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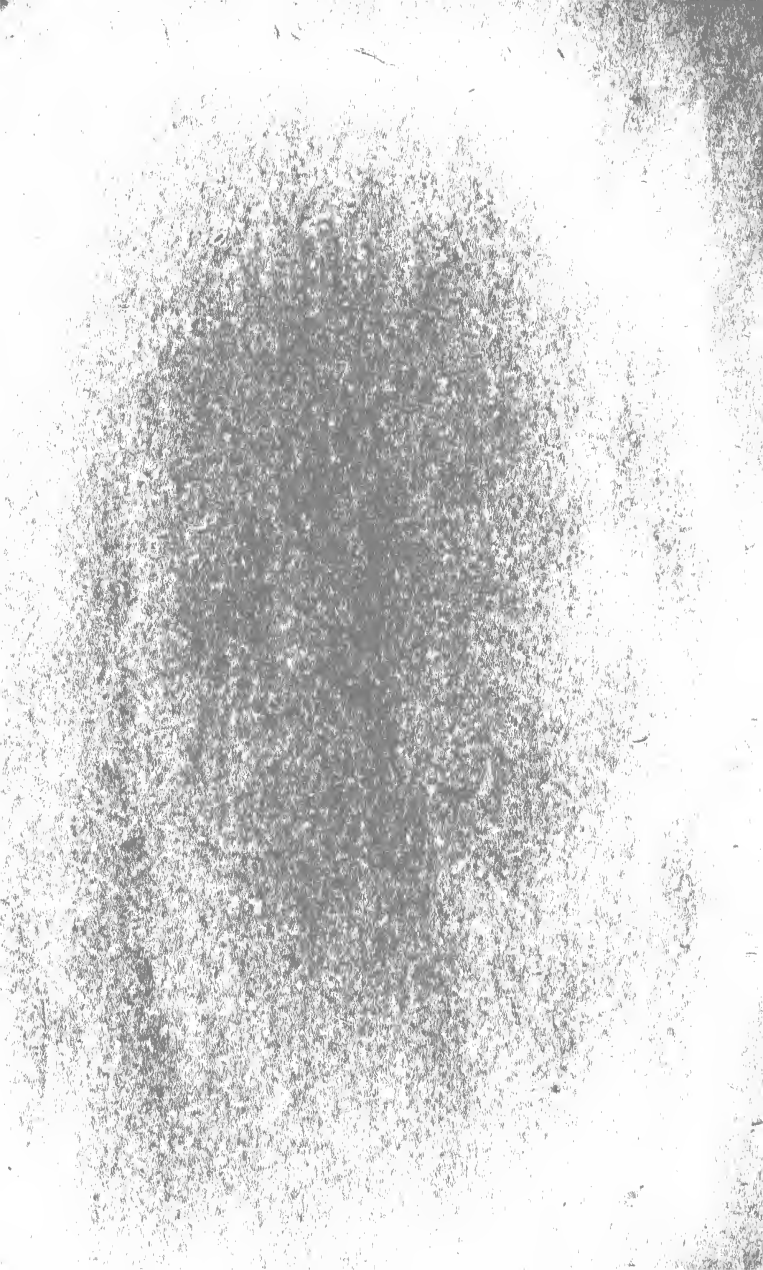
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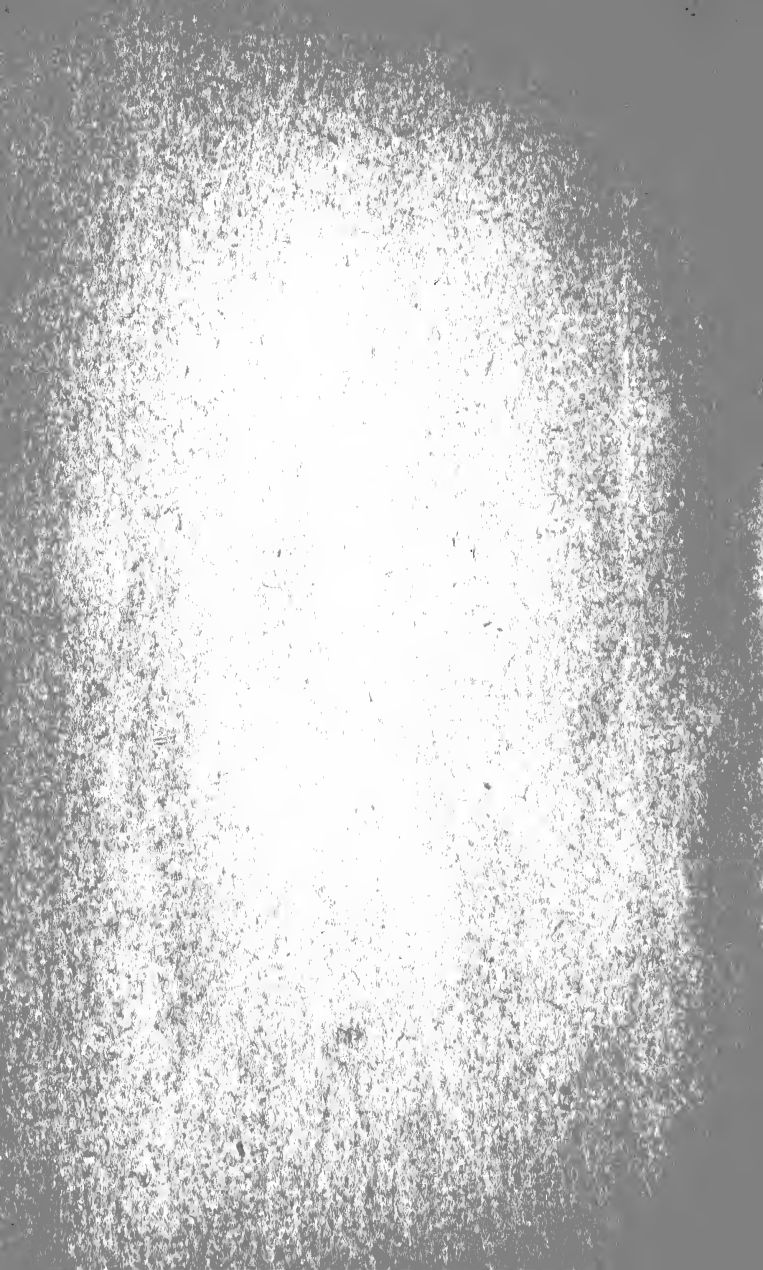
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THE
PURCELL PAPERS.

BY THE LATE
JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU,
AUTHOR OF 'UNCLE SILAS.'

With a Memoir by
ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.



LONDON: *d*
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.
1880.

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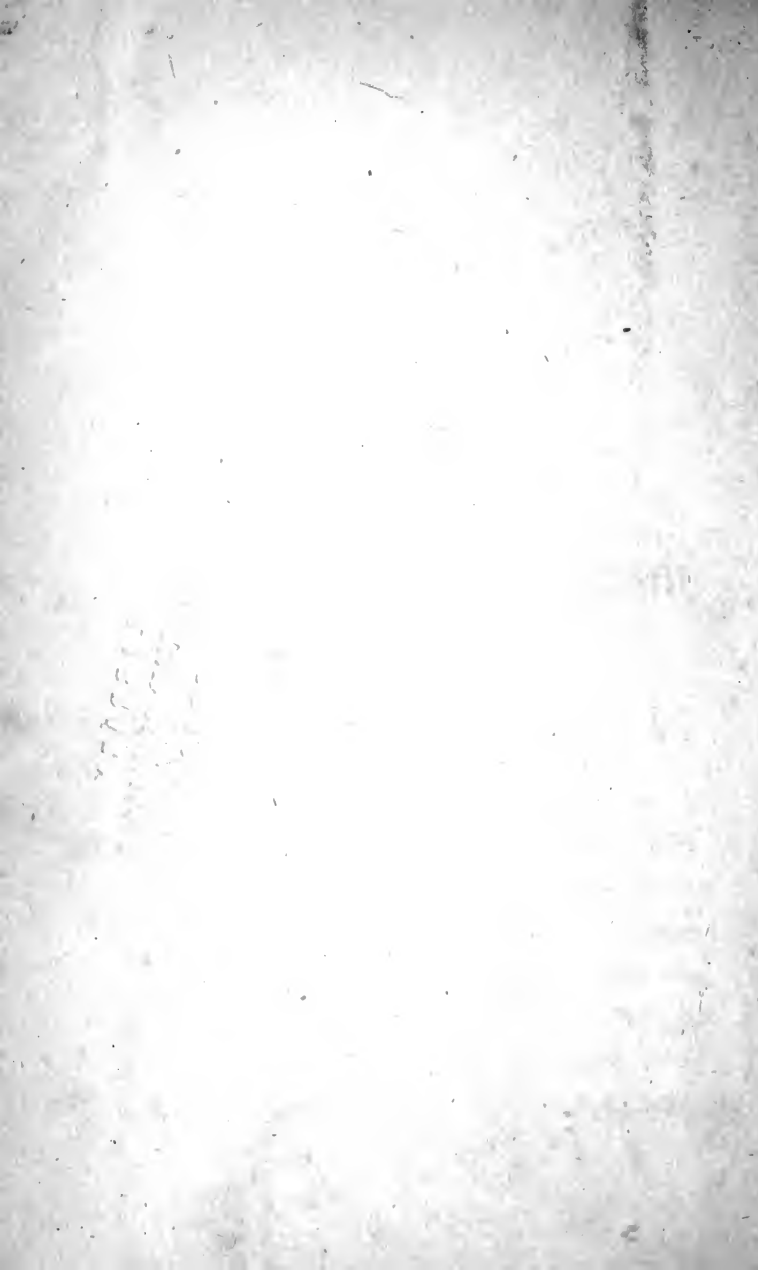
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MEMOIR
OF
JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU.

A NOBLE Huguenot family, owning considerable property in Normandy, the Le Fanus of Caen, were, upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, deprived of their ancestral estates of Mandeville, Sequeville, and Cresseron; but, owing to their possessing influential relatives at the court of Louis the Fourteenth, were allowed to quit their country for England, unmolested, with their personal property. We meet with John Le Fanu de Sequeville and Charles Le Fanu

de Cresseron, as cavalry officers in William the Third's army; Charles being so distinguished a member of the King's staff that he was presented with William's portrait from his master's own hand. He afterwards served as a major of dragoons under Marlborough.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, William Le Fanu was the sole survivor of his family. He married Henrietta Raboteau de Puggibaut, the last of another great and noble Huguenot family, whose escape from France, as a child, by the aid of a Roman Catholic uncle in high position at the French court, was effected after adventures of the most romantic danger.

Joseph Le Fanu, the eldest of the sons of this marriage who left issue, held the office of Clerk of the Coast in Ireland. He married for the second time Alicia, daughter of Thomas Sheridan and sister of Richard Brinsley Sheridan; his brother, Captain Henry Le Fanu, of Leamington, being united to the only other sister of the great wit and orator.

Dean Thomas Philip Le Fanu, the eldest son of Joseph Le Fanu, became by his wife Emma, daughter of Dr. Dobbin, F.T.C.D., the father of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, the subject of this memoir, whose name is so familiar to English and American readers as one of the greatest masters of the weird and the terrible amongst our modern novelists.

Born in Dublin on the 28th of August, 1814, he did not begin to speak until he was more than two years of age; but when he had once started, the boy showed an unusual aptitude in acquiring fresh words, and using them correctly.

The first evidence of literary taste which he gave was in his sixth year, when he made several little sketches with explanatory remarks written beneath them, after the manner of Du Maurier's, or Charles Keene's humorous illustrations in 'Punch.'

One of these, preserved long afterwards by his mother, represented a balloon in mid-air, and two aëronauts, who had occupied it, falling

headlong to earth, the disaster being explained by these words: 'See the effects of trying to go to Heaven.'

As a mere child, he was a remarkably good actor, both in tragic and comic pieces, and was hardly twelve years old when he began to write verses of singular spirit for one so young. At fourteen, he produced a long Irish poem, which he never permitted anyone but his mother and brother to read. To that brother, Mr. William Le Fanu, Commissioner of Public Works, Ireland, to whom, as the suggester of Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Phaudrig Croohore' and 'Shamus O'Brien,' Irish ballad literature owes a delightful debt, and whose richly humorous and passionately pathetic powers as a raconteur of these poems have only doubled that obligation in the hearts of those who have been happy enough to be his hearers—to Mr. William Le Fanu we are indebted for the following extracts from the first of his works, which the boy-author seems to have set any store by:

-
- ' *Muse of Green Erin, break thine icy slumbers !
Strike once again thy wreathèd lyre !
Burst forth once more and wake thy tuneful numbers !
Kindle again thy long-extinguished fire !*
- ' *Why should I bid thee, Muse of Erin, waken ?
Why should I bid thee strike thy harp once more ?
Better to leave thee silent and forsaken
Than wake thee but thy glories to deplore.*
- ' *How could I bid thee tell of Tara's Towers,
Where once thy sceptred Princes sate in state—
Where rose thy music, at the festive hours,
Through the proud halls where listening thousands
sate ?*
- ' *Fallen are thy fair palaces, thy country's glory,
Thy tuneful bards were banished or were slain,
Some rest in glory on their deathbeds gory,
And some have lived to feel a foeman's chain.*
- ' *Yet for the sake of thy unhappy nation,
Yet for the sake of Freedom's spirit fled,
Let thy wild harpstrings, thrilled with indignation,
Peal a deep requiem o'er thy sons that bled.*
- ' *O yes ! like the last breath of evening sighing,
Sweep thy cold hand the silent strings along,
Flash like the lamp beside the hero dying,
Then hushed for ever be thy plaintive song.'*

To Mr. William Le Fanu we are further indebted for the accompanying specimens of his brother's serious and humorous powers in verse, written when he was quite a lad, as valentines to a Miss G. K.:

'Life were too long for me to bear
If banished from thy view;
Life were too short, a thousand year,
If life were passed with you.

'Wise men have said "Man's lot on earth
Is grief and melancholy;"
But where thou art, there joyous mirth
Proves all their wisdom folly.

'If fate withhold thy love from me,
All else in vain were given;
Heaven were imperfect wanting thee,
And with thee earth were heaven.'

A few days after, he sent the following sequel:

'My dear good Madam,
You can't think how very sad I'm.
I sent you, or I mistake myself foully,
A very excellent imitation of the poet Cowley,
Containing three very fair stanzas,
Which number Longinus, a very critical man, says,

*And Aristotle, who was a critic ten times more caustic,
 To a nicety fits a valentine or an acrostic.
 And yet for all my pains to this moving epistle,
 I have got no answer, so I suppose I may go whistle.
 Perhaps you'd have preferred that like an old monk I
 had pattered on
 In the style and after the manner of the unfortunate Chat-
 terton ;
 Or that, unlike my reverend daddy's son,
 I had attempted the classicalities of the dull, though im-
 mortal Addison.
 I can't endure this silence another week ;
 What shall I do in order to make you speak ?
 Shall I give you a trope
 In the manner of Pope,
 Or hammer my brains like an old smith
 To get out something like Goldsmith ?
 Or shall I aspire on
 To tune my poetic lyre on
 The same key touched by Byron,
 And laying my hand its wire on,
 With its music your soul set fire on
 By themes you ne'er could tire on ?
 Or say,
 I pray,
 Would a lay
 Like Gay
 Be more in your way ?
 I leave it to you,
 Which am I to do ?
 It plain on the surface is
 That any metamorphosis,*

To affect your study
You may work on my soul or body.
Your frown or your smile, makes me Savage or Gay
In action, as well as in song ;
And if 'tis decreed I at length become Gray,
Express but the word and I'm Young ;
And if in the Church I should ever aspire
With friars and abbots to cope,
By a nod, if you please, you can make me a Prior—
By a word you render me Pope.
If you'd eat, I'm a Crab ; if you'd cut, I'm your Steel,
As sharp as you'd get from the cutler ;
I'm your Cotton whene'er you're in want of a reel,
And your livery carry, as Butler.
I'll ever rest your debtor
If you'll answer my first letter ;
Or must, alas, eternity
Witness your taciturnity ?
Speak—and oh ! speak quickly
Or else I shall grow sickly,
And pine,
And whine,
And grow yellow and brown
As e'er was mahogany,
And lie me down
And die in agony.

P.S.—You'll allow I have the gift
To write like the immortal Swift.'

But besides the poetical powers with which he

was endowed, in common with the great Brinsley, Lady Dufferin, and the Hon. Mrs. Norton, young Sheridan Le Fanu also possessed an irresistible humour and oratorical gift that, as a student of Old Trinity, made him a formidable rival of the best of the young debaters of his time at the 'College Historical,' not a few of whom have since reached the highest eminence at the Irish Bar, after having long enlivened and charmed St. Stephen's by their wit and oratory.

Amongst his compeers he was remarkable for his sudden fiery eloquence of attack, and ready and rapid powers of repartee when on his defence. But Le Fanu, whose understanding was elevated by a deep love of the classics, in which he took university honours, and further heightened by an admirable knowledge of our own great authors, was not to be tempted away by oratory from literature, his first and, as it proved, his last love.

Very soon after leaving college, and just when

he was called to the Bar, about the year 1838, he bought the 'Warder,' a Dublin newspaper, of which he was editor, and took what many of his best friends and admirers, looking to his high prospects as a barrister, regarded at the time as a fatal step in his career to fame.

Just before this period, Le Fanu had taken to writing humorous Irish stories, afterwards published in the 'Dublin University Magazine,' such as the 'Quare Gander,' 'Jim Sullivan's Adventure,' 'The Ghost and the Bone-setter,' etc.

These stories his brother William Le Fanu was in the habit of repeating for his friends' amusement, and about the year 1837, when he was about twenty-three years of age, Joseph Le Fanu said to him that he thought an Irish story in verse would tell well, and that if he would choose him a subject suitable for recitation, he would write him one. 'Write me an Irish "Young Lochinvar,"' said his brother; and in a few days he

handed him 'Phaudrig Croohore'—*Anglicè*,
'Patrick Crohore.'

Of course this poem has the disadvantage not only of being written after 'Young Lochinvar,' but also that of having been directly inspired by it; and yet, although wanting in the rare and graceful finish of the original, the Irish copy has, we feel, so much fire and feeling that it at least tempts us to regret that Scott's poem was not written in that heart-stirring Northern dialect without which the noblest of our British ballads would lose half their spirit. Indeed, we may safely say that some of Le Fanu's lines are finer than any in 'Young Lochinvar,' simply because they seem to speak straight from a people's heart, not to be the mere echoes of medieval romance.

'Phaudrig Croohore' did not appear in print in the 'Dublin University Magazine' till 1844, twelve years after its composition, when it was included amongst the Purcell Papers.

To return to the year 1837. Mr. William Le Fanu, the suggester of this ballad, who was from home at the time, now received daily instalments of the second and more remarkable of his brother's Irish poems—'Shamus O'Brien' (James O'Brien)—learning them by heart as they reached him, and, fortunately, never forgetting them, for his brother Joseph kept no copy of the ballad, and he had himself to write it out from memory ten years after, when the poem appeared in the 'University Magazine.'

Few will deny that this poem contains passages most faithfully, if fearfully, picturesque, and that it is characterised throughout by a profound pathos, and an abundant though at times a too grotesquely incongruous humour. Can we wonder, then, at the immense popularity with which Samuel Lover recited it in the United States? For to Lover's admiration of the poem, and his addition of it to his entertainment, 'Shamus O'Brien' owes its introduction into America, where it is now so popular. Lover

added some lines of his own to the poem, made Shamus emigrate to the States, and set up a public-house. These added lines appeared in most of the published versions of the poem. But they are indifferent as verse, and certainly injure the dramatic effect of the poem.

'Shamus O'Brien' is so generally attributed to Lover (indeed we remember seeing it advertised for recitation on the occasion of a benefit at a leading London theatre as 'by Samuel Lover') that it is a satisfaction to be able to reproduce the following letter upon the subject from Lover to William le Fanu:

'Astor House,

'New York, U.S. America.

'Sept. 30, 1846.

'My dear Le Fanu,

'In reading over your brother's poem while I crossed the Atlantic, I became more and

more impressed with its great beauty and dramatic effect—so much so that I determined to test its effect in public, and have done so here, on my first appearance, with the greatest success. Now I have no doubt there will be great praises of the poem, and people will suppose, most likely, that the composition is mine, and as you know (I take for granted) that I would not wish to wear a borrowed feather, I should be glad to give your brother's name as the author, should he not object to have it known; but as his writings are often of so different a tone, I would not speak without permission to do so. It is true that in my programme my name is attached to other pieces, and no name appended to the recitation; so far, you will see I have done all I could to avoid "appropriating," the spirit of which I might have caught here, with Irish aptitude; but I would like to have the means of telling all whom it may concern the name of the author, to whose head and heart it does so much honour. Pray, my dear Le Fanu, inquire,

and answer me here by next packet, or as soon as convenient. My success here has been quite triumphant.

'Yours very truly,

'SAMUEL LOVER.'

We have heard-it said (though without having inquired into the truth of the tradition) that 'Shamus O'Brien' was the result of a match at pseudo-national ballad writing made between Le Fanu and several of the most brilliant of his young literary confrères at T. C. D. But however this may be, Le Fanu undoubtedly was no young Irelander; indeed he did the stoutest service as a press writer in the Conservative interest, and was no doubt provoked as well as amused at the unexpected popularity to which his poem attained amongst the Irish Nationalists. And here it should be remembered that the ballad was written some eleven years before the outbreak of '48, and at a time when a '98 subject might

fairly have been regarded as legitimate literary property amongst the most loyal.

We left Le Fanu as editor of the 'Warder.' He afterwards purchased the 'Dublin Evening Packet,' and much later the half-proprietorship of the 'Dublin Evening Mail.' Eleven or twelve years ago he also became the owner and editor of the 'Dublin University Magazine,' in which his later as well as earlier Irish Stories appeared. He sold it about a year before his death in 1873, having previously parted with the 'Warder' and his share in the 'Evening Mail.'

He had previously published in the 'Dublin University Magazine' a number of charming lyrics, generally anonymously, and it is to be feared that all clue to the identification of most of these is lost, except that of internal evidence.

The following poem, undoubtedly his, should make general our regret at being unable to fix with certainty upon its fellows :

' *One wild and distant bugle sound
Breathed o'er Killarney's magic shore
Will shed sweet floating echoes round
When that which made them is no more.*

' *So slumber in the human heart
Wild echoes, that will sweetly thrill
The words of kindness when the voice
That uttered them for aye is still.*

' *Oh! memory, though thy records tell
Full many a tale of grief and sorrow,
Of mad excess, of hope decayed,
(Of dark and cheerless melancholy ;*

' *Still, memory, to me thou art
The dearest of the gifts of mind,
For all the joys that touch my heart
Are joys that I have left behind.*

Le Fanu's literary life may be divided into three distinct periods. During the first of these, and till his thirtieth year, he was an Irish ballad, song, and story writer, his first published story being the 'Adventures of Sir Robert Ardagh,' which appeared in the 'Dublin University Magazine' of 1838.

In 1844 he was united to Miss Susan Bennett,

the beautiful daughter of the late George Bennett, Q.C. From this time until her decease, in 1858, he devoted his energies almost entirely to press work, making, however, his first essays in novel writing during that period. The 'Cock and Anchor,' a chronicle of old Dublin city, his first and, in the opinion of competent critics, one of the best of his novels, seeing the light about the year 1850. This work, it is to be feared, is out of print, though there is now a cheap edition of 'Torlogh O'Brien,' its immediate successor. The comparative want of success of these novels seems to have deterred Le Fanu from using his pen, except as a press writer, until 1863, when the 'House by the Churchyard' was published, and was soon followed by 'Uncle Silas' and his five other well-known novels.

We have considered Le Fanu as a ballad writer and poet. As a press writer he is still most honourably remembered for his learning and brilliancy, and the power and point of his sarcasm, which long made the 'Dublin Evening

Mail' one of the most formidable of Irish press critics; but let us now pass to the consideration of him in the capacity of a novelist, and in particular as the author of '*Uncle Silas*.'

There are evidences in '*Shamus O'Brien*,' and even in '*Phaudrig Croohore*,' of a power over the mysterious, the grotesque, and the horrible, which so singularly distinguish him as a writer of prose fiction.

'*Uncle Silas*,' the fairest as well as most familiar instance of this enthralling spell over his readers, is too well known a story to tell in detail. But how intensely and painfully distinct is the opening description of the silent, inflexible Austin Ruthyn of Knowl, and his shy, sweet daughter Maude, the one so resolutely confident in his brother's honour, the other so romantically and yet anxiously interested in her uncle—the sudden arrival of Dr. Bryerly, the strange Swedenborgian, followed by the equally unexpected apparition of Madame de la Rougère, Austin Ruthyn's painful death, and the reading

of his strange will consigning poor Maud to the protection of her unknown Uncle Silas—her cousin, good, bright devoted Monica Knollys, and her dreadful distrust of Silas—Bartram Haugh and its uncanny occupants, and foremost amongst them Uncle Silas.

This is his portrait:

‘A face like marble, with a fearful monumental look, and for an old man, singularly vivid, strange eyes, the singularity of which rather grew upon me as I looked; for his eyebrows were still black, though his hair descended from his temples in long locks of the purest silver and fine as silk, nearly to his shoulders.

‘He rose, tall and slight, a little stooped, all in black, with an ample black velvet tunic, which was rather a gown than a coat. . . .

‘I know I can’t convey in words an idea of this apparition, drawn, as it seemed, in black and white, venerable, bloodless, fiery-eyed, with its singular look of power, and an expression so

bewildering—was it derision, or anguish, or cruelty, or patience?

‘The wild eyes of this strange old man were fixed on me as he rose; an habitual contraction, which in certain lights took the character of a scowl, did not relax as he advanced towards me with a thin-lipped smile.’

Old Dicken and his daughter Beauty, old L'Amour and Dudley Ruthyn, now enter upon the scene, each a fresh shadow to deepen its already sombre hue, while the gloom gathers in spite of the glimpse of sunshine shot through it by the visit to Elverston. Dudley's brutal encounter with Captain Oakley, and vile persecution of poor Maude till his love marriage comes to light, lead us on to the ghastly catastrophe, the hideous conspiracy of Silas and his son against the life of the innocent girl.

It is interesting to know that the germ of Uncle Silas first appeared in the ‘Dublin University Magazine’ of 1837 or 1838, as the short tale, entitled, ‘A Passage from the Secret

History of an Irish Countess,' which is printed in this collection of Stories. It next was published as 'The Murdered Cousin' in a collection of Christmas stories, and finally developed into the three-volume novel we have just noticed.

There are about Le Fanu's narratives touches of nature which reconcile us to their always remarkable and often supernatural incidents. His characters are well conceived and distinctly drawn, and strong soliloquy and easy dialogue spring unaffectedly from their lips. He is a close observer of Nature, and reproduces her wilder effects of storm and gloom with singular vividness; while he is equally at home in his descriptions of still life, some of which remind us of the faithfully minute detail of old Dutch pictures.

Mr. Wilkie Collins, amongst our living novelists, best compares with Le Fanu. Both of these writers are remarkable for the ingenious mystery with which they develop their plots, and for the absorbing, if often over-sensational, nature

of their incidents ; but whilst Mr. Collins excites and fascinates our attention by an intense power of realism which carries us with unreasoning haste from cover to cover of his works, Le Fanu is an idealist, full of high imagination, and an artist who devotes deep attention to the most delicate detail in his portraiture of men and women, and his descriptions of the outdoor and indoor worlds—a writer, therefore, through whose pages it would be often an indignity to hasten. And this more leisurely, and certainly more classical, conduct of his stories makes us remember them more fully and faithfully than those of the author of the ‘Woman in White.’ Mr. Collins is generally dramatic, and sometimes stagy, in his effects. Le Fanu, while less careful to arrange his plots, so as to admit of their being readily adapted for the stage, often surprises us by scenes of so much greater tragic intensity that we cannot but lament that he did not, as Mr. Collins has done, attempt the drama, and so furnish another

ground of comparison with his fellow-countryman, Maturin (also, if we mistake not, of French origin), whom, in his writings, Le Fanu far more closely resembles than Mr. Collins, as a master of the darker and stronger emotions of human character. But, to institute a broader ground of comparison between Le Fanu and Mr. Collins, whilst the idiosyncrasies of the former's characters, however immaterial those characters may be, seem always to suggest the minutest detail of his story, the latter would appear to consider plot as the prime, character as a subsidiary element in the art of novel writing.

Those who possessed the rare privilege of Le Fanu's friendship, and only they, can form any idea of the true character of the man; for after the death of his wife, to whom he was most deeply devoted, he quite forsook general society, in which his fine features, distinguished bearing, and charm of conversation marked him out as

the beau-ideal of an Irish wit and scholar of the old school.

From this society he vanished so entirely that Dublin, always ready with a nickname, dubbed him 'The Invisible Prince;' and indeed he was for long almost invisible, except to his family and most familiar friends, unless at odd hours of the evening, when he might occasionally be seen stealing, like the ghost of his former self, between his newspaper office and his home in Merrion Square; sometimes, too, he was to be encountered in an old out-of-the-way bookshop poring over some rare black letter Astrology or Demonology.

To one of these old bookshops he was at one time a pretty frequent visitor, and the bookseller relates how he used to come in and ask with his peculiarly pleasant voice and smile, 'Any more ghost stories for me, Mr. ——?' and how, on a fresh one being handed to him, he would seldom leave the shop until he had looked it through. This taste for the supernatural

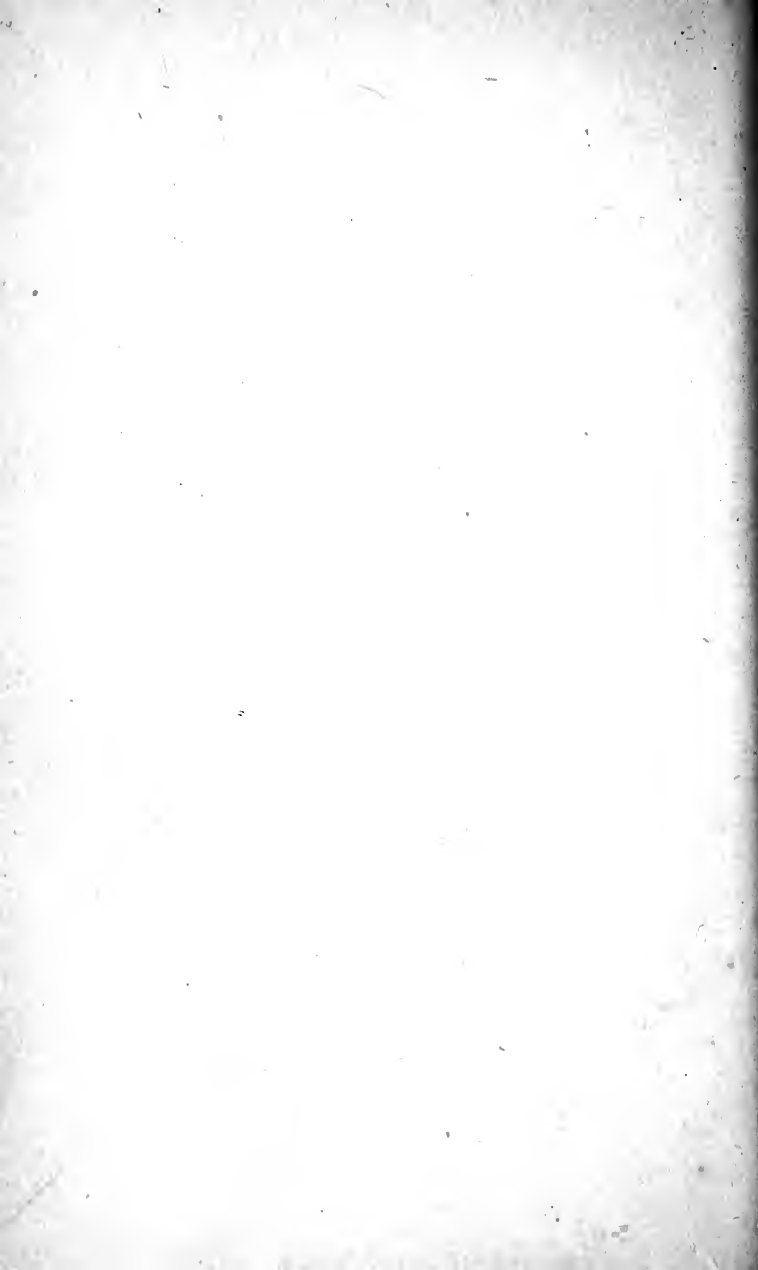
seems to have grown upon him after his wife's death, and influenced him so deeply that, had he not been possessed of a deal of shrewd common sense, there might have been danger of his embracing some of the visionary doctrines in which he was so learned. But no! even Spiritualism, to which not a few of his brother novelists succumbed, whilst affording congenial material for our artist of the superhuman to work upon, did not escape his severest satire.

Shortly after completing his last novel, strange to say, bearing the title 'Willing to Die,' Le Fanu breathed his last at his home No. 18, Merrion Square South, at the age of fifty-nine.

'He was a man,' writes the author of a brief memoir of him in the 'Dublin University Magazine,' 'who thought deeply, especially on religious subjects. To those who knew him he was very dear; they admired him for his learning, his sparkling wit, and pleasant conversation, and loved him for his manly virtues, for his noble and generous qualities, his gentleness,

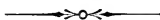
and his loving, affectionate nature.' And all who knew the man must feel how deeply deserved are these simple words of sincere regard for Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu.

Le Fanu's novels are accessible to all; but his Purcell Papers are now for the first time collected and published, by the permission of his eldest son (the late Mr. Philip Le Fanu), and very much owing to the friendly and active assistance of his brother, Mr. William Le Fanu.





THE PURCELL PAPERS.



THE GHOST AND THE BONE- SETTER.

IN looking over the papers of my late valued and respected friend, Francis Purcell, who for nearly fifty years discharged the arduous duties of a parish priest in the south of Ireland, I met with the following document. It is one of many such; for he was a curious and industrious collector of old local tra-

ditions—a commodity in which the quarter where he resided mightily abounded. The collection and arrangement of such legends was, as long as I can remember him, his hobby; but I had never learned that his love of the marvellous and whimsical had carried him so far as to prompt him to commit the results of his inquiries to writing, until, in the character of residuary legatee, his will put me in possession of all his manuscript papers. To such as may think the composing of such productions as these inconsistent with the character and habits of a country priest, it is necessary to observe, that there did exist a race of priests—those of the old school, a race now nearly extinct — whose education abroad tended to produce in them tastes more literary than have yet been evinced by the *alumni* of Maynooth.

It is perhaps necessary to add that the superstition illustrated by the following story, namely, that the corpse last buried is obliged, during his juniority of interment, to supply his brother tenants of the churchyard in which he lies, with fresh water to allay the burning thirst of purgatory, is prevalent throughout the south of Ireland.

The writer can vouch for a case in which a respectable and wealthy farmer, on the borders of Tipperary, in tenderness to the corns of his departed helpmate, enclosed in her coffin two pair of brogues, a light and a heavy, the one for dry, the other for sloppy weather; seeking thus to mitigate the fatigues of her inevitable perambulations in procuring water and administering it to the thirsty souls of purgatory. Fierce and desperate conflicts

have ensued in the case of two funeral parties approaching the same churchyard together, each endeavouring to secure to his own dead priority of sepulture, and a consequent immunity from the tax levied upon the pedestrian powers of the last-comer. An instance not long since occurred, in which one of two such parties, through fear of losing to their deceased friend this inestimable advantage, made their way to the churchyard by a short cut, and, in violation of one of their strongest prejudices, actually threw the coffin over the wall, lest time should be lost in making their entrance through the gate. Innumerable instances of the same kind might be quoted, all tending to show how strongly among the peasantry of the south this superstition is entertained. However, I shall not detain the reader further by

any prefatory remarks, but shall proceed to lay before him the following :

*Extract from the MS. Papers of the late
Rev. Francis Purcell, of Drumcoolagh.*

I tell the following particulars, as nearly as I can recollect them, in the words of the narrator. It may be necessary to observe that he was what is termed a well-spoken man, having for a considerable time instructed the ingenious youth of his native parish in such of the liberal arts and sciences as he found it convenient to profess—a circumstance which may account for the occurrence of several big words in the course of this narrative, more distinguished for euphonious effect than for correctness of application. I proceed then, without further preface, to lay

before you the wonderful adventures of Terry Neil.

‘ Why, thin, ’tis a quare story, an’ as throe as you’re sittin’ there ; and I’d make bould to say there isn’t a boy in the seven parishes could tell it better nor crickther than myself, for ’twas my father himself it happened to, an’ many’s the time I heerd it out iv his own mouth ; an’ I can say, an’ I’m proud av that same, my father’s word was as incredible as any squire’s oath in the counthry ; and so signs an’ if a poor man got into any unlucky throuble, he was the boy id go into the court an’ prove ; but that doesn’t signify—he was as honest and as sober a man, barrin’ he was a little bit too partial to the glass, as you’d find in a day’s walk ; an’ there wasn’t the likes of him in the counthry round for nate labourin’

an' *baan* diggin'; and he was mighty handy entirely for carpenter's work, and mendin' ould spudethrees, an' the likes i' that. An' so he tuk up with bone-settin', as was most nathural, for none of them could come up to him in mendin' the leg iv a stool or a table; an' sure, there never was a bone-setter got so much custom—man an' child, young an' ould—there never was such breakin' and mendin' of bones known in the memory of man. Well, Terry Neil—for that was my father's name—began to feel his heart growin' light, and his purse heavy; an' he took a bit iv a farm in Squire Phelim's ground, just undher the ould castle, an' a pleasant little spot it was; an' day an' mornin' poor crathurs not able to put a foot to the ground, with broken arms and broken legs, id be comin' ramblin' in from all quarters to have their bones spliced up. Well,

yer honour, all this was as well as well could be ; but it was customary when Sir Phelim id go anywhere out iv the country, for some iv the tinants to sit up to watch in the ould castle, just for a kind of compliment to the ould family—an' a mighty unplisant compliment it was for the tinants, for there wasn't a man of them but knew there was something quare about the ould castle. The neighbours had it, that the squire's ould grandfather, as good a gintleman—God be with him—as I heer'd, as ever stood in shoe-leather, used to keep walkin' about in the middle iv the night, ever sinst he bursted a bloodvessel pullin' out a cork out iv a bottle, as you or I might be doin', and will too, plase God—but that doesn't signify. So, as I was sayin', the ould squire used to come down out of the frame, where his picthur was hung up, and

to break the bottles and glasses—God be merciful to us all—an' dthink all he could come at—an' small blame to him for that same; and then if any of the family id be comin' in, he id be up again in his place, looking as quite an' as innocent as if he didn't know anything about it—the mischievous ould chap.

' Well, your honour, as I was sayin', one time the family up at the castle was stayin' in Dublin for a week or two; and so, as usual, some of the tinants had to sit up in the castle, and the third night it kem to my father's turn. "Oh, tare an' ouns!" says he unto himself, "an' must I sit up all night, and that ould vagabone of a sperit, glory be to God," says he, "sere-nadin' through the house, an' doin' all sorts iv mischief?" However, there was no gettin' aff, and so he put a bould face

on it, an' he went up at nightfall with a bottle of pottieen, and another of holy wather.

'It was rainin' smart enough, an' the evenin' was darksome and gloomy, when my father got in; and what with the rain he got, and the holy wather he sprinkled on himself, it wasn't long till he had to swally a cup iv the pottieen, to keep the cowld out iv his heart. It was the ould steward, Lawrence Connor, that opened the door—and he an' my father wor always very great. So when he seen who it was, an' my father tould him how it was his turn to watch in the castle, he offered to sit up along with him; and you may be sure my father wasn't sorry for that same. So says Larry :

'“ We'll have a bit iv fire in the parlour,” says he.

“An’ why not in the hall?” says my father, for he knew that the squire’s picthur was hung in the parlour.

“No fire can be lit in the hall,” says Lawrence, “for there’s an ould jackdaw’s nest in the chimney.”

“Oh thin,” says my father, “let us stop in the kitchen, for it’s very unproper for the likes iv me to be sittin’ in the parlour,” says he.

“Oh, Terry, that can’t be,” says Lawrence; “if we keep up the ould custom at all, we may as well keep it up properly,” says he.

“Divil sweep the ould custom!” says my father—to himself, do ye mind, for he didn’t like to let Lawrence see that he was more afeard himself.

“Oh, very well,” says he. “I’m agreeable, Lawrence,” says he; and so

down they both wint to the kitchen, until the fire id be lit in the parlour—an' that same wasn't long doin'.

' Well, your honour, they soon wint up again, an' sat down mighty comfortable by the parlour fire, and they beganned to talk, an' to smoke, an' to dhrink a small taste iv the pottieen ; and, moreover, they had a good rousin' fire o' bogwood and turf, to warm their shins over.

' Well, sir, as I was sayin' they kep' convarsin' and smokin' together most agreeable, until Lawrence beginn'd to get sleepy, as was but nathural for him, for he was an ould sarvint man, and was used to a great dale iv sleep.

' " Sure it's impossible," says my father, " it's gettin' sleepy you are ?"

' " Oh, divil a taste," says Larry ; " I'm only shuttin' my eyes," says he, " to keep

out the parfume o' the tibacky smoke, that's makin' them wather," says he. "So don't you mind other people's business," says he, stiff enough, for he had a mighty high stomach av his own (rest his sowl), "and go on," says he, "with your story, for I'm listenin'," says he, shuttin' down his eyes.

'Well, when my father seen spakin' was no use, he went on with his story. By the same token, it was the story of Jim Soolivan and his ould goat he was tellin'—an' a plisant story it is—an' there was so much divarsion in it, that it was enough to waken a dormouse, let alone to pervint a Christian goin' asleep. But, faix, the way my father tould it, I believe there never was the likes heerd sinst nor before, for he bawled out every word av it, as if the life was fairly

lavin' him, thrying to keep ould Larry awake; but, faix, it was no use, for the hoorsness came an him, an' before he kem to the end of his story Larry O'Connor began to snore like a bagpipes.

““ Oh, blur an' agres,” says my father, “isn't this a hard case,” says he, “that ould villain, lettin' on to be my friend, and to go asleep this way, an' us both in the very room with a sperit,” says he. “The crass o' Christ about us!” says he; and with that he was goin' to shake Lawrence to waken him, but he just remimbered if he roused him, that he'd surely go off to his bed, an' lave him completely alone, an' that id be by far worse.

““ Oh thin,” says my father, “I'll not disturb the poor boy. It id be neither friendly nor good-nathured,” says he, “to tormint him while he is asleep,” says he;

“only I wish I was the same way, myself,” says he.

‘An’ with that he began to walk up an’ down, an’ sayin’ his prayers, until he worked himself into a sweat, savin’ your presence. But it was all no good; so he dthruke about a pint of sperits, to compose his mind.

““ Oh,” says he, “ I wish to the Lord I was as asy in my mind as Larry there. Maybe,” says he, “if I thried I could go asleep;” an’ with that he pulled a big arm-chair close beside Lawrence, an’ settled himself in it as well as he could.

‘ But there was one quare thing I forgot to tell you. He couldn’t help, in spite av himself, lookin’ now an’ thin at the picthur, an’ he immediately obsarved that the eyes av it was follyin’ him about, an’ starin’ at him, an’ winkin’ at him, wher-

iver he wint. "Oh," says he, when he seen that, "it's a poor chance I have," says he; "an' bad luck was with me the day I kem into this unforthunate place," says he. "But any way there's no use in bein' freckened now," says he; "for if I am to die, I may as well parspire undaunted," says he.

' Well, your honour, he thried to keep himself quite an' asy, an' he thought two or three times he might have wint asleep, but for the way the storm was groanin' and creakin' through the great heavy branches outside, an' whistlin' through the ould chimleys iv the castle. Well, afther one great roarin' blast iv the wind, you'd think the walls iv the castle was just goin' to fall, quite an' clane, with the shakin' iv it. All av a suddint the storm stopt, as silent an' as quite as if it was a July

evenin'. Well, your honour, it wasn't stopped blowin' for three minnites, before he thought he hard a sort iv a noise over the chimley-piece; an' with that my father just opened his eyes the smallest taste in life, an' sure enough he seen the ould squire gettin' out iv the picthur, for all the world as if he was throwin' aff his ridin' coat, until he stept out clane an' compleate, out av the chimley-piece, an' thrun himself down an the floor. Well, the slieven ould chap—an' my father thought it was the dirtiest turn iv all—before he beganned to do anything out iv the way, he stopped for a while to listen wor they both asleep; an' as soon as he thought all was quite, he put out his hand and tuk hould iv the whisky bottle, an dhrank at laste a pint iv it. Well, your honour, when he tuk his turn out iv it, he

settled it back mighty cute entirely, in the very same spot it was in before. An' he began to walk up an' down the room, lookin' as sober an' as solid as if he never done the likes at all. An' whinever he went apast my father, he thought he felt a great scent of brimstone, an' it was that that freckened him entirely; for he knew it was brimstone that was burned in hell, savin' your presence. At any rate, he often heerd it from Father Murphy, an' he had a right to know what belonged to it—he's dead since, God rest him. Well, your honour, my father was asy enough until the sperit kem past him; so close, God be marcifful to us all, that the smell iv the sulphur tuk the bréath clane out iv him; an' with that he tuk such a fit iv coughin', that it al-a-most shuk him out iv the chair he was sittin' in.

“Ho, ho!” says the squire, stoppin’ short about two steps aff, and turnin’ round facin’ my father, “is it you that’s in it?—an’ how’s all with you, Terry Neil?”

“At your honour’s sarvice,” says my father (as well as the fright id let him, for he was more dead than alive), “an’ it’s proud I am to see your honour to-night,” says he.

“Terence,” says the squire, “you’re a respectable man” (an’ it was throe for him), “an industhrious, sober man, an’ an example of inebriety to the whole parish,” says he.

“Thank your honour,” says my father, gettin’ courage, “you were always a civil spoken gintleman, God rest your honour.”

“Rest my honour?” says the sperit (fairly gettin’ red in the face with the

madness), "Rest my honour?" says he. "Why, you ignorant spalpeen," says he, "you mane, niggarly ignoramush," says he, "where did you lave your manners?" says he. "If I *am* dead, it's no fault iv mine," says he; "an' it's not to be thrun in my teeth at every hand's turn, by the likes iv you," says he, stampin' his foot an the flure, that you'd think the boords id smash undther him.

"Oh," says my father, "I'm only a foolish, ignorant poor man," says he.

"You're nothing else," says the squire: "but any way," says he, "it's not to be listenin' to your goster, nor convarsin' with the likes iv you, that I came *up*—down I mane," says he—(an' as little as the mistake was, my father tuk notice iv it). "Listen to me now, Terence Neil," says he: "I was always a good mather

to Pathrick Neil, your grandfather," says he.

“ ‘Tis throe for your honour,” says my father.

“And, moreover, I think I was always a sober, riglar gintleman,” says the squire.

“That’s your name, sure enough,” says my father (though it was a big lie for him, but he could not help it).

“Well,” says the sperit, “although I was as sober as most men—at laste as most gintlemin,” says he; “an’ though I was at different periods a most extempory Christian, and most charitable and inhuman to the poor,” says he; “for all that I’m not as asy where I am now,” says he, “as I had a right to expect,” says he.

“An’ more’s the pity,” says my father. “Maybe your honour id wish to have a word with Father Murphy?”

“Hould your tongue, you misherable bliggard,” says the squire; “it’s not iv my sowl I’m thinkin’—an’ I wondther you’d have the impitence to talk to a gintleman consarnin’ his sowl; and when I want *that* fixed,” says he, slappin’ his thigh, “I’ll go to them that knows what belongs to the likes,” says he. “It’s not my sowl,” says he, sittin’ down oposite my father; “it’s not my sowl that’s annoyin’ me most—I’m unasy on my right leg,” says he, “that I bruk at Glenvarloch cover the day I killed black Barney.”

‘My father found out afther, it was a favourite horse that fell undher him, afther leapin’ the big fence that runs along by the glin.

“I hope,” says my father, “your honour’s not unasy about the killin’ iv him?”

“Hould your tongue, ye fool,” said the squire, “an’ I’ll tell you why I’m unasy on my leg,” says he. “In the place, where I spend most iv my time,” says he, “except the little leisure I have for lookin’ about me here,” says he, “I have to walk a great dale more than I was ever used to,” says he, “and by far more than is good for me either,” says he; “for I must tell you,” says he, “the people where I am is uncommonly fond iv cowld wather, for there is nothin’ betther to be had; an’, moreover, the weather is hotter than is altogether plisant,” says he; “and I’m appinted,” says he, “to assist in carryin’ the wather, an’ gets a mighty poor share iv it myself,” says he, “an’ a mighty throublesome, wearin’ job it is, I can tell you,” says he; “for they’re all iv them surprisibly dthry, an’ dthrinks it as fast as my legs can carry it,” says he;

“but what kills me intirely,” says he, “is the wakeness in my leg,” says he, “an’ I want you to give it a pull or two to bring it to shape,” says he, “and that’s the long an’ the short iv it,” says he.

““Oh, plase your honour,” says my father (for he didn’t like to handle the sperit at all), “I wouldn’t have the impidence to do the likes to your honour,” says he; “it’s only to poor crathurs like myself I’d do it to,” says he.

““None iv your blarney,” says the squire. “Here’s my leg,” says he, cockin’ it up to him—“pull it for the bare life,” says he; an’ “if you don’t, by the immortal powers I’ll not lave a bone in your carcish I’ll not powdher,” says he.

‘When my father heerd that, he seen there was no use in purtendin’, so he tuk hould iv the leg, an’ he kep’ pullin’ an’

pullin', till the sweat, God bless us, began to pour down his face.

“Pull, you divil!” says the squire.

“At your sarvice, your honour,” says my father.

“Pull harder,” says the squire.

“My father pulled like the divil.

“I'll take a little sup,” says the squire, rachin' over his hand to the bottle, “to keep up my courage,” says he, lettin' an to be very wake in himself intirely. But, as cute as he was, he was out here, for he tuk the wrong one. “Here's to your good health, Terence,” says he; “an' now pull like the very divil.” An' with that he lifted the bottle of holy wather, but it was hardly to his mouth, whin he let a screech out, you'd think the room id fairly split with it, an' made one chuck that sent the leg clane aff his body in my father's hands.

Down wint the squire over the table, an' bang wint my father half-way across the room on his back, upon the flure. Whin he kem to himself the cheerful mornin' sun was shinin' through the windy shutthers, an' he was lying flat an' his back, with the leg iv one of the great ould chairs pulled clane out iv the socket an' tight in his hand, pintin' up to the ceilin', an' ould Larry fast asleep, an' snorin' as loud as ever. My father wint that mornin' to Father Murphy, an' from that to the day of his death, he never neglected confission nor mass, an' what he tould was betther believed that he spake av it but seldom. An', as for the squire, that is the sperit, whether it was that he did not like his liquor, or by rason iv the loss iv his leg, he was never known to walk agin.'



THE FORTUNES OF SIR ROBERT ARDAGH.

*Being a second Extract from the Papers of the late
Father Purcell.*

‘The earth hath bubbles as the water hath—
And these are of them.’

IN the south of Ireland, and on
the borders of the county of
Limerick, there lies a district of
two or three miles in length, which is
rendered interesting by the fact that it is
one of the very few spots throughout this

country, in which some vestiges of aboriginal forest still remain. It has little or none of the lordly character of the American forest, for the axe has felled its oldest and its grandest trees ; but in the close wood which survives, live all the wild and pleasing peculiarities of nature : its complete irregularity, its vistas, in whose perspective the quiet cattle are peacefully browsing ; its refreshing glades, where the grey rocks arise from amid the nodding fern ; the silvery shafts of the old birch trees ; the knotted trunks of the hoary oak, the grotesque but graceful branches which never shed their honours under the tyrant pruning-hook ; the soft green sward ; the chequered light and shade ; the wild luxuriant weeds ; the lichen and the moss—all, all are beautiful alike in the green freshness of spring, or in the

sadness and sere of autumn. Their beauty is of that kind which makes the heart full with joy—appealing to the affections with a power which belongs to nature only. This wood runs up, from below the base, to the ridge of a long line of irregular hills, having perhaps, in primitive times, formed but the skirting of some mighty forest which occupied the level below.

But now, alas! whither have we drifted? whither has the tide of civilisation borne us? It has passed over a land unprepared for it—it has left nakedness behind it; we have lost our forests, but our marauders remain; we have destroyed all that is picturesque, while we have retained everything that is revolting in barbarism. Through the midst of this woodland there runs a deep gully or glen, where the stillness of the scene is broken in

upon by the brawling of a mountain-stream, which, however, in the winter season, swells into a rapid and formidable torrent.

There is one point at which the glen becomes extremely deep and narrow; the sides descend to the depth of some hundred feet, and are so steep as to be nearly perpendicular. The wild trees which have taken root in the crannies and chasms of the rock have so intersected and entangled, that one can with difficulty catch a glimpse of the stream, which wheels, flashes, and foams below, as if exulting in the surrounding silence and solitude.

This spot was not unwisely chosen, as a point of no ordinary strength, for the erection of a massive square tower or keep, one side of which rises as if in continuation of the precipitous cliff on which it is based.

Originally, the only mode of ingress was by a narrow portal in the very wall which overtopped the precipice, opening upon a ledge of rock which afforded a precarious pathway, cautiously intersected, however, by a deep trench cut with great labour in the living rock ; so that, in its original state, and before the introduction of artillery into the art of war, this tower might have been pronounced, and that not presumptuously, almost impregnable.

The progress of improvement and the increasing security of the times had, however, tempted its successive proprietors, if not to adorn, at least to enlarge their premises, and at about the middle of the last century, when the castle was last inhabited, the original square tower formed but a small part of the edifice.

The castle, and a wide tract of the sur-

rounding country, had from time immemorial belonged to a family which, for distinctness, we shall call by the name of Ardagh; and owing to the associations which, in Ireland, almost always attach to scenes which have long witnessed alike the exercise of stern feudal authority, and of that savage hospitality which distinguished the good old times, this building has become the subject and the scene of many wild and extraordinary traditions. One of them I have been enabled, by a personal acquaintance with an eye-witness of the events, to trace to its origin; and yet it is hard to say whether the events which I am about to record appear more strange or improbable as seen through the distorting medium of tradition, or in the appalling dimness of uncertainty which surrounds the reality.

Tradition says that, sometime in the last century, Sir Robert Ardagh, a young man, and the last heir of that family, went abroad and served in foreign armies; and that, having acquired considerable honour and emolument, he settled at Castle Ardagh, the building we have just now attempted to describe. He was what the country people call a *dark* man; that is, he was considered morose, reserved, and ill-tempered; and, as it was supposed from the utter solitude of his life, was upon no terms of cordiality with the other members of his family.

The only occasion upon which he broke through the solitary monotony of his life was during the continuance of the racing season, and immediately subsequent to it; at which time he was to be seen among the busiest upon the course, betting deeply

and unhesitatingly, and invariably with success. Sir Robert was, however, too well known as a man of honour, and of too high a family, to be suspected of any unfair dealing. He was, moreover, a soldier, and a man of an intrepid as well as of a haughty character; and no one cared to hazard a surmise, the consequences of which would be felt most probably by its originator only.

Gossip, however, was not silent; it was remarked that Sir Robert never appeared at the race-ground, which was the only place of public resort which he frequented, except in company with a certain strange-looking person, who was never seen elsewhere, or under other circumstances. It was remarked, too, that this man, whose relation to Sir Robert was never distinctly ascertained, was the only person to whom

he seemed to speak unnecessarily ; it was observed that while with the country gentry he exchanged no further communication than what was unavoidable in arranging his sporting transactions, with this person he would converse earnestly and frequently. Tradition asserts that, to enhance the curiosity which this unaccountable and exclusive preference excited, the stranger possessed some striking and unpleasant peculiarities of person and of garb—she does not say, however, what these were—but they, in conjunction with Sir Robert's secluded habits and extraordinary run of luck—a success which was supposed to result from the suggestions and immediate advice of the unknown—were sufficient to warrant report in pronouncing that there was something *queer* in the wind, and in surmising that Sir Robert

was playing a fearful and a hazardous game, and that, in short, his strange companion was little better than the devil himself.

Years, however, rolled quietly away, and nothing novel occurred in the arrangements of Castle Ardagh, excepting that Sir Robert parted with his odd companion, but as nobody could tell whence he came, so nobody could say whither he had gone. Sir Robert's habits, however, underwent no consequent change; he continued regularly to frequent the race meetings, without mixing at all in the convivialities of the gentry, and immediately afterwards to relapse into the secluded monotony of his ordinary life.

It was said that he had accumulated vast sums of money—and, as his bets were always successful, and always large, such must have been the case. He did not

suffer the acquisition of wealth, however, to influence his hospitality or his house-keeping—he neither purchased land, nor extended his establishment; and his mode of enjoying his money must have been altogether that of the miser—consisting merely in the pleasure of touching and telling his gold, and in the consciousness of wealth.

Sir Robert's temper, so far from improving, became more than ever gloomy and morose. He sometimes carried the indulgence of his evil dispositions to such a height that it bordered upon insanity. During these paroxysms he would neither eat, drink, nor sleep. On such occasions he insisted on perfect privacy, even from the intrusion of his most trusted servants; his voice was frequently heard, sometimes in earnest supplication, sometime

as if in loud and angry altercation with some unknown [v]isitant; sometimes he would, for hours together, walk to and fro throughout the long oak wainscoted apartment, which he generally occupied, with wild gesticulations and agitated pace, in the manner of one who has been roused to a state of unnatural excitement by some sudden and appalling intimation.

These paroxysms of apparent lunacy were so frightful, that during their continuance even his oldest and most faithful domestics dared not approach him; consequently, his hours of agony were never intruded upon, and the mysterious causes of his sufferings appeared likely to remain hidden for ever.

On one occasion a fit of this kind continued for an unusual time, the ordinary term of their duration—about two

days—had been long past, and the old servant who generally waited upon Sir Robert after these visitations, having in vain listened for the well-known tinkle of his master's hand-bell, began to feel extremely anxious ; he feared that his master might have died from sheer exhaustion, or perhaps put an end to his own existence during his miserable depression. These fears at length became so strong, that having in vain urged some of his brother servants to accompany him, he determined to go up alone, and himself see whether any accident had befallen Sir Robert.

He traversed the several passages which conducted from the new to the more ancient parts of the mansion, and having arrived in the old hall of the castle, the utter silence of the hour, for it was very late in the night, the idea of the nature of

the enterprise in which he was engaging himself, a sensation of remoteness from anything like human companionship, but, more than all, the vivid but undefined anticipation of something horrible, came upon him with such oppressive weight that he hesitated as to whether he should proceed. Real uneasiness, however, respecting the fate of his master, for whom he felt that kind of attachment which the force of habitual intercourse not unfrequently engenders respecting objects not in themselves amiable, and also a latent unwillingness to expose his weakness to the ridicule of his fellow-servants, combined to overcome his reluctance; and he had just placed his foot upon the first step of the staircase which conducted to his master's chamber, when his attention was arrested by a low but distinct knocking at the hall-door.

Not, perhaps, very sorry at finding thus an excuse even for deferring his intended expedition, he placed the candle upon a stone block which lay in the hall, and approached the door, uncertain whether his ears had not deceived him. This doubt was justified by the circumstance that the hall entrance had been for nearly fifty years disused as a mode of ingress to the castle. The situation of this gate also, which we have endeavoured to describe, opening upon a narrow ledge of rock which overhangs a perilous cliff, rendered it at all times, but particularly at night, a dangerous entrance. This shelving platform of rock, which formed the only avenue to the door, was divided, as I have already stated, by a broad chasm, the planks across which had long disappeared by decay or otherwise, so that it seemed at least highly im-

probable that any man could have found his way across the passage in safety to the door, more particularly on a night like that, of singular darkness. The old man, therefore, listened attentively, to ascertain whether the first application should be followed by another. He had not long to wait; the same low but singularly distinct knocking was repeated; so low that it seemed as if the applicant had employed no harder or heavier instrument than his hand, and yet, despite the immense thickness of the door, with such strength that the sound was distinctly audible.

The knock was repeated a third time, without any increase of loudness; and the old man, obeying an impulse for which to his dying hour he could never account, proceeded to remove, one by one, the three great oaken bars which secured the door. Time and

damp had effectually corroded the iron chambers of the lock, so that it afforded little resistance. With some effort, as he believed, assisted from without, the old servant succeeded in opening the door; and a low, square-built figure, apparently that of a man wrapped in a large black cloak, entered the hall. The servant could not see much of this visitant with any distinctness; his dress appeared foreign, the skirt of his ample cloak was thrown over one shoulder; he wore a large felt hat, with a very heavy leaf, from under which escaped what appeared to be a mass of long sooty-black hair; his feet were cased in heavy riding-boots. Such were the few particulars which the servant had time and light to observe. The stranger desired him to let his master know instantly that a friend had come, by appointment, to

settle some business with him. The servant hesitated, but a slight motion on the part of his visitor, as if to possess himself of the candle, determined him ; so, taking it in his hand, he ascended the castle stairs, leaving his guest in the hall.

On reaching the apartment which opened upon the oak-chamber he was surprised to observe the door of that room partly open, and the room itself lit up. He paused, but there was no sound ; he looked in, and saw Sir Robert, his head and the upper part of his body reclining on a table, upon which burned a lamp ; his arms were stretched forward on either side, and perfectly motionless ; it appeared that, having been sitting at the table, he had thus sunk forward, either dead or in a swoon. There was no sound of breathing ; all was silent, except the sharp ticking of a watch, which

lay beside the lamp. The servant coughed twice or thrice, but with no effect; his fears now almost amounted to certainty, and he was approaching the table on which his master partly lay, to satisfy himself of his death, when Sir Robert slowly raised his head, and throwing himself back in his chair, fixed his eyes in a ghastly and uncertain gaze upon his attendant. At length he said, slowly and painfully, as if he dreaded the answer :

‘ In God’s name, what are you ?’

‘ Sir,’ said the servant, ‘ a strange gentleman wants to see you below.’

At this intimation Sir Robert, starting on his feet and tossing his arms wildly upwards, uttered a shriek of such appalling and despairing terror that it was almost too fearful for human endurance ; and long after the sound had ceased it seemed to

the terrified imagination of the old servant to roll through the deserted passages in bursts of unnatural laughter. After a few moments Sir Robert said :

‘ Can’t you send him away ? Why does he come so soon ? O God ! O God ! let him leave me for an hour ; a little time. I can’t see him now ; try to get him away. You see I can’t go down now ; I have not strength. O God ! O God ! let him come back in an hour ; it is not long to wait. He cannot lose anything by it ; nothing, nothing, nothing. Tell him that ; say anything to him.’

The servant went down. In his own words, he did not feel the stairs under him till he got to the hall. The figure stood exactly as he had left it. He delivered his master’s message as coherently as he could. The stranger replied in a careless tone :

‘If Sir Robert will not come down to me, I must go up to him.’

The man returned, and to his surprise he found his master much more composed in manner. He listened to the message, and though the cold perspiration rose in drops upon his forehead faster than he could wipe it away, his manner had lost the dreadful agitation which had marked it before. He rose feebly, and casting a last look of agony behind him, passed from the room to the lobby, where he signed to his attendant not to follow him. The man moved as far as the head of the staircase, from whence he had a tolerably distinct view of the hall, which was imperfectly lighted by the candle he had left there.

He saw his master reel, rather than walk down the stairs, clinging all the way to the banisters. He walked on, as if

about to sink every moment from weakness. The figure advanced as if to meet him, and in passing struck down the light. The servant could see no more ; but there was a sound of struggling, renewed at intervals with silent but fearful energy. It was evident, however, that the parties were approaching the door, for he heard the solid oak sound twice or thrice, as the feet of the combatants, in shuffling hither and thither over the floor, struck upon it. After a slight pause he heard the door thrown open with such violence that the leaf seemed to strike the side-wall of the hall, for it was so dark without that this could only be surmised by the sound. The struggle was renewed with an agony and intenseness of energy that betrayed itself in deep-drawn gasps. One desperate effort, which terminated in the breaking of

some part of the door, producing a sound as if the door-post was wrenched from its position, was followed by another wrestle, evidently upon the narrow ledge which ran outside the door, overtopping the precipice. This proved to be the final struggle, for it was followed by a crashing sound as if some heavy body had fallen over, and was rushing down the precipice, through the light boughs that crossed near the top. All then became still as the grave, except when the moan of the night wind sighed up the wooded glen.

The old servant had not nerve to return through the hall, and to him the darkness seemed all but endless; but morning at length came, and with it the disclosure of the events of the night. Near the door, upon the ground, lay Sir Robert's sword-belt, which had given way in the scuffle.

A huge splinter from the massive doorpost had been wrenched off by an almost superhuman effort—one which nothing but the gripe of a despairing man could have severed—and on the rock outside were left the marks of the slipping and sliding of feet.

At the foot of the precipice, not immediately under the castle, but dragged some way up the glen, were found the remains of Sir Robert, with hardly a vestige of a limb or feature left distinguishable. The right hand, however, was uninjured, and in its fingers were clutched, with the fixedness of death, a long lock of coarse sooty hair—the only direct circumstantial evidence of the presence of a second person. So says tradition.

This story, as I have mentioned, was current among the dealers in such lore ;

but the original facts are so dissimilar in all but the name of the principal person mentioned and his mode of life, and the fact that his death was accompanied with circumstances of extraordinary mystery, that the two narratives are totally irreconcilable (even allowing the utmost for the exaggerating influence of tradition), except by supposing report to have combined and blended together the fabulous histories of several distinct bearers of the family name. However this may be, I shall lay before the reader a distinct recital of the events from which the foregoing tradition arose. With respect to these there can be no mistake; they are authenticated as fully as anything can be by human testimony; and I state them principally upon the evidence of a lady who herself bore a prominent part in the

strange events which she related, and which I now record as being among the few well-attested tales of the marvellous which it has been my fate to hear. I shall, as far as I am able, arrange in one combined narrative the evidence of several distinct persons who were eye-witnesses of what they related, and with the truth of whose testimony I am solemnly and deeply impressed.

Sir Robert Ardagh, as we choose to call him, was the heir and representative of the family whose name he bore; but owing to the prodigality of his father, the estates descended to him in a very impaired condition. Urged by the restless spirit of youth, or more probably by a feeling of pride which could not submit to witness, in the paternal mansion, what he considered a humiliating alteration in the style and hospitality which up to

that time had distinguished his family, Sir Robert left Ireland and went abroad. How he occupied himself, or what countries he visited during his absence, was never known, nor did he afterwards make any allusion or encourage any inquiries touching his foreign sojourn. He left Ireland in the year 1742, being then just of age, and was not heard of until the year 1760—about eighteen years afterwards—at which time he returned. His personal appearance was, as might have been expected, very greatly altered, more altered, indeed, than the time of his absence might have warranted one in supposing likely. But to counterbalance the unfavourable change which time had wrought in his form and features, he had acquired all the advantages of polish of manner and refinement of taste which foreign travel is sup-

posed to bestow. But what was truly surprising was that it soon became evident that Sir Robert was very wealthy—wealthy to an extraordinary and unaccountable degree ; and this fact was made manifest, not only by his expensive style of living, but by his proceeding to disembarass his property, and to purchase extensive estates in addition. Moreover, there could be nothing deceptive in these appearances, for he paid ready money for everything, from the most important purchase to the most trifling.

Sir Robert was a remarkably agreeable man, and possessing the combined advantages of birth and property, he was, as a matter of course, gladly received into the highest society which the metropolis then commanded. It was thus that he became acquainted with the two beautiful Miss

F——ds, then among the brightest ornaments of the highest circle of Dublin fashion. Their family was in more than one direction allied to nobility ; and Lady D——, their elder sister by many years, and sometime married to a once well-known nobleman, was now their protectress. These considerations, beside the fact that the young ladies were what is usually termed heiresses, though not to a very great amount, secured to them a high position in the best society which Ireland then produced. The two young ladies differed strongly, alike in appearance and in character. The elder of the two, Emily, was generally considered the handsomer—for her beauty was of that impressive kind which never failed to strike even at the first glance, possessing as it did all the advantages of a fine person and a commanding

carriage. The beauty of her features strikingly assorted in character with that of her figure and deportment. Her hair was raven-black and richly luxuriant, beautifully contrasting with the perfect whiteness of her forehead—her finely pencilled brows were black as the ringlets that clustered near them—and her blue eyes, full, lustrous, and animated, possessed all the power and brilliancy of brown ones, with more than their softness and variety of expression. She was not, however, merely the tragedy queen. When she smiled, and that was not seldom, the dimpling of cheek and chin, the laughing display of the small and beautiful teeth—but, more than all, the roguish archness of her deep, bright eye, showed that nature had not neglected in her the lighter and the softer characteristics of woman.

Her younger sister Mary was, as I believe not unfrequently occurs in the case of sisters, quite in the opposite style of beauty. She was light-haired, had more colour, had nearly equal grace, with much more liveliness of manner. Her eyes were of that dark grey which poets so much admire—full of expression and vivacity. She was altogether a very beautiful and animated girl—though as unlike her sister as the presence of those two qualities would permit her to be. Their dissimilarity did not stop here—it was deeper than mere appearance—the character of their minds differed almost as strikingly as did their complexion. The fair-haired beauty had a large proportion of that softness and pliability of temper which physiognomists assign as the characteristics of such complexions. She was much more

the creature of impulse than of feeling, and consequently more the victim of extrinsic circumstances than was her sister. Emily, on the contrary, possessed considerable firmness and decision. She was less excitable, but when excited her feelings were more intense and enduring. She wanted much of the gaiety, but with it the volatility of her younger sister. Her opinions were adopted, and her friendships formed more reflectively, and her affections seemed to move, as it were, more slowly, but more determinedly. This firmness of character did not amount to anything masculine, and did not at all impair the feminine grace of her manners.

Sir Robert Ardagh was for a long time apparently equally attentive to the two sisters, and many were the conjectures and the surmises as to which would be the lady

of his choice. At length, however, these doubts were determined; he proposed for and was accepted by the dark beauty, Emily F——d.

The bridals were celebrated in a manner becoming the wealth and connections of the parties; and Sir Robert and Lady Ardagh left Dublin to pass the honeymoon at the family mansion, Castle Ardagh, which had lately been fitted up in a style bordering upon magnificent. Whether in compliance with the wishes of his lady, or owing to some whim of his own, his habits were henceforward strikingly altered; and from having moved among the gayest if not the most profligate of the votaries of fashion, he suddenly settled down into a quiet, domestic, country gentleman, and seldom, if ever, visited the capital, and then his sojourns

were as brief as the nature of his business would permit.

Lady Ardagh, however, did not suffer from this change further than in being secluded from general society; for Sir Robert's wealth, and the hospitality which he had established in the family mansion, commanded that of such of his lady's friends and relatives as had leisure or inclination to visit the castle; and as their style of living was very handsome, and its internal resources of amusement considerable, few invitations from Sir Robert or his lady were neglected.

Many years passed quietly away, during which Sir Robert's and Lady Ardagh's hopes of issue were several times disappointed. In the lapse of all this time there occurred but one event worth recording. Sir Robert had brought with

him from abroad a valet, who sometimes professed himself to be French, at others Italian, and at others again German. He spoke all these languages with equal fluency, and seemed to take a kind of pleasure in puzzling the sagacity and balking the curiosity of such of the visitors at the castle as at any time happened to enter into conversation with him, or who, struck by his singularities, became inquisitive respecting his country and origin. Sir Robert called him by the French name, JACQUE, and among the lower orders he was familiarly known by the title of 'Jack, the devil,' an appellation which originated in a supposed malignity of disposition and a real reluctance to mix in the society of those who were believed to be his equals. This morose reserve, coupled with the mystery which

enveloped all about him, rendered him an object of suspicion and inquiry to his fellow-servants, amongst whom it was whispered that this man in secret governed the actions of Sir Robert with a despotic dictation, and that, as if to indemnify himself for his public and apparent servitude and self-denial, he in private exacted a degree of respectful homage from his so-called master, totally inconsistent with the relation generally supposed to exist between them.

This man's personal appearance was, to say the least of it, extremely odd ; he was low in stature ; and this defect was enhanced by a distortion of the spine, so considerable as almost to amount to a hunch ; his features, too, had all that sharpness and sickliness of hue which generally accompany deformity ; he wore his hair, which

was black as soot, in heavy neglected ringlets about his shoulders, and always without powder—a peculiarity in those days. There was something unpleasant, too, in the circumstance that he never raised his eyes to meet those of another; this fact was often cited as a proof of his being something not quite right, and said to result not from the timidity which is supposed in most cases to induce this habit, but from a consciousness that his eye possessed a power which, if exhibited, would betray a supernatural origin. Once, and once only, had he violated this sinister observance: it was on the occasion of Sir Robert's hopes having been most bitterly disappointed; his lady, after a severe and dangerous confinement, gave birth to a dead child. Immediately after the intelligence had been made known, a servant,

having upon some business passed outside the gate of the castle-yard, was met by Jacque, who, contrary to his wont, accosted him, observing, 'So, after all the pother, the son and heir is still-born.' This remark was accompanied by a chuckling laugh, the only approach to merriment which he was ever known to exhibit. The servant, who was really disappointed, having hoped for holiday times, feasting and debauchery with impunity during the rejoicings which would have accompanied a christening, turned tartly upon the little valet, telling him that he should let Sir Robert know how he had received the tidings which should have filled any faithful servant with sorrow; and having once broken the ice, he was proceeding with increasing fluency, when his harangue was cut short and his temerity punished, by

the little man raising his head and treating him to a scowl so fearful, half-demoniac, half-insane, that it haunted his imagination in nightmares and nervous tremors for months after.

To this man Lady Ardagh had, at first sight, conceived an antipathy amounting to horror, a mixture of loathing and dread so very powerful that she had made it a particular and urgent request to Sir Robert, that he would dismiss him, offering herself, from that property which Sir Robert had by the marriage settlements left at her own disposal, to provide handsomely for him, provided only she might be relieved from the continual anxiety and discomfort which the fear of encountering him induced.

Sir Robert, however, would not hear of it; the request seemed at first to agitate

and distress him ; but when still urged in defiance of his peremptory refusal, he burst into a violent fit of fury ; he spoke darkly of great sacrifices which he had made, and threatened that if the request were at any time renewed he would leave both her and the country for ever. This was, however, a solitary instance of violence ; his general conduct towards Lady Ardagh, though at no time uxorious, was certainly kind and respectful, and he was more than repaid in the fervent attachment which she bore him in return.

Some short time after this strange interview between Sir Robert and Lady Ardagh ; one night after the family had retired to bed, and when everything had been quiet for some time, the bell of Sir Robert's dressing-room rang suddenly and violently ; the ringing was repeated again

and again at still shorter intervals, and with increasing violence, as if the person who pulled the bell was agitated by the presence of some terrifying and imminent danger. A servant named Donovan was the first to answer it; he threw on his clothes, and hurried to the room.

Sir Robert had selected for his private room an apartment remote from the bed-chambers of the castle, most of which lay in the more modern parts of the mansion, and secured at its entrance by a double door. As the servant opened the first of these, Sir Robert's bell again sounded with a longer and louder peal; the inner door resisted his efforts to open it; but after a few violent struggles, not having been perfectly secured, or owing to the inadequacy of the bolt itself, it gave way, and the servant rushed into the apartment,

advancing several paces before he could recover himself. As he entered, he heard Sir Robert's voice exclaiming loudly— 'Wait without, do not come in yet;' but the prohibition came too late. Near a low truckle-bed, upon which Sir Robert sometimes slept, for he was a whimsical man, in a large armchair, sat, or rather lounged, the form of the valet Jacque, his arms folded, and his heels stretched forward on the floor, so as fully to exhibit his misshapen legs, his head thrown back, and his eyes fixed upon his master with a look of indescribable defiance and derision, while, as if to add to the strange insolence of his attitude and expression, he had placed upon his head the black cloth cap which it was his habit to wear.

Sir Robert was standing before him, at the distance of several yards, in a posture

expressive of despair, terror, and what might be called an agony of humility. He waved his hand twice or thrice, as if to dismiss the servant, who, however, remained fixed on the spot where he had first stood ; and then, as if forgetting everything but the agony within him, he pressed his clenched hands on his cold damp brow, and dashed away the heavy drops that gathered chill and thickly there.

Jacque broke the silence.

‘Donovan,’ said he, ‘shake up that drone and drunkard, Carlton ; tell him that his master directs that the travelling carriage shall be at the door within half-an-hour.’

The servant paused, as if in doubt as to what he should do ; but his scruples were resolved by Sir Robert’s saying hurriedly, ‘Go—go, do whatever he directs ; his

commands are mine; tell Carlton the same.'

The servant hurried to obey, and in about half-an-hour the carriage was at the door, and Jacque, having directed the coachman to drive to B——n, a small town at about the distance of twelve miles—the nearest point, however, at which post-horses could be obtained—stepped into the vehicle, which accordingly quitted the castle immediately.

Although it was a fine moonlight night, the carriage made its way but very slowly, and after the lapse of two hours the travellers had arrived at a point about eight miles from the castle, at which the road strikes through a desolate and heathy flat, sloping up distantly at either side into bleak undulatory hills, in whose monotonous sweep the imagination beholds the heaving of

some dark sluggish sea, arrested in its first commotion by some preternatural power. It is a gloomy and divested spot; there is neither tree nor habitation near it; its monotony is unbroken, except by here and there the grey front of a rock peering above the heath, and the effect is rendered yet more dreary and spectral by the exaggerated and misty shadows which the moon casts along the sloping sides of the hills.

When they had gained about the centre of this tract, Carlton, the coachman, was surprised to see a figure standing at some distance in advance, immediately beside the road, and still more so when, on coming up, he observed that it was no other than Jacque whom he believed to be at that moment quietly seated in the carriage; the coachman drew up, and

nodding to him, the little valet exclaimed :

‘ Carlton, I have got the start of you ; the roads are heavy, so I shall even take care of myself the rest of the way. Do you make your way back as best you can, and I shall follow my own nose.’

So saying, he chucked a purse into the lap of the coachman, and turning off at a right angle with the road, he began to move rapidly away in the direction of the dark ridge that lowered in the distance.

The servant watched him until he was lost in the shadowy haze of night ; and neither he nor any of the inmates of the castle saw Jacque again. His disappearance, as might have been expected, did not cause any regret among the servants and dependants at the castle ; and Lady Ardagh did not attempt to conceal her delight ;

but with Sir Robert matters were different, for two or three days subsequent to this event he confined himself to his room, and when he did return to his ordinary occupations, it was with a gloomy indifference, which showed that he did so more from habit than from any interest he felt in them. He appeared from that moment unaccountably and strikingly changed, and thenceforward walked through life as a thing from which he could derive neither profit nor pleasure. His temper, however, so far from growing wayward or morose, became, though gloomy, very—almost unnaturally—placid and cold; but his spirits totally failed, and he grew silent and abstracted.

These sombre habits of mind, as might have been anticipated, very materially affected the gay house-keeping of the

castle; and the dark and melancholy spirit of its master seemed to have communicated itself to the very domestics, almost to the very walls of the mansion.

Several years rolled on in this way, and the sounds of mirth and wassail had long been strangers to the castle, when Sir Robert requested his lady, to her great astonishment, to invite some twenty or thirty of their friends to spend the Christmas, which was fast approaching, at the castle. Lady Ardagh gladly complied, and her sister Mary, who still continued unmarried, and Lady D----- were of course included in the invitations. Lady Ardagh had requested her sisters to set forward as early as possible, in order that she might enjoy a little of their society before the arrival of the other guests; and in compliance with this request they

left Dublin almost immediately upon receiving the invitation, a little more than a week before the arrival of the festival which was to be the period at which the whole party were to muster.

For expedition's sake it was arranged that they should post, while Lady D——'s groom was to follow with her horses, she taking with herself her own maid and one male servant. They left the city when the day was considerably spent, and consequently made but three stages in the first day; upon the second, at about eight in the evening, they had reached the town of K——k, distant about fifteen miles from Castle Ardagh. Here, owing to Miss F——d's great fatigue, she having been for a considerable time in a very delicate state of health, it was determined to put up for the night. They, accord-

ingly, took possession of the best sitting-room which the inn commanded, and Lady D—— remained in it to direct and urge the preparations for some refreshment, which the fatigues of the day had rendered necessary, while her younger sister retired to her bed-chamber to rest there for a little time, as the parlour commanded no such luxury as a sofa.

Miss F——d was, as I have already stated, at this time in very delicate health ; and upon this occasion the exhaustion of fatigue, and the dreary badness of the weather, combined to depress her spirits. Lady D—— had not been left long to herself, when the door communicating with the passage was abruptly opened, and her sister Mary entered in a state of great agitation ; she sat down pale and trembling upon one of the chairs, and it

was not until a copious flood of tears had relieved her, that she became sufficiently calm to relate the cause of her excitement and distress. It was simply this. Almost immediately upon lying down upon the bed she sank into a feverish and unrefreshing slumber; images of all grotesque shapes and startling colours flitted before her sleeping fancy with all the rapidity and variety of the changes in a kaleidoscope. At length, as she described it, a mist seemed to interpose itself between her sight and the ever-shifting scenery which sported before her imagination, and out of this cloudy shadow gradually emerged a figure whose back seemed turned towards the sleeper; it was that of a lady, who, in perfect silence, was expressing as far as pantomimic gesture could, by wringing her hands, and throwing her

head from side to side, in the manner of one who is exhausted by the over indulgence, by the very sickness and impatience of grief, the extremity of misery. For a long time she sought in vain to catch a glimpse of the face of the apparition, who thus seemed to stir and live before her. But at length the figure seemed to move with an air of authority, as if about to give directions to some inferior, and in doing so, it turned its head so as to display, with a ghastly distinctness, the features of Lady Ardagh, pale as death, with her dark hair all dishevelled, and her eyes dim and sunken with weeping. The revulsion of feeling which Miss F——d experienced at this disclosure—for up to that point she had contemplated the appearance rather with a sense of curiosity and of interest, than of anything

deeper—was so horrible, that the shock awoke her perfectly. She sat up in the bed, and looked fearfully around the room, which was imperfectly lighted by a single candle burning dimly, as if she almost expected to see the reality of her dreadful vision lurking in some corner of the chamber. Her fears were, however, verified, though not in the way she expected; yet in a manner sufficiently horrible—for she had hardly time to breathe and to collect her thoughts, when she heard, or thought she heard, the voice of her sister, Lady Ardagh, sometimes sobbing violently, and sometimes almost [shrieking as if in terror, and calling upon her and Lady D——, with the most imploring earnestness of despair, for God's sake to lose no time in coming to her. All this was so horribly distinct,

that it seemed as if the mourner was standing within a few yards of the spot where Miss F——d lay. She sprang from the bed, and leaving the candle in the room behind her, she made her way in the dark through the passage, the voice still following her, until as she arrived at the door of the sitting-room it seemed to die away in low sobbing.

As soon as Miss F——d was tolerably recovered, she declared her determination to proceed directly, and without further loss of time, to Castle Ardagh. It was not without much difficulty that Lady D—— at length prevailed upon her to consent to remain where they then were, until morning should arrive, when it was to be expected that the young lady would be much refreshed by at least remaining quiet for the night, even though sleep

were out of the question. Lady D—— was convinced, from the nervous and feverish symptoms which her sister exhibited, that she had already done too much, and was more than ever satisfied of the necessity of prosecuting the journey no further upon that day. After some time she persuaded her sister to return to her room, where she remained with her until she had gone to bed, and appeared comparatively composed. Lady D—— then returned to the parlour, and not finding herself sleepy, she remained sitting by the fire. Her solitude was a second time broken in upon, by the entrance of her sister, who now appeared, if possible, more agitated than before. She said that Lady D—— had not long left the room, when she was roused by a repetition of the same wailing and lamentations, accom-

panied by the wildest and most agonized supplications that no time should be lost in coming to Castle Ardagh, and all in her sister's voice, and uttered at the same proximity as before. This time the voice had followed her to the very door of the sitting-room, and until she closed it, seemed to pour forth its cries and sobs at the very threshold.

Miss F——d now most positively declared that nothing should prevent her proceeding instantly to the castle, adding that if Lady D—— would not accompany her, she would go on by herself. Superstitious feelings are at all times more or less contagious, and the last century afforded a soil much more congenial to their growth than the present. Lady D—— was so far affected by her sister's terrors, that she became, at least, uneasy ;

and seeing that her sister was immovably determined upon setting forward immediately, she consented to accompany her forthwith. After a slight delay, fresh horses were procured, and the two ladies and their attendants renewed their journey, with strong injunctions to the driver to quicken their rate of travelling as much as possible, and promises of reward in case of his doing so.

Roads were then in much worse condition throughout the south, even than they now are; and the fifteen miles which modern posting would have passed in little more than an hour and a half, were not completed even with every possible exertion in twice the time. Miss F——d had been nervously restless during the journey. Her head had been constantly out of the carriage window; and as they ap-

proached the entrance to the castle demesne, which lay about a mile from the building, her anxiety began to communicate itself to her sister. The postillion had just dismounted, and was endeavouring to open the gate—at that time a necessary trouble; for in the middle of the last century porter's lodges were not common in the south of Ireland, and locks and keys almost unknown. He had just succeeded in rolling back the heavy oaken gate so as to admit the vehicle, when a mounted servant rode rapidly down the avenue, and drawing up at the carriage, asked of the postillion who the party were; and on hearing, he rode round to the carriage window and handed in a note, which Lady D—— received. By the assistance of one of the coach-lamps they succeeded in deciphering it. It was

scrawled in great agitation, and ran thus :

‘MY DEAR SISTER—MY DEAR SISTERS BOTH,—In God’s name lose no time, I am frightened and miserable ; I cannot explain all till you come. I am too much terrified to write coherently ; but understand me—hasten—do not waste a minute. I am afraid you will come too late.

‘ E. A.’

The servant could tell nothing more than that the castle was in great confusion, and that Lady Ardagh had been crying bitterly all the night. Sir Robert was perfectly well. Altogether at a loss as to the cause of Lady Ardagh’s great distress, they urged their way up the steep and broken avenue which wound through the crowding trees, whose wild and grotesque

branches, now left stripped and naked by the blasts of winter, stretched drearily across the road. As the carriage drew up in the area before the door, the anxiety of the ladies almost amounted to agony; and scarcely waiting for the assistance of their attendant, they sprang to the ground, and in an instant stood at the castle door. From within were distinctly audible the sounds of lamentation and weeping, and the suppressed hum of voices as if of those endeavouring to soothe the mourner. The door was speedily opened, and when the ladies entered, the first object which met their view was their sister, Lady Ardagh, sitting on a form in the hall, weeping and wringing her hands in deep agony. Beside her stood two old, withered crones, who were each endeavouring in their own way to administer consolation,

without even knowing or caring what the subject of her grief might be.

Immediately on Lady Ardagh's seeing her sisters, she started up, fell on their necks, and kissed them again and again without speaking, and then taking them each by a hand, still weeping bitterly, she led them into a small room adjoining the hall, in which burned a light, and, having closed the door, she sat down between them. After thanking them for the haste they had made, she proceeded to tell them, in words incoherent from agitation, that Sir Robert had in private, and in the most solemn manner, told her that he should die upon that night, and that he had occupied himself during the evening in giving minute directions respecting the arrangements of his funeral. Lady D—— here suggested the possibility of his labouring under the

hallucinations of a fever ; but to this Lady Ardagh quickly replied :

‘ Oh ! no, no ! Would to God I could think it. Oh ! no, no ! Wait till you have seen him. There is a frightful calmness about all he says and does ; and his directions are all so clear, and his mind so perfectly collected, it is impossible, quite impossible.’ And she wept yet more bitterly.

At that moment Sir Robert’s voice was heard in issuing some directions, as he came downstairs ; and Lady Ardagh exclaimed, hurriedly :

‘ Go now and see him yourself. He is in the hall.’

Lady D—— accordingly went out into the hall, where Sir Robert met her ; and, saluting her with kind politeness, he said, after a pause :

‘You are come upon a melancholy mission—the house is in great confusion, and some of its inmates in considerable grief.’ He took her hand, and looking fixedly in her face, continued: ‘I shall not live to see to-morrow’s sun shine.’

‘You are ill, sir, I have no doubt,’ replied she; ‘but I am very certain we shall see you much better to-morrow, and still better the day following.’

‘I am *not* ill, sister,’ replied he. ‘Feel my temples, they are cool; lay your finger to my pulse, its throb is slow and temperate. I never was more perfectly in health, and yet do I know that ere three hours be past, I shall be no more.’

‘Sir, sir,’ said she, a good deal startled, but wishing to conceal the impression which the calm solemnity of his manner had, in her own despite, made upon her, ‘Sir, you

should not jest ; you should not even speak lightly upon such subjects. You trifle with what is sacred—you are sporting with the best affections of your wife——’

‘ Stay, my good lady,’ said he ; ‘ if when this clock shall strike the hour of three, I shall be anything but a helpless clod, then upbraid me. Pray return now to your sister. Lady Ardagh is, indeed, much to be pitied ; but what is past cannot now be helped. I have now a few papers to arrange, and some to destroy. I shall see you and Lady Ardagh before my death ; try to compose her—her sufferings distress me much ; but what is past cannot now be mended.’

Thus saying, he went upstairs, and Lady D—— returned to the room where her sisters were sitting.

‘ Well,’ exclaimed Lady Ardagh, as she

re-entered, 'is it not so?—do you still doubt?—do you think there is any hope?'

Lady D—— was silent.

'Oh! none, none, none,' continued she; 'I see, I see you are convinced.' And she wrung her hands in bitter agony.

'My dear sister,' said Lady D——, 'there is, no doubt, something strange in all that has appeared in this matter; but still I cannot but hope that there may be something deceptive in all the apparent calmness of Sir Robert. I still must believe that some latent fever has affected his mind, or that, owing to the state of nervous depression into which he has been sinking, some trivial occurrence has been converted, in his disordered imagination, into an augury foreboding his immediate dissolution.'

In such suggestions, unsatisfactory even

to those who originated them, and doubly so to her whom they were intended to comfort, more than two hours passed ; and Lady D—— was beginning to hope that the fated term might elapse without the occurrence of any tragical event, when Sir Robert entered the room. On coming in, he placed his finger with a warning gesture upon his lips, as if to enjoin silence ; and then having successively pressed the hands of his two sisters-in-law, he stooped sadly over the fainting form of his lady, and twice pressed her cold, pale forehead, with his lips, and then passed silently out of the room.

Lady D——, starting up, followed to the door, and saw him take a candle in the hall, and walk deliberately up the stairs. Stimulated by a feeling of horrible curiosity, she continued to follow him at a distance. She

saw him enter his own private room, and heard him close and lock the door after him. Continuing to follow him as far as she could, she placed herself at the door of the chamber, as noiselessly as possible, where after a little time she was joined by her two sisters, Lady Ardagh and Miss F——d. In breathless silence they listened to what should pass within. They distinctly heard Sir Robert pacing up and down the room for some time ; and then, after a pause, a sound as if some one had thrown himself heavily upon the bed. At this moment Lady D——, forgetting that the door had been secured within, turned the handle for the purpose of entering ; when some one from the inside, close to the door, said, ‘ Hush ! hush ! ’ The same lady, now much alarmed, knocked violently at the door ; there was no answer. She knocked again more vio-

lently, with no further success. Lady Ardagh, now uttering a piercing shriek, sank in a swoon upon the floor. Three or four servants, alarmed by the noise, now hurried upstairs, and Lady Ardagh was carried apparently lifeless to her own chamber. They then, after having knocked long and loudly in vain, applied themselves to forcing an entrance into Sir Robert's room. After resisting some violent efforts, the door at length gave way, and all entered the room nearly together. There was a single candle burning upon a table at the far end of the apartment; and stretched upon the bed lay Sir Robert Ardagh. He was a corpse—the eyes were open—no convulsion had passed over the features, or distorted the limbs—it seemed as if the soul had sped from the body without a struggle to remain there. On touching

the body it was found to be cold as clay—all lingering of the vital heat had left it. They closed the ghastly eyes of the corpse, and leaving it to the care of those who seem to consider it a privilege of their age and sex to gloat over the revolting spectacle of death in all its stages, they returned to Lady Ardagh, now a widow. The party assembled at the castle, but the atmosphere was tainted with death. Grief there was not much, but awe and panic were expressed in every face. The guests talked in whispers, and the servants walked on tiptoe, as if afraid of the very noise of their own footsteps.

The funeral was conducted almost with splendour. The body, having been conveyed, in compliance with Sir Robert's last directions, to Dublin, was there laid within the ancient walls of St. Audoen's Church

—where I have read the epitaph, telling the age and titles of the departed dust. Neither painted escutcheon, nor marble slab, have served to rescue from oblivion the story of the dead, whose very name will ere long moulder from their tracery—

‘Et sunt sua fata sepulchris.’*

The events which I have recorded are not imaginary. They are **FACTS**; and there lives one whose authority none would venture to question, who could vindicate the accuracy of every statement which I have set down, and that, too, with

* This prophecy has since been realised; for the aisle in which Sir Robert's remains were laid has been suffered to fall completely to decay; and the tomb which marked his grave, and other monuments more curious, form now one indistinguishable mass of rubbish.

all the circumstantiality of an eye-witness.*

* This paper, from a memorandum, I find to have been written in 1803. The lady to whom allusion is made, I believe to be Miss Mary F——d. She never married, and survived both her sisters, living to a very advanced age.



THE LAST HEIR OF CASTLE CONNOR.

*Being a third Extract from the legacy of the late Francis
Purcell, P. P. of Drumcoolagh.*



HERE is something in the decay of ancient grandeur to interest even the most unconcerned spectator—the evidences of greatness, of power, and of pride that survive the wreck of time, proving, in mournful contrast with present desolation and decay, what *was* in other days, appeal, with a resistless power, to the sympathies of our nature. And

when, as we gaze on the scion of some ruined family, the first impulse of nature that bids us regard his fate with interest and respect is justified by the recollection of great exertions and self-devotion and sacrifices in the cause of a lost country and of a despised religion — sacrifices and efforts made with all the motives of faithfulness and of honour, and terminating in ruin—in such a case respect becomes veneration, and the interest we feel amounts almost to a passion.

It is this feeling which has thrown the magic veil of romance over every roofless castle and ruined turret throughout our country; it is this feeling that, so long as a tower remains above the level of the soil, so long as one scion of a prostrate and impoverished family survives, will never suffer Ireland

to yield to the stranger more than the 'mouth honour' which fear compels.* I who have conversed *viva voce et propria persona* with those whose recollections could run back so far as the times previous to the confiscations which followed the Revolution of 1688—whose memory could repeople halls long roofless and desolate, and point out the places where greatness once had been, may feel all this more strongly, and with a more vivid interest, than can those whose sympathies are awakened by the feebler influence of what

* This passage serves (*mirabile dictu*) to corroborate a statement of Mr. O'Connell's, which occurs in his evidence given before the House of Commons, wherein he affirms that the principles of the Irish priesthood 'are democratic, and were those of Jacobinism.'—See *digest of the evidence upon the state of Ireland, given before the House of Commons.*

may be called the *picturesque* effects of ruin and decay.

There do, indeed, still exist some fragments of the ancient Catholic families of Ireland ; but, alas ! what *very* fragments ! They linger like the remnants of her aboriginal forests, reft indeed of their strength and greatness, but proud even in decay. Every winter thins their ranks, and strews the ground with the wreck of their loftiest branches ; they are at best but tolerated in the land which gave them birth--objects of curiosity, perhaps of pity, to one class, but of veneration to another.

The O'Connors, of Castle Connor, were an ancient Irish family. The name recurs frequently in our history, and is generally to be found in a prominent place whenever periods of tumult or of peril called forth

the courage and the enterprise of this country. After the accession of William III., the storm of confiscation which swept over the land made woeful havoc in their broad domains. Some fragments of property, however, did remain to them, and with it the building which had for ages formed the family residence.

About the year 17—, my uncle, a Catholic priest, became acquainted with the inmates of Castle Connor, and after a time introduced me, then a lad of about fifteen, full of spirits, and little dreaming that a profession so grave as his should ever become mine.

The family at that time consisted of but two members, a widow lady and her only son, a young man aged about eighteen. In our early days the progress from acquaintance to intimacy, and from intimacy to

friendship is proverbially rapid ; and young O'Connor and I became, in less than a month, close and confidential companions—an intercourse which ripened gradually into an attachment ardent, deep, and devoted—such as I believe young hearts only are capable of forming.

He had been left early fatherless, and the representative and heir of his family. His mother's affection for him was intense in proportion as there existed no other object to divide it—indeed such love as that she bore him I have never seen elsewhere. Her love was better bestowed than that of mothers generally is, for young O'Connor, not without some of the faults, had certainly many of the most engaging qualities of youth. He had all the frankness and gaiety which attract, and the generosity of heart which confirms

friendship ; indeed, I never saw a person so universally popular ; his very faults seemed to recommend him ; he was wild, extravagant, thoughtless, and fearlessly adventurous—defects of character which, among the peasantry of Ireland, are honoured as virtues. The combination of these qualities, and the position which O'Connor occupied as representative of an ancient Irish Catholic family—a peculiarly interesting one to me, one of the old faith—endeared him to me so much that I have never felt the pangs of parting more keenly than when it became necessary, for the finishing of his education, that he should go abroad.

Three years had passed away before I saw him again. During the interval, however, I had frequently heard from him, so that absence had not abated the warmth

of our attachment. Who could tell of the rejoicings that marked the evening of his return? The horses were removed from the chaise at the distance of a mile from the castle, while it and its contents were borne rapidly onward almost by the pressure of the multitude, like a log upon a torrent. Bonfires blared far and near—bagpipes roared and fiddles squeaked; and, amid the thundering shouts of thousands, the carriage drew up before the castle.

In an instant young O'Connor was upon the ground, crying, 'Thank you, boys—thank you, boys;' while a thousand hands were stretched out from all sides to grasp even a finger of his. Still, amid shouts of 'God bless your honour—long may you reign!' and 'Make room there, boys! clear the road for the masher!' he reached the

threshold of the castle, where stood his mother weeping for joy.

Oh! who could describe that embrace, or the enthusiasm with which it was witnessed? 'God bless him to you, my lady—glory to ye both!' and 'Oh, but he is a fine young gentleman, God bless him!' resounded on all sides, while hats flew up in volleys that darkened the moon; and when at length, amid the broad delighted grins of the thronging domestics, whose sense of decorum precluded any more boisterous evidence of joy, they reached the parlour, then giving way to the fulness of her joy the widowed mother kissed and blessed him and wept in turn. Well might any parent be proud to claim as son the handsome stripling who now represented the Castle Connor family; but to her his beauty had a peculiar charm, for it

bore a striking resemblance to that of her husband, the last O'Connor.

I know not whether partiality blinded me, or that I did no more than justice to my friend in believing that I had never seen so handsome a young man. I am inclined to think the latter. He was rather tall, very slightly and elegantly made; his face was oval, and his features decidedly Spanish in cast and complexion, but with far more vivacity of expression than generally belongs to the beauty of that nation. The extreme delicacy of his features and the varied animation of his countenance made him appear even younger than his years—an illusion which the total absence of everything studied in his manners seemed to confirm. Time had wrought no small change in me, alike in mind and spirits; but in the case of O'Connor it

seemed to have lost its power to alter. His gaiety was undamped, his generosity unchilled; and though the space which had intervened between our parting and reunion was but brief, yet at the period of life at which we were, even a shorter interval than that of three years has frequently served to form or *deform* a character.

Weeks had passed away since the return of O'Connor, and scarce a day had elapsed without my seeing him, when the neighbourhood was thrown into an unusual state of excitement by the announcement of a race-ball to be celebrated at the assembly-room of the town of T——, distant scarcely two miles from Castle Connor.

Young O'Connor, as I had expected, determined at once to attend it; and having directed in vain all the powers of

his rhetoric to persuade his mother to accompany him, he turned the whole battery of his logic upon me, who, at that time, felt a reluctance stronger than that of mere apathy to mixing in any of these scenes of noisy pleasure for which for many reasons I felt myself unfitted. He was so urgent and persevering, however, that I could not refuse ; and I found myself reluctantly obliged to make up my mind to attend him upon the important night to the spacious but ill-finished building, which the fashion and beauty of the county were pleased to term an assembly-room.

When we entered the apartment, we found a select few, surrounded by a crowd of spectators, busily performing a minuet, with all the congées and flourishes which belonged to that courtly dance ; and my

companion, infected by the contagion of example, was soon, as I had anticipated, waving his *chapeau bras*, and gracefully bowing before one of the prettiest girls in the room. I had neither skill nor spirits to qualify me to follow his example; and as the fulness of the room rendered it easy to do so without its appearing singular, I determined to be merely a spectator of the scene which surrounded me, without taking an active part in its amusements.

The room was indeed very much crowded, so that its various groups, formed as design or accident had thrown the parties together, afforded no small fund of entertainment to the contemplative observer. There were the dancers, all gaiety and good-humour; a little further off were the tables at which sat the card-players, some plying their vocation with

deep and silent anxiety—for in those days gaming often ran very high in such places—and others disputing with all the vociferous pertinacity of undisguised ill-temper. There, again, were the sallow, blue-nosed, grey-eyed dealers in whispered scandal; and, in short, there is scarcely a group or combination to be met with in the court of kings which might not have found a humble parallel in the assembly-room of T——.

I was allowed to indulge in undisturbed contemplation, for I suppose I was not known to more than five or six in the room. I thus had leisure not only to observe the different classes into which the company had divided itself, but to amuse myself by speculating as to the rank and character of many of the individual actors in the drama.

Among many who have long since passed from my memory, one person for some time engaged my attention, and that person, for many reasons, I shall not soon forget. He was a tall, square-shouldered man, who stood in a careless attitude, leaning with his back to the wall; he seemed to have secluded himself from the busy multitudes which moved noisily and gaily around him, and nobody seemed to observe or to converse with him. He was fashionably dressed, but perhaps rather extravagantly; his face was full and heavy, expressive of sullenness and stupidity, and marked with the lines of strong vulgarity; his age might be somewhere between forty and fifty. Such as I have endeavoured to describe him, he remained motionless, his arms doggedly folded across his broad chest, and turning

his sullen eyes from corner to corner of the room, as if eager to detect some object on which to vent his ill-humour.

It is strange, and yet it is true, that one sometimes finds even in the most commonplace countenance an undefinable something, which fascinates the attention, and forces it to recur again and again, while it is impossible to tell whether the peculiarity which thus attracts us lies in feature or in expression, or in both combined, and why it is that our observation should be engrossed by an object which, when analysed, seems to possess no claim to interest or even to notice. This unaccountable feeling I have often experienced, and I believe I am not singular, but never in so remarkable a degree as upon this occasion. My friend O'Connor, having disposed of his fair partner, was crossing

the room for the purpose of joining me, in doing which I was surprised to see him exchange a familiar, almost a cordial, greeting with the object of my curiosity. I say I was surprised, for independent of his very questionable appearance, it struck me as strange that though so constantly associated with O'Connor, and, as I thought, personally acquainted with all his intimates, I had never before even seen this individual. I did not fail immediately to ask him who this gentleman was. I thought he seemed slightly embarrassed, but after a moment's pause he laughingly said that his friend over the way was too mysterious a personage to have his name announced in so giddy a scene as the present; but that on the morrow he would furnish me with all the information which I could desire. There

was, I thought, in his affected jocularly a real awkwardness which appeared to me unaccountable, and consequently increased my curiosity; its gratification, however, I was obliged to defer. At length, wearied with witnessing amusements in which I could not sympathise, I left the room, and did not see O'Connor until late in the next day.

I had ridden down towards the castle for the purpose of visiting the O'Connors, and had nearly reached the avenue leading to the mansion, when I met my friend. He was also mounted; and having answered my inquiries respecting his mother, he easily persuaded me to accompany him in his ramble. We had chatted as usual for some time, when, after a pause, O'Connor said:

‘By the way, Purcell, you expressed

some curiosity respecting the tall, handsome fellow to whom I spoke last night.'

'I certainly did question you about a *tall* gentleman, but was not aware of his claims to beauty,' replied I.

'Well, that is as it may be,' said he; 'the ladies think him handsome, and their opinion upon that score is more valuable than yours or mine. Do you know,' he continued, 'I sometimes feel half sorry that I ever made the fellow's acquaintance: he is quite a marked man here, and they tell stories of him that are anything but reputable, though I am sure without foundation. I think I know enough about him to warrant me in saying so.'

'May I ask his name?' inquired I.

'Oh! did not I tell you his name?' rejoined he. 'You should have heard

that first; he and his name are equally well known. You will recognise the individual at once when I tell you that his name is—Fitzgerald.'

'Fitzgerald!' I repeated. 'Fitzgerald!—can it be Fitzgerald the duellist?'

'Upon my word you have hit it,' replied he, laughing; 'but you have accompanied the discovery with a look of horror more tragic than appropriate. He is not the monster you take him for—he has a good deal of old Irish pride; his temper is hasty, and he has been unfortunately thrown in the way of men who have not made allowance for these things. I am convinced that in every case in which Fitzgerald has fought, if the truth could be discovered, he would be found to have acted throughout upon the defensive. No man is mad enough to risk his own life,

except when the doing so is an alternative to submitting tamely to what he considers an insult. I am certain that no man ever engaged in a duel under the consciousness that he had acted an intentionally aggressive part.'

'When did you make his acquaintance?' said I.

'About two years ago,' he replied. 'I met him in France, and you know when one is abroad it is an ungracious task to reject the advances of one's countryman, otherwise I think I should have avoided his society—less upon my own account than because I am sure the acquaintance would be a source of continual though groundless uneasiness to my mother. I know, therefore, that you will not unnecessarily mention its existence to her.'

I gave him the desired assurance, and added :

‘May I ask you, O’Connor, if, indeed, it be a fair question, whether this Fitzgerald at any time attempted to engage you in anything like gaming?’

This question was suggested by my having frequently heard Fitzgerald mentioned as a noted gambler, and sometimes even as a *blackleg*. O’Connor seemed, I thought, slightly embarrassed. He answered :

‘No, no—I cannot say that he ever attempted anything of the kind. I certainly have played with him, but never lost to any serious amount; nor can I recollect that he ever solicited me—indeed he knows that I have a strong objection to deep play. *You* must be aware that my finances could not bear much pruning

down. I never lost more to him at a sitting than about five pounds, which you know is nothing. No, you wrong him if you imagine that he attached himself to me merely for the sake of such contemptible winnings as those which a broken-down Irish gentleman could afford him. Come, Purcell, you are too hard upon him—you judge only by report; you must see him, and decide for yourself.—Suppose we call upon him now; he is at the inn, in the High Street, not a mile off.’

I declined the proposal drily.

‘Your caution is too easily alarmed,’ said he. ‘I do not wish you to make this man your bosom friend: I merely desire that you should see and speak to him, and if you form any acquaintance with him, it must be of that slight nature which can be dropped or continued at pleasure.’

From the time that O'Connor had announced the fact that his friend was no other than the notorious Fitzgerald, a foreboding of something calamitous had come upon me, and it now occurred to me that if any unpleasantness were to be feared as likely to result to O'Connor from their connection, I might find my attempts to extricate him much facilitated by my being acquainted, however slightly, with Fitzgerald. I know not whether the idea was reasonable—it was certainly natural; and I told O'Connor that upon second thoughts I would ride down with him to the town, and wait upon Mr. Fitzgerald.

We found him at home, and chatted with him for a considerable time. To my surprise his manners were perfectly those of a gentleman, and his conversation, if not peculiarly engaging, was certainly

amusing. The politeness of his demeanour, and the easy fluency with which he told his stories and his anecdotes, many of them curious, and all more or less entertaining, accounted to my mind at once for the facility with which he had improved his acquaintance with O'Connor; and when he pressed upon us an invitation to sup with him that night, I had almost joined O'Connor in accepting it. I determined, however, against doing so, for I had no wish to be on terms of familiarity with Mr. Fitzgerald; and I knew that one evening spent together as he proposed would go further towards establishing an intimacy between us than fifty morning visits could do. When I arose to depart, it was with feelings almost favourable to Fitzgerald; indeed I was more than half ashamed to acknowledge to my companion

how complete a revolution in my opinion respecting his friend half an hour's conversation with him had wrought. His appearance certainly *was* against him ; but then, under the influence of his manner, one lost sight of much of its ungainliness, and of nearly all its vulgarity ; and, on the whole, I felt convinced that report had done him grievous wrong, inasmuch as anybody, by an observance of the common courtesies of society, might easily avoid coming into personal collision with a gentleman so studiously polite as Fitzgerald. At parting, O'Connor requested me to call upon him the next day, as he intended to make trial of the merits of a pair of greyhounds, which he had thoughts of purchasing ; adding, that if he could escape in anything like tolerable time from Fitzgerald's supper-party, he would

take the field soon after ten on the next morning. At the appointed hour, or perhaps a little later, I dismounted at Castle Connor; and, on entering the hall, I observed a gentleman issuing from O'Connor's private room. I recognised him, as he approached, as a Mr. M'Donough, and, being but slightly acquainted with him, was about to pass him with a bow, when he stopped me. There was something in his manner which struck me as odd; he seemed a good deal flurried, if not agitated, and said, in a hurried tone :

‘This is a very foolish business, Mr. Purcell. You have some influence with my friend O'Connor; I hope you can induce him to adopt some more moderate line of conduct than that he has decided upon. If you will allow me, I will return

for a moment with you, and talk over the matter again with O'Connor.'

As M'Donough uttered these words, I felt that sudden sinking of the heart which accompanies the immediate anticipation of something dreaded and dreadful. I was instantly convinced that O'Connor had quarrelled with Fitzgerald, and I knew that if such were the case, nothing short of a miracle could extricate him from the consequences. I signed to M'Donough to lead the way, and we entered the little study together. O'Connor was standing with his back to the fire; on the table lay the breakfast-things in the disorder in which a hurried meal had left them; and on another smaller table, placed near the hearth, lay pen, ink, and paper. As soon as O'Connor saw me, he came forward and shook me cordially by the hand.

‘My dear Purcell,’ said he, ‘you are the very man I wanted. I have got into an ugly scrape, and I trust to my friends to get me out of it.’

‘You have had no dispute with that man—that Fitzgerald, I hope,’ said I, giving utterance to the conjecture whose truth I most dreaded.

‘Faith, I cannot say exactly what passed between us,’ said he, ‘inasmuch as I was at the time nearly half seas over; but of this much I am certain, that we exchanged angry words last night. I lost my temper most confoundedly; but, as well as I can recollect, he appeared perfectly cool and collected. What he said was, therefore, deliberately said, and on that account must be resented.’

‘My dear O’Connor, are you mad?’ I exclaimed. ‘Why will you seek to drive

to a deadly issue a few hasty words, uttered under the influence of wine, and forgotten almost as soon as uttered? A quarrel with Fitzgerald it is twenty chances to one would terminate fatally to you.'

'It is exactly because Fitzgerald is such an accomplished shot,' said he, 'that I become liable to the most injurious and intolerable suspicions if I submit to anything from him which could be construed into an affront; and for that reason Fitzgerald is the very last man to whom I would concede an inch in a case of honour.'

'I do not require you to make any, the slightest sacrifice of what you term your honour,' I replied; 'but if you have actually written a challenge to Fitzgerald, as I suspect you have done, I conjure you

to reconsider the matter before you despatch it. From all that I have heard you say, Fitzgerald has more to complain of in the altercation which has taken place than you. You owe it to your only surviving parent not to thrust yourself thus wantonly upon—I will say it, the most appalling danger. Nobody, my dear O'Connor, can have a doubt of your courage; and if at any time, which God forbid, you shall be called upon thus to risk your life, you should have it in your power to enter the field under the consciousness that you have acted throughout temperately and like a man, and not, as I fear you now would do, having rashly and most causelessly endangered your own life and that of your friend.'

'I believe, Purcell, your are right,' said he. 'I believe I *have* viewed the matter

in too decided a light ; my note, I think, scarcely allows him an honourable alternative, and that is certainly going a step too far—further than I intended. Mr. M'Donough, I'll thank you to hand me the note.'

He broke the seal, and, casting his eye hastily over it, he continued :

'It is, indeed, a monument of folly. I am very glad, Purcell, you happened to come in, otherwise it would have reached its destination by this time.'

He threw it into the fire ; and, after a moment's pause, resumed :

'You must not mistake me, however. I am perfectly satisfied as to the propriety, nay, the necessity, of communicating with Fitzgerald. The difficulty is in what tone I should address him. I cannot say that the man directly affronted me—I cannot

recollect any one expression which I could lay hold upon as offensive — but his language was ambiguous, and admitted frequently of the most insulting construction, and his manner throughout was insupportably domineering. I know it impressed me with the idea that he presumed upon his reputation as a *dead shot*, and that would be utterly unendurable.’

‘I would now recommend, as I have already done,’ said M‘Donough, ‘that if you write to Fitzgerald, it should be in such a strain as to leave him at perfect liberty, without a compromise of honour, in a friendly way, to satisfy your doubts as to his conduct.’

I seconded the proposal warmly, and O‘Connor, in a few minutes, finished a note, which he desired us to read. It was to this effect :

‘O’Connor, of Castle Connor, feeling that some expressions employed by Mr. Fitzgerald upon last night, admitted of a construction offensive to him, and injurious to his character, requests to know whether Mr. Fitzgerald intended to convey such a meaning.

‘Castle Connor, Thursday morning.’

This note was consigned to the care of Mr. M’Donough, who forthwith departed to execute his mission. The sound of his horse’s hoofs, as he rode rapidly away, struck heavily at my heart; but I found some satisfaction in the reflection that M’Donough appeared as averse from extreme measures as I was myself, for I well knew, with respect to the final result of the affair, that as much depended upon the tone adopted by the *second*, as upon

the nature of the written communication.

I have seldom passed a more anxious hour than that which intervened between the departure and the return of that gentleman. Every instant I imagined I heard the tramp of a horse approaching, and every time that a door opened I fancied it was to give entrance to the eagerly expected courier. At length I did hear the hollow and rapid tread of a horse's hoof upon the avenue. It approached—it stopped—a hurried step traversed the hall—the room door opened, and M'Donough entered.

'You have made great haste,' said O'Connor; 'did you find him at home?'

'I did,' replied M'Donough, 'and made the greater haste as Fitzgerald did not let me know the contents of his reply.'

At the same time he handed a note to O'Connor, who instantly broke the seal. The words were as follow :

‘ Mr. Fitzgerald regrets that anything which has fallen from him should have appeared to Mr. O'Connor to be intended to convey a reflection upon his honour (none such having been meant), and begs leave to disavow any wish to quarrel unnecessarily with Mr. O'Connor.

‘ T—— Inn, Thursday morning.’

I cannot describe how much I felt relieved on reading the above communication. I took O'Connor's hand and pressed it warmly, but my emotions were deeper and stronger than I cared to show, for I was convinced that he had escaped a most imminent danger. Nobody whose notions upon the subject are derived from the

duelling of modern times, in which matters are conducted without any very sanguinary determination upon either side, and with equal want of skill and coolness by both parties, can form a just estimate of the danger incurred by one who ventured to encounter a duellist of the old school. Perfect coolness in the field, and a steadiness and accuracy (which to the unpractised appeared almost miraculous) in the use of the pistol, formed the characteristics of this class ; and in addition to this there generally existed a kind of professional pride, which prompted the duellist, in default of any more malignant feeling, from motives of mere vanity, to seek the life of his antagonist. Fitzgerald's career had been a remarkably successful one, and I knew that out of thirteen duels which he had fought in Ireland, in nine cases he

had *killed* his man. In those days one never heard of the parties leaving the field, as not unfrequently now occurs, without blood having been spilt; and the odds were, of course, in all cases tremendously against a young and unpractised man, when matched with an experienced antagonist. My impression respecting the magnitude of the danger which my friend had incurred was therefore by no means unwarranted.

I now questioned O'Connor more accurately respecting the circumstances of his quarrel with Fitzgerald. It arose from some dispute respecting the application of a rule of piquet, at which game they had been playing, each interpreting it favourably to himself, and O'Connor, having lost considerably, was in no mood to conduct an argument with temper—an

altercation ensued, and that of rather a pungent nature, and the result was that he left Fitzgerald's room rather abruptly, determined to demand an explanation in the most peremptory tone. For this purpose he had sent for M'Donough, and had commissioned him to deliver the note, which my arrival had fortunately intercepted.

As it was now past noon, O'Connor made me promise to remain with him to dinner ; and we sat down a party of three, all in high spirits at the termination of our anxieties. It is necessary to mention, for the purpose of accounting for what follows, that Mrs. O'Connor, or, as she was more euphoniously styled, the lady of Castle Connor, was precluded by ill-health from taking her place at the dinner-table, and, indeed, seldom left her room before

four o'clock.* We were sitting after dinner sipping our claret, and talking, and laughing, and enjoying ourselves exceedingly, when a servant, stepping into the room, informed his master that a gentleman wanted to speak with him.

‘Request him, with my compliments, to walk in,’ said O’Connor; and in a few moments a gentleman entered the room.

His appearance was anything but prepossessing. He was a little above the middle size, spare, and raw-boned; his face very red, his features sharp and bluish, and his age might be about sixty. His attire savoured a good deal of the SHABBY-GENTEEL; his clothes, which had much of tarnished and faded pretension about

* It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader, that at the period spoken of, the important hour of dinner occurred very nearly at noon.

them, did not fit him, and had not improbably fluttered in the stalls of Plunket Street. We had risen on his entrance, and O'Connor had twice requested of him to take a chair at the table, without his hearing, or at least noticing, the invitation; while with a slow pace, and with an air of mingled importance and effrontery, he advanced into the centre of the apartment, and regarding our small party with a supercilious air, he said :

‘I take the liberty of introducing myself—I am Captain M'Creagh, formerly of the — infantry. My business here is with a Mr. O'Connor, and the sooner it is despatched the better.’

‘I am the gentleman you name,’ said O'Connor; ‘and as you appear impatient, we had better proceed to your commission without delay.’

‘Then, Mr. O’Connor, you will please to read that note,’ said the captain, placing a sealed paper in his hand.

O’Connor read it through, and then observed :

‘This is very extraordinary indeed. This note appears to me perfectly unaccountable.’

‘You are very young, Mr. O’Connor,’ said the captain, with vulgar familiarity ; ‘but, without much experience in these matters, I think you might have anticipated something like this. You know the old saying, “*Second thoughts are best* ;” and so they are like to prove, by G— !’

‘You will have no objection, Captain M’Creagh, on the part of your friend, to my reading this note to these gentlemen ; they are both confidential friends of mine,

and one of them has already acted for me in this business.'

'I can have no objection,' replied the captain, 'to your doing what you please with your own. I have nothing more to do with that note once I put it safe into your hand; and when that is once done, it is all one to me, if you read it to half the world—that's *your* concern, and no affair of mine.'

O'Connor then read the following :

'Mr. Fitzgerald begs leave to state, that upon re-perusing Mr. O'Connor's communication of this morning carefully, with an experienced friend, he is forced to consider himself as challenged. His friend, Captain M'Creagh, has been empowered by him to make all the necessary arrangements.

' T—— Inn, Thursday.'

I can hardly describe the astonishment with which I heard this note. I turned to the captain, and said :

‘Surely, sir, there is some mistake in all this?’

‘Not the slightest, I’ll assure you, sir,’ said he, coolly ; ‘the case is a very clear one, and I think my friend has pretty well made up his mind upon it. May I request your answer?’ he continued, turning to O’Connor ; ‘time is precious, you know.’

O’Connor expressed his willingness to comply with the suggestion, and in a few minutes had folded and directed the following rejoinder :

‘Mr. O’Connor having received a satisfactory explanation from Mr. Fitzgerald, of the language used by that gentleman, feels that there no longer exists

any grounds for misunderstanding, and wishes further to state, that the note of which Mr. Fitzgerald speaks was not intended as a challenge.'

With this note the captain departed; and as we did not doubt that the message which he had delivered had been suggested by some unintentional misconception of O'Connor's first *billet*, we felt assured that the conclusion of his last note would set the matter at rest. In this belief, however, we were mistaken; before we had left the table, and in an incredibly short time, the captain returned. He entered the room with a countenance evidently tasked to avoid expressing the satisfaction which a consciousness of the nature of his mission had conferred; but in spite of all his efforts to look gravely unconcerned, there was a twinkle in the small grey eye, and an

almost imperceptible motion in the corner of the mouth, which sufficiently betrayed his internal glee, as he placed a note in the hand of O'Connor. As the young man cast his eye over it, he coloured deeply, and turning to M'Donough, he said :

'You will have the goodness to make all the necessary arrangements for a meeting. Something has occurred to render one between me and Mr. Fitzgerald inevitable. Understand me literally, when I say that it is now totally impossible that this affair should be amicably arranged. You will have the goodness, M'Donough, to let me know as soon as all the particulars are arranged. Purcell,' he continued, 'will you have the kindness to accompany me?' and having bowed to M'Creagh, we left the room.

As I closed the door after me, I heard the captain laugh, and thought I could distinguish the words—‘By —— I knew Fitzgerald would bring him to his way of thinking before he stopped.’

I followed O’Connor into his study, and on entering, the door being closed, he showed me the communication which had determined him upon hostilities. Its language was grossly impertinent, and it concluded by actually threatening to ‘*post*’ him, in case he further attempted ‘to be *off*.’ I cannot describe the agony of indignation in which O’Connor writhed under this insult. He said repeatedly that ‘he was a degraded and dishonoured man,’ that ‘he was dragged into the field,’ that ‘there was ignominy in the very thought that such a letter should have been directed to him.’ It was in vain that I reasoned

against this impression; the conviction that he had been disgraced had taken possession of his mind. He said again and again that nothing but his *death* could remove the stain which his indecision had cast upon the name of his family. I hurried to the hall, on hearing M'Donough and the captain passing, and reached the door just in time to hear the latter say, as he mounted his horse :

‘ All the rest can be arranged on the spot; and so farewell, Mr. M'Donough—we'll meet at Philippi, you know;’ and with this classical allusion, which was accompanied with a grin and a bow, and probably served many such occasions, the captain took his departure.

M'Donough briefly stated the few particulars which had been arranged. The parties were to meet at the stand-house,

in the race-ground, which lay at about an equal distance between Castle Connor and the town of T——. The hour appointed was half-past five on the next morning, at which time the twilight would be sufficiently advanced to afford a distinct view ; and the weapons to be employed were *pistols*—M'Creagh having claimed, on the part of his friend, all the advantages of the *challenged* party, and having, consequently, insisted upon the choice of '*tools*,' as he expressed himself ; and it was further stipulated that the utmost secrecy should be observed, as Fitzgerald would incur great risk from the violence of the peasantry, in case the affair took wind. These conditions were, of course, agreed upon by O'Connor, and M'Donough left the castle, having appointed four o'clock upon the next morning as the hour of his

return, by which time it would be his business to provide everything necessary for the meeting. On his departure, O'Connor requested me to remain with him upon that evening, saying that 'he could not bear to be alone with his mother.' It was to me a most painful request, but at the same time one which I could not think of refusing. I felt, however, that the difficulty at least of the task which I had to perform would be in some measure mitigated by the arrival of two relations of O'Connor upon that evening.

'It is very fortunate,' said O'Connor, whose thoughts had been running upon the same subject, 'that the O'Gradys will be with us to-night; their gaiety and good-humour will relieve us from a heavy task. I trust that nothing may occur to

prevent their coming.' Fervently concurring in the same wish, I accompanied O'Connor into the parlour, there to await the arrival of his mother.

God grant that I may never spend such another evening! The O'Gradys *did* come, but their high and noisy spirits, so far from relieving me, did but give additional gloom to the despondency, I might say the despair, which filled my heart with misery—the terrible forebodings which I could not for an instant silence, turned their laughter into discord, and seemed to mock the smiles and jests of the unconscious party. When I turned my eyes upon the mother, I thought I never had seen her look so proudly and so lovingly upon her son before—it cut me to the heart—oh, how cruelly I was deceiving her! I was a hundred times on the very point of start-

ing up, and, at all hazards, declaring to her how matters were ; but other feelings subdued my better emotions. Oh, what monsters are we made of by the fashions of the world ! how are our kindlier and nobler feelings warped or destroyed by their baleful influences ! I felt that it would not be *honourable*, that it would not be *etiquette*, to betray O'Connor's secret. I sacrificed a higher and a nobler duty than I have since been called upon to perform, to the dastardly fear of bearing the unmerited censure of a world from which I was about to retire. O Fashion ! thou gaudy idol, whose feet are red with the blood of human sacrifice, would I had always felt towards thee as I now do !

O'Connor was not dejected ; on the contrary, he joined with loud and lively alacrity in the hilarity of the little party :

but I could see in the flush of his cheek, and in the unusual brightness of his eye, all the excitement of fever—he was making an effort almost beyond his strength, but he succeeded—and when his mother rose to leave the room, it was with the impression that her son was the gayest and most light-hearted of the company. Twice or thrice she had risen with the intention of retiring, but O'Connor, with an eagerness which I alone could understand, had persuaded her to remain until the usual hour of her departure had long passed; and when at length she arose, declaring that she could not possibly stay longer, I alone could comprehend the desolate change which passed over his manner; and when I saw them part, it was with the sickening conviction that those two beings, so dear

to one another, so loved, so cherished, should meet no more.

O'Connor briefly informed his cousins of the position in which he was placed, requesting them at the same time to accompany him to the field, and this having been settled, we separated, each to his own apartment. I had wished to sit up with O'Connor, who had matters to arrange sufficient to employ him until the hour appointed for M'Donough's visit; but he would not hear of it, and I was forced, though sorely against my will, to leave him without a companion. I went to my room, and, in a state of excitement which I cannot describe, I paced for hours up and down its narrow precincts. I could not—who could?—analyse the strange, contradictory, torturing feelings which, while I recoiled in shrinking horror from the scene

which the morning was to bring, yet forced me to wish the intervening time annihilated ; each hour that the clock told seemed to vibrate and tinkle through every nerve ; my agitation was dreadful ; fancy conjured up the forms of those who filled my thoughts with more than the vividness of reality ; things seemed to glide through the dusky shadows of the room. I saw the dreaded form of Fitzgerald—I heard the hated laugh of the captain—and again the features of O'Connor would appear before me, with ghastly distinctness, pale and writhed in death, the gouts of gore clotted in the mouth, and the eye-balls glared and staring. Scared with the visions which seemed to throng with unceasing rapidity and vividness, I threw open the window and looked out upon the quiet scene around. I turned my eyes in

the direction of the town ; a heavy cloud was lowering darkly about it, and I, in impious frenzy, prayed to God that it might burst in avenging fires upon the murderous wretch who lay beneath. At length, sick and giddy with excess of excitement, I threw myself upon the bed without removing my clothes, and endeavoured to compose myself so far as to remain quiet until the hour for our assembling should arrive.

A few minutes before four o'clock I stole noiselessly downstairs, and made my way to the small study already mentioned. A candle was burning within ; and, when I opened the door, O'Connor was reading a book, which, on seeing me, he hastily closed, colouring slightly as he did so. We exchanged a cordial but mournful greeting ; and after a slight pause he said,

laying his hand upon the volume which he had shut a moment before :

‘Purcell, I feel perfectly calm, though I cannot say that I have much hope as to the issue of this morning’s rencounter. I shall avoid half the danger. If I must fall, I am determined I shall not go down to the grave with his blood upon my hands. I have resolved not to fire at Fitzgerald—that is, to fire in such a direction as to assure myself against hitting him. Do not say a word of this to the O’Gradys. Your doing so would only produce fruitless altercation ; they could not understand my motives. I feel convinced that I shall not leave the field alive. If I must die to-day, I shall avoid an awful aggravation of wretchedness. Purcell,’ he continued, after a little space, ‘I was so weak as to feel almost ashamed of the manner in which I

was occupied as you entered the room. Yes, *I—I* who will be, before this evening, a cold and lifeless clod, was ashamed to have spent my last moment of reflection in prayer. God pardon me! God pardon me!' he repeated.

I took his hand and pressed it, but I could not speak. I sought for words of comfort, but they would not come. To have uttered one cheering sentence I must have contradicted every impression of my own mind. I felt too much awed to attempt it. Shortly afterwards, M'Donough arrived. No wretched patient ever underwent a more thrilling revulsion at the first sight of the case of surgical instruments under which he had to suffer, than did I upon beholding a certain oblong flat mahogany box, bound with brass, and of about two feet in length, laid upon the

table in the hall. O'Connor, thanking him for his punctuality, requested him to come into his study for a moment, when, with a melancholy collectedness, he proceeded to make arrangements for our witnessing his will. The document was a brief one, and the whole matter was just arranged, when the two O'Gradys crept softly into the room.

‘So! last will and testament,’ said the elder. ‘Why, you have a very *blue* notion of these matters. I tell you, you need not be uneasy. I remember very well, when young Ryan of Ballykealey met M'Neil the duellist, bets ran twenty to one against him. I stole away from school, and had a peep at the fun as well as the best of them. They fired together. Ryan received the ball through the collar of his coat, and M'Neil in the temple; he spun like a top:

it was a most unexpected thing, and disappointed his friends damnably. It was admitted, however, to have been very pretty shooting upon both sides. To be sure,' he continued, pointing to the will, 'you are in the right to keep upon the safe side of fortune ; but then, there is no occasion to be altogether so devilish down in the mouth as you appear to be.'

'You will allow,' said O'Connor, 'that the chances are heavily against me.'

'Why, let me see,' he replied, 'not so hollow a thing either. Let me see, we'll say about four to one against you ; you may chance to throw doublets like him I told you of, and then what becomes of the odds I'd like to know ? But let things go as they will, I'll give and take four to one, in pounds and tens of pounds. There, M'Donough, there's a *get* for you ; b—t

me, if it is not. Poh! the fellow is stolen away,' he continued, observing that the object of his proposal had left the room; 'but d——it, Purcell, you are fond of a *soft thing*, too, in a quiet way—I'm sure you are—so curse me if I do not make you the same offer—is it a go?'

I was too much disgusted to make any reply, but I believe my looks expressed my feelings sufficiently, for in a moment he said :

'Well, I see there is nothing to be done, so we may as well be stirring. M'Donough, myself, and my brother will saddle the horses in a jiffy, while you and Purcell settle anything which remains to be arranged.'

So saying, he left the room with as much alacrity as if it were to prepare for a fox-hunt. Selfish, heartless fool! I have often since heard him spoken of as *a cursed*

good-natured dog and a d——good fellow; but such eulogies as these are not calculated to mitigate the abhorrence with which his conduct upon that morning inspired me.

The chill mists of night were still hovering on the landscape as our party left the castle. It was a raw, comfortless morning—a kind of drizzling fog hung heavily over the scene, dimming the light of the sun, which had now risen, into a pale and even a grey glimmer. As the appointed hour was fast approaching, it was proposed that we should enter the race-ground at a point close to the stand-house—a measure which would save us a ride of nearly two miles, over a broken road; at which distance there was an open entrance into the race-ground. Here, accordingly, we dismounted, and leaving our horses in the care of a

country fellow who happened to be stirring at that early hour, we proceeded up a narrow lane, over a side wall of which we were to climb into the open ground where stood the now deserted building, under which the meeting was to take place. Our progress was intercepted by the unexpected appearance of an old woman, who, in the scarlet cloak which is the picturesque characteristic of the female peasantry of the south, was moving slowly down the avenue to meet us, uttering that peculiarly wild and piteous lamentation well known by the name of 'the Irish cry,' accompanied throughout by all the customary gesticulation of passionate grief. This rencounter was more awkward than we had at first anticipated; for, upon a nearer approach, the person proved to be no other than an old attached dependent of the family, and who had her-

self nursed O'Connor. She quickened her pace as we advanced almost to a run; and, throwing her arms round O'Connor's neck, she poured forth such a torrent of lamentation, reproach, and endearment, as showed that she was aware of the nature of our purpose, whence and by what means I knew not. It was in vain that he sought to satisfy her by evasion, and gently to extricate himself from her embrace. She knelt upon the ground, and clasped her arms round his legs, uttering all the while such touching supplications, such cutting and passionate expressions of woe, as went to my very heart.

At length, with much difficulty, we passed this most painful interruption; and, crossing the boundary wall, were placed beyond her reach. The O'Gradys damned her for a troublesome hag, and

passed on with O'Connor, but I remained behind for a moment. The poor woman looked hopelessly at the high wall which separated her from him she had loved from infancy, and to be with whom at that minute she would have given worlds; she took her seat upon a solitary stone under the opposite wall, and there, in a low, subdued key, she continued to utter her sorrow in words so desolate, yet expressing such a tenderness of devotion as wrung my heart.

‘My poor woman,’ I said, laying my hand gently upon her shoulder, ‘you will make yourself ill; the morning is very cold, and your cloak is but a thin defence against the damp and chill. Pray return home and take this; it may be useful to you.’

So saying, I dropped a purse, with what

money I had about me, into her lap, but it lay there unheeded; she did not hear me.

‘Oh! my child, my child, my darlin’ she sobbed, ‘are you gone from me? are you gone from me? Ah, mavourneen, mavourneen, you’ll never come back alive to me again. The crathur that slept on my bosom—the lovin’ crathur that I was so proud of—they’ll kill him, they’ll kill him. Oh, voh! voh!’

The affecting tone, the feeling, the abandonment with which all this was uttered, none can conceive who have not heard the lamentations of the Irish peasantry. It brought tears to my eyes. I saw that no consolation of mine could soothe her grief, so I turned and departed; but as I rapidly traversed the level sward which separated me from my companions, now considerably

in advance, I could still hear the wailings of the solitary mourner.

As we approached the stand-house, it was evident that our antagonists had already arrived. Our path lay by the side of a high fence constructed of loose stones, and on turning a sharp angle at its extremity, we found ourselves close to the appointed spot, and within a few yards of a crowd of persons, some mounted and some on foot, evidently awaiting our arrival. The affair had unaccountably taken wind, as the number of the expectants clearly showed; but for this there was now no remedy.

As our little party advanced we were met and saluted by several acquaintances, whom curiosity, if no deeper feeling, had brought to the place. Fitzgerald and the Captain had arrived, and having dismounted,

were standing upon the sod. The former, as we approached, bowed slightly and sullenly—while the latter, evidently in high good humour, made his most courteous obeisance. No time was to be lost; and the two seconds immediately withdrew to a slight distance, for the purpose of completing the last minute arrangements. It was a brief but horrible interval—each returned to his principal to communicate the result, which was soon caught up and repeated from mouth to mouth throughout the crowd. I felt a strange and insurmountable reluctance to hear the sickening particulars detailed; and as I stood irresolute at some distance from the principal parties, a top-booted *squireen*, with a hunting whip in his hand, bustling up to a companion of his, exclaimed:

‘Not fire together!—did you ever hear

the like? If Fitzgerald gets the first shot all is over. M'Donough sold the pass, by——, and that is the long and the short of it.'

The parties now moved down a little to a small level space, suited to the purpose; and the captain, addressing M'Donough, said:

'Mr. M'Donough, you'll now have the goodness to toss for choice of ground; as the light comes from the east the line must of course run north and south. Will you be so obliging as to toss up a crown-piece, while I call?'

A coin was instantly chucked into the air. The captain cried, 'Harp.' The *head* was uppermost, and M'Donough immediately made choice of the southern point at which to place his friend—a position which it will be easily seen had

the advantage of turning his back upon the light—no trifling superiority of location. The captain turned with a kind of laugh, and said :

‘By ——, sir, you are as cunning as a dead pig ; but you forgot one thing. My friend is a left-handed gunner, though never a bit the worse for that ; so you see there is no odds as far as the choice of light goes.’

He then proceeded to measure nine paces in a direction running north and south, and the principals took their ground.

‘I must be troublesome to you once again, Mr. M'Donough. One toss more, and everything is complete. We must settle who is to have the *first slap*.’

A piece of money was again thrown into the air ; again the captain lost the toss, and M'Donough proceeded to load the

pistols. I happened to stand near Fitzgerald, and I overheard the captain, with a chuckle, say something to him in which the word 'cravat' was repeated. It instantly occurred to me that the captain's attention was directed to a bright-coloured muffler which O'Connor wore round his neck, and which would afford his antagonist a distinct and favourable mark. I instantly urged him to remove it, and at length, with difficulty, succeeded. He seemed perfectly careless as to any precaution. Everything was now ready; the pistol was placed in O'Connor's hand, and he only awaited the word from the captain.

M'Creagh then said :

'Mr. M'Donough, is your principal ready?'

M'Donough replied in the affirmative ;

and, after a slight pause, the captain, as had been arranged, uttered the words :

‘ Ready—fire.’

O’Connor fired, but so wide of the mark that some one in the crowd exclaimed :

‘ Fired in the air.’

‘ Who says he fired in the air?’ thundered Fitzgerald. ‘ By —— he lies, whoever he is.’ There was a silence. ‘ But even if he was fool enough to fire in the air, it is not in *his* power to put an end to the quarrel by *that*. D—— my soul, if I am come here to be played with like a child, and by the Almighty —— you shall hear more of this, each and everyone of you, before I’m satisfied.’

A kind of low murmur, or rather groan, was now raised, and a slight motion was observable in the crowd, as if to intercept Fitzgerald’s passage to his horse.

M'Creagh, drawing the horse close to the spot where Fitzgerald stood, threatened, with the most awful imprecations, 'to blow the brains out of the first man who should dare to press on them.'

O'Connor now interfered, requesting the crowd to forbear, and some degree of order was restored. He then said, 'that in firing as he did, he had no intention whatever of waiving his right of firing upon Fitzgerald, and of depriving that gentleman of his right of prosecuting the affair to the utmost—that if any person present imagined that he intended to fire in the air, he begged to set him right; since, so far from seeking to extort an unwilling reconciliation, he was determined that no power on earth should induce him to concede one inch of ground to Mr. Fitzgerald.'

This announcement was received with a shout by the crowd, who now resumed their places at either side of the plot of ground which had been measured. The principals took their places once more, and M'Creagh proceeded, with the nicest and most anxious care, to load the pistols ; and this task being accomplished, Fitzgerald whispered something in the Captain's ear, who instantly drew his friend's horse so as to place him within a step of his rider, and then tightened the girths. This accomplished, Fitzgerald proceeded deliberately to remove his coat, which he threw across his horse in front of the saddle ; and then, with the assistance of M'Creagh, he rolled the shirt sleeve up to the shoulder, so as to leave the whole of his muscular arm perfectly naked. A cry of 'Coward, coward ! butcher,

butcher !' arose from the crowd. Fitzgerald paused.

'Do you object, Mr. M'Donough? and upon what grounds, if you please?' said he.

'Certainly he does not,' replied O'Connor; and, turning to M'Donough, he added, 'pray let there be no unnecessary delay.'

'There is no objection, then,' said Fitzgerald.

'I object,' said the younger of the O'Grady's, 'if nobody else will.'

'And who the devil are you, that *dares* to object?' shouted Fitzgerald; 'and what d—d presumption prompts you to *dare* to wag your tongue here?'

'I am Mr. O'Grady, of Castle Blake,' replied the young man, now much enraged; 'and by —, you shall answer for your language to me.'

‘Shall I, by——? Shall I?’ cried he, with a laugh of brutal scorn; ‘the more the merrier, d—n the doubt of it—so now hold your tongue, for I promise you you shall have business enough of your own to think about, and that before long.’

There was an appalling ferocity in his tone and manner which no words could convey. He seemed transformed; he was actually like a man possessed. Was it possible, I thought, that I beheld the courteous gentleman, the gay, good-humoured retailer of amusing anecdote with whom, scarce two days ago, I had laughed and chatted, in the blasphemous and murderous ruffian who glared and stormed before me!

O’Connor interposed, and requested that time should not be unnecessarily lost.

‘You have not got a second coat on?’

inquired the Captain. 'I beg pardon, but my duty to my friend requires that I should ascertain the point.'

O'Connor replied in the negative. The Captain expressed himself as satisfied, adding, in what he meant to be a complimentary strain, 'that he knew Mr. O'Connor would scorn to employ padding or any unfair mode of protection.'

There was now a breathless silence. O'Connor stood perfectly motionless; and, excepting the death-like paleness of his features, he exhibited no sign of agitation. His eye was steady—his lip did not tremble—his attitude was calm. The Captain, having re-examined the priming of the pistols, placed one of them in the hand of Fitzgerald.—M'Donough inquired whether the parties were prepared, and having been answered in the affirmative,

he proceeded to give the word, 'Ready.' Fitzgerald raised his hand, but almost instantly lowered it again. The crowd had pressed too much forward as it appeared, and his eye had been unsteadied by the flapping of the skirt of a frieze riding-coat worn by one of the spectators.

'In the name of my principal,' said the Captain, 'I must and do insist upon these gentlemen moving back a little. We ask but little ; fair play, and no favour.'

The crowd moved as requested. M'Donough repeated his former question, and was answered as before. There was a breathless silence. Fitzgerald fixed his eye upon O'Connor. The appointed signal, 'Ready, fire!' was given. There was a pause while one might slowly reckon three—Fitzgerald fired—and O'Connor fell helplessly upon the ground.

‘There is no time to be lost,’ said M’Creagh; ‘for, by ——, you have done for him.’

So saying, he threw himself upon his horse, and was instantly followed at a hard gallop by Fitzgerald.

‘Cold-blooded murder, if ever murder was committed,’ said O’Grady. ‘He shall hang for it; d—n me, but he shall.’

A hopeless attempt was made to overtake the fugitives; but they were better mounted than any of their pursuers, and escaped with ease. Curses and actual yells of execration followed their course; and as, in crossing the brow of a neighbouring hill, they turned round in the saddle to observe if they were pursued, every gesture which could express fury and defiance was exhausted by the enraged and defeated multitude.

‘Clear the way, boys,’ said young O’Grady, who with me was kneeling beside O’Connor, while we supported him in our arms; ‘do not press so close, and be d—d; can’t you let the fresh air to him; don’t you see he’s dying?’

On opening his waistcoat we easily detected the wound: it was a little below the chest—a small blue mark, from which oozed a single heavy drop of blood.

‘He is bleeding but little—that is a comfort at all events,’ said one of the gentlemen who surrounded the wounded man.

Another suggested the expediency of his being removed homeward with as little delay as possible, and recommended, for this purpose, that a door should be removed from its hinges, and the patient, laid upon this, should be conveyed from the field. Upon this rude bier my poor

friend was carried from that fatal ground towards Castle Connor. I walked close by his side, and observed every motion of his. He seldom opened his eyes, and was perfectly still, excepting a nervous *working* of the fingers, and a slight, almost imperceptible twitching of the features, which took place, however, only at intervals. The first word he uttered was spoken as we approached the entrance of the castle itself, when he said, repeatedly, 'The back way, the back way.' He feared lest his mother should meet him abruptly and without preparation; but although this fear was groundless, since she never left her room until late in the day, yet it was thought advisable, and, indeed, necessary, to caution all the servants most strongly against breathing a hint to their mistress of the events which had befallen.

Two or three gentlemen had ridden from the field one after another, promising that they should overtake our party before it reached the castle, bringing with them medical aid from one quarter or another; and we determined that Mrs. O'Connor should not know anything of the occurrence until the opinion of some professional man should have determined the extent of the injury which her son had sustained—a course of conduct which would at least have the effect of relieving her from the horrors of suspense. When O'Connor found himself in his own room, and laid upon his own bed, he appeared much revived—so much so, that I could not help admitting a strong hope that all might yet be well.

‘After all, Purcell,’ said he, with a melancholy smile, and speaking with

evident difficulty, 'I believe I have got off with a trifling wound. I am sure it cannot be fatal, I feel so little pain—almost none.'

I cautioned him against fatiguing himself by endeavouring to speak; and he remained quiet for a little time. At length he said :

'Purcell, I trust this lesson shall not have been given in vain. God has been very merciful to me; I feel—I have an internal confidence that I am not wounded mortally. Had I been fatally wounded—had I been killed upon the spot, only think on it'—and he closed his eyes as if the very thought made him dizzy—'struck down into the grave, unprepared as I am, in the very blossom of my sins, without a moment of repentance or of reflection; I must have been lost—lost for ever and ever.'

I prevailed upon him, with some difficulty, to abstain from such agitating reflections, and at length induced him to court such repose as his condition admitted of, by remaining perfectly silent, and as much as possible without motion.

O'Connor and I only were in the room ; he had lain for some time in tolerable quiet, when I thought I distinguished the bustle attendant upon the arrival of some one at the castle, and went eagerly to the window, believing, or at least hoping, that the sounds might announce the approach of the medical man, whom we all longed most impatiently to see.

My conjecture was right ; I had the satisfaction of seeing him dismount and prepare to enter the castle, when my observations were interrupted, and my attention was attracted by a smothered,

gurgling sound proceeding from the bed in which lay the wounded man. I instantly turned round, and in doing so the spectacle which met my eyes was sufficiently shocking.

I had left O'Connor lying in the bed, supported by pillows, perfectly calm, and with his eyes closed : he was now lying nearly in the same position, his eyes open and almost starting from their sockets, with every feature pale and distorted as death, and vomiting blood in quantities that were frightful. I rushed to the door and called for assistance ; the paroxysm, though violent, was brief, and O'Connor sank into a swoon so deep and death-like, that I feared he should waken no more.

The surgeon, a little, fussy man, but I believe with some skill to justify his pretensions, now entered the room, carry-

ing his case of instruments, and followed by servants bearing basins and water and bandages of linen. He relieved our doubts by instantly assuring us that 'the patient' was still living; and at the same time professed his determination to take advantage of the muscular relaxation which the faint had induced to examine the wound—adding that a patient was more easily 'handled' when in a swoon than under other circumstances.

After examining the wound in front where the ball had entered, he passed his hand round beneath the shoulder, and after a little pause he shook his head, observing that he feared very much that one of the *vertebræ* was fatally injured, but that he could not say decidedly until his patient should revive a little. Though his language was very technical, and

consequently to me nearly unintelligible, I could perceive plainly by his manner that he considered the case as almost hopeless.

O'Connor gradually gave some signs of returning animation, and at length was so far restored as to be enabled to speak. After some few general questions as to how he felt affected, etc., etc., the surgeon, placing his hand upon his leg and pressing it slightly, asked him if he felt any pressure upon the limb? O'Connor answered in the negative—he pressed harder, and repeated the question; still the answer was the same, till at length, by repeated experiments, he ascertained that all that part of the body which lay behind the wound was paralysed, proving that the spine must have received some fatal injury.

‘Well, doctor,’ said O'Connor, after the

examination of the wound was over; 'well, I shall do, shan't I?'

The physician was silent for a moment, and then, as if with an effort, he replied :

'Indeed, my dear sir, it would not be honest to flatter you with much hope.'

'Eh?' said O'Connor with more alacrity than I had seen him exhibit since the morning; 'surely I did not hear you aright; I spoke of my recovery—surely there is no doubt; there can be none—speak frankly, doctor, for God's sake—am I dying?'

The surgeon was evidently no stoic, and his manner had extinguished in me every hope, even before he had uttered a word in reply.

'You are—you are indeed dying. There is no hope; I should but deceive you if I held out any.'

As the surgeon uttered these terrible words, the hands which O'Connor had stretched towards him while awaiting his reply fell powerless by his side; his head sank forward; it seemed as if horror and despair had unstrung every nerve and sinew; he appeared to collapse and shrink together as a plant might under the influence of a withering spell.

It has often been my fate, since then, to visit the chambers of death and of suffering; I have witnessed fearful agonies of body and of soul; the mysterious shudderings of the departing spirit, and the heart-rending desolation of the survivors; the severing of the tenderest ties, the piteous yearnings of unavailing love—of all these things the sad duties of my profession have made me a witness. But, generally speaking, I have observed in such scenes some-

thing to mitigate, if not the sorrows, at least the terrors, of death ; the dying man seldom seems to feel the reality of his situation ; a dull consciousness of approaching dissolution, a dim anticipation of unconsciousness and insensibility, are the feelings which most nearly border upon an appreciation of his state ; the film of death seems to have overspread the mind's eye, objects lose their distinctness, and float cloudily before it, and the apathy and apparent indifference with which men recognise the sure advances of immediate death, rob that awful hour of much of its terrors, and the death-bed of its otherwise inevitable agonies.

This is a merciful dispensation ; but the rule has its exceptions—its terrible exceptions. When a man is brought in an instant, by some sudden accident, to the

very verge of the fathomless pit of death, with all his recollections awake, and his perceptions keenly and vividly alive, without previous illness to subdue the tone of the mind as to dull its apprehensions—then, and then only, the death-bed is truly terrible.

Oh, what a contrast did O'Connor afford as he lay in all the abject helplessness of undisguised terror upon his death-bed, to the proud composure with which he had taken the field that morning. I had always before thought of death as of a quiet sleep stealing gradually upon exhausted nature, made welcome by suffering, or, at least, softened by resignation; I had never before stood by the side of one upon whom the hand of death had been thus suddenly laid; I had never seen the tyrant arrayed in his terror till then.

Never before or since have I seen horror so intensely depicted. It seemed actually as if O'Connor's mind had been unsettled by the shock; the few words he uttered were marked with all the incoherence of distraction; but it was not words that marked his despair most strongly, the appalling and heart-sickening groans that came from the terror-stricken and dying man must haunt me while I live; the expression, too, of hopeless, imploring agony with which he turned his eyes from object to object, I can never forget. At length, appearing suddenly to recollect himself, he said, with startling alertness, but in a voice so altered that I scarce could recognise the tones:

‘Purcell, Purcell, go and tell my poor mother; she must know all, and then,

quick, quick, quick, call your uncle, bring him here; I must have a chance.' He made a violent but fruitless effort to rise, and after a slight pause continued, with deep and urgent solemnity: 'Doctor, how long shall I live? Don't flatter me. Compliments at a death-bed are out of place; doctor, for God's sake, as you would not have my soul perish with my body, do not mock a dying man; have I an hour to live?'

'Certainly,' replied the surgeon; 'if you will but endeavour to keep yourself tranquil; otherwise I cannot answer for a moment.'

'Well, doctor,' said the patient, 'I will obey you; now, Purcell, my first and dearest friend, will you inform my poor mother of—of what you see, and return with your uncle; I know you will.'

I took the dear fellow's hand and kissed it, it was the only answer I could give, and left the room. I asked the first female servant I chanced to meet, if her mistress were yet up, and was answered in the affirmative. Without giving myself time to hesitate, I requested her to lead me to her lady's room, which she accordingly did ; she entered first, I supposed to announce my name, and I followed closely ; the poor mother said something, and held out her hands to welcome me ; I strove for words ; I could not speak, but nature found expression ; I threw myself at her feet and covered her hands with kisses and tears. My manner was enough ; with a quickness almost preternatural she understood it all ; she simply said the words : ' O'Connor is killed ; ' she uttered no more.

How I left the room I know not; I rode madly to my uncle's residence, and brought him back with me—all the rest is a blank. I remember standing by O'Connor's bedside, and kissing the cold pallid forehead again and again; I remember the pale serenity of the beautiful features; I remember that I looked upon the dead face of my friend, and I remember no more.

For many months I lay writhing and raving in the frenzy of brain fever; a hundred times I stood tottering at the brink of death, and long after my restoration to bodily health was assured, it appeared doubtful whether I should ever be restored to reason. But God dealt very mercifully with me; His mighty hand rescued me from death and from madness when one or other appeared inevitable.

As soon as I was permitted pen and ink, I wrote to the bereaved mother in a tone bordering upon frenzy. I accused myself of having made her childless; I called myself a murderer; I believed myself accursed; I could not find terms strong enough to express my abhorrence of my own conduct. But, oh! what an answer I received, so mild, so sweet, from the desolate, childless mother! its words spoke all that is beautiful in Christianity—it was forgiveness—it was resignation. I am convinced that to that letter, operating as it did upon a mind already predisposed, is owing my final determination to devote myself to that profession in which, for more than half a century, I have been a humble minister.

Years roll away, and we count them not as they pass, but their influence is not the

less certain that it is silent ; the deepest wounds are gradually healed, the keenest griefs are mitigated, and we, in character, feelings, tastes, and pursuits, become such altered beings, that but for some few indelible marks which past events must leave behind them, which time may soften, but can never efface ; our very identity would be dubious. Who has not felt all this at one time or other ? Who has not mournfully felt it ? This trite, but natural train of reflection filled my mind as I approached the domain of Castle Connor some ten years after the occurrence of the events above narrated. Everything looked the same as when I had left it ; the old trees stood as graceful and as grand as ever ; no plough had violated the soft green sward ; no utilitarian hand had constrained the wanderings of the clear and

sportive stream, or disturbed the lichen-covered rocks through which it gushed, or the wild coppice that over-shadowed its sequestered nooks — but the eye that looked upon these things was altered, and memory was busy with other days, shrouding in sadness every beauty that met my sight.

As I approached the castle my emotions became so acutely painful that I had almost returned the way I came, without accomplishing the purpose for which I had gone thus far ; and nothing but the conviction that my having been in the neighbourhood of Castle Connor without visiting its desolate mistress would render me justly liable to the severest censure, could overcome my reluctance to encountering the heavy task which was before me. I recognised the old servant who opened the

door, but he did not know me. I was completely changed ; suffering of body and mind had altered me in feature and in bearing, as much as in character. I asked the man whether his mistress ever saw visitors. He answered :

‘ But seldom ; perhaps, however, if she knew that an old friend wished to see her for a few minutes, she would gratify him so far.’

At the same time I placed my card in his hand, and requested him to deliver it to his mistress. He returned in a few moments, saying that his lady would be happy to see me in the parlour, and I accordingly followed him to the door, which he opened. I entered the room, and was in a moment at the side of my early friend and benefactress. I was too much agitated to speak ; I could only hold the hands

which she gave me, while, spite of every effort, the tears flowed fast and bitterly.

‘It was kind, very, very kind of you to come to see me,’ she said, with far more composure than I could have commanded; ‘I see it is very painful to you.’

I endeavoured to compose myself, and for a little time we remained silent; she was the first to speak:

‘You will be surprised, Mr. Purcell, when you observe the calmness with which I can speak of him who was dearest to me, who is gone; but my thoughts are always with him, and the recollections of his love’—her voice faltered a little—‘and the hope of meeting him hereafter enables me to bear existence.’

I said I know not what; something about resignation, I believe.

‘I hope I am resigned; God made me

more so,' she said. 'Oh, Mr. Purcell, I have often thought I loved my lost child *too* well. It was natural—he was my only child—he was——' She could not proceed for a few moments: 'It was very natural that I should love him as I did; but it may have been sinful; I have often thought so. I doated upon him—I idolised him—I thought too little of other holier affections; and God may have taken him from me, only to teach me, by this severe lesson, that I owed to heaven a larger share of my heart than to anything earthly. I cannot think of him now without more solemn feelings than if he were with me. There is something holy in our thoughts of the dead; I feel it so.' After a pause, she continued—'Mr. Purcell, do you remember his features well? they were very beautiful.' I assured her that I did.

‘Then you can tell me if you think this a faithful likeness.’ She took from a drawer a case in which lay a miniature. I took it reverently from her hands ; it was indeed very like—touchingly like. I told her so ; and she seemed gratified.

As the evening was wearing fast, and I had far to go, I hastened to terminate my visit, as I had intended, by placing in her hand a letter from her son to me, written during his sojourn upon the Continent. I requested her to keep it ; it was one in which he spoke much of her, and in terms of the tenderest affection. As she read its contents the heavy tears gathered in her eyes, and fell, one by one, upon the page ; she wiped them away, but they still flowed fast and silently. It was in vain that she tried to read it ; her eyes were filled with tears : so she folded the letter,

and placed it in her bosom. I rose to depart, and she also rose.

‘I will not ask you to delay your departure,’ said she; ‘your visit here must have been a painful one to you. I cannot find words to thank you for the letter as I would wish, or for all your kindness. It has given me a pleasure greater than I thought could have fallen to the lot of a creature so very desolate as I am; may God bless you for it!’ And thus we parted; I never saw Castle Connor or its solitary inmate more.



THE DRUNKARD'S DREAM.

*Being a Fourth Extract from the Legacy of the late F.
Purcell, P.P. of Drumcoolagh.*

‘All this *he* told with some confusion and
Dismay, the usual consequence of dreams
Of the unpleasant kind, with none at hand
To expound their vain and visionary gleams,
I’ve known some odd ones which seemed really planned
Prophetically, as that which one deems
“A strange coincidence,” to use a phrase
By which such things are settled nowadays.’

BYRON.

DREAMS! What age, or what
country of the world, has not
felt and acknowledged the mys-
tery of their origin and end? I have

thought not a little upon the subject, seeing it is one which has been often forced upon my attention, and sometimes strangely enough ; and yet I have never arrived at anything which at all appeared a satisfactory conclusion. It does appear that a mental phenomenon so extraordinary cannot be wholly without its use. We know, indeed, that in the olden times it has been made the organ of communication between the Deity and His creatures ; and when, as I have seen, a dream produces upon a mind, to all appearance hopelessly reprobate and depraved, an effect so powerful and so lasting as to break down the inveterate habits, and to reform the life of an abandoned sinner, we see in the result, in the reformation of morals which appeared incorrigible, in the reclamation of a human soul which seemed to be irre-

trievably lost, something more than could be produced by a mere chimera of the slumbering fancy, something more than could arise from the capricious images of a terrified imagination ; but once presented, we behold in all these things, and in their tremendous and mysterious results, the operation of the hand of God. And while Reason rejects as absurd the superstition which will read a prophecy in every dream, she may, without violence to herself, recognise, even in the wildest and most incongruous of the wanderings of a slumbering intellect, the evidences and the fragments of a language which may be spoken, which *has* been spoken, to terrify, to warn, and to command. We have reason to believe too, by the promptness of action which in the age of the prophets followed all intimations of this kind, and

by the strength of conviction and strange permanence of the effects resulting from certain dreams in latter times, which effects we ourselves may have witnessed, that when this medium of communication has been employed by the Deity, the evidences of His presence have been unequivocal. My thoughts were directed to this subject, in a manner to leave a lasting impression upon my mind, by the events which I shall now relate, the statement of which, however extraordinary, is nevertheless *accurately correct.*

About the year 17—, having been appointed to the living of C---h, I rented a small house in the town, which bears the same name: one morning in the month of November, I was awakened before my usual time by my servant, who bustled into my bedroom for the purpose

of announcing a sick call. As the Catholic Church holds her last rites to be totally indispensable to the safety of the departing sinner, no conscientious clergyman can afford a moment's unnecessary delay, and in little more than five minutes I stood ready cloaked and booted for the road, in the small front parlour, in which the messenger, who was to act as my guide, awaited my coming. I found a poor little girl crying piteously near the door, and after some slight difficulty I ascertained that her father was either dead or just dying.

‘And what may be your father's name, my poor child?’ said I. She held down her head, as if ashamed. I repeated the question, and the wretched little creature burst into floods of tears still more bitter than she had shed before. At length,

almost provoked by conduct which appeared to me so unreasonable, I began to lose patience, spite of the pity which I could not help feeling towards her, and I said rather harshly :

‘ If you will not tell me the name of the person to whom you would lead me, your silence can arise from no good motive, and I might be justified in refusing to go with you at all.’

‘ Oh, don’t say that—don’t say that!’ cried she. ‘ Oh, sir, it was that I was afeard of when I would not tell you—I was afeard, when you heard his name, you would not come with me ; but it is no use hidin’ it now—it’s Pat Connell, the carpenter, your honour.’

She looked in my face with the most earnest anxiety, as if her very existence depended upon what she should read there ;

but I relieved her at once. The name, indeed, was most unpleasantly familiar to me ; but, however fruitless my visits and advice might have been at another time, the present was too fearful an occasion to suffer my doubts of their utility or my reluctance to re-attempting what appeared a hopeless task to weigh even against the lightest chance that a consciousness of his imminent danger might produce in him a more docile and tractable disposition. Accordingly I told the child to lead the way, and followed her in silence. She hurried rapidly through the long narrow street which forms the great thoroughfare of the town. The darkness of the hour, rendered still deeper by the close approach of the old-fashioned houses, which lowered in tall obscurity on either side of the way ; the damp, dreary chill which renders the

advance of morning peculiarly cheerless, combined with the object of my walk, to visit the death-bed of a presumptuous sinner, to endeavour, almost against my own conviction, to infuse a hope into the heart of a dying reprobate—a drunkard but too probably perishing under the consequences of some mad fit of intoxication ; all these circumstances united served to enhance the gloom and solemnity of my feelings, as I silently followed my little guide, who with quick steps traversed the uneven pavement of the main street. After a walk of about five minutes she turned off into a narrow lane, of that obscure and comfortless class which is to be found in almost all small old-fashioned towns, chill, without ventilation, reeking with all manner of offensive effluviæ, and lined by dingy, smoky, sickly

and pent-up buildings, frequently not only in a wretched but in a dangerous condition.

‘Your father has changed his abode since I last visited him, and, I am afraid, much for the worse,’ said I.

‘Indeed he has, sir ; but we must not complain,’ replied she. ‘We have to thank God that we have lodging and food, though it’s poor enough, it is, your honour.’

Poor child! thought I, how many an older head might learn wisdom from thee—how many a luxurious philosopher, who is skilled to preach but not to suffer, might not thy patient words put to the blush! The manner and language of this child were alike above her years and station ; and, indeed, in all cases in which the cares and sorrows of life have anticipated their usual date, and have fallen, as they

sometimes do, with melancholy prematurity to the lot of childhood, I have observed the result to have proved uniformly the same. A young mind, to which joy and indulgence have been strangers, and to which suffering and self-denial have been familiarised from the first, acquires a solidity and an elevation which no other discipline could have bestowed, and which, in the present case, communicated a striking but mournful peculiarity to the manners, even to the voice, of the child. We paused before a narrow, crazy door, which she opened by means of a latch, and we forthwith began to ascend the steep and broken stairs which led upwards to the sick man's room.

As we mounted flight after flight towards the garret-floor, I heard more and more distinctly the hurried talking of many

voices. I could also distinguish the low sobbing of a female. On arriving upon the uppermost lobby these sounds became fully audible.

'This way, your honour,' said my little conductress; at the same time, pushing open a door of patched and half-rotten plank, she admitted me into the squalid chamber of death and misery. But one candle, held in the fingers of a scared and haggard-looking child, was burning in the room, and that so dim that all was twilight or darkness except within its immediate influence. The general obscurity, however, served to throw into prominent and startling relief the death-bed and its occupant. The light was nearly approximated to, and fell with horrible clearness upon, the blue and swollen features of the drunkard. I did not think it possible that

a human countenance could look so terrific. The lips were black and drawn apart; the teeth were firmly set; the eyes a little un- closed, and nothing but the whites appear- ing. Every feature was fixed and livid, and the whole face wore a ghastly and rigid expression of despairing terror such as I never saw equalled. His hands were crossed upon his breast, and firmly clenched; while, as if to add to the corpse-like effect of the whole, some white cloths, dipped in water, were wound about the forehead and temples.

As soon as I could remove my eyes from this horrible spectacle, I observed my friend Dr. D——, one of the most humane of a humane profession, standing by the bedside. He had been attempting, but unsuccessful- ly, to bleed the patient, and had now applied his finger to the pulse.

‘Is there any hope?’ I inquired in a whisper.

A shake of the head was the reply. There was a pause while he continued to hold the wrist; but he waited in vain for the throb of life—it was not there: and when he let go the hand, it fell stiffly back into its former position upon the other.

‘The man is dead,’ said the physician, as he turned from the bed where the terrible figure lay.

Dead! thought I, scarcely venturing to look upon the tremendous and revolting spectacle. Dead! without an hour for repentance, even a moment for reflection; dead! without the rites which even the best should have. Is there a hope for him? The glaring eyeball, the grinning mouth, the distorted brow—that unutterable look in which a painter would have

sought to embody the fixed despair of the nethermost hell. These were my answer.

The poor wife sat at a little distance, crying as if her heart would break—the younger children clustered round the bed, looking with wondering curiosity upon the form of death never seen before.

When the first tumult of uncontrollable sorrow had passed away, availing myself of the solemnity and impressiveness of the scene, I desired the heart-stricken family to accompany me in prayer, and all knelt down while I solemnly and fervently repeated some of those prayers which appeared most applicable to the occasion. I employed myself thus in a manner which I trusted, was not unprofitable, at least to the living, for about ten minutes; and having accomplished my task, I was the first to arise.

I looked upon the poor, sobbing, helpless creatures who knelt so humbly around me, and my heart bled for them. With a natural transition I turned my eyes from them to the bed in which the body lay; and, great God! what was the revulsion, the horror which I experienced on seeing the corpse-like, terrific thing seated half upright before me; the white cloths which had been wound about the head had now partly slipped from their position, and were hanging in grotesque festoons about the face and shoulders, while the distorted eyes leered from amid them—

‘A sight to dream of, not to tell.’

I stood actually riveted to the spot. The figure nodded its head and lifted its arm, I thought, with a menacing gesture. A thousand confused and horrible thoughts

at once rushed upon my mind. I had often read that the body of a presumptuous sinner, who, during life, had been the willing creature of every satanic impulse, after the human tenant had deserted it, had been known to become the horrible sport of demoniac possession.

I was roused from the stupefaction of terror in which I stood, by the piercing scream of the mother, who now, for the first time, perceived the change which had taken place. She rushed towards the bed, but stunned by the shock, and overcome by the conflict of violent emotions, before she reached it she fell prostrate upon the floor.

I am perfectly convinced that had I not been startled from the torpidity of horror in which I was bound by some powerful and arousing stimulant, I should have

gazed upon this unearthly apparition until I had fairly lost my senses. As it was, however, the spell was broken—superstition gave way to reason: the man whom all believed to have been actually dead was living!

Dr. D—— was instantly standing by the bedside, and upon examination he found that a sudden and copious flow of blood had taken place from the wound which the lancet had left; and this, no doubt, had effected his sudden and almost preternatural restoration to an existence from which all thought he had been for ever removed. The man was still speechless, but he seemed to understand the physician when he forbid his repeating the painful and fruitless attempts which he made to articulate, and he at once resigned himself quietly into his hands.

I left the patient with leeches upon his temples, and bleeding freely, apparently with little of the drowsiness which accompanies apoplexy; indeed, Dr. D—— told me that he had never before witnessed a seizure which seemed to combine the symptoms of so many kinds, and yet which belonged to none of the recognised classes; it certainly was not apoplexy, catalepsy, nor *delirium tremens*, and yet it seemed, in some degree, to partake of the properties of all. It was strange, but stranger things are coming.

During two or three days Dr. D—— would not allow his patient to converse in a manner which could excite or exhaust him, with anyone; he suffered him merely as briefly as possible to express his immediate wants. And it was not until the fourth day after my early visit, the particulars of

which I have just detailed, that it was thought expedient that I should see him, and then only because it appeared that his extreme importunity and impatience to meet me were likely to retard his recovery more than the mere exhaustion attendant upon a short conversation could possibly do; perhaps, too, my friend entertained some hope that if by holy confession his patient's bosom were eased of the perilous stuff which no doubt oppressed it, his recovery would be more assured and rapid. It was then, as I have said, upon the fourth day after my first professional call, that I found myself once more in the dreary chamber of want and sickness.

The man was in bed, and appeared low and restless. On my entering the room he raised himself in the bed, and muttered, twice or thrice :

‘Thank God! thank God!’

I signed to those of his family who stood by to leave the room, and took a chair beside the bed. So soon as we were alone, he said, rather doggedly :

‘There’s no use in telling me of the sinfulness of bad ways—I know it all. I know where they lead to—I seen everything about it with my own eyesight, as plain as I see you.’ He rolled himself in the bed, as if to hide his face in the clothes; and then suddenly raising himself, he exclaimed with startling vehemence : ‘Look, sir! there is no use in mincing the matter : I’m blasted with the fires of hell ; I have been in hell. What do you think of that? In hell—I’m lost for ever—I have not a chance. I am damned already —damned—damned!’

The end of this sentence he actually

shouted. His vehemence was perfectly terrific; he threw himself back, and laughed, and sobbed hysterically. I poured some water into a tea-cup, and gave it to him. After he had swallowed it, I told him if he had anything to communicate, to do so as briefly as he could, and in a manner as little agitating to himself as possible; threatening at the same time, though I had no intention of doing so, to leave him at once, in case he again gave way to such passionate excitement.

‘It’s only foolishness,’ he continued, ‘for me to try to thank you for coming to such a villain as myself at all. It’s no use for me to wish good to you, or to bless you; for such as me has no blessings to give.’

I told him that I had but done my duty, and urged him to proceed to the matter

which weighed upon his mind. He then spoke nearly as follows :

‘ I came in drunk on Friday night last, and got to my bed here ; I don't remember how. Sometime in the night it seemed to me I wakened, and feeling uneasy in myself, I got up out of the bed. I wanted the fresh air ; but I would not make a noise to open the window, for fear I'd waken the crathurs. It was very dark and throublesome to find the door ; but at last I did get it, and I groped my way out, and went down as asy as I could. I felt quite sober, and I counted the steps one after another, as I was going down, that I might not stumble at the bottom.

‘ When I came to the first landing-place—God be about us always !—the floor of it sunk under me, and I went down—down—down, till the senses almost left me. I do

not know how long I was falling, but it seemed to me a great while. When I came rightly to myself at last, I was sitting near the top of a great table; and I could not see the end of it, if it had any, it was so far off. And there was men beyond reckoning, sitting down all along by it, at each side, as far as I could see at all. I did not know at first was it in the open air; but there was a close smothering feel in it that was not natural. And there was a kind of light that my eyesight never saw before, red and unsteady; and I did not see for a long time where it was coming from, until I looked straight up, and then I seen that it came from great balls of blood-coloured fire that were rolling high over head with a sort of rushing, trembling sound, and I perceived that they shone on the ribs of a great roof

of rock that was arched overhead instead of the sky. When I seen this, scarce knowing what I did, I got up, and I said, "I have no right to be here ; I must go." And the man that was sitting at my left hand only smiled, and said, "Sit down again; you can *never* leave this place." And his voice was weaker than any child's voice I ever heerd; and when he was done speaking he smiled again.

'Then I spoke out very loud and bold, and I said, "In the name of God, let me out of this bad place." And there was a great man that I did not see before, sitting at the end of the table that I was near ; and he was taller than twelve men, and his face was very proud and terrible to look at. And he stood up and stretched out his hand before him ; and when he stood up, all that was there, great and small, bowed down

with a sighing sound, and a dread came on my heart, and he looked at me, and I could not speak. I felt I was his own, to do what he liked with, for I knew at once who he was ; and he said, "If you promise to return, you may depart for a season;" and the voice he spoke with was terrible and mournful, and the echoes of it went rolling and swelling down the endless cave, and mixing with the trembling of the fire overhead ; so that when he sat down there was a sound after him, all through the place, like the roaring of a furnace, and I said, with all the strength I had, "I promise to come back—in God's name let me go !"

‘And with that I lost the sight and the hearing of all that was there, and when my senses came to me again, I was sitting in the bed with the blood all

over me, and you and the rest praying around the room.'

Here he paused and wiped away the chill drops of horror which hung upon his forehead.

I remained silent for some moments. The vision which he had just described struck my imagination not a little, for this was long before Vathek and the 'Hall of Eblis' had delighted the world; and the description which he gave had, as I received it, all the attractions of novelty beside the impressiveness which always belongs to the narration of an *eye-witness*, whether in the body or in the spirit, of the scenes which he describes. There was something, too, in the stern horror with which the man related these things, and in the incongruity of his description, with the vulgarly received notions of the great

place of punishment, and of its presiding spirit, which struck my mind with awe, almost with fear. At length he said, with an expression of horrible, imploring earnestness, which I shall never forget—
‘ Well, sir, is there any hope ; is there any chance at all ? or, is my soul pledged and promised away for ever ? is it gone out of my power ? must I go back to the place ?’

In answering him, I had no easy task to perform ; for however clear might be my internal conviction of the groundlessness of his fears, and however strong my scepticism respecting the reality of what he had described, I nevertheless felt that his impression to the contrary, and his humility and terror resulting from it, might be made available as no mean engines in the work of his conversion from profligacy, and of

his restoration to decent habits, and to religious feeling.

I therefore told him that he was to regard his dream rather in the light of a warning than in that of a prophecy ; that our salvation depended not upon the word or deed of a moment, but upon the habits of a life ; that, in fine, if he at once discarded his idle companions and evil habits, and firmly adhered to a sober, industrious, and religious course of life, the powers of darkness might claim his soul in vain, for that there were higher and firmer pledges than human tongue could utter, which promised salvation to him who should repent and lead a new life.

I left him much comforted, and with a promise to return upon the next day. I did so, and found him much more cheerful and without any remains of the dogged

sullenness which I suppose had arisen from his despair. His promises of amendment were given in that tone of deliberate earnestness, which belongs to deep and solemn determination ; and it was with no small delight that I observed, after repeated visits, that his good resolutions, so far from failing, did but gather strength by time ; and when I saw that man shake off the idle and debauched companions, whose society had for years formed alike his amusement and his ruin, and revive his long discarded habits of industry and sobriety, I said within myself, there is something more in all this than the operation of an idle dream.

One day, sometime after his perfect restoration to health, I was surprised on ascending the stairs, for the purpose of visiting this man, to find him busily

employed in nailing down some planks upon the landing-place, through which, at the commencement of his mysterious vision, it seemed to him that he had sunk. I perceived at once that he was strengthening the floor with a view to securing himself against such a catastrophe, and could scarcely forbear a smile as I bid 'God bless his work.'

He perceived my thoughts, I suppose, for he immediately said :

'I can never pass over that floor' without trembling. I'd leave this house if I could, but I can't find another lodging in the town so cheap, and I'll not take a better till I've paid off all my debts, please God ; but I could not be easy in my mind till I made it as safe as I could. You'll hardly believe me, your honour, that while I'm working, maybe a mile away, my heart

is in a flutter the whole way back, with the bare thoughts of the two little steps I have to walk upon this bit of a floor. So it's no wonder, sir, I'd thry to make it sound and firm with any idle timber I have.'

I applauded his resolution to pay off his debts, and the steadiness with which he perused his plans of conscientious economy, and passed on.

Many months elapsed, and still there appeared no alteration in his resolutions of amendment. He was a good workman, and with his better habits he recovered his former extensive and profitable employment. Everything seemed to promise comfort and respectability. I have little more to add, and that shall be told quickly. I had one evening met Pat Connell, as he returned from his work, and as usual, after a mutual,

and on his side respectful salutation, I spoke a few words of encouragement and approval. I left him industrious, active, healthy—when next I saw him, not three days after, he was a corpse.

The circumstances which marked the event of his death were somewhat strange—I might say fearful. The unfortunate man had accidentally met an early friend just returned, after a long absence, and in a moment of excitement, forgetting everything in the warmth of his joy, he yielded to his urgent invitation to accompany him into a public-house, which lay close by the spot where the encounter had taken place. Connell, however, previously to entering the room, had announced his determination to take nothing more than the strictest temperance would warrant.

But oh ! who can describe the inveterate

tenacity with which a drunkard's habits cling to him through life? He may repent—he may reform—he may look with actual abhorrence upon his past profligacy; but amid all this reformation and compunction, who can tell the moment in which the base and ruinous propensity may not recur, triumphing over resolution, remorse, shame, everything, and prostrating its victim once more in all that is destructive and revolting in that fatal vice?

The wretched man left the place in a state of utter intoxication. He was brought home nearly insensible, and placed in his bed, where he lay in the deep calm lethargy of drunkenness. The younger part of the family retired to rest much after their usual hour; but the poor wife remained up sitting by the fire, too much grieved and shocked at the occur-

rence of what she had so little expected, to settle to rest; fatigue, however, at length overcame her, and she sank gradually into an uneasy slumber. She could not tell how long she had remained in this state, when she awakened, and immediately on opening her eyes, she perceived by the faint red light of the smouldering turf embers, two persons, one of whom she recognised as her husband, noiselessly gliding out of the room.

‘Pat, darling, where are you going?’ said she. There was no answer—the door closed after them; but in a moment she was startled and terrified by a loud and heavy crash, as if some ponderous body had been hurled down the stair. Much alarmed, she started up, and going to the head of the staircase, she called repeatedly upon her husband, but in vain. She returned to

the room, and with the assistance of her daughter, whom I had occasion to mention before, she succeeded in finding and lighting a candle, with which she hurried again to the head of the staircase.

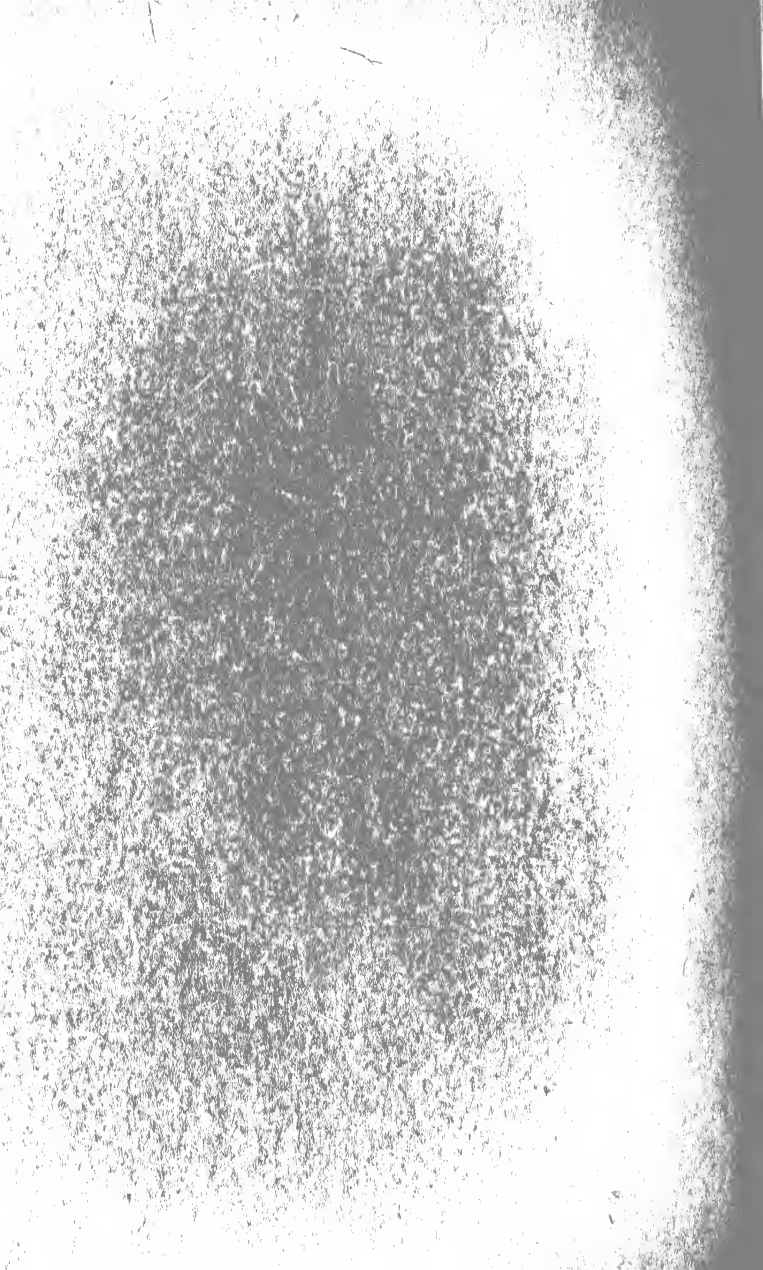
At the bottom lay what seemed to be a bundle of clothes, heaped together, motionless, lifeless—it was her husband. In going down the stair, for what purpose can never now be known, he had fallen helplessly and violently to the bottom, and coming head foremost, the spine at the neck had been dislocated by the shock, and instant death must have ensued. The body lay upon that landing-place to which his dream had referred. It is scarcely worth endeavouring to clear up a single point in a narrative where all is mystery ; yet I could not help suspecting that the second figure which had been seen in the

room by Connell's wife on the night of his death, might have been no other than his own shadow. I suggested this solution of the difficulty; but she told me that the unknown person had been considerably in advance of the other, and on reaching the door, had turned back as if to communicate something to his companion. It was then a mystery.

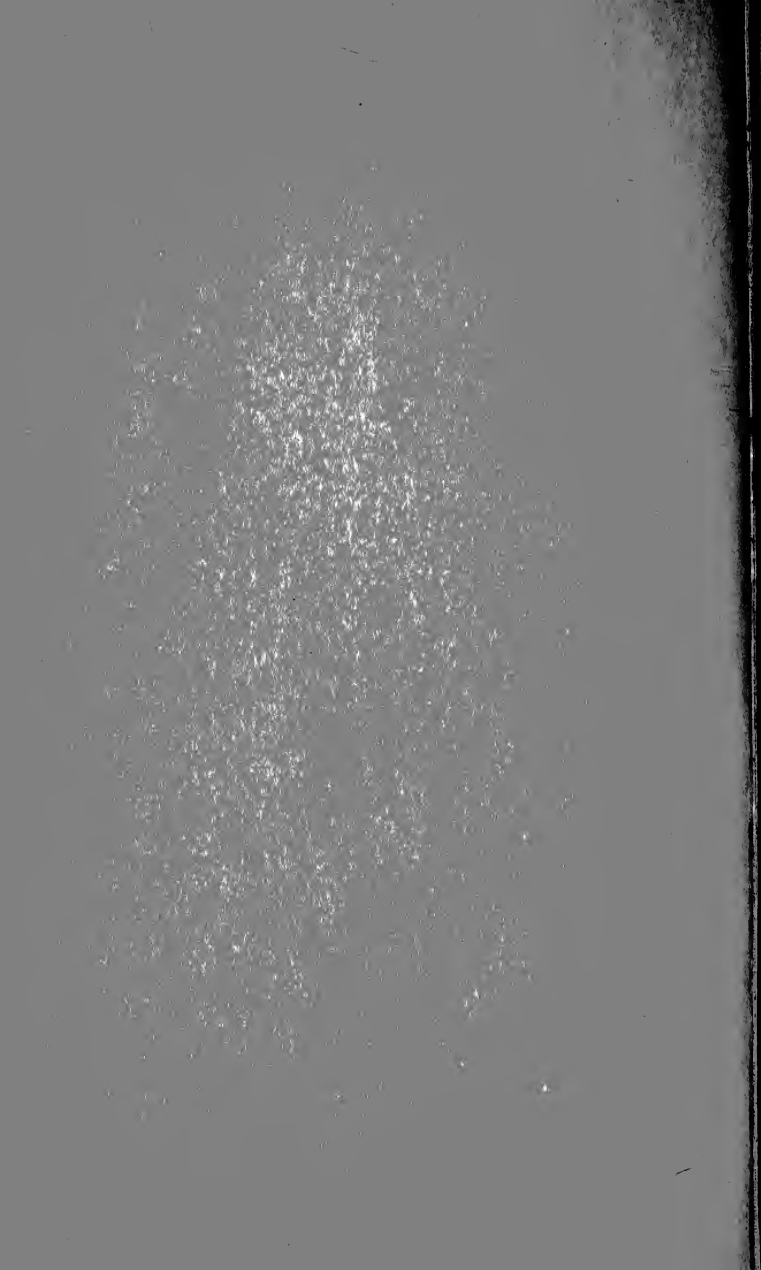
Was the dream verified?—whither had the disembodied spirit sped?—who can say? We know not. But I left the house of death that day in a state of horror which I could not describe. It seemed to me that I was scarce awake. I heard and saw everything as if under the spell of a night-mare. The coincidence was terrible.

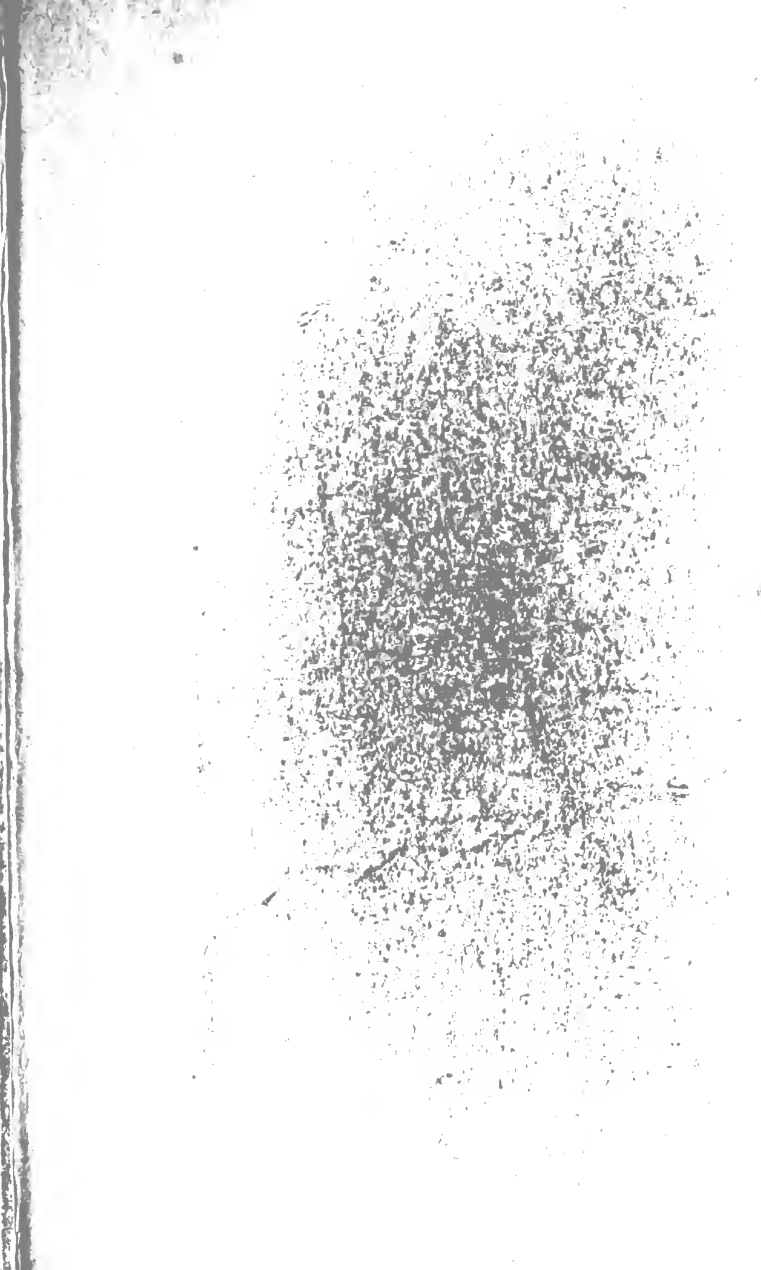
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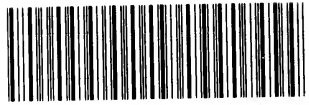








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