angel, would express her concern for his health, and her interest in his welfare, overcome by such celestial sympathy, he has been obliged to rush from the room, to conceal

the tumult of his feelings, and prevent his throwing himself at her feet, in a full confession of his love.

A state of anxiety and embarrassment like this, poor Pierce Doran thought quite sufficient for mortal endurance; but the presence of Sir Walter D'Arcy at the castle, soon taught him how severely its miseries might be aggravated, by an accession of suffering, in which the tortures of jealousy sharpened all the pangs of hopeless love.

CHAPTER XII.

It will be recollected, that after the breaking up of the party at Oldcourt Castle, the principal personages of whom it was composed, were conducted, with all due attention, to their several apartments; where their slumbers were not a little disturbed by the reflections that naturally resulted from the different occurrences of the day.

But as the drowsy god is seldom so disposed to favour us, as just at the moment, when we ought to break from his seductions, so, on this occasion, having in the morning made his usual atonement to the sufferers of the night, the family did not assemble at the breakfast-table quite so early as usual.

Sir Walter D'Arcy, indeed, always a late riser, was so much under the influence of *Somnus* as to have entirely overslept himself; and Mrs.

Oldcourt, in her medical capacity, would, on no account, suffer him to be disturbed: as she judiciously observed, that "after all, sleep was the best restorative;" an opinion, in which I would undertake to support that good lady, against the whole College of Physicians.

Pierce Doran was, as usual with him, the first who appeared in the breakfast-room, and Grace Oldcourt, as was very unusual with her, the last. The former, wearing on his countenance the traces of a disturbed night; the latter, also, indicating, by a slight predominance of the lily over the rose, in her complexion, that her slumbers had been somewhat less refreshing than she ordinarily found them.

Miss Oldcourt was always particularly attentive to her morning costume; a point of propriety and good breeding, which well-educated women, in all civilized countries, are careful to observe, and, for a commendable observance of which, English women may be said to be pre-eminently distinguished.

Even in the unceremonious privacy of her domestic circle, Grace never allowed herself, by any negligence of dress, to violate the *bienséance* of the breakfast-table, or show, that she had less respect for her family than for her friends.

On this morning, she was dressed with her usual

taste and simplicity ; but, though her appearance indicated no particular solicitude for personal decoration, Pierce Doran suspected that she had consulted her toilette with more than ordinary care and skill. An impression from which, for reasons which lovers will readily conjecture, he appeared to derive no satisfaction.

The squire, like most gentlemen who are very convivial at night, was always very dull in the morning. His stomach was queasy, his tongue parched, and he had no appetite. Mrs. Oldcourt had already consulted Buchan as to the best remedies for heart-burn, acidity, and the thousand other ills the *bon vivant* is heir to, and she was anxious to bring the whole *materia medica* to his assistance.

But the squire was one of her most refractory patients : he had his own specific, which as it possessed the double property of relieving his complaint, and at the same time, tickling his palate with some slight relish of the pleasures by which that complaint was contracted, he invariably resorted to—a little brandy in his tea.

The good lady of the mansion appeared in her accustomed good humour, and in more than her accustomed good spirits. Miss Matty Malone, and the young Oldcourts, were pretty much *comme à l'ordinaire*.

The conversation, as may be supposed, turned very much on the personal qualities and agreeable manners of their guest, Sir Walter D'Arcy; and much discriminative commendation was bestowed upon him, though it was worthy of remark, that neither Grace Oldcourt, nor Pierce Doran were forward in his praise.

Mrs. Oldcourt energetically declared, he was a remarkably handsome man, and the finest gentleman she had ever been acquainted with.

“Thank you, my dear Nelly,” jocularly observed Mr. Oldcourt, who in his youth considered himself as having some claim to the character of a fine gentleman, at least in the country.

“Oh! my dear Mr. Oldcourt,” said his lady, with an affectionate glow on her cheek; “you know, the present company—the old saying—besides, I gave you a good proof of what I thought of your pretensions. But amongst the present race, you will allow, Sir Walter is quite a star.”

“He seems a smart young fellow, I grant you,” replied the squire; “and more liberal in his sentiments than one would expect, considering the apostasy of his father.”

“Ah! my dear Mr. Oldcourt,” replied his wife, with a pathetic shake of the head, and a reference in her mind to her own father's case; “it is not every man who wishes to preserve his

property to his family, in times of rapine and oppression, that can be said to forsake his faith, though he may seem to change his religion."

"That is very true, my dear Nelly," said the squire, recollecting how the allusion applied, and good-naturedly wishing to remove its sting; "but, at any rate, I must crack a bottle with the baronet, before I can give my opinion of him."

"For my part," interrupted Miss Matty Malone, "I like him, because, although he is such a good-looking young man, he is not occupied with himself, but knows how to behave in women's company; polite to all, without neglecting any one: not like our awkward, booby squires, who can think or talk of nothing but their horses and dogs, and are, indeed, fit only for such company."

As Miss Matty was rather antiquated, and somewhat more formal than fair, she rarely attracted much notice, or even civility, from the young men who frequented the castle; she was, therefore, quite flattered, by some polite attentions from the baronet.

"Yes, Miss Matty," observed Barry Oldcourt, "you may justly say he is a very different person from our steeple-hunting heroes and country bumpkins."

"Come, come, Master Barry," observed his

father, half seriously, "you forget whom that shot hits; I have hunted a steeple before now, my young gentleman! and could make my bow not the worse in a ball-room. Eh! my dear Nelly! don't you think so?" turning to Mrs. Oldcourt, with a complacent security that he should find a ready evidence in his favour,—a confidence, which an assenting nod and smile from that good lady immediately justified; while he added,—“I have known many hearty good fellows amongst steeple hunters, I assure you.”

“But, sir, the race has very much degenerated since your time,” replied Barry; “and if *you* indulged in such pursuits, they were only your amusements. You did not consider them your business, nor make them your boast.”

Now, this civil speech on the part of the son, was the gratuitous result of a dutiful desire to set himself right with his father, and take off the edge of his former indiscreet observation, which he could not but perceive to have touched a little unpleasantly on the paternal *epidermis*.

The fact is, that few of the squirearchy of his day were more devoted to such exploits than Mr. Oldcourt, or more proud of them, even long after their performance became to him physically impossible. Yet, such is our disposition to be pleased with a compliment, even when we are

conscious we do not deserve it, that the old gentleman, with an evident chuckle of satisfaction, said :—

“ Why, that is very true, my dear Barry ! but, by Jupiter ! the gentlemen of my day had little other business than their amusements. I flatter myself, however, I was not behind-hand with my contemporaries, in any field of competition.”

“ The baronet,” rejoined Barry, “ belongs to a different age ; *nova progenies*, as Ovid says. He is neither coarse in his familiarity, nor boisterous in his mirth. Though his manners are gentle and polished, they are not coxcombical ; and there is an unreserved openness about him, that particularly becomes the character of a soldier.”

“ Come, Grace, now it is your turn ;” cried the youngest son, Philip, laughing. “ Have you nothing to say of this paragon ? No little purring rill of praise, to swell this full tide of panegyric ?”

“ No, Phil.,” said Grace, blushing deeply ; “ I leave Sir Walter D’Arcy in your hands ; and as you know you are the counsellor of the family, you may probably find a flaw in his character.”

“ From that blush, Grace,” laughingly replied her brother, “ I suspect you think that would

be a difficult matter. But, Pierce, I dare say, will assist me," turning to him; "he has not yet given tongue in the full cry of commendation."

"My verdict," said Pierce, with a tremulous motion of the upper lip, "is of little value; but it is never given on insufficient evidence."

The blood, which before only blushed beautifully in her cheek, on her brother's second remark, diffused itself in deeper carnation over Grace's whole face.

"My dear Phil.," said his mother, "you should not embarrass your sister. Grace knows, and so ought you to know, that it is not proper for young ladies to be forward in giving their opinions of young gentlemen."

"Very true, my dear mother," rejoined the counsellor; "and as a blush is the best evidence in this case, we will close the inquiry."

"I declare, Philip," said Miss Matty Malone, turning down her tea-cup, which it was then the fashion to do, "you are quite provoking; and I wonder Grace has patience with you."

"My dear madam," replied Phil., "how can you be surprised? Besides all other virtues, you know that Grace has patience for every body; and so you and I come in for our share, now and then."

This rejoinder, covering a sly allusion to some

rather tiresome prosings, by which Miss Matty was wont occasionally to exercise the patience of her friends, produced a general laugh ; in which, however, that ancient maiden neither joined, nor seemed to take any pleasure ; being, at the moment, wholly occupied in administering a large pinch of snuff to the appropriate organ.

Mrs. Oldcourt now declared, “ that as no ill consequence had ensued, she was not sorry the accident had occurred, since it was the means of procuring them such a pleasant acquaintance ; indeed, she hoped, one of these days, to be able to say, friend. And Barry,” said she, addressing her eldest son, “ as he has been so much abroad, he may give you some information about the Austrian service. Besides a large fortune, they say he has great influence ; and who knows, Pierce,” turning to that young man, “ but through his means, something may be done for your interest.”

“ My dear madam,” replied Doran, with a sad and serious air, “ I must be always grateful for your kindness ; but I should be sorry to receive any favour at the hands of Sir Walter D’Arcy. My own exertions will, I trust, render any interference on his part unnecessary.”

The peculiar feeling with which this was spoken appeared to excite some surprise. Grace and her

brothers looked at each other, and the old squire, raising his eyes from the County Chronicle, which he had been reading, observed :—

“ Why ! what favour does Pierce Doran want from Sir Walter D’Arcy or any body else ? Is not he well enough off here ? I am sure if he was not here I should not be well off ; for he is of more use to me than any of you.”

“ My dear sir,” cried Pierce, with great warmth of feeling ; “ the thought that you attached some little value to my poor services, has long been my only comfort under the weight of my obligations ; but,” added he, the tear trembling in his eye, “ it is full time that I should cease to be a burthen on my generous benefactors.”

“ Oh ! Pierce,” exclaimed Grace, laying her hand affectionately on his arm, as he sat next to her, and looking at him with the most anxious and amiable expression of interest, “ have we deserved this ? Are you not one of the family ? Have we not always looked upon you as a brother, and a kind brother ? And as such I shall ever regard you.”

Poor Doran was little gratified by this last assurance of attachment, on the part of Grace Oldcourt. His emotion was so great that he could not venture to touch her hand, or utter a word.

“ My dear Grace,” said Mrs. Oldcourt,

“Pierce Doran must be well aware how we all regard him, and how much we should regret to lose him; but we must not be so selfish as to suffer him to sacrifice himself to us; and it is quite natural that a young man should wish to see the world.”

“I am sure if *he* does not,” exclaimed Barry Oldcourt, “*I* do. This idle life is dreadful.”

During Mrs. Oldcourt’s last observation, Pierce Doran’s agitation appeared to increase. He was evidently surprised, and looked upon the latter part of her remark, as a hint not to be misunderstood.

Grace seemed little less affected than himself; she coloured deeply, and for the first time in her life, thought her mother was unkind.

With an evident effort at calmness, Doran rose from his seat, and said:—

“I fear it is not natural for me to wish to quit this revered roof, under which I have spent so many happy days; but, I assure you, Mrs. Oldcourt, I have long been convinced that such a step is proper, though I have not had resolution enough to adopt it. Your approval of it, however, renders it not only proper, but necessary.”

The last sentence was spoken in a voice that showed he was almost overcome by his feelings. It was followed by a general exclamation of all

the parties, in an eager assurance that he had quite mistaken Mrs. Oldcourt; and that good lady's kindness of heart made her join anxiously in the assertion; though, it must be confessed, her meaning justified Pierce Doran's interpretation of her words.

The scene was becoming painfully interesting; and the squire was sufficiently aroused, by the general energy, from a studious slumber over the County Chronicle, to ask,—“What is all this nonsense about?”—when the entrance of Sir Walter D'Arcy prevented a continuance of the subject, and produced immediately an apparent calm. Pierce Doran took an opportunity of leaving the room on the baronet's appearance, and received such a look of kindness from Grace at his departure, as would have made him the happiest man in the world, if he could have forgotten that it was avowedly bestowed upon him in his fraternal character.

Sir Walter gracefully apologised for making his appearance so late in the breakfast-room; and in answer to Mrs. Oldcourt's medical inquiries, declared himself quite well; a report which that good lady, after having insisted on feeling his pulse, confirmed, pronouncing, with an air of medical erudition, which would have excited the envy of Mr. Phelim M'Cabe, that “there was no acceleration

of the arterial action," and that "all febrile symptoms had disappeared."

A fresh breakfast was ordered for the baronet, at which Grace presided with a "sweet obligingness," as Sir Charles Grandison would express it. She displayed, indeed, on the occasion, that sensitive propriety of conduct, which hits the happy medium between the pert and prattling familiarity, that leads you to expect a box on the ear, if you should happen to give offence; and the cold, ungracious, repulsive reserve, which, amongst the higher as well as the lower classes of females, always denotes an insensible, ill-conditioned, and under-bred character.

The baronet's admiration was undisguised; and he exerted all his powers of gallantry, to render himself agreeable, and produce a corresponding sentiment in his favour.

He blessed the happy accident that had procured for him an introduction to such an interesting family,—expressed in all the forms of eloquent acknowledgment, his gratitude for the hospitality and kindness with which he had been treated,—most impressively solicited the privilege of cultivating an intercourse from which he should derive so much honour and happiness, and warmly invited the young men to visit him at his quarters in Galway.

D'Arcy's overtures, as may be supposed, from the hospitable character of the squire, the sanguine speculations of Mrs. Oldcourt, and the satisfaction of the sons at the prospect of such an agreeable acquaintance, were met with the most encouraging cordiality.

For Grace I say nothing, because she said nothing for herself; but she blushed such a beautiful acquiescence in the family sentiment, as outweighed, in the baronet's estimation, the combined eloquence of the rest of the establishment.

After a lengthened conversation, in which our hero was all anecdote and vivacity, and his hearers were all attention and admiration, he rose to take his leave; declaring, that his conscience would not suffer him to trespass farther on their indulgence; but that he would take an early opportunity to pay his respects at the castle.

This movement, however, was immediately opposed by a vigorous discharge of remonstrance from the main body of his hosts. Some shots also took effect from a reserve of *glancers*, in the eyes of Miss Oldcourt: and the baronet's retreat was finally cut off by the squire, who swore his horse should be impounded for the dues of hospitality, which he had not yet paid. "We have seen the birth of our acquaintance, Sir Walter," said he, "but we have not yet had the baptism;

and that is a ceremony quite essential to Christian communion, in the social creed of Oldcourt."

The baronet, like a besieged town, with a disaffected garrison, found that all his feelings were disposed to take part with the assailants; and though a soldier, he thought his best course was a surrender.

The conditions were, that he should spend another day at the castle; and the following one he would be allowed to march out, with all the honours of hospitality.

Matters being thus arranged, the horses were ordered for a morning ride; and Grace, who was fond of riding, and an excellent horsewoman, as she had proved, to the satisfaction of the Kilboyne Hunt, retired to equip herself in her habit accordingly.

She first, however, proceeded to seek for Pierce Doran, to tell him of the equestrian party, and ask him to join it;—a ceremonial of invitation not usual from her, his alacrity of attention rendering it always unnecessary; but there was a tact of delicacy in her character, which, without any well defined reason for it, made her particularly wish, on the present occasion, to show her desire for his company.

Though latterly she had observed a con-

siderable change both in his health and spirits, she was surprised by his evident agitation at the breakfast-table ; and not being aware of the motives, which, reasonably enough, influenced Mrs. Oldcourt's mind, to wish for his removal from the castle, she was concerned, and thought it unkind, that her mother should express herself in a manner to suggest a suspicion that she was favourable to such a measure.

The absence of Pierce Doran, however, who had left the house immediately after breakfast, disappointed, for the moment, her amiable solicitude on his account.

The riding party, therefore, consisted of Miss Oldcourt, her brother Barry, and the baronet ; for Garret was engaged to be present at a cock-fight ; a sport (as in common with other barbarous country practices, it is called,) in which that young gentleman delighted much ; and Phil. had received a new publication from Dublin, which he was anxious to peruse.

The ride was pleasant to the parties, and, therefore, it was prolonged beyond the usual time. The conversation was gay and agreeable to those who were engaged in it ; but as little was said, which could be considered important to the progress of this history, it is needless to repeat

it. Suffice it to observe, that the baronet returned still more enamoured than when he set out.

Grace Oldcourt was one of the few, upon whom Nature had profusely lavished her favours. Her countenance, though blooming with all the fascinations of a Hebe, was not more captivating than her form; yet she never looked more beautiful than when, in her riding habit, the charms of her person were precluded from entering into competition with her face. As she was conspicuously graceful in all her equestrian movements, as well as skilful in the management of her horse, the impression she had made upon D'Arcy, the evening before, was strengthened by her morning appearance; and his favourable judgment of her understanding confirmed, by the colloquial developement of its powers, in the course of their long ride.

As they were returning to the castle, Grace observed Pierce Doran in a musing position, leaning on a stile, which separated the road from a foot-path in an adjoining wood. She urged her horse forward, with a view to address him; but on the approach of the party, he bowed, jumped over the stile, and disappeared. Grace and her brother thought his retreat extraordinary, but made no observation.

When Pierce Doran withdrew from the breakfast-table in the morning, he rushed out of the house, to conceal the agitated state of mind, which was produced in him by what had passed there. Mrs. Oldcourt's observation he could look upon in no other light than as a plain intimation, that his longer residence in the castle would be dispensed with; and he had been for so many years in the habit of considering Oldcourt as his home, that a hint so unexpected, struck upon his heart, like expulsion from a parental roof.

When he reflected on the benevolence of Mrs. Oldcourt's character, and the maternal kindness with which she had invariably treated him, a change of sentiment so sudden, appeared to him unaccountable; and led him finally to the suspicion, that in spite of all his caution, she had discovered the secret of his attachment, and thought it prudent to remove him from farther intercourse with her daughter.

Neither his pride, however, nor his sense of propriety, would now suffer him to remain; and he found that every hour added to his intoxication, in a passion which, he saw but too plainly, was hopeless, and the humblest declaration of which, would lay him under a charge of unparalleled presumption and ingratitude.

The question was, therefore, settled in his mind, as indeed it had often been settled before ; but the baronet's introduction to the family, and the consequences which, with a lover's prescience, he anticipated, gave additional weight to his conviction on the subject, and made him more determined than ever, to remove from a scene in which mortification and misery must await him if he remained.

Occupied by a succession of such agitating reflections, he roamed for some hours through the ancient woods of Oldcourt—now pondering projects of active enterprise, to invest his name with some distinction, which might make it sound with credit in Grace Oldcourt's ear ; and, by a retrospective operation, render his presumption in loving her more excusable—now, execrating the absurd distinctions of society, which, counteracting the noblest emotions of our nature, raised such a barrier between him and the idol of his admiration, as condemned him to silence, when, by the open, ardent avowal of his love, he might possibly have urged it with success—now, losing himself in a reverie of romantic delusion, in which his fancy pictured his mistress responding to his passion—receiving him as a lover, and rewarding him for his long sufferings, in some terrestrial paradise of rural bliss. Then

would he awake from his trance, and start forward in a half-frantic agony of feeling, at the contrast which the sad reality of his situation presented to his view.

Hopeless in his love, and about to become an outcast from the home with which all his ideas of earthly felicity were associated, and which contained the angelic being to whom his heart had cleaved, with instinctive and irresistible energy, even from his cradle, his spirit sunk in an overwhelming sense of desolation, which, among all his anxieties, he had never before experienced.

The days of his childhood rushed upon his recollection, arrayed in the charms of innocent and unreserved intercourse with his blooming companion—the period of his early youth, spent with her in a delightful community of pleasures and pursuits,—till tracing the progress of his feelings, through all the gradations of devotion growing into idolatry, amongst the more tumultuous raptures of his latter years, he at length became wholly subdued by the retrospect of joys that never could return—his resolution failed—he groaned aloud, and melted into tears.

Relieved and somewhat calmed by this lachrymal vent to his emotions, he had just emerged from the road, on his return to the

castle, when the riding party approached him. Doran had taken it for granted, that the baronet must have left the castle, to return to his quarters, immediately after breakfast. To see him, therefore, officiating as an escort to Grace Oldcourt, was much more a surprise than a pleasure to poor Doran ; and afraid to trust his feelings, after the agitation they had undergone, he determined to retreat into the wood, till Grace and the party had passed.

Though Doran had eagerly sought the most retired solitude in the neighbourhood of the castle, to ruminate, undisturbed, on his unhappy situation, and devise, if possible, some plan for his future conduct, the agony of his mind had rendered all deliberation impracticable. No specific project had occurred to him ; and a vague determination to depart from Oldcourt, and seek his fortune amid the bustle of the world, was the only result of his morning's meditations.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE qualities which distinguished Sir Walter D'Arcy, have been sufficiently developed in the course of this authentic record, to satisfy the reader, that he was well calculated to succeed in rendering himself agreeable to the family of Oldcourt Castle. His manners were so prepossessing, and his powers of conversation so versatile, that, when he pleased, he could be "all things to all men."

He had, it is true, learned but little at school, and still less at the university. As to what is commonly called erudition, he was not more encumbered with that commodity, than the general run of students who go to college, merely in compliance with the prescribed routine of fashionable education; and who have neither a wish to acquire learning, nor an intention to enter upon any career in which it can be considered necessary.

His deficiency in this respect, did not, however, arise from want of talent, but want of industry; not from any natural disrelish to intellectual pursuits, or from any coarse and vulgar disregard of letters; it proceeded from the disturbing influence of passions too impetuous for scholastic restraint, and which neither religious principle, nor paternal authority, had ever been employed to control.

After the thoughtless freaks of his boyhood, however, when the wild irregularities of his early youth had subsided into the more decorous dissipations of that class of society in which he moved, he had taken no small pains, and had many opportunities to educate himself in the great school of the world; and as, in most cases of self-instruction, the process of tuition is assisted by a strong desire to learn, his knowledge of life and manners, and his proficiency in all the social graces and accomplishments which recommend a man in the *beau monde*, were in proportion to his talents and his zeal.

He was naturally open, brave, and generous; his pride of family, his ambition to sustain the character of a gentleman, and a high sense of what the world calls honour, all operated to rescue him from low associates and vulgar vices. In every case but one, indeed, they supplied with

him the place of religious and moral principles ; and that one was, unfortunately, a case in which the propensities of our nature, and the practice of fashionable society, are too often effectually urged as a palliative and a precedent.

To the circle into which he was now introduced, his reputation as *un homme à bonnes fortunes*, would have been no recommendation ; but as his exploits in that character were equally unknown and unsuspected by them, there was no drawback upon the favourable impression which his personal and mental qualities were calculated to produce.

The second day of the baronet's *séjour* at the castle, passed off still more agreeably to its inhabitants than the first ; for he was the great source of entertainment, and the sole object of attention. In proportion as he became more familiar, he appeared more fascinating ; new topics of discussion afforded him new opportunities of colloquial captivation, in which his knowledge of the great world furnished materials of unwonted interest to a rural circle, and enabled him to embroider, with anecdote and humour, the home-spun simplicity of country conversation.

Mrs. Oldcourt had contrived to keep off, for that day, those chance visitors, whose hospitable habits disposed them to understand an occasional

invitation as a periodical privilege, and drop in *accidentally*, with hebdomadal regularity.

As D'Arcy, though by no means addicted to excess in wine, was highly convivial in his manners, and as he was, certainly, a very lively substitute for those dull soakers, who, though they could drink a great deal, had very little to say for themselves, the squire was perfectly satisfied, and thought him very good company.

He was, indeed, pre-eminently skilled in that happiest of all colloquial arts,—the art of drawing out the stores of others as well as displaying his own. However well pleased his auditors were to listen to him, he never allowed himself to monopolize the discourse, or to show off as the fiddle of the company. To the feast of conversation, he considered that every man was disposed to furnish his share; and whether it be a refined treat for a philosophical Apicius,—a trifle of taste,—a whip syllabub of science, or an Ollapodrida of polite literature—whether it be calipash fit for a corporation of square caps—currie peppered to the palate of an oriental scholar, or sour crou_t calculated for a Dutch conversazione,—every contributor has a right to complain, if he be not allowed an opportunity to serve up his particular dish, and ascertain how far it may be relished by the company.

In the exercise of the peculiar talent here alluded to, the baronet was, on the present occasion, eminently successful. He pleased all parties, by leading each in turn, to the favourite topic upon which he was the best qualified to speak, and could always find something to say. With Mr. Oldcourt he discussed the ordinary common places of country squires; and by the *á-propos* introduction of some anecdotes of hunting in the Back Settlements, and shooting at a mark by American riflemen, he gave that old gentleman a happy opportunity of renewing the recollections of his own exploits, and "fighting all his battles o'er again." In this triumphant recapitulation, the reader may take it for granted, that the silver trophy of his pistol prowess, the dollar, mentioned in a former part of this work, was not forgotten.

With his amiable hostess, he entered into all the mysteries of domestic economy, and listened, with every expression of interest, to the various details of house-wife cares, and culinary grievances. He took an opportunity of expressing his acknowledgments to her medical skill, in taking precautions against the consequences of an accident, which otherwise might have proved fatal; declared that her knowledge of the healing art must be a blessing to her neighbourhood; and talked as learnedly of the *pharmacopœia* of her

medicine-chest, which she insisted upon showing him, as if he had been a travelling mountebank, or a member of the Apothecaries' Company.

With Miss Matty Malone, he deplored the degeneracy of the age, the decay of politeness, and the coarse neglect which women of intellect experience from the brainless boobies of the day; who stare like so many gawkies, if they hear a rational remark, and are never at their ease but when engaged in a noisy dispute upon dogs, horses, and drinking-bouts,—fairs, fights, and fowling-pieces.

He assured her, that in the best circles of London and Paris, women of a certain age were exclusively the fashion; as combining a rich ripeness of the understanding, with the mellow maturity of their personal attractions. Finally, he won her heart by praising the pattern of her flounced silk negligé, and promising to procure for her from Dublin, a canister of Lundy Foote's genuine "stock and fine," by the first opportunity.

D'Arcy's knowledge of military affairs, and the interesting details of a campaign, which his personal experience enabled him to communicate, rendered his society particularly agreeable to Barry Oldcourt, whose ardour to engage in martial adventure, received an additional impulse from the stories of the "tented field,"

with which he was so eloquently entertained. The baronet, however, was never the hero of his own tale. He had too much courage and good taste to be a boaster; and some of his auditors were well disposed to appreciate his merit through his modesty.

With the second son, Master Garret, the baronet's tact was a little at fault; for as that young gentleman had nothing to say in respectable company, he very prudently said nothing; there was, therefore, no chink by which the quality of his intellectual light could be discovered; and, indeed, if D'Arcy could have figged a hunter for sale, with the skill of a horse-dealer, have fought a main of cocks with the judgment of a knowing one in that line, and have hedged a bet on a race-course, like Chiffney himself, such accomplishments would have been of little avail in calling forth the colloquial powers of Master Garret Oldcourt; for his conversationn ever flowed but amongst his cronies in the stable, or the tap-room of the "Old Goat."

The counsellor tried hard in his jocularly disputatious way, to draw the baronet into an argument on the constitution of the Roman Legion, and the modern practice of keeping up standing armies; but D'Arcy turned all his points with such pleasantry and politeness, that he foiled

without offending him, and preserved the loose play of conversation free from the regular assault of argument.

Even Pierce Doran shared in his attentions ; though, from the first moment they met, they seemed to be influenced by a feeling of mutual repulsion. D'Arcy addressed several observations to him, favourable to his friends, the Americans ; and related a circumstance highly illustrative of their patriotic enthusiasm, in their contest with the mother country ; but Doran was not to be conciliated ; he received his rival's civilities with a lowering brow, responded by a dry monosyllabic assent, or a frigid bend of the head, when directly addressed ; and enclosed himself in a crust of reserve, that no politeness on D'Arcy's part could penetrate or remove.

But to Grace Oldcourt, above the whole party, were all the baronet's powers of pleasing directed, with the greatest solicitude, and the most complete success.

She had made an impression on him which he felt to be somewhat different in its nature, from any sentiment by which he had been ever before influenced, in his intercourse with the fair sex. It was not an impulse to be satisfied in a passing flirtation, or gratified in the heartless gallantry of a fashionable intrigue. The attraction of Grace

Oldcourt was magnetic or magical, and seemed to draw his whole soul towards her, in an energy of admiration, which made him painfully anxious to obtain her good opinion, and, for the first time in his life, apprehensive of his success.

All his attentions to the rest of the family were, therefore, influenced by one motive; to gain such a character and footing in the house as, co-operating with his own exertions, might enable him to excite an interest in the heart of Miss Oldcourt, which, without any determinate object in view, he found himself irresistibly induced to cultivate.

Few women, even in the most elevated sphere of fashionable life, where the qualities which distinguished D'Arcy, by being more common, are less captivating, could remain long insensible to his addresses. It was not wonderful, therefore, that in the secluded circle of a provincial establishment, where he put forth all his powers with unrivalled fascination, and unexampled accomplishment, Grace should regard him as a superior being, and as almost of a different species from the Nimrod race of lovers by whom she had been hitherto rather hunted than wooed.

Her experience of that graceful *tournure* of figure, and polished propriety of manners, which give such a charm to the intercourse of polite

society, was very limited, and derived entirely from such examples of the *beau monde*, as occasionally condescend to dazzle the natives at an assize ball. Barristers, just escaped from their wigs and gowns, transformed into beaux, and bringing all their circuit civilities to bear upon the wives and daughters of conceited town-clerks, and many-briefed country attorneys. The members for the county, looking deep sagacity and political importance, cold, stiff, and supercilious, till the approach of an election, when they find it convenient to unbend in all the blandishments of a hustings familiarity and canvassing condescension.

Their ladies too, and their fair daughters, sweeping graciously through the admiring throng, and regulating the distribution of their smiles, in a due gradation of affability and condescension, from the squirearchal *noblesse*, with their haughty, emulative airs, through all the incense of small gentry assiduities, down to the awkward adulations of the shopkeeping *bourgeoisie*.

Such scenes were little calculated to supply her with genuine examples of fashionable life. She was rather disgusted there, with the ludicrous conflict of offensive pretensions. Pride swelling into insolence,—meanness shrinking into servility,—all ranks and degrees eagerly struggling

into notice and importance,—presenting a Janus-like character—smiling most solicitously on those above them,—scowling most superciliously on those below. Each offensive and offended by turns, and somewhat consoled for the pain of their own wounded consequence, by the pleasure of inflicting on others a similar mortification: the whole exhibiting, in all the forms of vulgar vanity and petty competition, a periodical aggregate of ill-will, ill-humour, and ill-manners.

In short, when her few opportunities of mixing with elegant society are considered, it affords a strong proof, that genuine politeness is the result of a happy combination of sensibility, good sense, and good temper, to find, that under such disadvantages, she had acquired a delicacy and grace of manners, that would have adorned a court.

The same constitution of mind, however, which displayed itself in a refinement at once so fascinating and inartificial, led her to look for kindred qualities in others, and particularly amongst those, who approached her with pretensions which, in her estimation, only some degree of congeniality in character could rationally justify. For this species of sympathy, however, amongst her admirers, she had hitherto sought in vain.

The best specimens of country accomplishment, which her circle afforded, were, indeed, to be found in her own family.

But the brilliant graces and highly-polished manners of D'Arcy, the easy elegance of his address, and the insinuating gentleness of his assiduities, realised the happiest visions of her fancy, and presented to her a model of perfection, which, she had begun to suspect, belonged to the regions of romance, and would be sought for in vain, among the homely and defective characters of real life.

Under these impressions, to her so novel in their nature, and which, though highly agreeable on the whole, appeared to act upon her lively spirit, in an uneasy solicitude of hope and fear, Grace Oldcourt retired to her chamber, at the close of D'Arcy's second day at the castle. The *insomnie* of the preceding night was renewed, and a still more disturbing train of cogitations interfered again with the fervour of her devotion, and for no small portion of the night, deprived her pillow of its narcotic powers.

That a sentiment was arising in her breast, which must be of the most serious consequence to her future peace, she could not conceal from herself; and, though it was pretty evident to her, that the baronet regarded her with more than

equal favour, yet, under all the circumstances of the case, and as she could not be certain that his attentions would prove any thing more than the ordinary homage, which a man of the world considers himself called upon to pay to the fair sex, she prudently resolved to resist the first approaches of an attachment, which, if prematurely indulged, might terminate in mortification, if not in misery.

But, though a discreet young lady may go to sleep at night, with a fixed determination of this sort in her head, it is generally found to be very unfixed in the morning. And should the object against whose dangerous influence it is directed, happen to be present, it loses its efficacy entirely in the course of the day.

It must be confessed, that Grace Oldcourt has not afforded a satisfactory refutation of this remark; for, notwithstanding her very judicious resolve, the first hour's subsequent experience of the baronet's deserts and devotion, determined her—to make no determination upon the subject.

Vows, not to love at all, are generally as ill observed as vows to love for ever.

On the following morning, the breakfast-table was attended in due time, by all the party, except Pierce Doran, who was reported to have gone to

a neighbouring fair, on some business for Mr. Oldcourt.

The squire could not recollect for what purpose he had commissioned Doran that morning ; he said, however, that Pierce was a good, thoughtful lad, and always knew what he was about.

The baronet, for some reason which he did not himself particularly define, had speculated a little on the nature of Pierce Doran's connexion with the house of Oldcourt, and felt some curiosity on the subject, which he thought the present opportunity might enable him to gratify. Addressing Mr. Oldcourt, therefore, he observed, " that in the management of his extensive property, it must be a great advantage to have the unbought assistance of so active and confidential a relation of the family, as Mr. Doran appeared to be."

To this palpably fishing observation the squire replied ; " That they all had, for a long time, looked upon Pierce Doran as one of the family ; and, indeed, he well deserved to be so considered, though, poor fellow, he had no claim to the blood of the Oldcourts."

Mrs. Oldcourt, who had her own reasons for wishing to explain, and thought this a favourable moment for the purpose, now interposed with a brief sketch of Pierce Doran's birth, character, and behaviour ; speaking of him with the greatest

kindness, and bestowing upon him every possible commendation ; placing him, at the same time, upon such a footing in the family, as she concluded would prevent the possibility of a suspicion, that he could have the presumption to aspire beyond his sphere ; and winding up the whole by observing, that the young man was naturally anxious to push himself forward in the world, and they were now most desirous to procure for him some respectable situation, in which he might exert his talents for his own advantage.

The baronet thought “ such a spirit highly commendable in the young man ; and as far as he had any interest, he would be most happy to employ it in his favour.”

The old squire, however, who had been rather surprised at the last chapter of Mrs. Oldcourt’s biographic memoir, now observed :—

“ Why, my dear Nelly, I never understood that Pierce Doran had expressed any dissatisfaction with his situation. I am sure, I always told him that, one of these days, I should do something for him, and perhaps make him my agent at last, if Quigley did not manage matters better. I am quite surprised ; and I am sure I don’t know what I should do without him.”

Mrs. Oldcourt “ thought that although Pierce Doran might be too delicate to express any desire

to leave them, yet it would be cruel, and indeed selfish, to obstruct his wishes or his interests."

In this sentiment the baronet warmly concurred; and "he was satisfied Mr. Oldcourt was the last man in the world who would be actuated by such motives."

This compliment the squire did not know exactly how to disclaim, without casting some little imputation on his own generosity; he therefore contented himself with shaking his head, and observing, "that it was very odd."

During this little discussion, and more particularly while her mother was giving the baronet an outline of Doran's history, the spirit and drift of which surprised much more than they pleased her, Grace Oldcourt, by some evident heightenings of the rose in her cheeks, and divers minutely expressive movements of the upper lip, gave strong indications of the interest which warmed her affectionate and generous heart to her foster-brother, and long faithful companion.

Her emotions were not unobserved by D'Arcy; and a suspicion arose in his mind, that they might possibly have their source in a more tender feeling than the warmth of friendship could supply. This idea, by seeming to throw a difficulty in his way, rather increased the ardour of his passion, and his desire for its success. He rapidly re-

viewed in his mind, the conduct which Grace had observed towards Doran for the last two days ; and though he could not recall a word or look of hers, which could be interpreted as an indication, that she felt any other sentiment towards that young man, than such as the relation in which she stood to him, might in Ireland account for, yet he came to the conclusion that Doran's removal from the castle would be advisable ; and he very sincerely resolved to follow up his assurance to Mrs. Oldcourt, by an exertion to effect that object.

After the disposal of this topic, which had for a moment checked a little the gaiety of the party, the morning meal passed off with much pleasantry, and increased satisfaction to all who attended it.

The baronet now renewed, in still more ardent and eloquent terms than he had used the day before, the expression of his gratitude to the family ; and declared that, in his own defence, he must break away from the fascination of a circle, which was becoming too powerful for his resolution. He politely pleaded the conditions of the capitulation of the previous day, though he would assert that no prisoner ever quitted his place of confinement with such reluctance.

The squire wished to enter into a new treaty, the basis of which he proposed to discuss over

another bottle of claret ; but D'Arcy recollected that before he returned to his quarters, he had to make his apologies to Major Ogle, whose guest he had been at the period of his accident ; and he was accordingly allowed to take his leave.

Before his departure, however, he took an opportunity of soliciting, in the most respectful manner, Miss Oldcourt's permission to renew, at an early opportunity, the delight which he experienced in her society ; a request to which that young lady assented most graciously ; not so much, however, in any well ascertained form of words, as by some beautiful mantlings of the blood, in a cheek which the baronet thought, at the moment, was the most captivating specimen of Nature's colouring which he had ever beheld.

D'Arcy also prevailed on Barry and Philip Oldcourt to ride over with him to Galway, and spend a day or two at his quarters, as he did not propose to make any delay with his friend, Major Ogle.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE departure of Sir Walter D'Arcy appeared to leave a very unusual blank in the society of Oldcourt Castle. The squire yawned several times—expressed his fears that his old enemy, the gout, was flying about him—inquired at what point the wind blew—and “wished to God that little Begg, the gauger, or even Denny Burne, would drop in, at the usual time.”

Mrs. Oldcourt appeared not to enter with quite so much bustle as usual into her household affairs; she was evidently thoughtful and *distracted*; and, as if she had been carrying on a train of reflections, with which every body around her was as well acquainted as herself, she suddenly observed, aloud, that “she wondered so fine a young man had not been married *before*.”

“You mean the baronet, I suppose,” said Miss Matty Malone, taking a pinch of snuff out

of her box ; “ but fine young men are generally the last to marry. They are too much in request,—are often dissipated,—and find it difficult to choose.”

“ I’ll be sworn, Sir Walter D’Arcy is not a dissipated man,” replied Mrs. Oldcourt, resuming her reverie, as Grace retired to her room.

“ I hope he is not a dissipated man,” said Grace Oldcourt to herself, as she retreated, “ for his own sake ; and I am sure if he were—but why do I trouble my head so much about him ? ” humming an air at the same time, to show her indifference, and springing up the stairs to her own apartment, with her accustomed vivacity. But it would not do ;—before she was aware of her own movement, she found herself eagerly looking out of her window, that commanded a turn of the distant road, to try if she could see the baronet, as he proceeded on his way. Grace, recollecting herself, hastily shut down the window, and mechanically approached the glass on her toilet-table, in which she for a moment contemplated one of the most angelic examples of “ the human face divine,” that ever was reflected yet,—

“ From shining mirror, or from limpid stream ; ”

but she thought she did not look well that morning, and was less becomingly *coiffée* than usual.

She now took up a book, and after tracing each line of letters, through a page, perceived that she was quite unconscious of the sense which it contained; having been entirely absorbed in an agreeable recapitulation of the baronet's words, on his soliciting permission to pay his respects to her, at an early opportunity; and by a speculation also, as to the precise portion of time to which the expression of "an early opportunity," might be reasonably supposed to refer.

In short, after feeding her bird, administering a little fresh water to a collection of rival roses on the mantel-piece, and musing a few moments, during which she was busily employed in making a more picturesque arrangement of pins in her pin-cushion, Grace Oldcourt, for the first time in her life, thought the castle seemed dull, and all her accustomed occupations uninteresting.

Her solicitude about Pierce Doran, however, gave a new turn to her thoughts. She wondered at his absence, as she would have liked to take a ride with him; and longed for an opportunity of removing from his mind an impression, that any of the family could willingly contemplate his leaving a scene, which they all wished him to look upon as his home.

She could not, however, but consider her mother's observations as extraordinary; and the

sudden desire she expressed to obtain for him a situation, appeared unaccountable to her, except on the supposition, that for some reason, which Grace could not conjecture, Mrs. Oldcourt really wished to remove Doran from the castle.

Occupied by these reflections, the baronet constantly recurring, in spite of all her efforts to the contrary, as the preponderating subject of her cogitations, Grace passed some hours in her room, when the tedium of the day was broken in upon, if not relieved, by a morning visit from the widow Burton, and the accomplished young grazier, her son.

Although Mrs. Burton's hopes of forming a matrimonial alliance with the house of Oldcourt, had been considerably diminished, since her last visit to the castle, yet, as a prudent and affectionate parent, being very reluctant to give up the prospect of such a match for her son, while there appeared to be even a single chance for it upon the cards, she determined on bringing matters to an issue, by an immediate and direct proposal.

As all pecuniary advantages were incontestibly on the side of Mr. Bob Burton, she conceived, that "a good offer" from him, before Sir Walter D'Arcy's admiration should prompt him to as-

sume the character of a regular suitor, might operate on the prudence of the Oldcourts; and induce them, according to established proverbial policy, to prefer a certain advantage, to one in prospect, which, however flattering, appeared to hang upon a contingency, too precarious to have much influence in a rational calculation of human affairs.

With some difficulty, the young grazier was prevailed upon to acquiesce in this reasoning, and adopt the line of conduct which resulted from it. His ideas of his own consequence had received a shock from the coldness of Grace Oldcourt, for which he was by no means prepared; and as in dispositions where vanity is paramount, all other passions lose their vigour, his love was superseded by his mortification. Having been, however, convinced by his mother, that maidenly reserve was quite sufficient to account for the coldness of which he complained, he determined, as he said, "to pop the question at once, and give Miss Oldcourt another chance for a good husband."

That all external circumstances might correspond with her son's importance, and reinforce his pretensions,—a new and handsome post-chariot, just built according to Mr. Bob Burton's own taste, with his cypher and crest upon the

pannels, was to be used for the first time upon this occasion. A smart postilion, in scarlet and silver, with a black velvet cap, and large silver tassel—the heraldic honours of the Burtons, emblazoned like a fireman's badge upon his arm—and an outrider well mounted, in a jacket of the family livery, completed the equipage; from which, after rattling at a rapid pace up the forecourt of the castle, descended with great dignity, the widow Burton, and her accomplished son.

The young gentleman was, in his own estimation, and, according to the fashion of his time, equipped for conquest; he sported a new pair of buckskins, and yellow topped boots, fitted to his shape with a nicety of muscular adaptation, to the unwrinkled adhesiveness of which, no tight-braced beau of the present century has ever been so fortunate as to attain. His hair, powdered, pomatumed, and frizzed, to an enormous display of four stiff-pinned curls on each side of his head, was tied behind in a length of queue, which descended to his waist, enclosing within it a piece of lead about the size and shape of an ordinary carrot, to give it a more steady dependence, as well as a more graceful swing from shoulder to shoulder; his chin rested upon a large cauliflower cravat, beneath which he displayed a breast of muslin, which would have

supplied an ordinary milliner's shop with frills and flounces.

A small cocked hat, and a swallow-tail coat, which in front gave no indication of a skirt, with a smart rattan in his hand, completed the costume of Mr. Bob Burton, upon this important visit to his mistress. Such, indeed, was the ordinary style of dress which distinguished even a country beau, at that period of all that was preposterous, grotesque, and ungraceful.

Mrs. Oldcourt received her visitors with her usual kindness and cordiality ; but a nice observer (and mothers are always nice observers on such occasions,) would have seen, that there was no interchange between the ladies, of those looks of mutual intelligence through which, when influenced by a community of interests, they so well know how to telegraph their wishes, their hopes, and their intentions.

The widow Burton was not slow in observing this little alteration in Mrs. Oldcourt's manner, and augured unfavourably from it. Not perceiving, also, the usual promptitude in summoning Grace to the drawing-room, she considered that as a symptom still more intelligibly unpropitious. As she was determined, however, to fulfil at all events the intention of her visit, after a few general observations, she said,—

“ May we not hope for the pleasure of seeing Miss Oldcourt this morning ?”

“ Oh ! certainly,” answered Mrs. Oldcourt ; at the same time requesting that Miss Matty Malone would apprise her daughter, that her presence was required ; adding, with a smile to Mrs. Burton, “ that Grace was so fond of occupying herself in her own room, with one little thing or another, that she was sure she would willingly remain there the whole day.”

Mr. Bob Burton here interposed, and in a very dignified manner, requested that Miss Oldcourt might not be disturbed from her pursuits on *his* account.”

The presence of that young lady, however, who just then entered the room, and paid her respects to her friends, with her accustomed grace and sweetness, converted Mr. Bob Burton’s hauteur into homage, and made his mother sigh, at the reflection, that there was so little hope of obtaining such a treasure for her son.

As Miss Matty Malone, conceiving she might be *de trop* on such an occasion, did not return, Mrs. Burton, in *mezzo voce* to her friend, requested to say a few words to her in the pleasure-ground, to which a glass-door of the room opened. By this management, the young people were left to a tête-à-tête, and the lover had a

convenient opportunity of declaring his passion in the house, while his mother negotiated for him in the garden.

Mr. Bob Burton, however, found himself rather more awkward than usual; he coughed two or three times, and drew out his handkerchief—got up from his chair, and walked to the window—observed that there was a beautiful verdure on the trees, and that, as yet, the summer bid fair for a fine harvest; to which novel and ingenious remarks, Grace Oldcourt accorded the most amiable and unqualified assent.

A pause now ensued, during which, Mr. Bob Burton tapped his boot slightly with his rattan; and having, at length, summoned all his eloquence to his aid, he rather hesitatingly observed, that “he was sure Miss Oldcourt could not be a stranger to the admiration with which she had inspired him; an admiration, of which he was now about to give her the most decisive proof in his power, by soliciting permission to offer her his hand and fortune. He trusted he might, without presumption, say, that from his situation and circumstances, he had some small claims to her notice, and he hoped, he need not assure her, that his views were of the purest and most disinterested nature.”

To this long, studied harangue, the fair object

to whom it was addressed, replied, with a blushing amiability of demeanour, which tempered disappointment by the graciousness of regret, and ought to have deprived refusal of offence, "That she was highly sensible of the honour intended her by Mr. Burton, and grateful for so flattering a proof of his esteem. Her sense of duty, however, would not allow her to trifle for a moment with the feelings of an honourable man; and, as it was quite impossible for her to make an adequate return to the disinterested attachment which he professed, she trusted he would not consider her as manifesting any disrespect to the claims of a neighbour and a friend, if she declined to regard him in any other character."

To this polite intimation of her feelings, which, though he had every reason to expect, he could not receive, without evident displeasure and chagrin, Mr. Bob Burton, in an offended tone, replied,—

"Then you mean to say, Miss Oldcourt, that, without farther ceremony or consideration, you reject the offer of my hand and fortune?"

Colouring a little, at the conceited and self-important air of this interrogatory, Grace mildly, but firmly replied,—

"I mean to say, Mr. Burton, that, with a due

appreciation of both, I wish them to be proffered, where they may be received with those sentiments of satisfaction, which you seem to think they are so well calculated to inspire."

"Oh! very well, Miss Oldcourt," exclaimed Mr. Bob Burton, in a huffed and angry tone, rising from his chair, "there is no harm done, I hope; and though I do not sport a cockade, or a title, I believe I might count acres with any baronet in the county."

Grace blushed "like crimson," as the saying is, and was, for a second, confounded at this impertinence; but recovering herself, and rising also from her seat, with great dignity, she said,—

"I will not, sir, give you any farther opportunity of diminishing, by your indiscretion, the compliment I would willingly owe to your partiality;" quitting the room at the close of the sentence, and leaving Mr. Burton to his own reflections.

The approach of the old ladies from the garden, however, relieved him, in some degree, from such disagreeable company. Though Mr. Bob Burton was not blessed with one of those faces, which have any claim to be considered as "the index of the mind," yet his mother immediately perceived that something had occurred to ruffle his composure; and he, on his part,

though no great physiognomist, quickly discovered, in the maternal countenance, that her negotiation had been as unsuccessful as his own.

A considerable degree of embarrassment appeared to prevail amongst the parties. Mrs. Oldcourt, however, was polite and pressing in her offers of refreshment; but after some unmeaning general remarks, which showed that the spirit of amicable intercourse had been frozen down to the very zero of civil alienation, the disappointed Burtons stiffly and ceremoniously departed.

As Grace had some reason to suppose that her mother was not unfavourable to Mr. Bob Burton's addresses, she was quite relieved to find, on a reciprocal relation of what had passed, that Mrs. Oldcourt no longer espoused his cause. The speculations, however, which had produced so sudden a change in her sentiments, that good lady did not think it necessary to communicate to her daughter; and though Grace could not avoid entertaining some suspicions on the subject, she was particularly reluctant to show any curiosity by an inquiry.

The mother and daughter both agreed to suppress Mr. Burton's impertinent insinuation respecting the baronet, lest Barry Oldcourt, who was rather fiery in his temper, should resent it.

The day and the dinner now passed off heavily enough ; although, to gratify the squire's wish, Mr. Denny Burne made his appearance "in pudden time." Tuesday, indeed, was generally the day upon which Mr. Denny Burne thought fit to exercise the habit which he had contrived to establish, of "dropping in just to inquire after his old friend ;" and he was by no means willing that the supplemental Sunday dinner should disturb the routine of his usual weekly refectations at the castle.

Another guest, also, contributed by his presence, to rescue the squire from the *ennui* of a mere family party, in the person of Mr. Jerry Mulhall, the hearth-money collector of the district.

The squire being, as he expressed it, out on the recruiting service for the convivial campaign, encountered this terrific visitor of an Irish village, with his tax-book in his hand, his ink-horn at his button-hole, and his pen behind his ear, at the moment when he was about to satisfy the law, by seizing the only piece of furniture of a wretched hovel, in which a hole in the wall, with the appearance of a half-burnt brick in it, was construed to be a *bona-fide* fire-place, "within the intent and meaning of the statute."

The squire, always generous to his poor neigh-

bours, extricated the only bed of the cottager from the grasp of the fiscal functionary; and having distributed the light contents of his purse, in relieving other victims from a similar state of distress, he insisted on arresting Mr. Jerry Mulhall's farther progress that day, by carrying him home to dinner at the castle.

To the hospitalities of that ancient mansion, Mr. Mulhall was no stranger; and his experience of the good cheer that was to be found there, made him very willing to suspend his operations, for the pleasure of enjoying it again.

But neither Mr. Burne nor Mr. Mulhall were particularly qualified to enliven the social board. They were a species of festal flints, out of which no intellectual steel could strike a spark of fire, and no train of conversation was ever ignited by their aid. They, indeed, never seemed disposed to open their mouths, but to put something into them; and the squire himself used to say of them, that "a pair of duller dogs never soaked up a sea of good liquor."

Mr. Oldcourt was, therefore, in every sense of the word, the entertainer; and the presence of even the most uncongenial guest never failed to excite in him a flow of pleasantry and good spirits, which always failed him, when he was confined to his own family circle.

The ladies, to whom the company of their present visitors was particularly distasteful, retired as early as possible from the dining-room. Pierce Doran complained of being ill, was pale, silent, and thoughtful; and Master Garret was generally half asleep, when not amongst his noisy associates at the "Goat's Head."

The contrast, therefore, was complete, between this day and that which preceded it.

Grace Oldcourt had observed, with great regret, that Pierce Doran's pallid aspect and restless eye, indicated not only indisposition of body, but distress of mind. She took the most affectionate interest in his welfare; and as she conceived his present unhappiness to arise entirely from wounded feelings, under an impression that Mrs. Oldcourt was averse to his continued residence in the castle, she was particularly anxious for an opportunity to relieve his mind upon that subject; and, also, to ascertain clearly, what were his own views with respect to his advancement in life, that she might, if in her power, forward them with her father.

As poor Doran seemed to shun every opportunity of explanation, she, also, began to apprehend that he ascribed to her a sentiment similar to that which, he had some reason to suppose, actuated her mother with regard to him; and the

idea that such a suspicion existed in his mind, pierced her to the heart.

After tea, therefore, at a moment when Mrs. Oldcourt and Miss Matty Malone had left the room, and the squire and his guests were still engaged in the dining-parlour, Grace intercepted Doran, as he was retiring from a tête-a-tête, with the dangers of which he was but too well acquainted. Spreading her hands, in a playful manner before him, as he drew towards the door, she exclaimed, with a smile that fixed him to the spot in speechless admiration :—

“ No, no, Mr. Pierce ; you shall not escape me now, till we have a little conversation ; so march back quietly to your seat ;” leading him by the sleeve to his chair.

Doran’s agitation allowed him hardly breath to utter a word ; at length, in a tremulous voice, he said,—

“ Miss Oldcourt, if I have tried to escape from *you*, it is because I would fly from myself—from this house, and,” he added, in a tumult of feeling, “ from the world.”

“ Good Heavens ! my dear Pierce !” exclaimed Grace, with great surprise ; “ is it possible you can take up this matter so seriously,—that you can so easily misconceive the feelings of your

friends,—your family let me rather say ; for are you not one of us, and dear to us all ? Do you not know my mother too well, to suspect her of an unkind sentiment to any human being, much less to you, whom she has ever regarded as the child of her adoption ? and what have *I* done, and how have *I* offended, to be thus repelled by cold words, and an averted eye ?”

“ Oh God !” exclaimed poor Doran, in an agony of agitation.

“ Am I not,” continued the enthusiastic girl, “ the same Grace Oldcourt of our early days ? The same willing sharer in your griefs and joys,—unchilled—unchanged, by time or circumstances, and holding you as dearly as a brother.”

She might have continued the same strain of impassioned remonstrance to any extent, without interruption from Doran ; he seemed almost convulsed with contending emotions, and every muscle worked in a fruitless effort to suppress the powerful feeling that swelled in his throat to suffocation. At length, starting from his seat, and raising up his hands and eyes, he fervently exclaimed,—

“ Now, Heaven, in mercy aid me, in this trying moment of my life, or I am lost for ever !”

Grace, alarmed by the frantic wildness of his

manner, looked at him with the most anxious expression of astonishment; and, clasping her hands, exclaimed,—

“ Oh, Pierce! what can be the meaning of this dreadful agitation? Your looks quite frighten me! for God’s sake what has happened? I am sure something serious must have happened, to shake you thus! tell me, I implore you, tell me, the cause of a distress which you must be convinced every member of this family will be anxious to remove.”

Recovering a little calmness, Doran, who had, with hurried step, paced the room, now approached her, with pale and ghastly aspect, and said,—

“ Oh, Grace! for I will once more address you by that dear, familiar name; angelic friend, and companion of my worthless life! do not misinterpret emotions which, Heaven is witness, I long have struggled to suppress. Do not imagine I can, even for a moment, doubt your generous kindness,—your long tried friendship to a wretch that but for you and yours, would be but as a clod of the earth on which he walks,—unknowing and unknown. No, Grace, though I am unhappy, oh! how unhappy! I will never be ungrateful; and I should think my life a mean sacrifice for the smallest drop of blood that circles in the veins of any one belonging to the race of Oldcourt.”

Thus assured that there existed no impression on Doran's mind, of abated kindness on her part, or that of her family, Grace began to fear that his uneasiness might spring from some cause which he might be very unwilling to disclose; she therefore said,—

“ Well, Pierce, I have no right to press for a confidence which you may not think proper to repose in me; but that you are unhappy, has been but too apparent to us all. You have long lost the gay and cheerful spirit that distinguished you. My mother seems to think that, actuated by an ambition which is natural enough at your age, you wish to advance yourself in the world; and I own, I was more than anxious that you should not mistake her motives in encouraging you to the avowal of a desire, which she feared your delicacy would not suffer you to express.”

“ Mrs. Oldcourt,” replied Doran, “ is the best and most generous of women; and I owe more to her than ever son owed to mother. If I have felt her words, it was not in a fretful or offended spirit; but because they sounded in my ears as a call of duty, to which my reason responded, though my heart rebelled. Yes, yes, yes!” continued he, with increasing emotion; “ my reason long has told me, that this house is no fit place for me; though, deluded by my feelings and

my fate, I have lingered on, till I fear there is now left me neither hope nor rescue.”

“ Good God! what can this mean? ” exclaimed Grace, turning pale with emotion almost equal to his own, and conceiving him to allude to some personal hazard. “ Is it, then, essential to your safety, Pierce, that you should leave us? ”

Quite overcome by the torrent of his feelings, and the touching interest the affectionate girl betrayed for his welfare, poor Doran, in an agony, exclaimed,—

“ Urge me not, oh! urge me not to betray a secret that has been so long trembling on my lips, and bursting in my heart. Let me escape while I have strength to shun the precipice that yawns before me—let me fly this house—this scene of all my joy, and all my sorrow,—while you can yet think of me with kindness—while I can think of myself without detestation—while I retain my honour—my integrity—my senses.”—Then, seizing her hand, and pressing it to his lips, in an uncontrollable access of passion, he added,—

“ Angelic being! pity and forgive the wretch whom you have made!” and rushed from the apartment.

CHAPTER XV.

THE surprise and concern which were excited in the mind of Grace Oldcourt, by the few wild words that betrayed to her the long hoarded secret of unhappy Pierce Doran, almost deprived her of the power to move. The colour fled from her cheeks, she grew faint, and sunk into a chair in such a state of febleness and confusion, as must have alarmed any person who could have seen her at the moment. Luckily, however, before the return of her mother, or Miss Matty, to the drawing-room, she recovered herself sufficiently to make good her retreat to her own apartment, where she could meditate, undisturbed, on a discovery so embarrassing, and for which she was so little prepared.

Doran's words had operated upon her like an electric shock. It seemed as if a sudden light had flashed upon her, which at once cleared up

all that was dark and mysterious in that young man's conduct, and accounted for the long observed change in his temper and general deportment.

Nothing, indeed, could more plainly prove the absence of all vanity, coquetry, or affectation, from the artless character of Grace Oldcourt, than that she had remained so long unconscious of the peculiar sentiments, with which she had inspired a worshipper so devoted to her as her unhappy foster-brother.

But the kind of relation in which she stood towards Doran, combined with her natural modesty, and the deficient estimate which she formed of her own attractions, contributed effectually to mislead the delicate discernment which she possessed: a faculty which is reported to characterize her sex, particularly in all cases where the tender passion is concerned.

Grace Oldcourt and Doran, as the reader will recollect, had been brought up together from their birth. He was earlier and more intimately associated with all her pleasures and pursuits, than even her own brothers. She was accustomed to receive from him every mark of regard and attachment, which could be displayed in the different stages of an intercourse, which, from the period of Doran's establishment in the castle,

had assumed a family character, and was therefore unrestrained and uninterrupted.

The playful fondness of the child, had on his part gradually and imperceptibly warmed into the affectionate attentions of the youth, and the ardent but guarded devotion of the young man; and as the qualities which distinguished the amiable and lovely object of his idolatry, were such as called forth the most enthusiastic regard, from every member of her family, the general assiduity of affection by which she was surrounded, rendered her less likely to discriminate nicely, between the close masked admiration of the lover, and the almost equally vigilant devotion of her own relations.

Other circumstances, also, assisted not a little to deceive Grace Oldcourt, as to the nature of poor Doran's attachment to her. The peculiarities by which, in an old Irish family, the nurse may be said to be endearingly connected with every individual of it, to whom she may have performed the earliest and tenderest maternal office, have been already adverted to; and the sentiment of kindness which resulted from them, extended not only to the nurse but to her children, particularly to those of the same cradle, and sometimes even to her remote connections.

But though this species of cradle kindness, if

I may so call it, was allowed such influence in Ireland, in no other country, from the peculiar notions of the parties, could the line of demarcation between the patronage and dependence which it created, be more secure from encroachment. Thus, though Pierce Doran was adopted by the Oldcourts, and considered as one of the family, neither he, nor his benefactors, ever forgot that he was not of the same rank, nor of the same blood. This feeling, however, was never allowed to influence the liberal cordiality with which he was treated, and it operated only to beget a security on the side of the Oldcourts, that as there could be no pretensions to an equality, their grateful *protégé* could neither desire nor attempt to establish it.

In this confidence Grace Oldcourt fully participated; and though no human being was more exempt from the vulgar pride of wealth or station, yet, she never for a moment suspected that Doran could so far presume upon the recognised privileges of the character in which he was received at the castle, as to entertain any other sentiments towards her than those of respectful deference, and grateful regard.

All the associations of her life, which were more or less connected with him, his own merits, and the undeviating zeal with which he ever at-

tended to her gratification, produced in her the warmest esteem, the most perfect confidence, and the purest sisterly affection ; but the interchange of any other sentiments between them, was so little in accordance with her ideas of the relative position in which they stood, that she had never anticipated even the possibility of such a result from their intercourse, as that of which she had just made the discovery.

For poor Doran's unhappy situation, she felt the sincerest concern ; and could hardly acquit herself in her own eyes, for having by a too unguarded confidence and familiarity, unconsciously contributed to encourage sentiments in his breast, which she could neither sanction nor share.

She now thought she could account for what had appeared to her a little unkind in her mother's late observations respecting Doran ; and Grace herself could not but feel that his continuance in the family, was, for his own sake, as undesirable, as it would be embarrassing to her.

As Doran, however, seemed to be himself aware of what his sense of duty prescribed to him, under such circumstances, and had so strongly expressed his determination to leave the castle, Grace, after much deliberation, resolved to preserve silence as to what had just passed between them ; and this course she was the more readily

inclined to adopt, from the reflection, that she had herself, in some measure, wrung from poor Doran his secret, in a moment of agitation, and evidently without his having had any previous intention to reveal it.

She was, moreover, fully convinced, that the slightest intimation to her father and brothers, that Doran had so far forgotten himself, as to address her on such a subject, would entirely ruin him in their estimation, and expose him to an immediate and angry expulsion from the family.

From these considerations, though the most open and artless of human beings, and accustomed to think aloud, as it were, amongst her own family, she conceived that she was bound to keep Doran's secret for the present; and she determined while they remained together under the same roof, to observe a more guarded demeanour towards him, and avoid all opportunities of particular communication, without resorting to any such palpable change in her conduct as might be hurtful to his feelings, or likely to excite the observation of her friends.

In this state, things remained at the castle for some days. Doran always contrived to have business to transact, either for the squire or himself, which carried him abroad, particularly at meal

times ; and when, without any feasible pretext for his absence, he found himself obliged to join the family circle, the plea of illness which he offered for the deep melancholy that oppressed him, was but too strongly confirmed by his feverish eye and haggard aspect.

The young men of the family manifested the most friendly interest for him. Barry feared he had involved himself in some attachment which embarrassed him, and the nature of which he was unwilling to disclose. The squire wondered "what had come over the boy, so changed as he was, from such a fine lively lad, that it was a pleasure to have him in the house ; he was sure he could have no cause to be uneasy or unhappy, situated as he was in the castle, and with such expectations of what might be done for him one of those days. The poor fellow, he thought, must be going out of his mind."

Mrs. Oldcourt "was very apprehensive from the sudden flushings of his cheek, and the process of general emaciation which appeared to be going on in his frame, that he was consumptive, and she would advise an immediate change of air, and a milk diet. She was quite sure if he would go, for a month or two, to his father on the hill, drink goats' whey, and take gentle horse exercise, he would be soon as well as ever he was."

“Well, but my dear Nelly,” said Mr. Oldcourt, a little impatiently ; for independent of the real regard which he entertained for poor Doran, the latter was too useful to him, to be spared without great reluctance ; “ I can’t see why the air of Oldcourt is not as good as the air on the hill : and he can have goats’ milk here, and asses’ milk, too, if he wants it ; and as much horse-exercise as he pleases, without sending the poor boy out of the house, just at the time when he most requires our assistance. Besides, my dear, where is the use of all your balsams and cordials, and pectorals, and possets, if you can’t show your skill upon Pierce Doran, and bring back the blush of health in his cheek.”

“ My dear Mr. Oldcourt,” replied his lady, with an air of conscious science, which would have done credit to a country apothecary,—“ consumption is a disease which is called the *opprobrium*, or disgrace of medicine, because physic can do nothing for it. Diet, air, and exercise, are the only doctors to deal with it ; and change of air, even from good air to bad, has been often found efficacious. I am convinced this is the worst place in the world for Pierce Doran.”

“ And it is my opinion,” said Miss Matty Malone, stretching out her head, and taking a

pinch of snuff, no small portion of which was deposited in her lap, "that he thinks so himself."

"Then I am sure, if he does," hastily observed the squire, "he must be very ungrateful."

Grace Oldcourt, who for reasons that will readily occur to the reader, had before taken no part in the conversation, now interposed, in defence of her unhappy friend; and colouring deeply, said:—

"Oh, papa! whatever may be the cause of Pierce Doran's illness or unhappiness, this family, I am satisfied, will never find him ungrateful."

In this warm assurance, Grace was loudly echoed by all her brothers, who, with one voice, declared that Doran was an excellent fellow, and would lay down his life, they were sure, in the service of his benefactors.

Miss Matty Malone now observed, "that he was a very good young man; but it had been her opinion, all along, that never any good came of taking people out of their sphere, and giving them ideas beyond their natural station. She had, for some time, remarked, that he seemed gloomy and discontented; and she was sure that, as Hamlet says, (for Miss Matty was a reader of Shakspeare,) 'he lacked advance-

ment.' She rather suspected, indeed, that he meditated to remove himself from the castle ; for she overheard him the night before, say, with a deep sigh, when giving some directions to old Andrew, that he hoped he should not be long a trouble to him, or any of the family."

Grace was the only person who agreed in Miss Matty Malone's interpretation of poor Doran's expression ; and as she took care not to mention that agreement, the rest of the party saw nothing more in his words, than a casual trait of the melancholy which oppressed him.

Thus, the consultation on poor Doran's case, like most other consultations, terminated very little to the advantage of the patient ; though, in this instance at least, it might be said, that there was one individual engaged in it, who understood the real nature of the complaint.

Though Grace could not but acknowledge to herself, that Doran's departure from the castle, which she had now no doubt he meditated, was, under all the circumstances, absolutely necessary ; yet she could not contemplate the cessation of an intercourse which had continued so long, and from which she had derived so much satisfaction, without the sincerest feelings of regret.

The warm interest, too, which she took in the fate of her unhappy admirer, and her uncertainty

as to the manner in which he intended to dispose of himself, diverted her thoughts almost entirely, from the reflection which, nevertheless, had now and then occurred to her, that Sir Walter D'Arcy's "early opportunity of paying his respects at the castle," turned out to be somewhat later than she had expected.

The baronet, however, made his appearance in full time to rescue his gallantry from imputation; and the ardour of his attentions must have satisfied the most tenacious spirit of exaction, that Cupid could inspire in a female breast. His presence had the effect of relieving, in a considerable degree, that depression of spirits which Grace experienced on poor Doran's account; and to the full amount of which, it must be acknowledged, certain disturbing contemplations, in which D'Arcy was concerned, contributed their share.

Sir Walter's reception at the castle was as cordial as he himself could desire, and as hospitality could make it. The sentiment of admiration which Grace Oldcourt had excited in his breast, during his former visit, had suffered no diminution in the interval of his absence, and now derived additional vigour from the renewed impression of her attractions.

In her he beheld that combination of qua-

lities, personal and mental, which may be said to constitute the romantic vision of every young man's dream, when first he meditates on matrimony, and pictures to himself the paragon of perfection, with whom he would wish to connect his destiny, by the rapturous union of kindred hearts.

Though D'Arcy's early dissipations had tended very much to lower his general estimate of the female character, and his experience of the frail part of the fair sex, had nearly brought him to a determination never to shackle himself with bonds, which, in the *beau monde*, at least, he had found to be rather a cover for vice, than a security for virtue, yet, he had too much imagination not to have frequently indulged in those reveries of connubial felicity, in which the soul ardently aspires after a purer intercourse with some more perfect being, than we are likely to find amongst the common-place characters of this world.

In Grace Oldcourt, however, D'Arcy thought he had discovered a beautiful personification of all that he had ever conceived of female excellence; and under circumstances, also, which seemed to enhance the value of every charm, and ensure the stability of every virtue.

The idea of matrimony, therefore, was, in her company, presented occasionally to his mind, under associations with which it had never been

before connected ; and he was strongly inclined to the opinion, that a union with such a captivating creature as Grace Oldcourt, was, perhaps, after all, the best foundation for durable felicity, which sublunary things afford.

These reflections produced in the baronet a very anxious determination to cultivate, by the most winning assiduities, the good opinion of Miss Oldcourt ; and, during his present visit, he was, if possible, more agreeable and entertaining than before.

Doran, he was rather pleased to perceive, did not appear ; for, although D'Arcy had too good an opinion of himself to apprehend any danger from him as a rival, yet the nature of his connexion with the Oldcourts, gave him an evident interest with Grace, which her new admirer did not regard with any satisfaction.

In the course of conversation, when Mrs. Oldcourt happened to mention Doran's name, the baronet took an opportunity of observing, with an *ápropos*, " that he had not forgotten his promise respecting her *protégé*—that he had written to some friends of his, connected with the government, and he had no doubt that a respectable situation in the colonial civil service might be obtained for him, if the young man had no objection to go abroad."

During the latter part of this intimation, D'Arcy directed a penetrating glance towards Grace Oldcourt, in whose countenance, however, he could discover nothing but a very animated glow of satisfaction, at a prospect of advantage to her ill-fated friend. Indeed, she felt quite grateful for the baronet's interference in his favour, and thought the situation proposed, by removing Doran at once from all painful associations, would be the very best thing which could be wished for him.

Mrs. Oldcourt, too, was all acknowledgment: "a sea voyage would be of such infinite service to poor Pierce; and as he appeared to be so delicate, a warm climate would set him up entirely; she only hoped he would not stand in his own light, and from any foolish notion of independence, reject the interposition of his friends."

The squire, however, by no means participated in the pleasure of his wife and daughter, at the prospect of Doran's promotion. He seemed to sit uneasily upon his chair; and though politeness required that he, also, should express his obligation to the baronet's good offices, yet he performed his task very awkwardly; and added, with evident dissatisfaction, "that he could not conceive how it should have entered the boy's head to wish to quit his comfortable home, and go upon a wild-

goose chase, the Lord knows where. He was very much mistaken if he would find himself so well off any where, as in the castle amongst his friends; but if the young gentleman really thought himself so full fledged, that he might fly from the nest where he had been so long nourished with care and kindness—in God's name! let him try the experiment; he should be sorry to prevent him."

The squire's angry objections to Pierce Doran's imputed vagarious tendencies, were met by the whole party with the usual wise observations:—the natural desire of youth to change the scene—the love of novelty implanted in us for wise purposes—the ambition of distinction, and in Doran's particular case—the laudable anxiety to exert himself for his own support, instead of remaining a burthen on his friends.

The baronet, with whom it was a great point to stand well with his host, ingeniously contrived again, on this occasion, to enlist the old gentleman's vanity against his feelings. He declared that Mr. Oldcourt's sentiments did him the highest honour; for though his benevolence prompted him to take the charge of his *protégé* upon himself at home, yet nothing could be more evident, from the spirit which had always distinguished Mr. Oldcourt's character, than that

he must approve of those kindred qualities which ought to influence a young man in Mr. Doran's situation.

Barry Oldcourt, under the sanction of Sir Walter's authority, was strenuous on the same side, and ventured to throw in some excellent observations about "dawdling at home," "pacing the same horse in a mill-round," "vegetating like a cabbage," "inglorious ease," &c. &c. ; all of which, however, were silyly directed to apply to his own case, rather than to Doran's, and intended to advocate his hitherto fruitless desire to take the field as an Austrian officer.

The squire was not very impressible by argument; but when his spirit was appealed to, in such flattering terms, the reference was generally irresistible. He, therefore, "candidly acknowledged, that he was the last man who ought to censure the workings of a high spirit in any young man; but still he thought it was very odd, and he wondered that Pierce Doran could not be satisfied where he was, particularly when he knew that he was so useful to the family, and might expect to have something done for him one of those days."

Farther discussion on the subject was here prevented by the entrance of Doran himself, who appeared as if he suffered under the fatigue

of a hurried journey. His look was pale and agitated, and after communicating to Mr. Oldcourt, in a few words, the result of some commission which he had executed in Galway, he retired to his seat, without taking any particular notice of the baronet's presence.

The family seemed to be a little embarrassed, by what they conceived to be a disrespect to D'Arcy on the part of Doran; and Mrs. Oldcourt thought it particularly unlucky, at a moment when Sir Walter was employing his good offices to serve him; she, therefore, having no doubt, from his desire to go abroad into the world, that Doran would be really pleased with the communication, determined to give him an opportunity of setting himself right with the baronet, and redeeming his politeness. Addressing him, therefore, in her affectionate way, she said,—

“ My dear Pierce! I am happy to tell you, that Sir Walter D'Arcy has been so good as to interest some of his friends in your favour; and there is every prospect of something turning up highly advantageous to your future prospects.”

The moment the name of Sir Walter D'Arcy sounded in the foregoing sentence, the blood rushed into poor Doran's cheeks, with a violence that seemed to set his face on fire, and it

retreated with equal impetuosity to his heart, when Mrs. Oldcourt closed her observation, leaving him as pale as death.

His agitation was too palpable not to attract the notice of all around him; for a second, he seemed to struggle with his feelings, and rising from his chair, in a faltering voice, he addressed Mrs. Oldcourt.

“To you, madam, and to my ever revered patron and protector,” looking to the squire, “I owe a debt, which no efforts of my life can sufficiently repay; you have been to me more—much more than a mother, and your will has ever been, as it ought to be—my law. You will find that I need no new stimulus to prompt my compliance with that will now, when my reason tells me, it is most reasonable. But I trust, it will not be considered an impeachment of my gratitude to this family, if,” turning with a fierce look towards the baronet, “I decline the services of Sir Walter D’Arcy;” on saying which, he walked sternly out of the room.

The whole party were astonished at the scene, and the excitement which seemed to have deprived Doran of all self-possession. They were eager in their apologies to the baronet, who only smiled, and assured Mrs. Oldcourt, “that what

had passed should not have any unfavourable effect upon his exertions to serve Mr. Doran, so long as any of the family were interested in his favour.

Grace Oldcourt was afraid to trust herself with the expression of a single word; she was actually alarmed at the wild look of her unhappy foster-brother, and the inimical feeling which he seemed to betray towards D'Arcy; for she was the only one of the family who had a clue to account for an hostility, which to the rest appeared so extraordinary and unprovoked.

The squire, who could by no means understand what appeared to him the mystery of Doran's recent proceedings, was much more surprised than displeased at the rejection of the baronet's services. He declared he "was quite sure the poor boy had himself no desire to quit the castle, and he wondered who could have put such a thing in his head. It was very odd, but they all seemed to him to be driving the lad out against his will; which was very cruel and unthinking, considering how useful he had made himself upon all occasions."

An intention of this sort, was, of course, energetically disclaimed by all parties; the baronet assured Mr. Oldcourt that no consideration would have tempted him to interfere, if he had

not conceived, that he was acting conformably to the wishes of the family. Many compliments, protestations, and explanations, were now cordially exchanged on all sides ; and after a day, which, with the exception of the little incident just related, at the close of it, had passed off much to the general satisfaction, the baronet was allowed to take his leave, as his presence was necessary at his quarters in Galway.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER the interview with Grace Oldcourt, in which Pierce Doran had been so far overcome by his feelings, as to betray the secret of his heart, he retired to his room, in a state of mind very little to be envied by any man upon whom the most awful sentence of the law was not about to be executed. Irresolution, however, was now at an end ; and he felt, that to remain longer at the castle, would be only to wait for an expulsion, which could not fail to be attended, on his part, with disgrace. He knew his mistress too well to believe, for a moment, that she would willingly expose him to such a result, by discovering to the family what had occurred between them ; and he determined, as soon as possible, to relieve her from the restraint which his presence would naturally impose upon her.

A night of agitation, rather than deliberation,

did not supply him with any plan of proceeding, upon which he could immediately act. He was determined not only to leave the castle, but the country; it was easier, however, in his circumstances, to resolve upon such a measure than to carry it into effect. The squire was not overstocked with money himself, and did not conceive that those whose wants were all provided for, under his roof, could have much reasonable need of it; he was, therefore, not particularly solicitous to replenish the purses of the young people about him, and poor Doran never had less of his Majesty's coin in his possession, than just at the period here commemorated.

Unluckily, also, he could not recruit his funds from any other quarter. His mother, Grace Oldcourt's nurse, had been some years dead; and his father and he were not on very good terms. Old Doran was a coarse and vulgar-minded man; and though his son had been always anxious to pay him every attention consistent with his duty to his benefactor, yet the old man was testily disposed to consider himself neglected. He seemed quite jealous of the favour shown to his son at the castle; and, latterly, never saw him but to taunt him with the accusation of being "a fine gentleman, and ashamed of his father."

This impression on old Doran's mind was the

more distressing to his son, as it interrupted, in a great degree, his intercourse with his only sister, a young, handsome, and interesting girl, who kept house for her father, and to whom her brother was much attached.

To the old farmer, therefore, Doran could neither explain his situation, nor apply for assistance. His first idea was to direct his steps to the metropolis; but he had not the means even to transport himself thither, much less to sustain him there for any time after his arrival.

In this dilemma, to enlist as a soldier, seemed to be his sole chance of extrication. But here, an unconquerable objection occurred; the only recruiting party within his reach, was stationed at the military depôt in Galway, where the baronet commanded; and poor Doran would rather die than present himself before his rival, under such humiliating circumstances.

In this state of perplexity some days elapsed, during which, as has been already stated, he, under the pretext of business, avoided as much as possible, his ordinary intercourse with the family of the castle.

The agony of his mind, however, increased to such a degree, that he resolved to try if he could not enter himself as a sailor, in some of the vessels then lying in Galway Bay; and he

had proceeded to that town, for the purpose of making the inquiry, when his eye was attracted by a placard, inviting "all spirited young heroes who wished to make their fortunes, and return, like nabobs, loaded with diamonds, rupees, and pagodas, to repair to Lieutenant Tiffin, at the Mogul's Head Inn, who would immediately lead them to the paths of glory, in the Honourable East India Company's service."

Doran hesitated not a moment to embrace this opportunity of putting an end to a state of uncertainty which had become quite insupportable to him; and as both parties were equally desirous to close the bargain, Lieutenant Tiffin and he soon came to an agreement. It was after the die was cast, and he had pledged himself to join a party of oriental adventurers, who were to march from Galway on the following day, that he returned to the castle, just in time to meet his rival there, and occasion the scene which has been described in the preceding chapter.

The sensations with which Doran approached, for the last time, as he thought, the long-loved scene in which he had found a happy home, almost from his birth, must be left to the imagination of the reader to conceive.

There was not an object within the range of

his eye as he proceeded,—not a stone, a tree, or a spot, with which the unclouded delights of his childhood—the pleasures of his youth—or the rapturous emotions of his manhood, were not associated. The castle had been to him as the whole world; beyond its walls, life seemed to possess no interest; for within them was to be found that angelic being, to whom his soul, as if by an instinct of nature, even from the first days of his infancy, had been irresistibly attracted.

Upon that scene so endeared to him,—upon that countenance whose smile had been to him, for years, as the light of heaven,—he was now about to look for the last time. His heart sunk, and his limbs shook under him at the thought. As he moved towards the drawing-room where the Oldcourt party were assembled, his head became dizzy, a cold shivering seized him, and he was obliged to pause for a few moments, before he could recover strength sufficient to enter the apartment.

The presence of the baronet, at such a moment, for which he was not prepared, tended to aggravate his distress; but Mrs. Oldcourt's rather formal statement of Sir Walter's exertions in his favour, was the last drop in his cup of bitterness, that caused it to overflow.

On leaving the room in the manner before

described, his feelings were wrought up to such a pitch of excitement, that, to avoid observation, he rushed from the house, and wandered for some time about the adjoining grounds, till, in some of the unconscious windings of his walk, he found himself at the entrance of a little grotto, a favourite retreat of his mistress, in which she delighted to sit and read during the warm and serene evenings of summer.

This was the last place to which, from the associations connected with it, he could have wished to resort ; but he entered it mechanically. It was adorned with a profusion of shells, pebbles, different kinds of mosses, magazine prints, and small pieces of looking-glass, dispersed with great taste in a variety of picturesque combinations. The whole was the work of Grace Oldcourt, aided by Pierce Doran and his sister, then a little girl, of whom Grace took great notice, frequently retaining her at the castle for several days together, to assist in such operations. The hours which had been employed in the decoration of this little edifice, formed the happiest period of poor Doran's life ; for, with the characteristic thoughtlessness which belongs to the early age of seventeen, he had looked and loved, without a fear of the consequences ; and enjoyed the sunshine of the present, without allowing a cloud from the

future to darken his prospects, or diminish the lustre of the scene.

Now, whichever way he turned his head in the little apartment, he was reminded of some pleasurable train of circumstances connected with the work. Visions of his departed joys seemed to rise up on all sides around him, as if to renew the impressions of a felicity which was never to return, and render the contrast with his present misery more dreadful.

Unmanned by his emotions, he flung himself upon the seat of the grotto, and burst into tears. For some little time, he indulged a flow of sorrow, by which the burning heat of his brain appeared to be somewhat relieved; and he was preparing to retire from the spot, when the sound of a light approaching footstep arrested his attention, and before he could determine whether to move or to remain, Grace Oldcourt entered the grotto from the house.

After the departure of Sir Walter D'Arcy, the close of a delicious evening in June, had tempted her to seek her favourite retreat, for the double purpose of enjoying the air, and indulging, undisturbed, in some pensive reflections arising out of the events which had recently so much changed the even tenor of her life.

Absorbed in her own thoughts, she had ad-

vanced some steps into the grotto, before she was sensible that she was not alone ; and the moment she perceived Doran, she started, coloured, and made a movement to retire, saying :—

“ Oh, Pierce ! is it you ? I did not know you were here.”

“ Nor did I mean, Miss Oldcourt, that you should find me here,” answered Doran, in a melancholy tone ; “ but since fortune has favoured me so far, let me seize the opportunity—”

Observing that she moved towards the door with some expression of alarm, he now, in a tremor of agitation, exclaimed :—

“ Oh, God ! then, is it possible that Grace Oldcourt can entertain an apprehension of Pierce Doran, or that she will not vouchsafe one parting word to him whose life has been blessed in her friendship, and brightened by her smile ?”

From Doran's first sentence, Grace had been led to fear that he was about to renew the embarrassing subject with which he had so unexpectedly closed their last conversation, and any further explanation of which she was particularly anxious to avoid. Moved, however, by his wildly imploring look, and unwilling to mortify him, by showing any marked distrust of his intentions, she hesitated to depart, and said :—

“ My *friendship*, Pierce, I think you cannot

doubt, and I trust I may depend on *yours*, to secure me from the pain of listening to the expression of any sentiment which would be improper for you to utter, or for me to hear."

"Oh! fear me not," replied he, with a melancholy shake of the head; "once, and once only, in a moment of frenzy, I forgot myself, my station, and my duty to my benefactors; but I am about to atone for that offence; and if I would now avail myself of this unlooked for moment, it is but to solicit humbly that forgiveness, the kind assurance of which will tend to restore to me my own respect, and cheer my heart, when far—far distant from this long-loved scene."

While uttering the last words of this sentence, his voice faltered, and he appeared to be almost choked with the emotion which he evidently struggled to conceal. Grace, who through her whole life, had looked upon him almost as a brother, and was little less affected than himself, replied:—

"Alas, Pierce! you need no forgiveness from me. I must ever regard you with kindness—with esteem—with gratitude let me say, for services which I shall never forget,—for friendship long tried, faithful and unfailing. But, with pain I must acknowledge the prudence of the measure you propose. Yes, Pierce! after

what has passed, for your own sake,—for both our sakes, it is better we should part.”

“ I know it well,” he mournfully replied ; “ I long have known and felt it : but, ’tis at last decided. To-morrow’s sun will see me on my way to regions, where a hapless wretch like me may hope to find a refuge or a grave.”

“ Oh ! indulge not such gloomy thoughts, nor act too hastily,” rejoined Grace, with an expression of the most anxious interest. “ Confide your purpose to your friends, who will all be forward to promote your welfare ; and sure, Pierce, it is not wise to reject the proffered services of one——”

Her farther progress in the sentence was checked, by the observance of a ghastly and ferocious change in the expression of Doran’s countenance. His lips quivered, and, in a voice of irritated vehemence, he exclaimed,—

“ If you have mercy in you, mention him not ! Poison not this last precious moment of my life with his detested name ! He is my evil genius,—and Heaven, in pity grant, that he prove not yours !”

Grace shuddered as he spoke. “ But,” he continued, with a wild and half-distracted air, “ let me not linger thus, till again, perhaps, my resolution fails,—till I lose all command over

my feelings, and once more forget myself in frenzy!" Then, turning hastily to Grace, who was struck with terror and surprise at the violence of his perturbation, he said,—

"You tell me that you pity and forgive—?"

"I do, I do!" eagerly exclaimed Grace; "Heaven knows I do! my heart bleeds for you."

"Enough!" said he, with firmness; then, dropping on his knee,—“May all good angels guard, preserve, and bless the long-loved idol of this heart!” striking his breast, “that, while it beats, must cherish your remembrance.” Having said this, he suddenly snatched her hand, before she was aware of his movement, kissed it in an agony of passion, and exclaiming, “Farewell! farewell for ever!” rushed from the grotto, and was in a moment out of sight.

The hurried and half-frantic manner of Doran's departure had such an effect upon Grace, that, for a moment, she was fixed to the spot where she stood; and then, overcome by a sensation of weakness, sunk on the seat of the grotto, almost in a state of insensibility. The wildness of his look, and the general disorder of his appearance, led her to apprehend that he suffered under some aberration of mind: and so impressed was she by this idea, that, rousing herself in an effort to recover her locomotive

powers, she ran with the utmost trepidation to the castle, afraid to look behind her, lest she should find that she was pursued.

Agitated by the embarrassing situation in which she had been placed, perplexed by doubts of the propriety of her conduct, with respect to Doran,—distressed also by the affectionate interest she took in his fate, and not quite free from a little perturbation on her own account, the gentle bosom of Grace Oldcourt heaved under a weight of anxiety, heretofore unexampled in that region of beauty, peace, and innocence. As soon as she could escape from observation, she retired to her apartment, and copiously indulged in woman's soft resource in all her troubles—tears. To this lachrymose remedy, the young and gentle part of the fair sex are ever much addicted, particularly when under the influence of certain affections of the heart, which look for sympathy, while they shun disclosure.

Certain it is, that our heroine found her mental disturbance considerably allayed by the process; and having, with her usual devotion, besought the guardian power of Providence, her gentle spirit gradually sunk into one of those kind slumbers, which rarely fail, on such occasions, to rescue youth and innocence from care.

The following morning, when the family assembled at the breakfast-table, Pierce Doran did not make his appearance. As he had latterly absented himself often on different avocations, connected, as was alleged, with the concerns of his patron, his absence would not have attracted particular notice, if Mr. Oldcourt had not inquired for him; and if his conduct on the preceding evening, relative to Sir Walter D'Arcy, had not excited a good deal of surprise, and some displeasure.

The squire, however, was not one of those who felt any dissatisfaction with Doran on the baronet's account; for the old gentleman was averse to any arrangement, which would have the effect of depriving him of an active, faithful, and diligent dependant; and as to poor Doran's interests, his patron thought, that the flattering prospect of having "something done for him one of these days," was quite sufficient to satisfy his ambition, and compensate all his services.

On the present occasion, the squire "wondered that Pierce Doran had left no message; it was very odd, and very provoking too, for he wanted him on particular business." The servants were interrogated, but they knew nothing of his movements. Andrew the butler had let him in late

the preceding night; and he went immediately to his room, looking, as the old man said, "more dead than alive." Andrew also stated that from the adjoining chamber, which he occupied, he heard Doran walking to and fro in his apartment for a considerable time, and talking to himself, evidently in a disturbed state.

His apartment was now examined; and, from the appearance of the bed, it was plain he could not have slept in it. A pair of saddle-bags lay upon the floor, half-packed, with a few changes of dress; some papers, also, were torn and scattered about, as if they had been recently written on, but the fragments were so small, and the characters so blotted and confused, that nothing could be made out from them. There remained no doubt that he had left the house during the night, but at what time, or in what way, it was impossible to ascertain.

The greatest apprehensions now prevailed in the kind-hearted family of Oldcourt, on poor Doran's account, and persons were dispatched in all directions where any tidings of him were likely to be obtained. The gloomy state of his mind for some time back, and the degree of excitability which, on several occasions, he had recently manifested, suggested a suspicion that he might have meditated an attempt on his own life.

Grace Oldcourt, in particular, was fully impressed with this idea, from the state of disorder in which he had left the grotto on the evening before ; and so agitated did she appear, at the supposition that his desperation might have led him to such an extremity, that Mrs. Oldcourt's alarm took a different direction, and she began to fear that the interest her daughter seemed to take in Doran's fate, was warmer than the relation in which he stood to the family, could either account for or justify.

Grace, however, immediately removed her mother's apprehensions, by a full disclosure in private, of what had lately occurred between her and Doran, together with the motives of consideration for that unhappy young man, which actuated her in preserving silence on the subject, until his departure from the castle, which she understood to have been his immediate purpose.

Mrs. Oldcourt commended the prudent conduct of her darling ; severely censured her own folly, in having ever brought Doran into the castle, on so familiar a footing, and wondered how she could have been so blind to consequences, as not to have foreseen, that no young man could live under the same roof with her dear Grace, without being sensible of her merits.

As Doran had not so far violated the duty of

his station, or abused the privileges which had been allowed him, as to assume the character of a lover to her daughter, she felt the greatest commiseration for him ; and she and Grace, as the most prudent course to be adopted, under all the circumstances, and particularly, considering the rumour which had reached Mrs. Oldcourt's ear, and which has been before alluded to, determined to observe the strictest silence on the subject of poor Doran's unfortunate passion, even to the members of their own family. Making it known, they felt, could only have the effect of injuring him with his friends, and might give rise to ill-natured remarks on the imprudence of admitting a person taken from so humble a situation in life, to an intimacy from which such a result ought to have been anticipated.

The conference between the mother and daughter, was here interrupted by the arrival at the castle of Fanny Doran, with some intelligence of her brother. The poor girl, in the greatest state of distress, desired to be admitted to Mrs. Oldcourt ; and from her account, amidst tears, sobs, and lamentations, it appeared, that about six o'clock that morning, the unfortunate young man had been carried by one of Mr. Oldcourt's woodmen and an assistant to old

Doran's cottage, in such a state of laceration and disorder, as left no hope of his life.

According to the woodman's report, when going to his work that morning, in a plantation almost a mile from the castle, his attention was attracted, by finding a shoe in an unfrequented track, and the fellow to it a little farther on. It was evident they had been recently worn. Proceeding on his way, the woodman perceived, lying in a ditch, a hat, which, on examination, proved to have the name of Doran written in it.

The man was immediately struck with an apprehension that poor Doran, who was a general favourite with the working people, had been robbed, and probably murdered by some nightly depredators; and he and his assistant commenced a search for the body.

After traversing a considerable part of the wood, and tracing the footsteps of some person who seemed to have forced his progress in a strange zig-zag direction, through all sorts of obstructions, that briar, brake, or hedge could interpose in his course, they, at length, discovered poor Doran lying in the midst of a close-planted thicket, quite exhausted, his clothes almost torn from his back; his face, hands, legs, and feet, lacerated and bleeding, but exhibiting no other wounds or marks of violence than such as might

be supposed to result from a frantic attempt to rush headlong forward, in such a course as he appeared to have pursued.

Though evidently deranged, he recognised the woodman ; declared he was on his way to Galway, and requested to be carried there as quickly as possible.

As far as could be collected from his incoherent expressions, it seemed, that after retiring to his room, as related by the old butler, the disorder of his mind increased to such a degree, that full of his engagement with Lieutenant Tiffin, he had, in the middle of the night, rushed from the castle, in a state of frenzy, making his way through hedge and ditch, and briar, and brush-wood ; till quite overcome by his exertions, and unable to penetrate farther, he sunk exhausted on the spot where he was discovered.

When the woodmen proposed to take him home to the castle, he became quite outrageous ; threatened them with vengeance if they attempted it ; and his fury seemed to restore his strength to such a degree, that without using great violence, they could not remove him from the wood.

Becoming a little calm again, on their assurance that he should not be taken to the castle, he demanded, entreated, and supplicated, that he

might be carried to Galway, where he said he had business of the most urgent necessity ; but after endeavouring to convince him, that from the distance, it was impossible they could comply with his wish, they at length succeeded in quieting him so far that he allowed himself to be removed to his father's cottage.

By the time he arrived there, however, the disorder of his body, co-operating with that of his mind, produced a raging fever, the paroxysms of which became so violent, that before his sister left him, he was obliged to be tied down in his bed.

Poor Doran's situation, and the extraordinary circumstances in which he was discovered, excited equal sympathy and surprise at the castle ; but Grace was doubly shocked by the occurrence ; for, independent of her long friendship for him, she could not but regard herself as the principal, though involuntary cause of the disorder, which was likely to be attended by such a distressing result.

The old squire angrily declared " they had set the boy mad among them ; that he was as good a lad as ever was born until they blew his brains out with their nonsense about independence, and seeing the world ; for his part, he wondered what had come over them all ; and it was very odd they

could not let the poor fellow remain quiet where he was so well off, and of more use to him than any of them.”

He insisted that Doran should be immediately brought back to the castle, where proper care could be taken of him ; but this was quite out of the question, as he could not be moved from his bed, without danger to himself, and to those about him. Mrs. Oldcourt lost no time in repairing to old Doran’s cottage, with the Family Physician in her pocket, and all the Galenic auxiliaries her *materia medica* could supply. The case, however, was so serious, that she condescended to require the assistance of Mr. Phelim M’Cabe ; but that sturdy practitioner, who was not a little piqued by Mrs. Oldcourt’s frequent interference in his province, refused to join in consultation with his fair rival ; and when admitted to the patient, pronounced, with the natural shrewdness which, in him, supplied the place of science, that the young man’s disease was more of the mind than the body, and that there was no immediate danger of his life.

In his delirium, poor Doran but too plainly indicated the preponderating idea of his mind ; and to prevent the effect of his ravings in spreading the knowledge of his unhappy attachment, Mrs. Oldcourt gave strict orders that, as essential to his

cure, no person whatever should be permitted to approach the sufferer but by her authority, or that of Mr. M'Cabe ; whose co-operation so far, she secured by a marked deference to his skill, and a much more liberal fee than was usual for him, to receive, in the ordinary course of his practice.

The contusions and lacerations which at first appeared so formidable, and so much disfigured the unfortunate young man, were found to be of no serious consequence. A brain fever, however, confined him to his bed for a fortnight ; and when the bodily disease was completely removed, the mental malady continued with such unabated violence, that it was found necessary to place him under vigilant superintendence ; and, by the kindness of the Oldcourt family, who defrayed all the expenses, he was consigned to the care of a medical practitioner at Galway, who kept an establishment for the reception of persons afflicted with diseases of the mind : and there, for the present, we must leave Pierce Doran, to attend on the other personages of our history.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE events narrated in the last chapter, cast a considerable gloom over the hearts and the hospitalities of the Oldcourt family. Pierce Doran had been so long an inmate of the castle, and was such a general favourite with its inhabitants, that every individual of the establishment, from the squire himself, down to the humblest retainer of the kitchen, sympathized in his situation, and regretted his fate.

That Grace Oldcourt was more affected by the calamity which had fallen upon her early friend, than any other member of the family, might be accounted for, from the circumstances, already known to the reader, which connected her with his unfortunate malady. Though naturally of a most cheerful disposition, neither the remonstrances of her mother, nor the gallant assiduities of such an admirer as Sir

Walter D'Arcy, could re-animate her to her usual vivacity, until an account arrived that Doran's complaint had taken a favourable turn, and that there was every prospect of a final cure.

The baronet, in his visits to the castle, was, at first, somewhat uneasy on observing, that the fair object of his homage, suffered under a depression of spirits, which he was disposed to think rather more than commensurate to the occasion; and some of his former suspicions began to revive. But Grace expressed herself, on the subject of poor Doran, with such a calm, open, artless simplicity, as speedily convinced him that her feelings were influenced only by her natural benevolence and kindness of heart.

Nearly three months had passed off rapidly, subsequent to the occurrences above stated; and the close of the summer found Sir Walter D'Arcy more enamoured than ever—the avowed and accepted lover of the beautiful Grace Oldcourt. During this period, the baronet had diligently cultivated his suit, and so effectually established himself in the good opinion of her whole family, that Grace, under the observation of those to whose sanction she looked, in every action of her life, allowed the favourable sentiments with which D'Arcy had early inspired her, to ripen into a sincere and ardent attachment.

Her lover had not only been fortunate in gaining the affections of his mistress, but he was equally successful in another point, which, at first, he was rather disposed to think the more difficult achievement of the two. He had overcome his own prejudices against matrimony; all his doubts and difficulties were dissipated by the smiles of his idol—the glories of gallantry began to lose their lustre in his eye, and to his own surprise, his imagination ran continually upon visions of connubial love and domestic felicity.

The habits of society are in Ireland more easy and familiar than in England. The intercourse between young people of different sexes, is, therefore, more free and unrestrained; a young man may there talk, and walk, and ride, and dance with a young lady, without being set down as her lover, by all their acquaintance, or having a father or a brother, with an expostulating aspect, coming to inquire his intentions, before he has had time to ascertain them himself.

From this difference of manners, you have, in Ireland, some chance of being acquainted with your wife before you marry her, and may form a tolerable guess, as to her temper, taste, and disposition, before you commit yourself for better,

for worse, in bonds which can be dissolved only by death or disgrace.

D'Arcy had availed himself of the privilege which his intimacy in the Oldcourt family allowed him in this respect ; and though captivated from the first, had taken time for deliberate observation, before he formally disclosed his passion or his pretensions. To Barry Oldcourt he particularly attached himself ; and the latter, from the military turn of his mind, and a similarity of spirit and character, was delighted with D'Arcy as a companion, and valued him highly as a friend.

As the baronet's quarters at Galway were rather too distant to admit of his returning at night after a dinner visit, without some inconvenience ; and as Mrs. Oldcourt's delicacy made her more reluctant to lodge him in the castle, in proportion as she became more desirous to promote a match, which she thought in every respect so eligible for her daughter, our hero procured a comfortable little apartment at the "Goat's Head," in the village ; and there he occasionally took up his residence for three or four days at a time, when the pleasures of hunting, fishing, and shooting, were combined with the far more interesting pursuits which he was anxious to carry on at the castle.

The progress of a courtship which has not been obstructed by any extraordinary events, or apparently insurmountable difficulties, is not a very favourable subject for narration. The language of lovers is not easily translated into any ordinary form of prose; and even in poetry, it requires to be interrupted occasionally by incident, and varied by a recurrence to less impassioned topics of discourse, to prevent its becoming over-strained, monotonous, or mawkish. I shall not, therefore, enter into any details of the process by which D'Arcy and his mistress were entangled in Cupid's net, nor describe how they arrived at such a mutual understanding of each others sentiments, as to make it clear to them both, that their happiness depended on their union.

Certain it is, that a matrimonial result had been sufficiently long in the contemplation of all parties, to be looked upon as a highly desirable object, and expected as a matter of course; and when the baronet's rapturous vows of eternal devotion had extorted from his mistress a blushing reference to her father, the proposals of our hero were most flatteringly received, by every member of the Oldcourt family.

The squire was, indeed, particularly pleased; as, independent of the satisfaction which he de-

rived from the prospect of so advantageous a settlement for his daughter, D'Arcy, by disclaiming all pecuniary views, at once set the old gentleman at his ease, on a point which had often made him consider Grace's marriage, as a very embarrassing subject of discussion.

The baronet was too much enamoured to be influenced by mercenary considerations ; and certainly, if ever lover were justified in disregarding them, the admirer of Grace Oldcourt might reasonably plead her manifold perfections as an ample apology for his disinterestedness.

Mrs. Oldcourt was as delighted as an affectionate mother could be, who saw the most flattering visions she had ever formed of her child's happiness about to be realised. On the important subject of religion, also, which had always been a drawback on her most agreeable speculations with regard to D'Arcy, she obtained much more satisfaction than she expected ; for he assured her, and indeed with great truth, that the only religious impressions he had ever received, were those of the Catholic faith. D'Arcy, as before observed, had never, like his father, made any formal renunciation of popery, and all his early prejudices were in favour of the ancient creed. He had been satisfied to pass in the world as a member of the established church,

because Protestantism was the peculiar modification of Christianity, prevalent amongst the class of society in which he moved; and he attached no other importance to the distinction, than as it might be considered favourable to his views in life.

D'Arcy, indeed, had never seriously reflected on the subject, till his succession to the title and property of his family rendered it necessary for him to visit Killorgan Hall. There, when amongst his own tenants, he found himself an object of suspicion and dislike,—when, on his return to the seat of his ancestors, instead of being received with affection and enthusiasm as the chief of his race, he saw that he was regarded rather as an enemy and an apostate,—the loss of that respect and attachment, which the heads of ancient families in Ireland, who have remained firm to their faith and their country, have ever considered as the most valuable part of their inheritance, affected him most deeply; and as he had no pious predilections, to sustain the zeal, or stimulate the rancour of the convert, he bitterly deplored the policy which had prompted his father to cast away the hearts of his dependants, and stain the long tried fidelity of the D'Arcy's, without any compensation, religious or political

which could be considered adequate to such a sacrifice.

So strongly, indeed, had he been then impressed, by what he thought the discredit of having, from worldly motives, deserted the ancient creed of his country, that nothing but his love of a military life, and his unwillingness to encounter the jeers of his fashionable friends, prevented his open profession of the Catholic faith.

His views, however, were now altered; the lover had superseded the soldier; his ambition to mingle again in military scenes, and brilliant circles, had subsided in the contemplation of more tranquil prospects of happiness; in Grace Oldcourt, all his hopes and joys were now centered; and she was a rich treasure, which his experience of fashionable life made him unwilling to expose to the piracies of those unprincipled rovers, who infest the navigation of the great world.

He was quite sincere, therefore, when he assured Mrs. Oldcourt that he considered himself a Catholic; and that when once blessed in the possession of her daughter, he would resign the military profession, retire to the mansion of his ancestors, and endeavour to reinstate himself in the affections of his tenants and dependants, by the undisguised resumption of that faith which he

considered as connected with the antiquity of his descent, and as most becoming the honour of his family.

Even the excellent Father Clancy, who loved his fair pupil with the affection of a parent, and was zealous equally for her spiritual and temporal welfare, could see no objection to the proposed union. The liberal sentiments of D'Arcy, and his polite and respectful deportment towards the good priest, had early won the old man's favour; and the subsequent assurance which he received, of the baronet's real sentiments with respect to religion, had so completely satisfied him on the subject, that he congratulated Grace on her own prospects, and declared he considered her fortunate in being made an instrument to confirm Sir Walter D'Arcy in his good intentions.

By the express desire of the Oldcourt family, Sir Walter communicated to his mother and sister, his matrimonial views, and solicited their sanction, which he had no difficulty in obtaining; for though residing in a distant county, they were acquainted with the respectability of the house of Oldcourt; and the dearest wish of their hearts, was to see the baronet united to a good Catholic, whose influence, they hoped, might favourably affect his religious sentiments.

The squire and Mrs. Oldcourt forwarded a pressing invitation to Lady D'Arcy and her daughter, to spend some time at the castle, and be present at the ceremony, which was to be so interesting to both families ; but the infirm state of the dowager's health, rendered her unequal to the journey.

It may be supposed, that a nuptial negotiation, upon which the contracting parties and their allies had entered with such a cordial spirit of agreement, was speedily brought to a favourable issue. D'Arcy, always generous in pecuniary matters, was magnificent in his settlements, and formed a scale of matrimonial expenditure, which had but little prudential reference to the various incumbrances upon his estate.

The period of her marriage is the great and important epocha of a woman's life. It is then, that she seals her fate—that the die is cast, upon which her happiness or misery depends. Of all social compacts, matrimony seems to be that in which there is the least reciprocity of privilege, and in which the principle that "might constitutes right," is the most openly avowed. The laws, the habits, and the prejudices of society, are all so unfavourable to the wife, that if the husband be disposed to act the tyrant, he can do it with impunity ; and if he should be unwilling to incur

the odium of any open and public act of oppression, he may persecute his victim by petty vexations, and so harrass her by nondescript annoyances, that her spirit may droop through life in unregarded wretchedness, without having any available ground for redress, or a generally recognised pretext even for complaint.

What an event of awful interest to an affectionate parent, is the marriage of a favourite daughter, even under the most flattering auspices!

How the heart sinks under the conflict of opposite emotions, when you are about to part with the darling object of your cares—the loved solace of your toils, your troubles, and your disappointments—whose opening beauties you have contemplated with such delight—whose accomplishments you have cultivated with so much assiduity, and displayed with such exultation—when you are called upon to resign *her*, whose endearments have entwined her round your heart with a cling of affection that death alone can loosen or dissever—all innocent as she is—amiable, and unsuspecting, into the hands of a comparative stranger—a man with whom, perhaps, you have not had six months' acquaintance—for the qualities of whose

temper and disposition, you in most cases, can have no sufficient security—who may have masked the worst of passions under the most specious manners, and from the polite, ardent, and devoted lover, may be transformed at once to the cold, sullen, and selfish husband—uncongenial in his taste, unsympathising in his feelings, and unprincipled in all his proceedings. To those who know how the gentle spirit may be wounded by unkindness—who are aware how effectually the cup of life may be embittered by daily infusions of habitual moroseness, and domestic discontent, the hazard is dreadful; and, like all great hazards, to be supported with firmness, it must be encountered without reflection.

To few parents could these considerations present themselves, with more force, than to Mrs. Oldcourt. Grace was the darling of her heart. To see her, in the maternal sense of the phrase, “well settled,” had been the prime object of her mother’s solicitude, from the first moment that Grace had attained to the marriageable age of seventeen; and now that the period approached, when the fond parent’s wish was likely to be gratified to an extent beyond her most sanguine expectations, all the hazards of matrimony on the female side, of which she had had, herself, no

small experience, rose up in formidable array before her.

She trembled at the thought of parting with her child; and, like an April day, the sunshine of her joy and exultation was frequently overcast with clouds of apprehension, and chequered by showers of tears.

Mr. Oldcourt was not a man to refine much upon such matters. Like most of his countrymen, he had a high idea of the prerogatives of a husband; and, as long as a wife was respectably maintained in that class of society to which she belonged, and was allowed to manage her own department—the household—he considered her as having no cause to complain, however she might be otherwise wounded by indifference, or mortified by neglect.

D'Arcy's disregard of fortune made him a most eligible son-in-law for the squire; and though the latter was fond and proud of his daughter, his paternal sensibilities were not wrought up to any very agonizing solicitude about her happiness; nor was his regret at the prospect of losing her society, manifested by any more pathetic lamentation than an occasional remark, that "he wondered how they should get on without Grace; for he was sure the castle would be very dull when she left it."

Grace, herself, though ardently attached to the baronet, and regarding him as an example of every thing which her imagination had depicted, or her heart could desire, contemplated the proposed change in her condition, with a feeling of anxious and uneasy joy, in which it was difficult to say whether pain or pleasure predominated; the thought of leaving her family pressed so heavily upon her spirits.

Although the cheerful serenity of her temper, secured her from the dullness of ideal discontents, and preserved her from the gloom of superstition, she had a turn for piety, which almost amounted to enthusiasm; and, previous to her acquaintance with D'Arcy, observing in the sphere to which she was confined, no congenial spirit, to whom she could confidently intrust the guidance of her course, she had often contemplated a religious life, as a happy retreat from the cares of the world, and a safe asylum, where virtue and innocence might hope for tranquillity and peace. But the attractions and attentions of the baronet, opened to her admiring eye those prospects of connubial felicity which she had begun to consider only as visionary speculations, and society was preferred to seclusion.

The approaching event, however, was still re-

garded by her as possessing a character of awful interest, with which a marriage so sanctioned is rarely invested, at least in the minds of the parties principally concerned; and a circumstance which Grace thought particularly unlucky at the time, contributed to increase anxiety to apprehension.

Pierce Doran, by the judicious treatment of the medical practitioner, under whose care he had been placed at Galway, was gradually restored to the full possession of his faculties. A settled melancholy, however, continued to depress him, which nothing appeared to dissipate. The benevolent physician, who, in the liberal spirit of his profession, was generally as anxious to promote the happiness, as to restore the health of his patients, became interested for him; and, on being made acquainted with his situation, thinking that a complete change of scene would be his best remedy, procured for him an opportunity of going out to India, in the capacity of what is called a free mariner.

Doran seemed gladly and gratefully to accept the proffered appointment; and being anxious to see his father and sister before his departure, he arrived at the farm-house a few days before the time which had been fixed for Grace Oldcourt's marriage with the baronet.

Grace, who continued to take the warmest interest in Doran's welfare, and had heard with great satisfaction of his recovery, and purposed voyage to the East, was now seriously grieved to learn, that he had returned to the neighbourhood of the castle, at a moment which must be most distressing to his feelings, if not injurious to the recently restored tranquillity of his mind.

She could not avoid, also, some lively apprehensions on another account: recollecting the strong enmity which Doran had conceived, and so emphatically expressed towards D'Arcy, she felt a degree of anxiety approaching to alarm, at the possibility of some hostile collision between them; for the baronet was, at this time, quartered at his favourite little inn in the village; a residence which he had occasionally used for a few days at a time, during the last three months, to which he seemed partial, and which was situated exactly opposite the cottage inhabited by old Doran.

Grace's uneasiness on this subject increased so much, that she communicated her fears to her mother; and Mrs. Oldcourt so far participated in her daughter's impression, that without assigning her reasons for it, she proposed to the baronet to remove to the castle for the few days that were to intervene before the performance of the mar-

riage ceremony. This arrangement, however, the baronet respectfully declined, on the ground that for so short a time, it would be inconvenient to make the change.

All the usual preliminaries having been adjusted—the parchments signed and sealed, and the paraphernalia of the bride prepared under the inspection of Mrs. Oldcourt and Miss Matty Malone, the ensuing Sunday was fixed on for the wedding-day.

In Ireland, it was usual amongst Roman Catholics, to celebrate their marriages privately, in the presence only of such friends as were invited to attend them. Father Clancy, however, from motives of piety, was opposed to this practice; justly conceiving that a ceremony so important to the interests of society, as well as to those of the parties immediately concerned in it, should be invested with every solemnity, which it could derive from the sacred character of a church, or which the influence of religious associations could confer upon it.

He, therefore, required that the nuptials of his favourite pupil should take place in the chapel of Oldcourt; and he was too much respected by the squire and his family, not to have his wish attended to, on an occasion when it seemed pe-

cularly within his province to exercise a legitimate influence.

This arrangement, however, appeared to be by no means agreeable to the baronet; but he found that the religious feelings of Mrs. Oldcourt and the good pastor, were not to be shaken by such representations as his politeness or his prudence allowed him to make on the subject; and he was, though with marked reluctance, obliged to submit.

As the chapel of Oldcourt, however, was not an appropriate scene for a splendid ceremonial; and as the sensitive delicacy of the intended bride, made her shrink from all unnecessary publicity on the occasion, it was agreed, that as little attention as possible should be attracted to the wedding: that the parties should remain in the chapel till the congregation had dispersed after the celebration of mass, and that Father Clancy should then perform the ceremony at the altar, in the presence only of the family, and the servants of the establishment.

As the day approached, to which Mrs. Oldcourt had so long looked forward with delight, and which Grace herself considered as the commencement of a new course of existence, in which she might hope for as much happiness as

sublunary affairs allow, the anxiety and agitation of our heroine increased to an extent, which no ordinary consideration of the circumstances in which she was placed, could account for even to herself.

A vague and undefined impression of alarm hung upon her mind, which she tried in vain to shake off, and which she found, by the constant recurrence of the same idea, to be invariably connected with Pierce Doran. His words in the grotto, when he declared that D'Arcy was "his evil genius," and might also prove hers, arose to her recollection with a kind of ominous importance. She feared that some return of Doran's derangement might endanger the baronet's life, or produce some new catastrophe, calamitous to Doran himself, or others.

What contributed also to strengthen her apprehensions, was an idea which she had conceived that D'Arcy was not in his usual good spirits; as, though all admiration and devotion to her, he seemed occasionally thoughtful and absent.

Under the influence of these impressions, Grace earnestly besought her mother to postpone the wedding for a week, by which time Doran would have left their neighbourhood, and one great source of her uneasiness would be

thereby removed. But Mrs. Oldcourt was too affectionately anxious to salute her darling Grace as Lady D'Arcy, to acquiesce easily in such a proposition. She, therefore, only laughed at her fanciful apprehensions; and when Grace ventured to hint to the baronet her wish for delay, the intimation evidently disconcerted him, more than even a lover's eagerness could justify; and excited in him a degree of dissatisfaction, which it cost his politeness an effort to conceal. With that amiability, therefore, which ever induced her to prefer the inclination of her friends to her own, Grace consented to abide by the arrangement which had been originally determined on.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON a fine Sunday morning, in the picturesque month of October, after a night spent between agitated vigils and disturbed slumbers, Grace Oldcourt started from her pillow almost as early as the dawn, and looking much more beautiful than Aurora herself, at least, if that mythological personage has been faithfully represented to us by the pencil of Guido.

The recollection of the day, and the important event which was to distinguish it in the annals of the Oldcourt family, rushed upon her mind the moment she awoke, and her heart throbbed with the conflicting emotions which her situation excited.

Her dreams, indeed, had not been much calculated to tranquillize her feelings; for busy fancy, during sleep, had conjured up a thousand forms of terror and confusion, which not only

disturbed her repose, but depressed her spirits in proportion as they were more or less, combined, however incongruously, with the materials of her waking apprehensions.

The idea of leaving for ever, the home of her hitherto happy and innocent life, and all the dear relatives which that home contained, melted her to tears. Every well-known object to which she turned her eye, appeared to acquire a new interest in her estimation; and she looked at each, as if she saw it for the last time. She felt like a timid traveller, about to desert the haven of safety and repose, to enter upon a long and perilous voyage, amongst the rocks and tempests of unknown seas, without any support against the dangers and difficulties of the adventure, but in the affectionate fidelity and cheering co-operation of the loved companion, for whose sake it is undertaken.

Again, Pierce Doran and his mysterious words, at her last interview with him, haunted her imagination; and some unaccountable and undefined idea of danger, through his agency, continued to aggravate her anxiety, and increase her regret, that he should have revisited the neighbourhood at such a moment.

Oppressed by these reflections, after completing her simple toilette arrangement, she had

sunk despondingly into a chair, her eyes bearing testimony to the melancholy character of her morning meditations, when Mrs. Oldcourt entered her room.

The aspect of the kind-hearted parent showed plainly, how much her feelings sympathised with those of her daughter. The mother, however, affected to wear a cheerful look. She tenderly kissed her darling, without appearing to notice the tears that flowed down Grace's cheeks; and, in a faltering voice, told her, she came thus early, to congratulate her on the happy arrival of her wedding-day. The effort, however, was too great,—the same thought seemed, at the same time, to swell their bosoms to bursting,—they looked at each other for a moment; and, in an agony of emotion, rushed into each other's arms.

“ Oh, my child, my child !” exclaimed the weeping parent; “ must I then lose you?—Must my heart's treasure be taken from me for life!—and is it for this sad hour, that I have longed, and looked, and laboured, with such eagerness of hope and joy?—Desolate will be to me this house, and dreary to the mother's heart, when my doating eyes shall look round in vain for her whose smile was gladness—when my ear shall watch in vain for the sound of that sweet voice, that ever has

been music to my soul!—But,” endeavouring to calm her agitation, “you will be happy, my child; that thought must console me; and Heaven pour its choicest blessings on my darling’s head!”

Overpowered by her feelings, Grace could only sob aloud, and articulate: “My dear, dear mother!” and again they were locked in each other’s embrace.

When the violence of their emotion had somewhat subsided, they, by a mutual exertion, endeavoured to turn their thoughts to the more cheering contemplations of the day; and, summoning up as much composure as possible, descended to the breakfast-room. But though all parties agreed in calling it a happy morning, it was evidently a struggle to be gay through the whole family.

The squire “did not know what he should do without his mad-cap, Grace, to drive away the blue-devils of an evening, when he had not his friends about him;” and a tear stood in the old man’s eye, “albeit unused to the melting mood,” as the affectionate girl clung weeping on his neck.

Even the young men felt the influence of the moment; and the domestics of the establishment moved about, as if they also shared in the general loss the castle was about to sustain in the departure of her, whose goodness, gentle-

ness, and generosity, had made her beloved by rich and poor.

Miss Matty Malone was the only person who seemed to enjoy the pleasures of a wedding-day. She, however, was all bustle and importance; manifesting, by a loquacious administration of those domestic functions, which Mrs. Oldcourt's agitated state of mind disqualified her for performing, that excitement and satisfaction, which ancient maidens so disinterestedly display, in forwarding the marriage preparations of their friends.

In a sort of feverish fluctuation, between grief and gladness,—smiles faintly gleaming through tears, and the tremulous voice of congratulation faltering in the ill-suppressed sob of sorrow, the hours passed away, until the baronet arrived, to accompany his bride and the family to the chapel.

Manifesting towards Grace all the attentions of the most ardent lover, he endeavoured to rally the whole party, and divert the sensibility of their feelings from those depressing considerations, which seemed so inappropriate to a day, which he “hoped and trusted, they had all looked forward to as a day of joy.”

But it was evident that D'Arcy himself was disturbed. A cloud seemed occasionally to ga-

ther on his brow, and there was a restlessness of manner about him, which indicated a mind not perfectly at ease. The change, however, from his usual gay and gallant demeanour, appeared natural enough in a man who was just about to enter into so solemn an engagement, as that which may be said to fetter him for life.

As the fashion did not then prevail, which requires the happy pair, as soon as the indissoluble knot is tied, to rattle off from the church door in a chaise and four, to spend the honey-moon in unmolested matrimonial raptures, on a tour of tête-à-tête privacy—a trip to a watering-place, or a distant family mansion, the baronet and his bride were to return, after the ceremony, to the castle; where Doctor Bowen, Father Clancy, and a few intimate friends, were invited to assist in the celebration of a wedding-dinner; and the following day, Lady D'Arcy, accompanied by her brother Barry, was to proceed with her husband to Killorgan Hall.

The party having arrived at the humble temple which has been described in the early part of this work, they took their places, as usual, in the family pew. With palpitating heart, and trembling steps—pale, anxious, and agitated, Grace, led by her eldest brother, made her way through the rustic congregation, as they res-

pectfully opened for her a passage to her seat. Her veil had hitherto concealed her emotion; but as from her position in the pew, she commanded the whole chapel, she partially raised it, and threw a hasty and apprehensive glance around her, in search of one from whom her fears,—

“Still entertained strange augury of ill.”

But Pierce Doran was not to be discovered; nor did his father or sister appear in their usual places.

The baronet, also, seemed to cast an inquiring eye upon the dense mass of people who occupied the body of the chapel. He had never before attended the celebration of mass with the family; but, as strangers were often accommodated in Mr. Oldcourt's pew, D'Arcy's appearance there excited no surprise.

Father Clancy now proceeded with the service, in the course of which, he delivered a short, solemn, and impressive address, on the exemplary fulfilment of our domestic duties; purposely avoiding any palpable reference to the event upon which he was about to confer the sanction of the church. The parties concerned, however, made that application of his words to their own peculiar circumstances,

which a consciousness of the good priest's pious intentions prescribed.

All the individuals of the family were more or less affected by the simple eloquence of the preacher; and Grace, her mother, and Miss Matty Malone, were dissolved in tears.

The congregation having separated after the benediction, Father Clancy motioned that he was ready to proceed with the marriage ceremony; and the Oldcourt party advanced to the altar, taking their station within the railing which enclosed it from the open part of the chapel.

Grace, covered with confusion, and trembling in every limb, was supported to her place by D'Arcy and her brother Barry. Observing her trepidation, the baronet, in a low voice, said:—

“ My dear Grace! if you would not have me suspect that you regret the blessing which you are about to bestow upon me, sustain yourself with firmness for a few moments. But I must say it was cruel, because unnecessary, thus to expose your delicacy here.”

Grace, with a faint smile of affection, and a gentle pressure of the hand, falteringly replied:—

“ Oh, D'Arcy! mistake not those feelings which I find it impossible to repress; nor blame a course that religion and duty have alike dictated.”

Then, with a sweet assurance of confidence and love, she added: "I trust I shall behave better presently."

Notwithstanding the precautions taken to keep the ceremony as private as possible, the persons remaining in the chapel appeared to form a considerable number; as, in addition to the clergyman and his attendants, the Oldcourt party, and their whole establishment, several of the most respectable tenants had solicited permission to be present, with their families, at the marriage of the daughter of their landlord and patron.

A chair was placed, within the railing of the altar, for Mr. Oldcourt, who suffered much from the gout; and Barry, the eldest son, was appointed to give the bride away.

The doors having been closed, to prevent the further intrusion of strangers, and the chapel much darkened in consequence, the parties were arranged for the commencement of the ceremony, before any attention had been directed to two persons, a man and a woman, who had remained after the service, and were now discovered in the most obscure corner of the transverse part of the edifice.

The male figure, muffled in a loose great coat, his face half-concealed by a coloured handkerchief, stood with arms folded, his head bent upon

his breast, leaning against the wall of the chapel. The woman, whose face and figure were entirely hid from observation by her position, and a large cloak, similar to the mantle commonly worn by the humbler class of females in Ireland, the hood of which was drawn over, and completely enveloped her head, remained upon her knees, apparently regardless of the scene before her, and engaged in the most fervent devotion.

The baronet, whose restless eye had first glanced upon the strangers, evinced a slight change of countenance, and regarded them with a look which expressed uneasiness and dissatisfaction. After a pause, as of deliberation, he, in an under tone, suggested to Father Clancy, that as these persons had evidently no connexion with any of those who were present by permission, and as they were only indulging an idle curiosity, it would be proper to remove them from the chapel.

The clergyman having directed his eye to the intruders, observed to the baronet, in the same low voice, "that the poor people seemed to be occupied in some act of devotion; and he could not think of thrusting them forth from the house of God, while he was himself engaged there in the performance of any religious function."

The short communication between the priest and D'Arcy attracted the attention of Grace, who, turning her head, observed the individuals who had occasioned it; and, although she could not recognise them as persons whom she had ever seen before, yet the same unaccountable impression of alarm, which had recently so much annoyed her, struck again upon her heart, and she became as pale as death.

The young Oldcourts, seeing the effect which the presence of the two mysterious strangers seemed to have upon their sister, were moving out of the railed enclosure for the purpose of desiring them to withdraw, when the clergyman, noticing their purpose, in a loud and rather stern voice, said,—

“ This place, at least, is free to rich and poor alike; and no persons must be molested in it, who respect its sacred character.”

The interference of an authority, so revered by all parties, was quite effectual; and Father Clancy immediately claimed attention to the ceremony which he was about to commence.

A variety of feelings combined to excite a more than ordinary interest in the different members of the groupe collected, on this occasion, before the altar of Father Clancy's humble temple: the evident agitation of the principal par-

ties, for D'Arcy could not entirely conceal a perturbation which he made every effort to disguise, while Grace and her mother sobbed audibly, without an attempt to mask their emotions,—the anxiously affectionate looks of the rest of the family,—the love and attachment of the tenants and domestics, for their young mistress, producing an almost breathless silence and attention.

The sombre air of the chapel, which, when the doors were closed, seemed to derive more light from the tapers burning at the altar, than from the few small, low apertures which answered for windows to the building; all these influencing circumstances, with the odd and unexpected association of the two strangers, in such a scene, invested the ceremonial with a solemnity which affected all present with something like a sense of awe.

The baronet assumed an aspect of resolute calmness, and determined self-possession; his eye, in a side glance, still loweringly directed to the obscure corner where the strangers remained unmolested. Father Clancy, in a deep and impressive tone, now began to read the matrimonial formula, but had hardly time to finish the first sentence, when the male stranger, starting, as from a reverie, raised himself to an erect and dig-

nified posture, and interrupting the ceremony, in a hollow voice, exclaimed :—

“ Stop, reverend sir ; I protest against this marriage. Let *me* speak,” added he, firmly advancing, tearing away the handkerchief that concealed his face, and discovering to the astonished auditors, the pale and haggard countenance of Pierce Doran ; “ let me speak before you give the sanction of the church to sacrilege !”

Awed by the wild energy of his look and manner, the outside persons of the circle involuntarily made way for him, till he approached the railing of the altar.

D’Arcy’s expression was that of motionless confusion ; and Grace, turning suddenly to her astonished mother, who supported her with her arm, exclaimed :—

“ Oh God, my fears were prophetic ! What dreadful mystery is this ?”

While the rest of the groupe, in mute amazement, attended to his words, Doran solemnly stretching his hand forth towards Father Clancy, said :—

“ Before this holy altar—in the face of Heaven and man, I denounce Sir Walter D’Arcy as a villain,—the base betrayer of innocence—who has already virtually pledged to another that prosti-

tuted hand with which he would here pollute an angel's purity, and add sacrilege to seduction."

D'Arcy had now, in some degree, recovered his firmness; and indignantly addressing Father Clancy, he requested, "that the important ceremony in which they were engaged, might not be thus interrupted by the ravings of a madman;" at the same time, with an authoritative voice, desiring the servants to "remove the maniac from the chapel." Nobody, however, seemed disposed to obey the mandate, and Doran replied in the same solemn tone:—

"I have, indeed, been mad; and if the bitterest anguish of the soul could make me so, I should be mad again. But there is a sense of woe that strikes at life itself, and will not yield to madness. You, reverend father, know me well;—you shall judge if falsely, or in frenzy, I accuse this man; for I have a witness here that shall convict him. Yes," continued he, going to the female who had still remained muffled in her cloak, and drawing her, with great reluctance on her part, to the foot of the altar; "Come forth, unhappy victim of his baseness; confess—avow your shame, and confound with his guilt, the criminal who caused it!"

While uttering these words, he roughly tore

away the cloak which she vainly endeavoured to wrap round her, and discovered to view the shrinking figure, and pale and terrified countenance of Lucy Doran, drowned in tears, and with clasped hands, begging mercy of her relentless brother.

Surprise for a moment held the assembly mute; D'Arcy, confounded, turned away from the piteous look of the unfortunate girl; and Grace Oldcourt, in an agony of emotion, hid her face on her mother's shoulder, while Doran continued, with increasing vehemence:—

“ Look at her ! you all know what she was but three months since;—an opening rose-bud,—a sweet and tender flower of innocence and beauty ! Behold her now ! faded—blighted—blasted by a profligate,—a privileged spoiler !—in wantonness polluted for his sport—his pastime,—while he coolly spread his toils for higher game. Just Heaven ! is this to be endured—unanswered—unavenged ? Read here,” taking a paper from his pocket, and handing it to Barry Oldcourt, who stood near him ; “ read here, the base, unmanly artifices that wretches will resort to, who, with honour in their mouths, have hearts more cruel and remorseless than guilt has ever hardened into stone, beneath a felon's ribs ! ”

The paper purported to be a short note from

D'Arcy to Lucy Doran, in which he entreated her not to encourage unjust suspicions of his honour;—assured her that whatever she might have heard, she would always be the object of his warmest affections; and that if she would but keep their intercourse secret for a short time, he would realize all that he had promised, and place her beyond the reach of disappointment or reproach.

Barry Oldcourt, with a look of indignation towards D'Arcy, handed the paper to Father Clancy, who, having perused it, turned to the baronet, and said,—

“ Sir Walter D'Arcy, you have heard this young man's charge against you. I regret to say, it is my duty to decline proceeding with this marriage, till you can satisfy Miss Oldcourt's friends, and clear your conduct of the foul reproach that is here cast upon it.”

D'Arcy, with an assumed haughtiness of manner, replied,—

“ Your decision, reverend sir! seems rather hasty; nor can I recognise your right to put me on my trial. I might, perhaps, have expected, that the evident derangement of this young man would be considered, in estimating the motives by which he is actuated. To gratify a rancour which my friends here know,” turning to the

young men of the family, “ he has long entertained against me, he has contrived this scene; and worked upon his thoughtless sister’s fears, to join him as confederate in a plot to wound Miss Oldcourt’s feelings through my honour. To Miss Oldcourt, and her friends alone, I hold myself accountable. To them, of course, I shall be ready to explain whatever may appear questionable in my conduct; but I must protest, sir, against your refusal to complete the ceremony, on the grounds that you have stated. There exists no claim on the part of this young woman, or any other person, that can taint my honour towards Miss Oldcourt; or that should be considered as a lawful impediment to a union which has been sanctioned by all who have any right to judge of it, or to interfere regarding it.”

Conceiving the baronet’s *hauteur* of manner, and confident tone, to be ill suited to the awkward situation in which he stood, the worthy priest, with a sternness which characterized him, in reproving the immoralities of those who seemed to think their station should exempt them from rebuke, replied,—

“ Sir Walter D’Arcy, I assume no right or privilege which my function does not justify; and I must take leave to say, sir, that if not a legal, there

is a moral cause why this marriage should be postponed at least, if not prevented; and after what has passed, I am sure, neither Miss Oldcourt nor any of her worthy and respectable family, would now consent to proceed, without some inquiry into the circumstances of a transaction which bears so unfortunate an aspect."

"Certainly not," exclaimed Barry Oldcourt, in a decided and indignant tone; "I will answer for my sister," who was indeed incapable of uttering a word; and his declaration was instantly corroborated by every other member of the family, in some unequivocal look or gesture of agreement, which D'Arcy could not misinterpret, and to which he replied only by an expressive bow around, and an acquiescent shrug of the shoulders.

While this short dialogue was going on between the clergyman and the baronet, Pierce Doran stood with his hands resting, or rather supporting him on the rail of the altar, in such a state of suffering as indicated that he laboured under bodily anguish, as well as mental torture. His countenance became livid and ghastly—his lip quivered—large drops of frothy perspiration stood upon his clammy forehead; while every feature and muscle seemed to writhe with its appre-

priate agony. The eyes of all were turned upon him with mingled pity and alarm, as he struggled to work himself up, in a new effort to speak, while he exclaimed,—

“ I am warned to be brief;” then looking round, he proceeded; “ before you all I have accused this man, and he has not dared to deny the charge I have brought against him. For this poor child of sorrow,” turning to his sister, who stood weeping, and trembling by his side, “ so lately my pride, and now—my shame!—yet still so dear to me! Oh, God, how dear!” They here embraced each other with the most convulsive emotion, while he wildly exclaimed, “ my sister!—my wronged—my ruined sister!”

The eyes of all around them manifested the feelings which they had excited; and becoming somewhat calm again, Doran proceeded:—

“ For this poor sufferer there is no remedy—no redress—no refuge upon earth! Her doom is fixed—to live and die a wretched outcast. She must bare her bosom to this world’s keenest blast—rejected and reviled—the scoff and scorn of privileged vice and unforgiving virtue. Perhaps—Oh, God!” striking his forehead, and his whole frame shaking with emotion; “ perhaps, a homeless wanderer of the public street—debased—de-

praved—abandoned ! While the base spoiler of her honour, the assassin of her peace, shall walk abroad, unquestioned—unabhorred ;—remorseless, censureless, and shameless. Father of Heaven ! shall the poor hungry wretch, who robs a hen-roost, or entraps a hare, to feed his starving children,—shall he be racked with pains and penalties, while the foul traitor shall escape and triumph, who ravages the shrine of virtue—who plunder's virgin purity—who desolates the heart, consigning life to want and woe, and innocence to infamy ! Yes ! there he stands and braves me ; the heartless caitiff who has done all this ! He calls me madman—wonders, reverend sir, that you should listen to my ravings ; and, unabashed, beholds his hapless victim. He has refused me all atonement ; yes,—has sharpened injury by insult. I am, it seems, beneath him—his honour will suffer him to wrong, but not redress me ! We are plebeians,—reptiles,—crawling worms of the earth, fit only to be trampled in the soil, whenever it may please the proud patrician foot to tread upon us.—For a crime like this, there's neither law nor justice—it cries to Heaven in vain. What then is my resource?—To brand the wretch, before the altar of that God, whose law he has outraged. What place so proper to expose his

guilt?—so fit to punish it! Thus, then, I strike the blow!”

While uttering these last words, Doran approached nearer to the spot where D'Arcy stood, suddenly drew forth a pistol which had been concealed in the bosom of his great coat, levelled and instantly discharged it at the baronet.

The shot, from the position of the parties, must have effectually performed its office, if Barry Oldcourt, who was situated inside the rail of the altar next to Doran, had not, by one of those prompt mechanical movements, which seem to anticipate the exigency of the moment, without the intervention of thought, struck up his pistol arm, as he fired, and thereby altered a little the direction of the ball, which passed over the baronet's head, and lodged in the frame-work of the altar behind him.

The greatest alarm immediately prevailed. The women shrieked, Lucy Doran fainted, and was carried into the air; Grace Oldcourt, in strong hysterics, fell into the arms of her mother and Miss Matty, who were, themselves, in a state of the greatest terror and agitation. D'Arcy was the only person who seemed undisturbed; he never moved from his place, and merely ejaculated, with a look more expressive of commi-

seration than any other sentiment,—“ Wretched madman !”

The excitement to which unhappy Doran had been wrought up, during his last observations, and in which every nerve seemed strained to a fierce and feverish energy, had reached its crisis :—relaxation now succeeded. His strength failed him ; the hectic fire, that for the moment flamed upon his cheek, was quite extinguished ; and the leaden, livid hue of death, betrayed the suffering frame, and still more tortured spirit.

When seized by those around him, he attempted no resistance. A second loaded pistol was found upon him. “ That,” said he, coolly, “ was intended for myself ; but I have provided for this chance : a friendly draught, now burning in my veins, will soon release me from your grasp, and leave me little to regret, but that I have failed in executing justice on a villain.”

The extraordinary interest of the scene, the sympathy excited in all who were present, by the unhappy situation of the brother and sister, and the fiery vehemence of gesture and language, in which Doran poured forth the feeling of his wrongs, had suspended the faculties of the assembled group, in a kind of breathless awe and agitation. He might have spoken on for

half the day, and they would have eagerly attended, without a thought of interruption. Even the dreadful act with which he sought to close the statement of his injuries, seemed to lose something of its atrocity, in the character he had prepared for it; and assassination wore less the aspect of revenge than justice.

The tumult of alarm having in some degree subsided, Doran, after casting a look of the most anxious inquiry towards the group, in which Grace Oldcourt, surrounded by her friends, was just recovering slowly from the convulsive state into which she had been thrown by the discharge of the pistol, feebly and painfully addressing those who had seized, and still held him, said,—

“ You have disarmed me, gentlemen. I am already held in the strong grasp of death; and if I had the will, I have not now the strength, to injure one amongst you. In mercy, then, loose your hold but for a moment, and let me speak a word or two at liberty!”

The ghastly aspect of the unfortunate young man, and the evident exhaustion of his whole frame, which seemed scarcely able to sustain him on his feet, gave ample security, that the freedom he solicited could not be abused.

When he had been first seized, he was, for greater safety, drawn within the railing of the

altar ; and the moment the persons who secured him, now relaxed their grasp, tottering forward in the direction of the spot where Grace Oldcourt was placed, he fell upon his knees, and, with a gasping fervency of accent, exclaimed,—

“ Thus, let a dying wretch implore the only boon this world can now afford him ! ”

Grace, whose head rested on her mother’s shoulder, and whose hand was clasped in that of her affectionate parent, was situated with her back to Pierce Doran ; but when she heard herself addressed in his well-known voice, she turned round, uttered a cry of alarm, and again averted her head, with an expression of horror.

Doran, clasping his hands, with the most piteous look of deprecation and despair, continued :—

“ Oh ! turn not from me, Grace ! send me not to my grave in utter desolation ! Will not my death atone for my offence, to *you* at least ? Others, I know, will judge me harshly for what I have done here this day : but I regard it not. ’Twas in a sister’s cause ; and let them remember this : when wrong is without redress, revenge is justice. But fate, relentless to the last, has baffled me ! ”

He sunk here almost to the earth, in the last extremity of suffering ; an universal shudder

shook the hearts of all present at the dreadful contortions with which he writhed under the anguish he endured; while Grace, supported by those around her, wept and sobbed aloud. Now again summoning to another effort his convulsed faculties, in tremulous eagerness he exclaimed,—

“ Yet one short respite, Heaven !” and continued his address to the agitated object of his ill-starred love :—

“ This is an awful moment, Grace ;—*you* will not aggravate its terrors ! In death, at least, I may avow my love ;—presumptuous love, indeed, and justly punished ! But oh ! if one kind recollection of my life,—my hapless life—remain in that pure bosom ;—if our early years—our days of artless innocence—of mingled joys and sorrows, have left one trace behind ;—if the long faithful homage of this heart, its silent sufferings, and its wild despair, have power to wake one spark of sympathy,—let them avail me now ! Let them now plead for me, in this my last request ;—one prayer—’tis all I ask !—One prayer from your pure angel spirit, Grace,—breathed for my soul’s peace ! one look, before this world shall close on me for ever ;—one cheering look of pity and forgiveness !”

While Doran, with a burst of energy, in which the soul flared out before its final extinction, was uttering this impassioned appeal, Grace Oldcourt seemed to be wrought up to a state of agitation almost as painful and piteous as his own;—she gasped for breath. When he had finished, she made an effort to speak, but her words were arrested in her throat—a sense of suffocation deprived her of all power of utterance—for a moment she was convulsed; but at length, her eagerness conquering her feelings, she tremulously articulated:—

“Oh, Pierce! Oh! rash, unhappy friend! still true to me!—in life—in death—my guardian!”

When suddenly dropping on her knees, with upraised hands, she prayed:—

“Almighty Father! visit not in wrath this deed of desperation!” and turning to the expiring youth before her, she added, in a voice almost choked with sorrow:—

“May Heaven forgive you, Pierce, as I forgive and pity you!”

Entirely overcome by the struggle she had made, she tried to rise, but fell back into the arms of her brothers, who rushed forward to support her, and immediately carried her out of the chapel.

While she spoke, a feeble gleam of joy ap-

peared to light up the agonized countenance of poor Doran ; his lips moved, but no sound proceeded from them ; he made an attempt to replace himself upon his feet ; but wholly exhausted in the effort, he fell backwards with great violence against the railing of the altar, before any of those who were around him could rush to his assistance.

Father Clancy was the first to sustain his unfortunate pupil in his arms ;—Doran just opened his eyes,—looked in the face of his reverend benefactor—and with one convulsive sigh—expired.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN order to explain fully to the reader, the circumstances which led to the unhappy event recorded in the last chapter, it will be necessary to look back a little in our narrative, and perhaps repeat some of those observations which have been already noticed in the preceding pages.

If the character of Sir Walter D'Arcy have been developed with fidelity or effect, it will be recollected, that with many excellent qualities of head and heart, with many accomplishments, and many virtues, that young gentleman was, what in the language of fashionable life, is called a man of gallantry: that is, a person wholly without honour amongst women, whatever claim he may have to that quality amongst men; a person whose ambition it is to pursue his licentious pleasures, regardless of the misery which may be the result of their indulgence; and who

thinks it no impeachment of his estimation as a gentleman, to perpetrate offences against beauty and innocence, which, considered in their treacherous contrivance, or fatal consequences, might add a deeper shade to the guilt of an Abershaw, and blacken the calendar of the Old Bailey.

A little experience of the world, however, the self-searching ruminations of mature manhood, and a naturally generous spirit, operated to produce an occasional pause in the heartless career of dissipation, and led him often into that state of suspicious distaste and wavering immorality, in which,—

“The soul distrusting, asks if this be joy.”

Although, as has been already observed, he was wholly unrestrained by any religious or moral impressions in his intercourse with the fair, yet there was a sort of innate semi-suppressed nobleness of feeling in his breast, which recoiled from any cool, concerted plan of seduction. When temptation was thrown in his way, his ardent temperament rushed on to the gratification of his passions; but he never, “with malice prepense,” plotted an intrigue with the business-like baseness of the professional debauchee.

The circumstances which followed the death of his father, the embarrassments affecting his

pecuniary independence, which their combined extravagance had produced, and the mortifying distrust and dislike with which he was received at Killorgan Hall, by those from whom he had the warmest patrician expectations of homage and respect—all contributed to give a serious cast to his reflections,—to make him doubt the wisdom of his course, and suspect the soundness of those maxims which constitute the code of fashionable morality.

In this state of mind, and under the growing influence of these impressions, D'Arcy had joined the depôt of his regiment at Galway; and he, perhaps, never was so little in love with the character of a man of gallantry, as at the moment when he fell in love with Grace Oldcourt.

Nothing so soon, or so effectually diverts a man from a course of vicious indulgence, as a virtuous attachment. The influence of Miss Oldcourt's amiable qualities, and the pictures of connubial felicity, which D'Arcy began to paint in his ardent imagination, and in which she was always the principal figure, powerfully assisted to strengthen his good feelings, and turned the balance completely against those selfish sensualities, which he began to perceive were not more inconsistent with morality, than ineffectual for happiness.

It was with the most perfect sincerity of purpose, therefore, that he meditated to retrieve the follies of his early youth ; and commence, from his marriage, a new career, which, under the guidance of an angel, should be characterized by the exemplary fulfilment of every moral and social duty.

Burning with all the zeal of projected reformation, D'Arcy first took possession of the apartment which he had engaged in the little picturesque inn of the village of Oldcourt. It was situated directly opposite to the respectable cottage of old Doran, who, since the death of his wife, had lived in a sort of surly seclusion, with his only daughter, as the manager of his establishment.

Lucy Doran was a sweet, blooming, innocent girl of seventeen ; romantic from her age and character, melancholy from the unhappy situation of her brother, then confined under medical care at Galway, and from both causes combined, in a state of nervous sensibility, which rendered her peculiarly susceptible of tender impressions.

Much less beauty than Lucy Doran possessed, would have sufficed to excite attention in a country village ; and placed, as our hero was, in so favourable a post of observation, it was hardly possible that she should not attract his notice.

D'Arcy thought her an uncommonly pretty girl; but what had he now to do with pretty girls? His gallantries were at an end, and he, therefore, turned his head another way. Their eyes, however, so often met, that they seemed to be, involuntarily, on the look-out for each other; and Lucy always blushed and looked embarrassed.

There was a pleasant pathway leading from the village, through some fields, to the Castle of Oldcourt. It was an agreeable, well-shaded walk; and D'Arcy always preferred it to the common road. In one of his morning perambulations, he overtook Lucy Doran, at a stile which separated some meadows from a green lane that lay in their route. Common politeness required that he should assist her to get over it; and as they were proceeding in the same direction, it was impossible to avoid a little conversation on the way. D'Arcy was all compliment; Lucy all confusion. An acquaintance was thus commenced, which inadvertent opportunities on both sides, during the baronet's subsequent visits to the little inn of the village, increased to familiarity. Lucy Doran was too artless and unsuspecting to avoid those occasions of intercourse which D'Arcy persuaded himself he did not seek; and some how or other, they often found themselves thrown together by accident, under cir-

cumstances of passionate excitement, and in situations of dangerous seclusion.

The habits of gallantry are not easily relinquished; and few men, perhaps, have ever had the firmness to forego a favourite indulgence, without suffering an occasional relapse. D'Arcy's new moral convictions had not taken sufficient root in his mind, to resist the allurements to which he was now exposed. He flattered himself, however, with the reflection, that he had not sought the danger; and the licentious principles which were but too familiar to the circles in which his life had been hitherto passed, not only palliated, but sanctioned a conduct, which would only add one more trespass to the catalogue of fashionable follies in which men of the world allow themselves to indulge.

As an entanglement of this kind had, on his part, at least, nothing to do with the heart, he thought the serious matrimonial drama in which he was engaged at the castle, might be amusingly relieved by the underplot of a little rustic amour, without any very culpable violation of the homage which he offered at the shrine of his legitimate idol.

Poor Lucy Doran, though innocent in every thought, and as far as her intentions were concerned, as virtuous as a vestal, was too young

and artless, herself, to require much artifice in the proceedings of any handsome young man, who talked to her in the language of love. To her, the fascinations of the baronet were irresistible, and she soon fell a sacrifice to vows which, proverbially, are made to be broken; deluded by those vague and general professions of honour and attachment, by which relentless profligacy betrays the tender and the trusting heart.

But D'Arcy did not carry on his cottage adventure without some compunction, and considerable embarrassment. The extreme youth, the simplicity, and unsuspecting character of his victim, interested his better feelings in her favour. He lamented, when too late, the cruel and inconsiderate part he had acted towards her; and though he endeavoured to "lay the flattering unction to his soul," that his error was not the result of design on his part, but the consequence of the circumstances in which he was placed, he could not but consider the affair as the most reprehensible and unfortunate, in which his gallantry had ever involved him.

The gentlemanly station to which her brother had been raised by the injudicious kindness of the Oldcourt family, and her occasional visits to the castle, had given to Lucy Doran ideas beyond the class of life in which she was placed. She

became ambitious of moving in a higher sphere ; and the eagerness with which all her thoughts were directed to that object, rendered her an easy prey to a lover of superior rank, and the credulous dupe of his protestations.

D'Arcy, also, looked with no small alarm at the unfavourable effect which the discovery of this unlucky affair, might possibly produce at the castle. The delicacy of Grace Oldcourt's mind, and the strong religious and moral feeling by which he had observed her to be always influenced, made him fear that she would view an exploit of this nature, in a very different light from that in which it is usually considered by the gay world ; and so many awkward circumstances had combined to render concealment difficult, if not impracticable, that his only security appeared to consist in pressing forward his marriage as quickly as possible, before his delinquency should reach the ears of the family.

Notwithstanding the rumours which his frequent visits to the castle had occasioned in the neighbourhood, our hero succeeded in persuading the simple girl, that his intercourse with the Oldcourt family grew out of his friendship with the sons, and their pursuits as sportsmen, rather than his attachment to the daughter. But when the period of the wedding was fixed, and conse-

quently, had become publicly known in the village, the grief and consternation of poor Lucy Doran became uncontrollable.

With the sanguine folly characteristic of her age, and her ignorance of the world, she had indulged in flattering delusions of hope; which the special pleading of a man of gallantry satisfied D'Arcy that he had not authorized, because he had fraudulently masked his meaning in equivocal terms. Under the influence of disappointment and despair, the unfortunate girl became so regardless of appearances, as to excite apprehensions of an immediate explosion; and with the utmost difficulty was she dissuaded by the baronet from repairing to the castle, to make a full statement of her wrongs.

This was the embarrassing position of affairs in the village of Oldcourt, when Pierce Doran arrived there to take leave of his father and sister, previous to his departure for India. Old Doran had been some time confined to his bed by a violent attack of rheumatism; and he was too much engrossed by his own personal sufferings, to attend to the ill-suppressed agitation of his daughter. Her brother, with whom she had always been a great favourite, immediately perceived the change which had taken place in her appearance and spirits, and was led to apprehend

the existence of some cause for it, which could not be referred either to his father's illness or his own.

The baronet had just taken up his quarters at the little inn, for a few days previous to his marriage; and, when Doran learned that D'Arcy had been a frequent visitor there, during the long period of his own confinement at Galway, a dreadful suspicion crossed his mind, which anxious observation strengthened, and accident fatally confirmed.

A day or two after his arrival, Doran had been occupied, at a considerable distance from the village, in transacting some business for his father. Having arranged it sooner than he expected, he was slowly returning at the close of evening, in melancholy rumination on his fate, and lamenting that he had ever been removed from the sphere of life in which he had been born. In that humble state, his coarser feelings might have ensured him tranquillity, at least, if not happiness; and a life of labour would not have left him leisure to cultivate those morbid sensibilities of pride and passion, which too often become the insupportable torment of those who are removed from the grosser evils of existence, only to be exposed by leisure, education, and refinement, to miseries at once more keen, and less capable of remedy.

As he proceeded, by an unfrequented path, through an orchard at the back of the cottage, his attention was suddenly aroused to some impassioned words, between two persons at the other side of the hedge, whose voices were familiar to his ear. He stepped aside for a moment, and the immediate appearance of his sister, and Sir Walter D'Arcy, in deep and agitated conversation, realized his worst fears.

D'Arcy was earnestly endeavouring to pacify Lucy Doran's feelings, on the subject of his approaching marriage, and promising every atonement for her wrongs; the unhappy girl answered only by her tears, and the most piteous exclamations of distress at her situation.

Maddened by what he heard, Doran rushed from his concealment. His sister, with a scream of terror, fled precipitately towards the cottage. The baronet, though embarrassed by his unexpected *rencontre*, was cool and collected. Doran, in a transport of rage, and with a torrent of reproaches, struck at his enemy with a stick, which he carried in his hand. The latter, however, warded off the blow, wrested the weapon from the grasp of his assailant, and, by superior strength, in the personal struggle which ensued, threw him to the ground.

Doran, whose muscular vigour had been greatly

impaired by his long illness, and who was exhausted by his own fury, remained for some time panting for breath, and unable to rise. D'Arcy, having broken across his knee, the stick with which he had been attacked, declared, he would no farther punish the assault which Doran had made upon him; but contemptuously desiring him to go home, and thank his sister for his safety,—retired.

Mortified in his own person, and cut to the heart by the disgraceful discovery which he had made, Doran returned to the cottage, where the terrors of an interview with her exasperated brother, had induced the wretched Lucy to lock herself in her room for the night.

The irritation of Doran's feelings deprived him of sleep. Rage and revenge took possession of his soul; and impatiently he watched for the approach of morning, that he might take the necessary measures to sooth the one, and satisfy the other. Having prepared his pistols, he issued forth at the earliest hour in which he could hope for access to the baronet, and impetuously demanded from him immediate satisfaction.

D'Arcy, conscious that he had given ample cause for the resentment which Doran breathed

against him, at first tried to calm the agitation of his visitor, and suggested the propriety of accommodating an affair which violence could not now remedy. But the proposition served only to fire Doran with additional indignation. The baronet, however, having determined not to aggravate the injuries of his sister, by attempting the life of her brother, finally refused to give him the redress he sought for, on the ground that his station in life did not authorize him either to require or expect it.

This mode of setting aside his claim, by disallowing his pretensions to enforce it, operated on the unhappy young man as a new insult ; and he clamoured for redress with such increased vehemence, that D'Arcy haughtily declared, if Doran molested him farther on the subject, he would be obliged to inflict upon him an ignominious chastisement.

Stung to the soul, the indignant spirit of Doran prompted him to the wildest acts of violence ; but, checking his fury, he withdrew, uttering such mysterious denunciations of vengeance, that D'Arcy was struck with an apprehension lest, in a return of the insanity, under which the unfortunate young man so recently suffered, he might commit some act of desperation, that would at

once lay open those circumstances, the present concealment of which, was so essential to our hero's views.

The anxious considerations which were connected with the affair, at such a critical moment, so disconcerted the baronet, that he could not wholly suppress his embarrassment; and the conviction that he was disturbed by something unusual, tended to confirm Grace Oldcourt in those melancholy anticipations which hung upon her spirits, from the moment of Doran's arrival in the village, and which she could neither account for nor conquer.

In the bitterness of his heart, poor Doran cursed his fate, for having placed him in a situation to acquire the feelings of a gentleman; and execrated the prejudices of society, which denied him the privileges belonging to that character.

Disgraced in the dearest object of his domestic affections—wounded in the tenderest nerve of human passion—wronged, rivalled, and insulted, he saw himself hopeless, helpless, and unredressed. Overwhelmed with rage and passion, his reason again began to give way in the mental convulsion; but, struck by a sudden thought, he immediately assumed the calmness of determined purpose. He resolved to sacrifice himself, and the object of his vengeance, at the same time;

and after a night of dark and moody meditation, he devised the plan of which the result was detailed in the last chapter, as the most impressive and exemplary mode of punishing a crime to which the defective jurisprudence of society has attached no penalty. He never once upbraided his sister ; but wept over her as a fond parent over a dying child. Concealing from her the fatal extent of his design, he required her co-operation ; but poor Lucy shrunk with horror from a project which involved her own exposure as well as that of her seducer.

With the immoveable obstinacy, however, which characterizes the impressions of a disordered intellect, he persisted in demanding her assistance in his scheme ; till, after a wild alternation of threats and entreaties, the unfortunate girl, terrified at the frantic violence of his manner, consented, as the reader has seen, to act as he desired.

The dreadful scene to which Grace Oldcourt had been exposed at the chapel, her own distressing share in it, and the struggle she had made to support herself under such cruel circumstances, produced so powerful an effect upon her agitated frame, that she was carried home in a state of insensibility, which was but the prelude to a violent fever.

For many days sunk in debility, or excited to delirium, she fluctuated between life and death. Her heart-broken mother, night after night, watched by her bed-side ; the terror of losing her child absorbing her whole soul to such a degree, that, for some time, the disappointment of all her cherished hopes, was almost unthought of, in her apprehensions of the greater calamity with which she was threatened.

The whole family participated in the distress occasioned by the dangerous situation of their favourite. Even the gout, which deadens the sympathies of its victims towards the sufferings of others, more perhaps than any other malady, could not prevent the old squire uttering frequent exclamations of anxiety for his "poor Grace ;" and universal gloom and sadness reigned in the house of Oldcourt.

At length, however, youth, and a sound constitution, triumphed over the disease. After a crisis, which, for the moment, seemed the last struggle of exhausted nature, the patient, in a slumber, which only the vigilance of affection could distinguish from the sleep of death, derived new vigour from the mysterious source of life and health ; her disorder took a favourable turn, and she was gradually restored to the wishes and prayers of her delighted family.

After the melancholy occurrence at the chapel, when the parties retired, but little intercourse took place between them. The baronet, shocked and confounded at his situation, seemed quite uncertain how to act ; but approaching his friend, Barry Oldcourt, who had just been engaged with his brothers in placing their almost lifeless sister in the carriage which was to convey her to the castle, D'Arcy, with much embarrassment, addressed him :—

“ My dear Barry, you must allow me an early opportunity for a full explanation of this unpleasant business.”

To which the irritated young man fiercely and indignantly replied :—

“ In due time and place, sir, I shall require one ;” turning away with an air of resolute resentment, which precluded farther communication.

Exasperated at the outrage to his sister's feelings, grieved for the fate of poor Doran, and enraged at the unprincipled character of the whole transaction, the warm and enthusiastic friendship which Barry had conceived for the baronet, was at once shaken to its foundation ; and the spirited young man burned with the desire to avenge in the field, the injury and insult which he thought his family had received. Mr. Oldcourt,

however, who was himself too much alive to such feelings to doubt of his son's intentions on such an occasion, interfered, and decisively forbade all proceedings of personal hostility towards the baronet.

The squire, whose morality was rather lax in affairs of love, did not regard D'Arcy's transgression as quite so flagrant and unpardonable an offence as it appeared to the stricter principles of his children; although his good nature, and his long attachment to Pierce Doran, made him deplore the sad result by which that transgression had been attended.

In the eyes of the squire, the baronet had many recommendations as a son-in-law. "Allowances were to be made for human frailty. He had been no Joseph himself, he was sorry to say; and he knew many thoughtless young men, who, when they had sown their wild oats, sobered down into very good husbands, and exemplary masters of families. At any rate, the baronet had violated no engagement, and meditated no insult to his daughter; and he insisted that no decisive measure should be resorted to, till Grace was sufficiently recovered to determine for herself, in a case where her interest was so materially concerned."

The alarming illness of their sister, which

immediately ensued, co-operating with the commands of Mr. Oldcourt, prevented any immediate manifestation of resentment to D'Arcy, on the part of Barry, or his brothers.

With feelings of the deepest disappointment, and the keenest self-reproach, Sir Walter D'Arcy repaired to his quarters at Galway. He had now tasted, in all their bitterness, the poisonous fruits of that heartless sensuality, which the remissness or connivance of legislation, suffers to prowl around, and prey at large, upon the best, the most interesting, and the most defenceless portion of our species.

If, in the full career of dissipation,—in the riot of licentious indulgence, he had hesitated as to the policy of the course he was pursuing,—if he had suspected that it was not the path which leads to real pleasure, or substantial enjoyment, what must have been the appalling conviction of his mind upon the subject, when he found the sad results of his profligacy covering him with shame and confusion, at the most interesting moment of his existence?—when he found the ills which he had wantonly inflicted upon others, striking in fatal recoil against himself—blasting his dearest hopes, and baffling the only rational project he had ever formed for the happiness of his future life?

Until the period of his acquaintance with Grace Oldcourt, D'Arcy had never experienced the power, and, indeed, could hardly conceive the nature of an attachment, in which mind completely triumphs over matter; in which the ore of passion is purified from the dross of sense, and the grosser seductions of animal gratification become subordinate to those magnetic emotions of the heart, in which "souls each other draw," and sentiment spiritualizes love to an essence of celestial character. When the flame was once kindled, however, it burned with an intensity which corresponded with the ardour of our hero's disposition; and no worshipper could be more sincere in his conversion to the pure faith of affection, though the inveteracy of old habits exposed him to relapse into his former heresies.

The insanity of poor Doran, to which D'Arcy persuaded himself the last actions of that unfortunate young man's life were to be attributed, relieved our hero, in his own opinion, from some of the responsibility to which he would have otherwise considered himself liable; but he had humanity and generosity enough, to be shocked and grieved at Doran's unhappy fate.

For his conduct to Lucy Doran, also, he felt the bitterest remorse; and he resolved to make

her and her father all the amends that money, at least, could enable him to offer, for the redress of so irretrievable an injury.

But his whole soul was engrossed by the apprehension, that he had become an object of abhorrence in the eyes of Grace Oldcourt. He had, for some months, looked forward to his union with her, as the commencement of a new era in his life; in which he was to retrieve the follies and extravagance of his early youth, and realize all his visions of domestic bliss. Her sweetness, gentleness, vivacity, and good sense, had cast a spell upon his heart, more powerful than the necromancy of mere beauty could ever exercise; and her idea was so associated with all his future hopes and projects, that existence, without her, seemed to lose its relish; and the world, once the fairy land of his delight, presented to his mind, nothing better than

“One universal blank.”

He was willing to flatter himself, however, that he had still interest enough in Grace Oldcourt's heart, to sustain him against the shock, which he was aware he must have given to the purity of her nature, and the delicacy of her sentiments. Women in general, he

knew, were disposed to look with some indulgence on a lover, who had the reputation of being, according to the fashionable phrase, *un peu volage* before marriage, in the confidence, doubtless, of their power to fix the rover afterwards. But, though he had reason to know, that Grace looked with detestation on the libertine who shamelessly avows his vices, and even fancies that his immoralities will recommend him, yet our hero resolved to make an effort, to restore himself to the favour of his mistress; and, after a night's deliberation, he determined to address a letter to his friend, Barry Oldcourt, as the first step towards effecting that object.

CHAPTER XX.

DURING the first alarm of the family at the sudden and violent illness of Grace Oldcourt, the following letter, from Sir Walter D'Arcy, was delivered to Barry Oldcourt, enclosing a second, addressed to his sister.

“ MY DEAR BARRY,

“ So many unfortunate circumstances have conspired to place my conduct in an unfavourable point of view before you and your excellent family, that I can as readily excuse as account for, the tone and tendency of your reply to me yesterday; although I must say, I had hoped, that our friendship was too firmly established, to be so suddenly, and I trust, inconsiderately shaken.

“ I address you now, however, uninfluenced by any other feeling, than that which arises

from a sincere anxiety to reinstate myself in your good opinion, as far at least, as a reasonable consideration of the case may admit.

“ Do not imagine, my dear Barry, that I purpose to justify my conduct ; on the contrary, I am fully sensible of its impropriety ; and indeed, if I were not, I should hold myself as having no claim to that liberal construction of my actions, as far as they have been connected with recent unhappy events, which I so earnestly solicit.

“ I have been, my dear Barry, as I believe, in our confidential moments, I have acknowledged to you before, what the world calls a gay young man. Strong passions, an ill-conducted education, and bad example, exposed me early to many of those irregularities, which, I am sorry to say, too generally characterize the youth of the present day, in that class of life to which I belong.

“ Unruly at school, riotous at college, and dissipated in society, I shared in the follies of those by whom I was surrounded ; and thoughtlessly pursued those enjoyments, to which we are naturally too prone, and to which the consciousness of our common frailty renders us perhaps too indulgent.

“ But though I have been prodigal, I have not been unprincipled ; and though candour obliges

me to confess I have been somewhat dissolute in my pleasures, I have not been depraved. An ardent curiosity to behold human life in all its varieties, has occasionally led me into scenes of vulgar revelry, and low excess: but it has been as a spectator, not as an actor; and my character has never been degraded by the practice of mean or sordid vices.

“ Though, unguarded by moral or religious inculcation, I was left, in the very fever of passion, to my own guidance—though carried away by the current, and whirled round for a time in the vortex of dissipation, I never sunk to the level of the gambler, the bacchanal, or the debauchee;—my honour has always been untainted, and no man has ever dared to impute to me any conduct derogatory to my station in society, or inconsistent with the feelings of a gentleman.

“ I must do myself the justice to declare, also, that before I had the happiness to be introduced to your incomparable sister, I had become disgusted with the follies of my early course, and had determined that the future should be regulated on better principles than the past.

“ The contemplation of Miss Oldcourt’s virtues, and the ambition which I felt to render myself in some degree worthy of her regard, confirmed all my good intentions; and never was I more en-

thusiastically determined to justify the partiality with which she honoured me, than at the very moment when my evil genius threw that temptation in my way, by unfortunately yielding to which, the cup of felicity has been dashed from my lips, and all the prospects of my life, perhaps, have been blasted for ever.

“ But remember, Barry, I sought not this temptation. You know the motives which actuated me to take up my quarters at that accursed inn, unconscious that such a person as Lucy Doran existed. Bear in memory, then, I say again, that the temptation was brought to my very door. I meditated no wrong against this poor girl; nay, I anxiously struggled to resist those allurements which her simplicity rendered more dangerous, in proportion as they appeared undesigning. My heart and soul never for an instant swerved from the fidelity due to the angel who first had power to subject them to her sway; but the coarser passions of our corrupt nature rebelled in a moment of infatuation, and I now suffer the penalty of my offence.

“ Justly am I suffering, I acknowledge; but where is the young man who shall say, that in similar circumstances, he would have stood erect,—that he would not have fallen, like me! To you, my

dear Barry, I appeal, as to a man of sense—a man of the world;—young as you are, you have had experience enough of life, even in your own rural circle, to be convinced that it is necessary to make allowances for human frailty—you know how lightly such errors are passed over, in the lax morality of the great world, where, strange to say, they are even supposed to give an *éclat* to a fashionable reputation; but though you may naturally exclaim against such a perversion of principle, you will not judge transgressions of this sort, with the austerity of a monk.

“ The insanity of the unfortunate young man who has fallen a victim to his own desperation, has invested the affair in question with a tragic character, which does not fairly belong to it, and for which, under any reasonable calculation of consequences, I surely cannot be held responsible. You will, therefore, I trust, be my advocate with that angel upon whose decision my fate, for good or evil, now depends. In the enclosed letter, which I confide to your care, I have endeavoured to express my compunction—to lay my heart bare before her, and solicit the exercise of her mercy, to soften that verdict which I have too much reason to fear from her justice. But my faculties are powerless, even in the ideal presence

of a being so exalted above the imperfections of her sex, and the subject is of too delicate a nature to be discussed with a spirit so pure.

“ To you, my dear Barry, I give *carte blanche* ; you shall yourself regulate the reparation which I am bound to make to my unhappy victim, and the atonement which I am anxious to offer to your angelic sister.

“ You must be aware how readily matters of this nature are every day arranged, in those circles to which we all look up, for examples of that enlightened propriety, in which a liberal policy is allowed to soften the rigour of a system too pure for the practice of the world.

“ Procure for me, then, once more, the privilege of devoting body and soul, life and fortune, to the happiness of her who must ever be the sole idol of my heart, and whose loved idea is interwoven with my existence. Be the advocate of my cause, the palliator of my offence, and the guarantee of my repentance ; and you will for ever bind to you, by the strongest ties of gratitude and regard,

“ My dear Barry,

“ Your unhappy friend,

“ WALTER MAURICE D'ARCY.”

The agitation of his mind, occasioned by the

dangerous situation of his sister, rendered Barry Oldcourt incapable of attending to the baronet's letter ; and it remained for some time unanswered. As soon, however, as all fears for her life were removed, he dispatched a note to D'Arcy, couched in the following terms :—

“ SIR,

“ The alarming illness of Miss Oldcourt, has too much occupied her family, for some days past, to admit of an earlier reply to the communication with which you have favoured me.

“ She is, however, now out of danger ; and when her strength shall be so far restored, as to render it prudent for her friends to subject her to those emotions, which the perusal of such a document must excite, your letter shall be submitted to her consideration ; when it will receive such notice as may be dictated by the feelings of Miss Oldcourt, and consistent with the honour of her family.

“ I remain, Sir, &c.

“ BARRY OLDCOURT.”

The haughty and hostile spirit of this epistle stung the baronet to the quick. He felt that he had sunk in his own esteem ; and his pride and

his sense of personal dignity were mortified and depressed. But still he clung to the hope that his letter might revive his influence in the breast of Grace Oldcourt, and that after what had passed between them, she would not entirely cast him off. During her illness, he had been a prey to the most bitter anxiety; for he could not but regard himself as its cause. He was constant in his inquiries, and repaired frequently to the castle in person, but never could obtain admission within its walls.

In the most agitating suspense, therefore, he was obliged to await the decision of a court, in which, he knew, an impression of his offence was entertained, very different from that which prevailed in those regions of luxury and licentiousness, where fashion and folly are the advocates of vice, and profligacy is sheltered from reprobation, through mutual connivance and common criminality.

Through the whole of her indisposition, Grace Oldcourt never once mentioned the baronet's name; and studiously avoided recurring to any circumstances connected with their matrimonial engagement. During her convalescence, her sweet and gentle spirit, for the comfort of her friends, eagerly assumed the aspect of serenity;

while anguish agitated her secret thoughts, and preyed upon her heart.

When her strength appeared to be sufficiently restored, to justify the introduction of a subject, upon which the squire and his son Barry, for different reasons, were very desirous to obtain her decision, it was resolved, that D'Arcy's letter should be communicated to her without farther delay; and poor Mrs. Oldcourt, who, from the unhappy day that frustrated all her hopes, had never held up her head, undertook to perform the painful task of calling her daughter's attention to its contents.

In a moment of affectionate intercourse, when Grace seemed to be particularly calm and collected, her mother guardedly led to the topic that so often trembled on her lips; and, placing the baronet's letter in her daughter's hands, she said, with great emotion:—

“ Read that letter, Grace; and may God direct your decision, my child, for your own happiness!”

The instant Grace recognised the hand-writing of the address, she trembled violently: the hue of returning health forsook her cheeks, and exclaiming, “ Oh! cruel, cruel D'Arcy!” she fell upon her knees, adding, with clasped hands, and with the utmost fervour of devotion:—

“ Good Heaven sustain me in this second trial !”

She now requested to be allowed to retire to her own apartment, where she remained for the rest of that day, and the whole of that which succeeded, having solicited to be left alone during that time.

The affectionate feelings of Mrs. Oldcourt, however, would not allow her to refrain longer. At the close of the second evening, with a palpitating heart, she repaired to her daughter's room. Anxiously and unobserved she entered the apartment, and was shocked and alarmed, to perceive the effect which, in so short a period, agitation had produced upon her child. Grace was on her knees, in fervent prayer, her hands clasped upon her bosom, and tears streaming from her eyes. On a table which stood beside her, were writing materials,—many cancelled leaves of manuscript, and a letter, folded, and addressed to Sir Walter D'Arcy.

As soon as she perceived her mother, Grace rose hastily from her position, embraced her afflicted parent with great emotion, and exclaimed,—

“ Oh, my dear mother ! think not I have hesitated, because I have delayed. I am weak, but not irresolute. The struggle, however, I

over; and Heaven, I trust, has triumphed in my heart."

Then, taking up the letter from the table, she added:—

"I place this in your hands for him, whose name, in mercy! let me never hear again. And now, my dear mother, this world has loosed its hold upon me."

On saying which, unable to sustain the little firmness she had collected for the moment, she threw her arms round her mother's neck, and gave way to an agony of feeling, in which parent and child, drowned in tears, for some hours intermingled their mutual sorrows.

With the most anxious curiosity, the family assembled on the following morning, to hear the contents of a letter, so interesting to all its members, from their attachment to the writer, and their feelings as to her farther intercourse with Sir Walter D'Arcy.

Father Clancy, the zealous and confidential friend of the family, was requested to be present; his relationship to Mrs. Oldcourt, and his warm affection for his favourite pupil, giving him the claims, the consideration, and the influence of a near connexion.

Grace had requested to be still allowed to remain in the privacy of her own apartment; from which, indeed, the state of debility to

which she had been reduced, by the increased agitation of her mind, during the last two days, had rendered it impossible for her to remove.

Her letter to the baronet was couched in the following terms :—

“ SIR,

“ After the dreadful events which have recently taken place, and of which you must consider yourself the cause, you could have no reason to be surprised, if I had suffered the letter which you have addressed to me to remain unnoticed.

“ Of the effect which such events were calculated to produce on my mind, I should have thought you could entertain no doubt; but, as you so urgently solicit to be informed on the subject by my own hand, I shall endeavour, however painful it may be to my feelings, to perform the last task which our unfortunate acquaintance has imposed upon me.

“ To close, for ever, that acquaintance, is the object of this letter. Alas! why cannot I also shut out for ever from my memory, the delusive dream of its existence!

“ Before the fatal period of its commencement, though young, and of a cheerful temper, the ordinary pleasures of the world had little attrac-

tion for me. I trembled at its dangers and its cares ; and when I looked around, amongst those who distinguished me by their attentions, there was not one with whom, as a companion, I could willingly submit to encounter them. My feelings revolted against ungracious manners, intemperate habits, and contracted sentiments. I saw that a life of tranquillity and seclusion was my proper sphere ; and I considered myself as deficient in those finer sensibilities of the heart, which characterize my sex.

“ Soon, alas ! was I doomed to feel how much I was mistaken. Accident brought me acquainted with one who knew how to put my sensibility to the test, and who drew forth at once, all the latent affections of which I thought myself so little susceptible. In him was placed before me, the model of all that I had ever fancied as perfection in man. His mind appeared to me to be the seat of honour, integrity, and truth ; and in his deportment, the most engaging manners of the modern gentleman, were dignified by the lofty spirit of an ancient race. My own prejudices respecting high birth, strengthened every impression in his favour, and invested him with all the accumulated merits of his ancestors.

“ Oh ! how was I deceived ! How vain, how

futile the presumption of superior worth, in those who boast their lofty lineage! When I think of him who was the offspring of an humble peasant,—of him, for whose untimely fate, I must ever hold myself, in some degree, responsible,—when I consider his pure integrity—his noble disinterestedness,—his generous devotion,—his faithful love, and final sacrifice—the hapless victim of despair and frenzy!—when I contrast him, in every thing which constitutes true nobility of character, with the proud descendant of an ancient house,—how is my idle vanity rebuked!

“ Yes! Pierce Doran! poor, unhappy friend! For your sake, shall I ever hereafter contemn those unfounded claims of blood and birth, which pervert our notions of true moral dignity, and set up a false standard of merit.

“ He early warned me of my danger; he saw through the specious covering that concealed it from my dazzled eye; and in his death, as often in his life, he rescued me from the peril that hung over me. I shudder, when I think, that one moment more would have linked my fate, for ever, to a man on whom I must have looked with horror, and for whom my love must have expired with my respect.

“ Do not imagine, sir, that I mean to reproach

you for your conduct towards me. Slight, indeed, is my wrong, compared to the wrongs which you have inflicted on others. I would merely account for, and justify the last resolve, which reason and religion have alike extorted from a weak and wounded, but submissive spirit.

“ I presume not to discuss with you, the exact proportion of criminality which should attach to your proceedings, according to what you term ‘ the palliating licence of fashionable life.’ I am ill-qualified for such a task. But if the manners or the maxims of the fashionable world, be such as to countenance misconduct, and palliate immorality, I have little cause to lament the destiny, which will withdraw me for ever from their contaminating influence.

“ You strongly urge upon me, sir, the compunctious feelings with which you view your *irregularities*, as you call them; and you declare your anxiety to make every possible atonement to your unhappy victim. But, alas! what atonement can be made for a broken heart—for a ruined reputation—for a dishonoured name! With what balm will you sooth the double desolation of a father’s spirit, in the shame of his daughter, and the sacrifice of his son!

“ There is one reparation, indeed, which you have it in your power to offer to this poor un-

fortunate ; a reparation to which, if I could allow myself to be made a bar, I should become the accomplice of your crime. You would tell me, perhaps, that she is beneath you ; and you would convert the wrong that you have done her, into a reason for refusing its only reparation. But in my humble opinion, sir, he who wantonly inflicts an injury, sinks at once below the person who suffers it. It is vice only that can be truly said to taint the blood, and profligacy should be allowed no privilege. We shall be one day judged before a tribunal, at whose bar such a plea of pride would but aggravate our offences—a bar where sin alone will be considered shame, and guilt regarded as the sole debasement.

“ If these words offend you, sir, recollect that you have wrung them from me. They are words of sorrow, not of resentment—they have been written in anguish—let them not be read in anger. I will not disguise the conflict which I have endured, to chase your image from a heart in which you have had no rival, and will have no successor. You first opened that heart to the delusions of hope and joy ; and you have seared it up again in sadness and disappointment. But the struggle is over—the calm of extinguished hope has settled on my soul. I have sought aid from the

fountain of all mercy, and Heaven has pointed out to me a refuge.

“Accept, sir, my warmest wishes for your welfare here, and be assured of my fervent prayers for your happiness hereafter. Truly, sincerely do I forgive the wound that you have inflicted in this breast, although it bleeds afresh while I declare, that we meet no more in this world!—Farewell, for ever!

“G. O.”

The tone of calm and fixed despondency which pervaded this final decree against the baronet's hopes, and the evident intimation it contained, of the writer's meditated seclusion from the world, deeply affected the whole family. Barry, to whom the task of reading it had been assigned, was so overcome by his feelings, that he could not proceed, and was obliged to hand the letter to his brother Philip. Mrs. Oldcourt sat, in silent anguish, with that peculiar waving motion of the body, which in Ireland characterizes deep distress; the tears trickling from her eyes, and her hands locked together on her knees.

When the reading of the letter was finished, a silence of some seconds prevailed; at length the old squire, dashing a tear from his eye-lids, coughed up a hope, “that his poor girl had not

refined too much, for her own happiness, in a world like this, where few were found without a blot or blemish."

Miss Matty Malone warmly declared, that "Grace had decided as prudently as justly. Better far would it be for her to remain single for life, than to place her happiness at the mercy of a man who had proved himself capable of acting with such cruel hypocrisy, at such a moment."

Philip Oldcourt reprobated "the unprincipled libertine, who, he much feared, had blasted all his sister's prospects for life, and driven her thoughts into a channel from which they could never be diverted."

The second brother, Garret Oldcourt, who seldom favoured his family with his opinions on any subject, thought proper on this occasion, to observe, with strong marks of disapprobation, that "his sister was a great deal too squeamish and sentimental. For his part, he could not see that the baronet was worse than other people. Most young men were a little wild before marriage; and he thought it was quite enough if they allowed themselves to be hen-pecked afterwards. Sir Walter had done nothing more than what was common enough in the higher classes of society, and was attended with no disgrace

amongst those who considered themselves as examples in manners and morals. Many a girl of spirit would like him the better for his gallantries; and Grace should think twice, before she threw such a card out of her hand, and in a foolish fit of romance, rejected an establishment which would secure splendor for herself, and might be serviceable to her family."

Father Clancy, who had hitherto remained silent, now said, addressing Garret, with one of his sternest looks:—

"Young man, these principles do you no credit; and you learned them not from me."

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Barry, breaking in upon the speaker, with great emotion, "they are base and ignoble principles. Recollect, sir," added he, turning indignantly to the offender, "you are not now amongst your favourite associates—cock-fighters, and horse-jockies, for whom you had better reserve such maxims."

Flushed with anger, Garret was about to retort, when father Clancy prevented him, by saying:—

"In the presence of your father, young gentleman, and as your preceptor, I tell you, that your brother has justly, though intemperately, rebuked you. You libel your sister's sentiments, when you term them squeamish and romantic.

They are the sentiments of a pure, pious, and noble mind,—of a heart glowing with every generous virtue, and capable of an heroic sacrifice of its dearest affections, when honour, duty, and religion require it.

“ My worthy friends,” continued he, turning to Mr. and Mrs. Oldcourt, “ afflict not yourselves unnecessarily ; but rather rejoice in the escape of the angelic child, with which Heaven has blessed you, from a fate which we should all deplore—the withering, and baleful embrace of a profligate. The Providence that watches over innocence and virtue, has guided the decision of your daughter. Try not, therefore, to disturb it. After what has passed, she could not hope for happiness or safety in a union with Sir Walter D’Arcy. Trust, then, to the healing influence of time upon her heart ; and her duty and affection to her family will reconcile her to the world.”

The address of the venerable priest had its proper influence upon his hearers ; and all parties, without farther observation, acquiesced in the propriety of the baronet’s final rejection.

Barry Oldcourt undertook to deliver the letter to Sir Walter D’Arcy ; an arrangement which seemed to excite some uneasiness in the squire, who, fearing lest the fiery spirit of his son, might

prompt him to measures uncalled for by the occasion, took an opportunity of observing to him privately :—

“ Recollect, Barry, that although Sir Walter D’Arcy has not conducted himself properly in this matter, he has failed in no engagement with my family; and as he has made every concession in his power to your sister, no hostile measure can be necessary, either for her honour or yours.”

Barry pressed his father’s hand, and assured him, “ he would take no step in the affair which Mr. Oldcourt, himself, would not resort to under similar circumstances.”

CHAPTER XXI.

As Barry Oldcourt was anxious that the business which he proposed to transact with Sir Walter D'Arcy should meet with no interruption, he immediately proceeded to seek an interview with him at the military depôt in Galway.

He found the baronet, seated at table after dinner, with three of his brother officers. He seemed much disconcerted by the presence of his visitor, and received, with evident perturbation, the letter which he knew would prove decisive as to his hopes of completing his matrimonial engagement with Miss Oldcourt. His eagerness to ascertain the contents of a dispatch so interesting, would not allow him to stand on ceremony; but his agitation on opening it increased to such a degree, that he was obliged to make an apology to his guests, and retire to read it in private.

After a delay rather longer than was necessary

for the perusal of the letter, a servant announced to Barry Oldcourt that Sir Walter D'Arcy requested his company in the next room for a few moments. To this message, the former replied, in a tone and manner which not a little surprised his hearers, "that he declined all private communication with Sir Walter D'Arcy."

After the lapse of a few minutes, the baronet, with an assumed air of calmness and self-possession, returned to the company; and when he had re-occupied his chair, Barry Oldcourt, rising from his seat, sternly addressed him:—

"Sir Walter D'Arcy, the letter which I have just delivered to you, has, I believe, finally closed all intercourse between you and the family of Oldcourt Castle."

To this address, the baronet replied only by an assenting inclination of the head. Young Oldcourt then proceeded:—

"The moment is arrived, therefore, when I am at liberty to satisfy my feelings; and I avail myself of this opportunity to tell you, in the presence of your friends, that you have disgraced the character of an officer and a gentleman; that I disclaim your acquaintance, and demand from you immediate satisfaction for a conduct at once unprincipled, dishonourable, and base.

A declaration like this, delivered with appro-

priate energy, excited, as may be supposed, considerable surprise in the company. The baronet started in his seat—became pale as death; and, after a struggle to repress his agitation, replied:—

“ Barry Oldcourt, you have used language to me, which, under other circumstances, and from any other man living, I should punish on the spot. But I am humbled by the consciousness that I am in the wrong; and I will not add to my offences in the eyes of Miss Oldcourt, by endangering the life of her brother. Let me remark, however, that a less public discussion of our differences, would be more prudent for all parties.”

“ Sir,” rejoined Barry, with increased warmth, “ this is evasion, and shall not avail you. Miss Oldcourt’s name must not be defiled in the mouth of a profligate; and if you would not oblige me to apply to you a still more degrading epithet, you will not shrink from the resentment which you have so wantonly provoked.”

“ Shrink !” cried D’Arcy, with indignation; but checking himself, he proceeded:—

“ Barry, you have not had sufficient grounds to justify this violence. Though I acknowledge that my indiscretion has unhappily exposed me to censure, my honour is clear of all intentional offence to you, or any member of your family; and I

entreat, before you urge matters to the last extremity between us, that you will allow me, in private, a few moments calm attention."

"Coward!" exclaimed Barry Oldcourt, with great vehemence, "I disdain all parley with you."

Roused to the highest state of irritation, the baronet sprang from his seat, as if under an impulse personally to repel the insult he had received. His friends starting up at the same time, apparently to prevent such a proceeding, and one of them expostulating with Barry on what he termed his unnecessary violence, the fiery youth replied,—

"Your interference, sir, is officious. I do not submit my conduct to your decision; and my resentment must be measured by my provocation."

The baronet, now greatly agitated, turned to his friends and said:—

"Gentlemen, you have witnessed at what a sacrifice of feeling, and almost of honour, I have endeavoured to avoid a contest with this impetuous young man. Forbearance now, however, you will admit to be impossible."

To this the officers assented; and D'Arcy, addressing Barry Oldcourt, said:—

"Mr. Oldcourt, I retort not your insults; nor

do I fear, that my character for courage will suffer, though I acknowledge my regret for those unhappy circumstances which have prompted you to a proceeding so inconsiderate. Your intemperance has, however, left me no alternative. The satisfaction you require, I am ready to give you, when and where you please."

Barry Oldcourt demanded that they should immediately proceed to settle the matter that evening, in the barrack field. "He had his pistols ready, and as the baronet was at home, he was of course prepared."

This proposition, however, was objected to by the officers present, on the ground, that the baronet's opponent was not provided with a second. They also considered that a proceeding so hasty was unusual, and would be regarded as highly censurable.

After much warm discussion, it was finally arranged, that a meeting between D'Arcy and Barry Oldcourt should take place the following morning at day-break, on a common near the town; and, this point being settled, the parties separated for the night.

Punctual to time and place, the combatants appeared, attended by their seconds; and the officers who had been present, when the arrangement was made, immediately joined them on the

ground. The irritation to which the parties had been excited the previous evening, and the nature of the transaction in which their hostility originated, gave to the affair a character of more than ordinary seriousness; and the anxious expression of every countenance indicated the apprehension of some fatal result.

The baronet wore the appearance of a man who had passed through a fever of agitation, which had at length subsided in a calm and frozen fortitude, that nothing now could ruffle or disturb. The process of fermentation seemed to be quite over, and the spirit ran clear and cold. His aspect was pale and sad, but it was a sadness serene, and self-possessed; as if the soul, shut up in resolute apathy, was no longer accessible to hopes or fears.

He bowed distantly to Barry Oldcourt, who as distantly returned the salutation; but neither of them spoke.

The ceremonial of the combat was soon adjusted. In compliance with the desire of the baronet, expressed through his second, the parties were to take their ground at twelve paces distance—to advance upon each other by signal, and fire at their own discretion.

This mode of conducting a duel is rarely resorted to, except in cases of extraordinary hos-

tility, and it generally proves fatal to one or both of the parties. It seemed strange, therefore, from the absence of all enmity on D'Arcy's part, that he should have proposed an arrangement so likely to be attended by serious consequences. Before he took his station, he drew a paper from his pocket, and presenting it to his second, said slowly and distinctly :—

“ I wish that paper to be read on the ground at the close of this contest.”

The pistols were now delivered to the parties, and each calmly took his place.

The signal having been given, the baronet, with a hurried step, advanced towards his antagonist, who, seeing him approach so near, and conceiving that his intention was to make sure of his mark, fired, without moving from the spot where he was first stationed. D'Arcy staggered back a little, but, immediately recovering himself, tottered forward a few paces closer to his adversary, till the presented pistol almost touched his breast. D'Arcy then, in a feeble voice, said,—

“ Barry, you have hit me, and in the right place ;—'tis as I wished,—but you see I still have strength to discharge my pistol ;” on saying which, he turned half-round, fired in the air.

and, on the instant, fell apparently lifeless to the earth.

Barry and the seconds now anxiously approached the wounded man; he raised himself, with great difficulty, on his elbow, held out his hand to his opponent, and faintly addressing him, said,—

“Tell your sister I have thus atoned for all.”—

Articulation here failed him;—he evidently struggled in another effort to speak, but a convulsive shudder ran through his whole frame, and with a heavy sigh he expired.

The surgeon of D'Arcy's regiment, who had been one of his party the evening before, and who attended the duel as one of his friends, having pronounced that life was extinct, the baronet's second, greatly agitated, now opened the paper which his principal had deposited in his hands, and read it to those around him, as follows:—

“I wish by this paper to attest, that I enter the field determined not to fire at my adversary, under any circumstances. I desire also to acknowledge, that by a proceeding which was attended with unforeseen and fatal consequences, I have given just, though unintentional cause of

displeasure to Miss Oldcourt and her family ; it is my earnest wish, therefore, that should I fall in this contest, no measures may be resorted to by my friends to molest Mr. Oldcourt, whom I freely forgive and exonerate from all blame on this occasion.

“ WALTER MAURICE D'ARCY.”

Thus fell, in the prime of life, and in the full vigour of his faculties, Sir Walter Maurice D'Arcy, a man distinguished by many virtues, and adorned with many accomplishments. He was liberal, brave, and generous ; amiable in his temper, and engaging in his manners ; Nature had cast him of her best materials, and in her most perfect mould ; but the finishing of a moral and religious education was wanting to complete her work.

Spoiled by neglect and indulgence when a boy, his superior talents were suffered to run to waste ; perverted by corrupt precepts and evil example when a youth, his strong passions were allowed to run riot : impressed with no principles but those which a false honour fabricates, as a substitute for the sterling maxims of religion and morality, he was left without chart or compass to guide him on his course ; but though blown about for a time by all the winds of vice

and folly, the originally sound qualities of his head and heart would have corrected the irregularities of his conduct, if he had not fallen an untimely victim to the tolerated licentiousness of fashionable life, and the profligate habits of—a *man of gallantry*.

CONCLUSION.

MORE than thirty years had elapsed, subsequent to the transactions above narrated : my various pursuits in life had led me far from the scene in which those transactions took place ; and engrossed by the all-absorbing cares of the world, the events themselves, and the characters engaged in them, had long ceased to occupy my attention, and almost to live in my recollection ; when, little thinking I should ever be occupied in recording such occurrences, I found myself, after a long absence, in the British metropolis, to which I had been obliged to repair on business. I there, by accident, discovered, that a friend with whom I had been intimate in very early life, had attained considerable reputation in the profession of the law, and was then a resident in one of the Inns of Court. Old associations were immediately revived in my mind ; and I felt the strongest desire to renew my

intercourse with the companion of my youthful days.

I was directed to my friend, at his chambers in the Temple ; and I there found him, according to the common phrase, “ up to his eyes in business.” He was surrounded by all the formidable enginery of his profession ; the statutes at large, frowning in folio, from heavily encumbered shelves,—rolls and records, deeds and documents, of every description, looking litigation—significant of strife, and appalling the mind with all the perils that harrass human life, through the operation of parchment.

As I was not announced, we met as strangers ; he did not recollect me, and it was with some difficulty I recognised, in the sallow, scrutinizing aspect of the study-worn lawyer, the open, florid, and facetious countenance of my juvenile associate. My name, however, immediately brought me to his remembrance ; he received me, then, as cordially as if I had been one of his best clients ; and had my hand been extended to him with a fee, he could not have given it a more hearty shake.

He was, however, at the moment, too much occupied to bestow his time upon an idle visitor ; and he, therefore, with many expressions of satisfaction at our renewed intercourse, requested

me to take a family dinner with him on the ensuing Sunday, at his "little box" in the neighbourhood of London, where, as he said, we should have leisure to talk of old times—a sort of painful pleasure in which, as we grow old, we gladly embrace every opportunity to indulge.

My friend's "little box" turned out to be an elegant villa, in a pleasant village about six miles from town;—his family dinner was a feast, consisting of all the delicacies of the season, and served up in a style of the most luxurious refinement. The company was composed of my host's pretty numerous family—his wife, three sons, and two daughters,—a neighbour of his in the country, a retired merchant, and two professional friends from Lincoln's Inn.

The dinner passed off pleasantly enough, though I confess I thought the viands more palatable than the conversation. "Learned friends," particularly the younger brethren of the gown, are sometimes a little too pedantic and professional,—occasionally somewhat pompous and disputatious,—rather too dogmatic in statement, supercilious in discussion, and contemptuous in their treatment of topics unconnected with their own pursuits. But when a little experience of the world has taught them how to estimate what Burke calls "the lumber of Hicks's Hall and the Old Bailey,"—

when they have acquired some respect for common sense, as well as for common law, and begin to suspect that special pleading, in all its forms and fictions, is not "the perfection of human reason," they are frequently found to be liberal, agreeable, and eloquent companions.

The wars of Westminster Hall, and the events of the disastrous campaign in Russia, having engrossed the conversation at table, entirely to the exclusion of that "talk of old times" which I had expected to enjoy with my friend, I was not sorry when a languid circulation of the bottle, and a suspension of energy in argument, gave our host an opportunity to propose an adjournment to the drawing-room.

On looking round me there, I perceived an accession to the company, in the person of an elderly lady, whose peculiar appearance and deportment strongly attracted my attention.

Though she had not formed one of the dinner party, I immediately concluded, from divers domestic indications, that she was at home in the family; and though I was not particularly introduced to her, she noticed my approach to the part of the room where she sat, by a slight movement of equal grace, politeness, and dignity.

Her dress was of deep black, plain and unadorned, but evidently not intended for mourn-

ing. Her *coiffure* was a cap, neatly plaited, and closely fitted to her face, concealing her hair in the fashion of a widow, but not displaying the broad border which is appropriated to that character. Her aspect was pale and thin, but exhibiting the hue of sorrow rather than of sickness; and a few faint and fibrous streaks of delicate red, on her sallow cheek, denoted that the brightest rose of beauty had once bloomed there.

Her features, though not perfectly regular, were formed for the expression of all that is good in feeling, gracious in manner, or interesting in emotion; and though fifty years, at least, must have passed over her head, it was plain that time had not been so much her enemy, as care.

The general character of her countenance, and her mild demeanour, gave the impression of a serene and settled melancholy—a humiliation of the heart;—the utter prostration of a spirit prematurely divorced from the vanities of this life;—calm, passionless, and uncomplaining;—abstracted from all earthly interests, and tranquilly waiting its dismissal to the tomb.

But though melancholy gave the general colour to her expression, it was unmixed with any tinge of discontent or dissatisfaction; and if her eye no longer sparkled with pleasure, or brightened

in the laughing light of joy, her look was still placid, benevolent, and kind.

She spoke rarely, and only when directly addressed: she then replied, with a languid smile, in accents so sweet, so gentle, and so gracious, that you saw she was grateful for your notice; and her words fell on the ear like a strain of delightful music, which enchants us while it lasts, and which we eagerly hearken for, in the hope of hearing it again.

To the family around her, I could perceive she was an object of the greatest respect and affection; and, indeed, all present seemed desirous to mark towards her, their sentiments of deference and consideration.

For something more than an hour, during which she remained in the drawing-room, after my entrance, my observation was entirely directed to the fair stranger; an undefined feeling of anxious interest and curiosity occupied my whole soul, and so rivetted my attention to her every look and motion, that my host observed the effect she had produced upon me; and, taking an opportunity of drawing me on one side, -he said,—

“Your curiosity, my old friend, seems to be considerably excited by the lady who has just retired from the room.”

I acknowledged that I had never met with any woman, whose person, manner, and whole appearance were, at her time of life, so calculated to awake a powerful interest in the beholder.

“ Her lot in life,” resumed my friend, with a sigh, “ has been unhappy. When young, she was a distinguished beauty, admired alike for her person and disposition. Some distressing circumstances, which clouded her early prospects, acting on a pious mind, gave her a distaste to the world, and she retired to a convent at Lille. There, after a short residence, she took the veil, and became so exemplary for the performance of every moral and religious duty, that, on the death of the superior, she was appointed to fill that station. She, however, declined all distinction, and desired to continue an obscure and simple nun.

“ During the violent progress of the French Revolution, when all religious houses were suppressed, the convent at Lille shared the common fate; and its pious and charitable community, plundered and dispersed, were thrown upon the mercy of the world, to find shelter where they could, amongst their friends. When I learned the destruction which had fallen upon the establishment, I passed over to Flanders, and

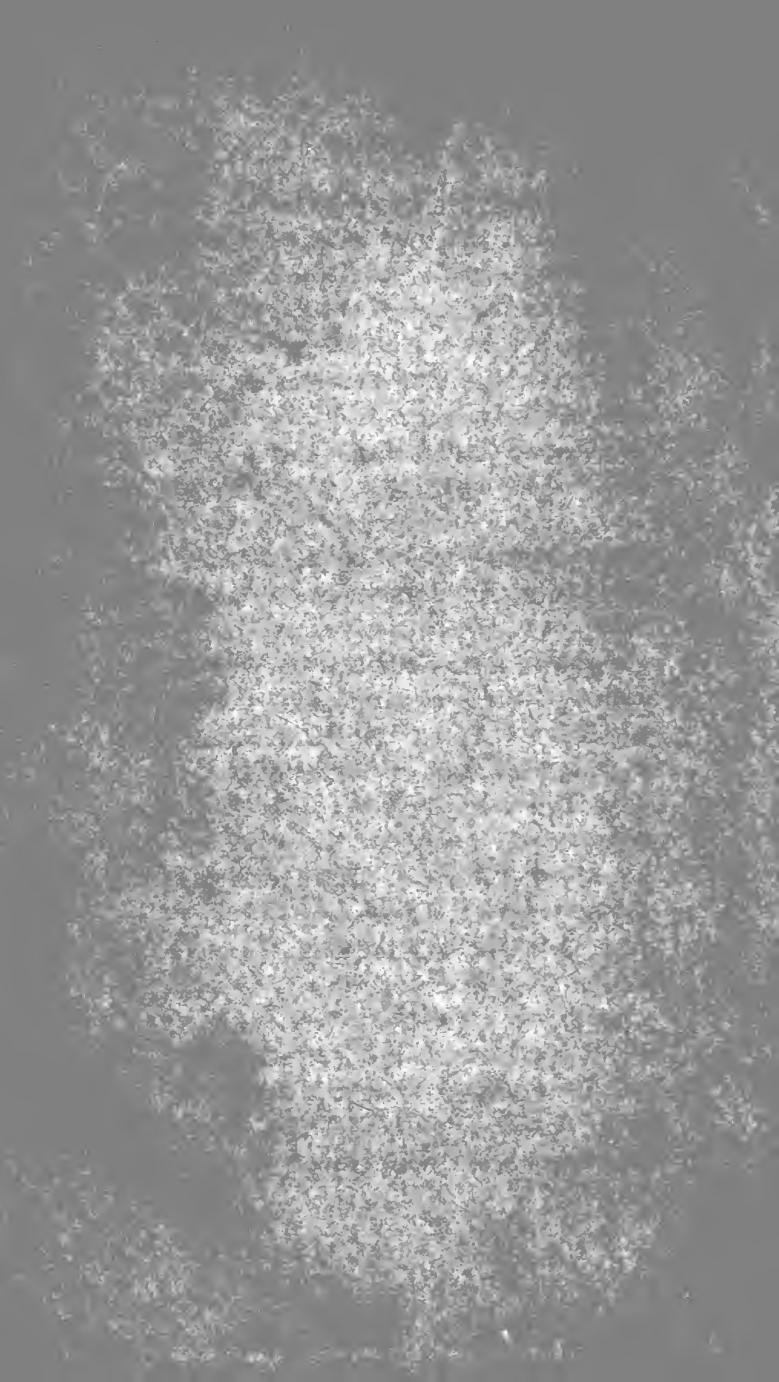
conducted the unhappy lady, who was thus rendered destitute, to this house, in which she has resided ever since.

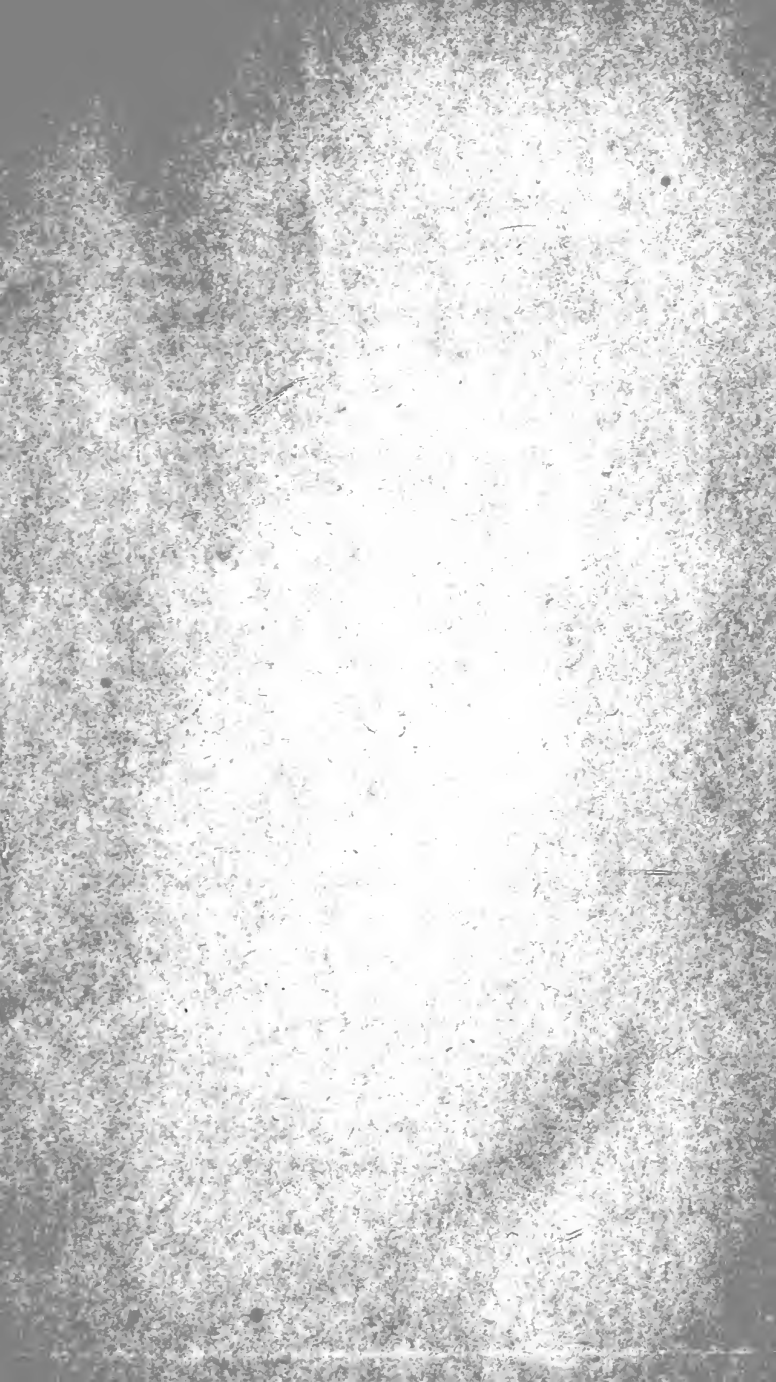
“ Here, she is as regular and punctual in the performance of her devotions, as if she were still a tenant of the cloister ; but she does not refuse to mix in the society of my family, in the way she has done this evening, provided nothing be said or done to draw attention towards her.

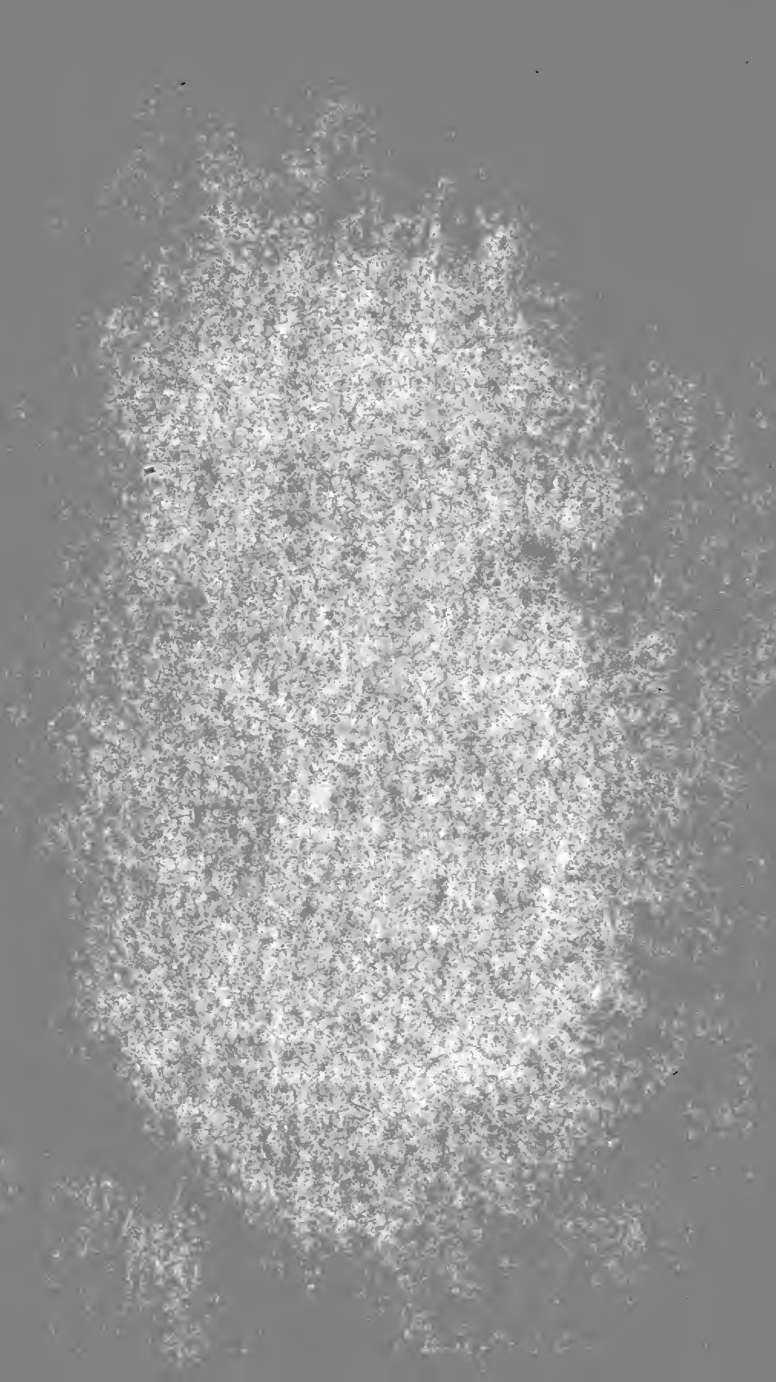
“ In short, my friend,” continued my host, pressing my hand with great emotion, while a tear stood in his eye, “ in the poor recluse who has so much attracted your notice, you have beheld the wreck of youth and beauty, in my angel sister, — the once universally admired GRACE OLDCOURT.

THE END.













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