THE

MARTINS OF CRO' MARTIN.

BY

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ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TO

THE REVEREND MORTIMER O'SULLIVAN, D.D.

If I have not asked your permission to dedicate this volume to you, it is because I would not involve you in the responsibility of any opinions even so light a production may contain, nor seek to cover by a great name the sentiments and views of a very humble one.

I cannot, however, deny myself the pleasure of inscribing to you a book to which I have given much thought and labour—a testimony of the deep and sincere affection of one, who has no higher pride than in the honour of your friendship.

Ever sincerely yours,

CHARLES LEVER.

Casa Capponi, Florence,
May, 1856.

APOLOGY FOR A PREFACE.

I REMEMBER once having made the ascent of a mountain in Killarney to see the sun rise, and watch the various effects the breaking day should successively throw on the surrounding landscape. With the sad fatality, however, so common to these regions, vast masses of cloud and mist obscured every object. The lakes, the islands, the woods, even the mountains themselves, were shrouded in this gloomy mantle, and it was only at rare intervals that a ray of light, piercing the darkness, afforded a fitful glance of a scene so full of picturesque beauty.

My guide, however, with the instincts of his order, pointed through the dim obscure to where Mangerton stood, the Turk Mountain, the waterfall, and Mucruss Abbey, and with a glowing eloquence described the features of the invisible landscape.

Shall I confess that now, as I have completed this tale, I find myself in a position somewhat resembling that of the guide? The various objects which I had hoped and promised myself to present to my readers have been displayed faintly, feebly, or not at all. The picture of a new social condition that I desired to develop, I have barely sketched—the great political change worked on a whole people, merely glanced at.

Perhaps my plan included intentions not perfectly compatible with fiction—perhaps the inability lay more with myself—mayhap both causes have had their share in the failure. But so is it that now, my task completed, I grieve to see how little opportunity I have had of dwelling on the great problem which first engaged me in the social working of the Emancipation Bill of '29.

It was a subject over which I had long thought and pondered, and in, I hope, a spirit of fairness and justice. Firmly feeling that the great evils of Ireland were rather social than political, and strongly impressed with the conviction that the remedy lay less in legislative enactment than in the growth of habits of mutual charity and goodwill, I have regarded the working of the Relief Bill with intense interest as its effects displayed themselves in the two opposite parties. I have seen, or fancied I have seen, great mistakes on both sides — golden opportunities of agreement neglected—happy coincidences of feeling ignored; and yet, with all this, a more generous forbearing tone has unquestionably succeeded; and, if we have not reached the happy goal of perfect concord, much of the bitterness of party has been effaced—much of the rancour of old jealousies forgotten.

If I wished to evidence something of this, still more did I desire to illustrate what might be done by a generous and kindly treatment of the people, especially at the hands of those who thoroughly understand and appreciate them, knowing well the complex web of their intricate natures, and able to discriminate between the real and unreal in their strangely involved characters.

In my heroine—of whom I take this opportunity to say that all the details are drawn from fiction—I have attempted this. I have endeavoured to picture one whose own nature, deeply imbued with the traits of country, could best appreciate the feelings of the people, and more readily deal with sentiments to which her own heart was no stranger. How inadequately even to my own conception, I have rendered this intention, I know and feel, and I have but once more to repeat my entreaty for the kind indulgence of those friends whose favour has for so many a year formed my happiness and my pride.

Let them at least believe that what I have written has been done with a purpose; and if even a shadow of the intention manifests itself in the performance, "The Martins of Cro' Martin" may not have been written in vain.

C. L.

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THE

MARTINS OF CRO' MARTIN.

CHAPTER I.

CRO' MARTIN.

I AM about to speak of Ireland as it was some four-and-twenty years ago, and feel as if I were referring to a long-past period of history, such have been the changes, political and social, effected in that interval! Tempting as in some respects might be an investigation into the causes of these great changes, and even speculation as to how they might have been modified, and whither they tend, I prefer rather to let the reader form his own unaided judgment on such matters, and will therefore, without more of preface, proceed to my story.

If the traveller leaves the old town of Oughterard, and proceeds westward, he enters a wild and dreary region, with few traces of cultivation, and with scarcely an inhabitant. Bare, bleak mountains, fissured by many a torrent, bound plains of stony surface,—here and there the miserable hut of some "cottier," with its poor effort at tillage, in the shape of some roods of wet potato land, or the sorry picture of a stunted oat crop, green even in the late autumn. Gradually, however, the scene becomes less dreary. Little patches of grass land come into view, generally skirting some small lake; and here are to be met with droves of those wild Connemara ponies, for which the district is so celebrated; a stunted, hardy race, with all the endurance and courage that beseem a mountain origin. Further on, the grateful sight of young timber meets the eye, and large enclosures of larch and spruce fir are seen on every favourable spot of ground. And at length, on winding round the base of a steep mountain, the deep woods of a rich demesne appear, and soon afterwards a handsome entrance-gate of massive stone, with armorial bearings above it, announces the approach to Cro' Martin Castle, the ancient seat of the Martins.

An avenue of several miles in length, winding through scenery of the most varied character, at one time traversing rich lawns of waving meadow, at another tracking its course along some rocky glen, or skirting the bank of a clear and rapid river, at length arrives at the Castle. With few pretensions to architectural correctness, Cro' Martin was, indeed, an imposing structure. Originally the stronghold of some bold Borderer, it had been added to by successive proprietors, till at last it had assumed the proportions of a vast and spacious edifice, different eras contributing the different styles of building, and presenting in the mass, traces of every architecture, from the stern old watch-tower of the fourteenth century to the commodious dwelling-house of our own.

If correct taste might take exception to many of the external details of this building, the arrangements within doors, where all that elegance and comfort could combine were to be found, might safely challenge criticism. Costly furniture abounded, not for show in state apartments, shrouded in canvas or screened from sunlight, but for daily use in rooms that showed continual habitation.

Some of the apartments displayed massive specimens of that richly-carved old oak furniture for which the Chateaux of the Low Countries were famed; others abounded with inlaid consoles and costly tables of "marqueterie," and others again exhibited that chaste white and gold which characterised the splendid era of the Regency in France. Great jars of Sèvres, those splendid mockeries of high art, stood in the windows, whose curtains were of the heaviest brocade. Carpets of soft Persian wool covered the floors, and rich tapestries were thrown over sofas and chairs with a careless grace, the very triumph of picturesque effect.

In the scrupulous neatness of all these arrangements, in the orderly air, the demure and respectful bearing of the servants as they showed the Castle to strangers, one might read the traces of a strict and rigid discipline—features, it must be owned, that seemed little in accordance with the wild region that stretched on every side. The spotless windows of plate-glass, the polished floor that mirrored every chair that stood on it, the massive and well-fitting doors, the richly gilded dogs that shone within the marble hearth, had little brotherhood with the dreary dwellings of the cottiers beyond the walls of the park—and certainly even Irish misery never was more conspicuous than in that lonely region.

It was early on a calm morning of the late autumn that the silent court-yard of the Castle resounded with the sharp quick tramp of a horse, suddenly followed by a loud shrill whistle, as a young girl, mounted upon a small but highly-bred horse, galloped up to one of the back entrances. Let us employ the few seconds in which she thus awaited, to introduce her to the reader. Somewhat above the middle size, and with a figure admirably proportioned, her face seemed to blend the joyous character of happy girlhood with a temperament of resolute action. The large and liquid hazel eyes, with their long dark fringes, were almost at variance with the expression of the mouth, which, though finely and beautifully fashioned, conveyed the working of a spirit that usually followed its own dictates, and as rarely brooked much interference.

Shaded by a broad-leaved black hat, and with a braid of her dark auburn hair accidentally fallen on her shoulder, Mary Martin sat patting the head of the wire-haired greyhound, who had reared himself to her side—a study for Landseer himself. Scarcely above a minute had elapsed, when several servants were seen running towards her, whose hurried air betrayed that they had only just risen from bed.

"You're all very late to-day," cried the young lady. "You should have been in the stables an hour ago. Where's Brand?"

"He's gone into the fair, Miss, with a lot of hoggets," said a little old fellow with a rabbit-skin cap, and a most unmistakable groom formation about the knees and ankles.

"Look to the mare, Barny," said she, jumping off, "and remind me, if I forget it, to fine you all, for not having fed and watered before six o'clock. Yes, I'll do it—I said so once before, and you'll see I'll keep my word. Is it because my uncle goes a few weeks to the sea-side, that you are to neglect your duty? Hackett, I shall want to see the colts presently; go round to the straw-yard and wait till I come; and, Graft, let us have a look at the garden, for my aunt is quite provoked at the flowers you have been sending her lately."

All this was said rapidly, and in a tone that evidently was not meant to admit of reply; and the gardener led the way, key in hand, very much with the air of a felon going to conviction. He was a Northern Irishman, however, and possessed the Scotch-like habits of prudent reserve, that never wasted a word in a bad cause. And thus he suffered himself to be soundly rated upon various short-comings in his department: celery, that wanted landing; asparagus grown to the consistence of a walking-cane; branches of fruit-trees breaking under their weight of produce; and even weed-grown walks, all were there, and upon all was he arraigned.

"The old story, of course, Graft," said she, slapping her foot impatiently with her riding-whip—"you have too few people in the garden; but my remedy will be to lessen their number. Now mark me. My uncle is coming home on Wednesday next—just so—a full month earlier than you expected—and if the garden be not in perfect order—if I find one of these things I have complained of to-day——"

"But, my Leddy, this is the season when, what wi' sellin' the fruit, and what wi' the new shoots——"

"I'll have it done, that's all, Mr. Graft; and you'll have one man less to do it with. I'll go over the hothouse after breakfast," said she, smiling to herself at the satisfaction with which he evidently heard this short reprieve. Nor was he himself more anxious to escape censure than was she to throw off the ungracious office of inflicting it.

"And now, for old Catty Broon, and a good breakfast to put me in better temper," said she to herself, as she entered the Castle and wended her way to the housekeeper's room.

"May I never—but I thought it was a dream when I heard your voice outside," said old Catty, as she welcomed her young mistress with heartfelt delight; "but when I saw them runnin' here and runnin' there, I said, sure enough, she's come in earnest."

"Quite true, Catty," said Mary, laughing. "I surprised the garrison, and found them, I must say, in most sorry discipline; but never mind, they'll have everything to rights by Wednesday, when we are all coming back again."

"Was the bathing any use to my Lady, Miss?" asked Catty, but in a tone that combined a kind of half drollery with earnest.

"She's better and worse, Catty; better in health, and scarcely as good-humoured; but, there's a good old soul, let me have breakfast, for I have a great deal to do before I ride back."

"But sure you are not goin' to ride back to Kilkieran to-day?"

"That am I, Catty, and up to Kyle's Wood and the new plantations before I go. Why, it's only fifteen miles, old lady!"

"Faix, you're your father's daughter all over," said Catty, with a look first at *her* and then at a water-coloured sketch which occupied a place over the chimney, and represented a fair-haired, handsome boy of about ten years of age.

"Was that ever like Papa?" asked the girl.

"'Tis his born image, it is," said Catty; and her eyes swam with tears as she turned away.

"Well, to *my* thinking he is far better-looking in that picture!" said Mary, pointing with her whip to a coloured drawing of a showily-dressed dragoon officer, reining in his charger, and seeming to eye with considerable disdain the open mouth of a cannon in front of him.

"Ah, then, the other was more himself!" sighed Catty; "and more nat'ral too, with the long hair on his neck and tha' roguish laugh in his eye."

"And neither are very like that!" said Mary, pointing to a third portrait, which represented a swarthy horseman with a wide sombrero and a jacket all braided and buttoned in Mexican fashion, a rifle at his back and a long lance in his hand, with the heavy coil of a lasso at his saddle-peak.

"Arrah, that ain't a bit like him," said the old woman, querulously, "for all that he said that it was."

Mary arose at the words, and perused aloud some lines which were written at the foot of the picture, and which many and many a time before she had conned over and repeated. They ran thus: "Aye, Catty, though you won't believe it, that rough-looking old rider, all bearded and sunburnt, is your own wild Barry of former days, and for all that the world has done, wonderfully little altered in the core, though the crust is not very like that cherry-cheeked boy that used to, and mayhap, still may, hang over your fireplace.—Guastalla, May, 1808."

"And has he not written since that?" sighed the girl, over whom the dark shadow of orphanhood passed as she spoke.

"Twice only—the first of the two spoke of his coming home again—but somehow he seemed to be put off it, and the next letter was all about you, as if he didn't mean to come back! My Lady and Master Barry never was fond of each other," muttered the old woman, after a pause, and as though giving an explanation to some problem that she was working within her own head.

"But my uncle loved him," broke in Mary.

"And why wouldn't he. Warn't they twins? There was only a few minutes between them—long enough to make one a rich man and leave the other only his own wits and the wide world for a fortune! Ayeh, ayeh!" grumbled out the old crone, "if they were both born poor they'd be livin' together like brothers now, under the one roof—happy and comfortable; and you and your cousin, Master Dick, would be playfellows and companions, instead of his being away in Ingia, or America, or wherever it is!"

The young girl leaned her head on her hand, and appeared to have fallen into a deep train of thought, for she never noticed old Catty's remarks, nor indeed seemed conscious of her presence for some time. "Catty," said she at length, and in a voice of unusually calm earnestness, "never talk to me of these things—they only fret me—they set me a thinking of Heaven knows what longings—for a home, that should be more like a real home than this, though God knows my uncle is all that I could wish in kindness and affection; but—but ——" She stopped, and her lip quivered, and her eyes grew heavy-looking; and then, with a kind of struggle against her emotions, she added gaily, "Come and show me the dairy, Catty. I want to see all those fine things in Wedgewood-ware that you got while we were away, and then we'll have a peep at the calves, and by that time it will be the hour for my levee."

"Faix, Miss," said the old woman, "they're all here already. The news soon spread that you came over this morning, and you'll have a great assembly."

"I'll not keep them waiting, then," said Mary; and, so saying, she left the room, and proceeding by many passages and corridors, at length reached a remote part of the building, which once had formed part of the ancient edifice. A suite of low-ceiled rooms here opened upon a small grassy enclosure, all of which had been appropriated by Mary to her own use. One was a little library or study, neatly but very modestly furnished; adjoining it was her office, where she transacted all business matters; and beyond that again was a large chamber, whose sole furniture consisted in a row of deal presses against the walls, and a long table or counter which occupied the middle of the room. Two large windows opening to the floor lighted the apartment, and no sooner had Mary thrown these wide, than a burst of salutations and greetings arose from a dense and motley crowd assembled on the grass outside, and who stood, sat, or lay in every possible attitude and grouping, their faces all turned towards the window where she was standing.

With true native volubility they poured out not only their welcomings, but a number of interjectional flatteries, supposed not to be audible by her on whom they commented; and thus her hair, her eyes, her teeth, her complexion, even her foot, were praised with an enthusiasm of admiration that might have shamed more polished worshippers.

These muttered eulogies continued as the young girl was occupied unlocking drawers and presses, and placing upon the table several books and papers, as well as a small scale and weights—preparations all equally the source of fruitful observation.

The company was entirely of the softer sex!—an epithet not perhaps in the strictest accordance with an array of faces that really might have shamed witchcraft. Bronzed, blear-eyed, and weather-beaten, seamed with age and scarred with sickness, shrewd-looking, suspicious, and crafty in every lineament, there was yet one characteristic predominant over all—an intense and abject submission, an almost slavish deference to every observation addressed to them. Their dress bespoke the very greatest poverty; not only were they clothed in rags of every hue and shape, but all were barefooted, and some of the very oldest wore no other covering to their heads than their own blanched and grizzled locks.

Nor would a follower of Lavater have argued too favourably of the prosperity of Irish regeneration, in beholding that array of faces—low-browed, treacherous-looking, and almost savagely cruel, as many of them were in expression. There was not, indeed, as often is to be remarked amongst the peasant class of many countries, a look of stupid, stolid indifference; on the contrary, their faces were intensely, powerfully significant, and there was stamped upon them that strange mixture of malignant drollery and sycophancy that no amount of either good or adverse fortune ever entirely subdues in their complex natures.

The expediency of misery had begotten the expediency of morals, and in all the turnings and windings of their shifty natures you could see the suggestions of that abject destitution which had eaten into their very hearts. It would have puzzled a moralist to analyse these "gnarled natures," wherein some of the best and some of the worst features of humanity warred and struggled together. Who could dare to call them kind-hearted or malevolent, grateful or ungrateful, free-giving or covetous, faithful or capricious, as a people? Why, they were all these, and fifty other things just as opposite besides, every twenty-four hours of their lives! Their moods of mind ranged from one extreme to the other; nothing had any permanency amongst them but their wretchedness. Of all their qualities, however, that which most obstructed their improvement, ate deepest into their natures, and suggested the worst fears for the future, was suspicion. They trusted nothing—none—so that every benefit bestowed on them came alloyed with its own share of doubt; and all the ingenuity of their crafty minds found congenial occupation in ascribing this or that motive to every attempt to better their condition.

Mary Martin knew them—understood them—as well as most people; few, indeed, out of their own actual station of life, had seen so much of their domesticity. From her very childhood she had been conversant with their habits and their ways. She had seen them patient under the most trying afflictions, manfully braving every ill of life, and submitting with a noble self-devotion to inevitable calamity; and she had also beheld them, with ignorant impatience, resenting the slightest interference when they deemed it uncalled for, and rejecting kindness when it came coupled with the suggestion of a duty.

By considerable skill, and no little patience, she had insinuated a certain small amount of discipline into this disorderly mass. She could not succeed in persuading them to approach her one by one, or wait with any semblance of order while she was yet occupied; but she enforced conformity with at least one rule, which was, that none should speak save in answer to some question put by herself. This may seem a very small matter, and yet to any one who knows the Irish peasant it will appear little short of miraculous. The passion for discursiveness, the tendency to make an effective theme of their misery, whatever particular shape it may assume, is essentially national, and to curb this vent to native eloquence was to oppose at once the strongest impulse of their natures.

Nothing short of actual, tangible benefits could compensate them for what they scrupled not to think was downright cruelty; nor was it till after months of steady perseverance on her part that her system could be said to have attained any success. Many of the most wretched declined to seek relief on the conditions thus imposed. Some went as actual rebels, to show their friends and neighbours how they would resist such intolerance; others, again, professed that they only went out of curiosity. Strange and incomprehensible people, who can brave every ill of poverty, endure famine, and fever, and want, and yet will not bow the head to a mere matter of form, nor subject themselves to the very least restriction when a passion or a caprice stands opposed to it!

After about eighteen months of hard persistance the system began at length to work; the refractory spirits had either refrained from coming or had abandoned the opposition, and now a semblance of order pervaded the motley assemblage. Whenever the slightest deviation from the ritual occurred, a smart tap of a small ivory ruler on the table imposed silence; and they who disregarded the warning were ordered to move by, unattended to. Had a stranger been permitted, therefore, to take a peep at these proceedings, he would have been astonished at the rapidity with which complaints were heard, and wants redressed; for, with an instinct thoroughly native, Mary Martin appreciated the cases which came before her, and rarely or never confounded the appeal of real suffering with the demands of fictitious sorrow. Most of those who came were desirous of tickets for Dispensary aid, for sickness has its permanent home in the Irish cabin, and fever lurks amidst the damp straw and the smoky atmosphere of the poor peasant's home. Some, however, came for articles of clothing, or for aid to make and repair them; others, for some little assistance in diet, barley for a sick man's drink, a lemon, or an orange, to moisten the parched lips of fever; others, again, wanted leave to send a grandchild or a niece to the school; and, lastly, a few priviledged individuals appeared to claim their weekly rations of snuff or tobacco—little luxuries accorded to old age—comforts that solaced many a dreary hour of a joyless existence. Amongst all the crowded mass, there was not one whom Mary had not known and visited in their humble homes. Thoroughly conversant with their condition and their necessities, she knew well their real wants; and if one less hopeful than herself might have despaired to render any actual relief to such wide-spread misery, she was sanguine enough to be encouraged by the results before her, small and few as they were, to think that possibly the good time was yet to come when such efforts would be unneeded, and when Ireland's industry, employed and rewarded, would more than suffice for all the requirements of her humble poor.

"Jane Maloney," said Mary, placing a small packet on the table. "Give this to Sally Kieran as you pass her door; and here's the order for your own cloak."

"May the heavens be your bed. May the holy ——"

"Catty Honan," cried Mary, with a gesture to enforce silence. "Catty, your granddaughter never comes to the school now that she has got leave. What's the reason of that?"

"Faix, your reverance Miss, 'tis ashamed she is by rayson of her clothes. She says Luke Cassidy's daughters have check aprons."

"No more of this, Catty. Tell Eliza to come on Monday, and if I'm satisfied with her, she shall have one too."

"Two ounces of tea for the Widow Jones."

"Ayeh," muttered an old hag. "But it's weak it makes it without a little green in it!"

"How are the pains, Sarah?" asked Mary, turning to a very feeble-looking old creature with crutches.

"Worse and worse, my Lady. With every change of the weather, they come on afresh."

"The doctor will attend you, Sally, and if he thinks wine good for you, you shall have it."

"'Tis that same would be the savin' of me, Miss Mary," said a cunning-eyed little woman, with a tattered straw bonnet on her head, and a ragged shawl over her.

"I don't think so, Nancy. Come up to the house on Monday morning, and help Mrs. Taafe with the bleaching."

"So this is the duplicate, Polly?" said she, taking a scrap of paper from an old woman, whose countenance indicated a blending of dissipation with actual want.

"One-and-fourpence was all I got on it, and trouble enough it gave me." These words she uttered with a heavy sigh, and in a tone at once resentful and complaining.

"Were my uncle to know that you had pawned your cloak, Polly, he'd never permit you to cross his threshold."

"Ayeh, it's a great sin, to be sure," whined out the hag, half insolently.

"A great shame and a great disgrace it certainly is; and I shall stop all relief to you till the money be paid back."

"And why not!"—"To be sure!"—"Miss Mary is right?"—"What else could she do?" broke in full twenty sycophant voices, who hoped to prefer their own claims by the cheap expedient of condemning another.

"The Widow Hannigan."

"Here, Miss," simpered out a smiling, little old creature, with a curtsey, as she held up a scroll of paper in her hand.

"What's this, Widow Hannigan?"

"'Tis a picture Mickey made of you, Miss, when you was out riding that day with the hounds; he saw you jumping a stone wall."

Mary smiled at the performance, which certainly did not promise future excellence, and went on:

"Tell Mickey to mend his writing; his was the worst copy in the class; and here's a card for your daughter's admission into the Infirmary. By-the-way, widow, which of the boys was it I saw dragging the river on Wednesday?"

"Faix, Miss, I don't know. Sure it was none of ours would dare to ——"

"Yes they would, any one of them; but I'll not permit it; and what's more, widow, if it occur again, I'll withdraw the leave I gave to fish with a rod."

"Teresa Johnson, your niece is a very good child, and promises to be very handy with her needle. Let her hem these handkerchiefs, and there's a frock for herself. My uncle says Tom shall have half his wages paid him till he's able to come to work again."

But why attempt to follow out what would be but the long-unending catalogue of native misery—that dreary series of wants and privations to which extreme destitution subjects a long-neglected and helpless people? There was nothing from the cradle to the coffin, from the first wailing wants of infancy to the last requirement of doting old age, that they did not stand in need of.

A melancholy spectacle, indeed, was it to behold an entire population so steeped in misery, so utterly inured to wretchedness, that they felt no shame at its exposure, but rather a sort of self-exultation at any opportunity of displaying a more than ordinary amount of human suffering and sorrow;—to hear them how they caressed their afflictions, how they seemed to fondle their misfortunes, vieing with each other in calamity, and bidding higher and higher for a little human sympathy.

Mary Martin set herself stoutly to combat this practice, including, as it does, one of the most hopeless features of the national character. To inculcate habits of self-reliance she was often driven, in violation of her own feelings, to favour those who least needed assistance, but whose efforts to improve their condition might serve as an example. With a people who are such consummate actors she was driven into simulation herself, and paraded sentiments of displeasure and condemnation when her very heart was bursting with pity and compassion. No wonder was it, then, that she rejoiced when this painful task was completed, and she found herself in the more congenial duty of looking over the "young stock," and listening to old Barny's predictions about yearlings and two-year olds.

This young girl, taught to read by a lady's maid, and to sew by a housekeeper, possessed scarcely any of the resources so usual to those in her own condition, and was of sheer necessity thrown upon herself for occupation and employment. Her intense sympathy with the people, her fondness for them even in their prejudices, had suggested the whole story of her life. Her uncle took little or no interest in the details of his property. The indolence in which he first indulged from liking, became at last a part of his very nature, and he was only too well pleased to see the duty undertaken by another which had no attraction for himself.

"Miss Mary will look to it"—"Tell my niece of it"—"Miss Martin will give her orders," were the invariable replies by which he escaped all trouble, and suffered the whole weight of labour and responsibility to devolve upon a young girl scarcely out of her teens, until gradually, from the casual care of a flower-garden, or a childish pleasure in giving directions, she had succeeded to the almost unlimited rule of her uncle's house and his great estate.

Mr. Martin was often alarmed at some of his niece's measures of reform. The large sums drawn out of bank, the great expenses incurred in weekly wages, the vast plans of building, draining, road-making, and even bridging, terrified him; while the steward, Mr. Henderson, slily insinuated, that though Miss Mary was a wonderful manager, and the "best head he ever knew, except my lady's," she was dreadfully imposed on by the people—but, to be sure, "how could a young lady be up to them?" But she was up to them, aye, and more still, she was up to Mr. Henderson himself, notwithstanding his mild, douce manner, his cautious reserve, and his unbroken self-possession.

It is very far from my intention to say that Mary Martin was not over and over again the dupe of some artifice or other of the crafty and subtle natures that surrounded her. Mock misery, mock industry, mock enlightenment, mock conviction, even mock submission and resignation, had all their partial successes; and she was entrapped by many a pretence that would have had no chance of imposing on Mr. Henderson. Still, there was a credit side to this account, wherein his name would not have figured. There were traits of the people, which he neither could have understood or valued. There were instincts —hard struggling efforts, fighting their way through all the adverse circumstances of their poverty—that he never could have estimated, much less could he have speculated on the future to which they might one day attain.

If Mary was heart and soul devoted to her object—if she thought of nothing else—if all her dreams by night and all her daily efforts were in the cause, she was by no means insensible to the flattery which constantly beset her. She accepted it readily and freely, laughing at what she persuaded herself to believe was the mere exuberance of that national taste for praise. Like most warm and impulsive natures, she was greedy of approbation; even failure itself was consoled by a word of encomium on the effort. She liked to be thought active, clever, and energetic. She loved to hear the muttered voices which at any moment of difficulty said, "Faix, Miss Mary will find the way to it;" or, "Sure it won't baffle *her*, anyhow." This confidence in her powers stimulated and encouraged her, often engendering the very resources it imputed.

She might have made many a mistake in the characters of those for whom she was interested—conceived many a false hope—nurtured many a delusive expectation; but in the scheme of life she had planned out for herself, the exalting sense of a duty more than recompensed her for every failure: and if any existence could be called happy, it was hers—the glorious excitement of an open-air life, with all its movements and animation. There was that amount of adventure and enterprise which gave a character of romantic interest to her undertakings, and thus elevated her to a degree of heroism to herself, and then, knowing no fatigue, she was again in the saddle, and, straight as the crow flies, over the county to Kyle's wood.

A solitary cabin or two stood in the midst of the wild, bleak plain, and by these she paused for a few minutes. The watchful eyes that followed her as she went, and the muttered blessings that were wafted after her, proclaimed what her mission had been, and showed how she had for a brief space thrown a gleam of sunshine over the darksome gloom of some sad existence.

"God bless her! she's always cheerful and light-hearted," said the poor peasant, as he leaned on his spade to look after her; "and one feels better the whole day after the sight of her!"

CHAPTER .II.

KILKIERAN BAY.

IN one of the many indentures of Kilkieran Bay—favoured by a southerly aspect and a fine sandy beach, sheltered by two projecting headlands—stood a little row of cabins, originally the dwellings of poor fishermen, but now, in summer-time, the resort of the neighbouring gentry, who frequented the coast for sea-bathing. There was little attempt made by the humble owners to accommodate the habits of the wealthy visitors. Some slight effort at neatness, or some modest endeavour at internal decoration, by a little window-curtain or a rickety chest of drawers, were the very extent of these pretensions. Year by year the progress of civilisation went thus lazily forward; and, far from finding fault with this backwardness, it was said that the visitors were just as well satisfied. Many hoped to see the place as they remembered it in their own childhood—many were not sorry to avail themselves of its inexpensive life and simple habits—and some were more pleased that its humble attractions could draw no strangers to sojourn there to mock by their more costly requirements the quiet ways of the old residents.

Under the shelter of a massive rock, which formed the northern boundary of the little bay, stood one building of more pretension. It was a handsome bathing-lodge, with a long verandah towards the sea, and an effort, not very successful, however, at a little flower-garden in front. The spacious bay-windows, which opened in French fashion, were of plate-glass; the deep projecting eave was ornamented with a handsome cornice; and the entire front had been richly decorated by entablatures in stucco and common cement. Still, somehow, there seemed to be a spiteful resistance in the climate to such efforts at embellishment. The wild hurricanes that swept over the broad Atlantic were not to be withstood by the frail timbers of the Gothic verandah. The sweeping gusts that sent foaming spray high over the rocky cliffs, shattered the costly panes, and smashed even the mullions that held them; while fragments of carving, or pieces of stuccoed tracery, together with broken vases and uprooted shrubs, littered the garden and the terrace. The house was but a few years built, and yet was already dilapidated and ruinous-looking. A stout stone wall had replaced the trellised woodwork of one side of the porch; some of the windows were firmly barricaded with boards on the outside; and iron cramps, and other appliances equally unsightly on the roof, showed by what means the slates were enabled to resist the storms.

The aspect of consistent poverty never inspires ridicule. It is shabby gentility alone that provokes the smile of sarcastic meaning; and thus the simple dwellings of the fishermen, in all their humility, offered nothing to the eye of critical remark. There seemed abundant absurdity in this attempt to defy climate and aspect, place and circumstance; and every effort to repair an accident but brought out the pretension into more glaring contrast.

The "Osprey's Nest," as Lady Dorothea Martin had styled her bathing-lodge, bore indeed but a sorry resemblance to its water-coloured emblem in the plan of the architect; for Mr. Kirk had not only improvised a beautiful villa, with fuchsias and clematis, and moss-roses clustering on it, but he had invented an Italian sky, and given a Lago Maggiore tint to the very Atlantic. Your fashionable architect is indeed a finished romancer, and revels in the license of his art with a most voluptuous abandonment.

It was now, however, late in the autumn: some warnings of the approaching equinox had already been felt, and the leaden sky above, and the dark green, sullen sea beneath, above which a cold north-wester swept gustily, recalled but little of the artistic resemblance.

The short September day was drawing to a close, and it was just that dreary interval between day and dusk, so glorious in fine weather, but so terribly depressing in the cold ungenial season, as all the frequenters of the little bay were hastening homeward for the night. Already a twinkling candle or two showed that some had retired to their humble shealings, to grumble over the discomforts about them, and speculate on a speedy departure. They who visited Kilkieran during the "season" were usually the gentry families of the neighbourhood; but as the summer wore over, their places were occupied by a kind of "half-price company"—shopkeepers and smart residents of Oughterard, who waited for their pleasure till it could be obtained economically. Of this class were now those on the evening I have mentioned, and to a small select party of whom I now desire to introduce my reader.

It was "Mrs. Cronan's Evening"—for the duty of host was taken in rotation—and Mrs. Cronan was one of the leaders of fashion in Oughterard, for she lived on her own private means, at the top of Carraway-street, entertained Father Maher every Sunday at dinner, and took in the *Galway Intelligence*, which, it is but fair to say, was, from inverted letters and press blunders, about as difficult reading as any elderly lady ever confronted.

Mrs. Cronan was eminently genteel—that is to say, she spent her life in unceasing lamentations over the absence of certain comforts "she was always used to;" and passed her days in continual reference to some former state of existence, which, to hear her, seemed almost borrowed bodily out of the *Arabian Nights*. Then there was Captain Bodkin, of the Galway Fencibles—a very fat, asthmatic old gentleman, who came down to the "salt water" every summer for thirty years, fully determined to bathe, but never able to summon courage to go in. He was a kind-hearted, jolly old fellow, who loved strong punch and long whist, and cared very little how the world went on, if these enjoyments were available.

Then there was Miss Busk, a very tall, thin, ghostly personage, with a pinkish nose and a pinched lip, but whose manners were deemed the very type of high breeding, for she curtseyed or bowed at almost minute intervals during an "Evening," and had a variety of personal reminiscences of the Peerage. She was of "an excellent family," Mrs. Cronan always said, and though reduced by circumstances—she was the Swan and Edgar of Oughterard—"was company for the Queen herself."

The fourth hand in the whist-table was usually taken by Mrs. Nelligan, wife of "Pat Nelligan"—the great shopkeeper of Oughterard—and who, though by no means entitled on heraldic grounds to take her place in any such exalted company, was, by the happy accident of fortune, elevated to this proud position. Mrs. Nelligan being unwell, her place was, on the present occasion, supplied by her son, and of him I would fain say a few words, since the reader is destined to bear company with him when the other personages here referred to have been long forgotten.

Joseph Nelligan was a tall, pale young fellow, who, though only just passed twenty-two, looked several years older; the serious, thoughtful expression of his face giving the semblance of age. His head was large and massively shaped, and the temples were strong and square, deeply indented at the sides, and throwing the broad, high forehead into greater prominence; dark eyes, shaded by heavy, black eyebrows, lent an almost scowling character to a face which, regular in feature, was singularly calm and impassive-looking. His voice was deep, low, and sonorous, and though strongly impressed with the intonation of his native province, was peculiarly soft, and, to Irish ears, even musical. He was, however, remarkably silent; rarely or never conversed, as his acquaintances understood conversation, and only when roused by some theme that he cared for, or stimulated by some assertion that he dissented from, was he heard to burst forth into a rapid flow of words—uttered as though under the impulse of passion, and of which, when ended, he seemed actually to feel ashamed himself.

He was no favourite with the society of Kilkieran; some thought him downright stupid; others regarded him as a kind of spy upon his neighbours—an imputation most lavishly thrown out in every circle where there is nothing to detect, and where all the absurdity lies palpable on the surface; and many were heard to remark, that he seemed to forget who he was, and that "though he was a College student, he ought to remember he was only Pat Nelligan's son."

If he never courted their companionship, he as little resented their estrangement from him. He spent his days and no small share of his nights in study; books supplied to him the place of men, and in their converse he forgot the world. His father's vanity had entered him as a Fellow-Commoner in the University, and even this served to widen the interval between him and those of his own age—his class-fellows regarded his presence amongst them as an intolerable piece of low-bred presumption. Nor was this unkindly feeling diminished when they saw him, term after term, carry away the prizes of each examination; for equally in science as in classics was he distinguished, till at length it became a current excuse for failure when a man said, "I was in Nelligan's division."

It is not impossible that his social isolation contributed much to his success. For him there were none of the amusements which occupy those of his own age. The very fact of his Fellow-Commoner's gown separated him as widely from one set of his fellow-students as from the other, and thus was he left alone with his ambition. As time wore on, and his successes obtained wider notoriety, some of those in authority in the University appeared to be disposed to make advances to him; but he retreated modestly from these marks of notice, shrouding himself in his obscurity, and pleading the necessity for study. At length came the crowning act of his College career, in the examination for the gold medal, and although no competitor was bold enough to dispute the prize with him, he was obliged to submit to the ordeal. It is rarely that the public vouchsafes any interest in the details of University honours; but this case proved an exception, and almost every journal of the capital alluded in terms of high panegyric to the splendid display he made on that occasion.

In the very midst of these triumphs, young Nelligan arrived at his father's house in Oughterard, to enjoy the gratification his success had diffused at home, and rest himself after his severe labours. Little as old Pat Nelligan or his neighbours knew of University honours, or the toil which won them, there was enough in the very publicity of his son's career to make him a proud man. He at least knew that Joe had beaten them all; that none could hold a candle to him; "that for nigh a century such answering had not been heard on the bench." This was the expression of a Dublin journal, coupled with the partisan regret that, by the bigoted statutes of the College, genius of such order should be denied the privilege of obtaining a fellowship.

If young Nelligan retired, half in pride, half in bashfulness, from the notice of society in Dublin, he was assuredly little disposed to enter into the gaieties and dissipations of a small country town existence. The fulsome adulation of some, the stupid astonishment of others, but, worse than either, the vulgar assumption that his success was a kind of party triumph—a blow dealt by the plebeian against the patrician—the Papist against the Protestant—shocked and disgusted him, and he was glad to leave Oughterard and accompany his mother to the sea-side. She was an invalid of some years' standing—a poor, frail, simple-hearted creature, who, after a long, struggling life of hardship and toil, saw herself in affluence and comfort, and yet could not bring her mind to believe it true. As little could she comprehend the strange fact of Joe's celebrity—of his name figuring in newspapers, and his health being drunk at a public dinner in his native town. To her he was invaluable; the very tenderest of nurses, and the best of all companions. She didn't care for books, even those of the most amusing kind, but she loved to hear the little gossip of the place where the neighbours passed the evening; what topics they discussed; who had left and who had arrived, and every other little incident of their uneventful lives. Simple and easy of execution as such an office might have been to a kindred spirit, to Joseph Nelligan it proved no common labour. And certain it is that the mistakes he committed in names, and the blunders he fell into as regarded events, rather astonished his mother, and led that good lady to believe that Trinity College must not have been fertile in genius when poor Joe was regarded as one of the great luminaries of his time. "Ah," would she say, "if he had his father's head, it would be telling him! but, poor boy, he remembers nothing!"

This digression—far longer than I cared to make it—but which has grown to its present extent under my hands, will explain young Nelligan's presence at Mrs. Cronan's "Tea," where already a number of other notables had now assembled, and were gracefully dispersed through the small rooms which formed her apartment. Play of various kinds formed the chief amusement of the company; and while the whist-table, in decorous gravity, held the chief place in the sitting-room, a laughing round game occupied the kitchen, and a hardly-contested "hit" of backgammon was being fought out on the bed, where, for lack of furniture, the combatants had established themselves.

The success of an evening party is not always proportionate to the means employed to secure it. Very splendid *salons*, costly furniture, and what newspapers call "all the delicacies of the season," are occasionally to be found in conjunction with very dull company; while a great deal of enjoyment, and much social pleasure, are often to be met with where the material resources have been of the fewest and most simple kind. On the present occasion there was a great deal of laughing, and a fair share of love-making: some scolding at whist, and an abundance of scandal, at least of that cut-and-thrust at character which amuses the speakers themselves, and is never supposed to damage those who are the object of it. All the company who had frequented the port—as Kilkieran was called—during the season, were passed in review, and a number of racy anecdotes interchanged about their rank, morals, fortune, and pretensions. A very general impression seemed to prevail, that in the several points of climate, scenery, social advantages, and amusements, Kilkieran might stand a favourable comparison with the first watering-places, not alone of England, but the Continent; and after various discursive reasons why its fame had not equalled its deserts, there was an almost unanimous declaration of opinion that the whole fault lay with the Martins; not, indeed, that the speakers were very logical in their arguments, since some were heard to deplore the change from the good old times, when everybody was satisfied to live anywhere, and anyhow; when there was no road to the place but a bridle-path; not a loaf of bread to be had within twelve miles; no post-office; while others eloquently expatiated on all that might have been, and yet was not done.

"We tried to get up a little news-room," said Captain Bodkin, "and I went to Martin myself about it, but he hum'd and ha'd, and said, until people subscribed for the Dispensary, he thought they needn't mind newspapers."

"Just like him," said Mrs. Cronan; "but indeed I think it's my Lady does it all."

"I differ from you, ma'am," said Miss Busk, with a bland smile; "I attribute the inauspicious influence to another."

"You mean Miss Martin?" said Mrs. Cronan.

"Just so, ma'am; indeed, I have reason to know I am correct. This time two years it was I went over to Cro' Martin House to propose opening 'my Emporium' for the season at the port. I thought it was due to the owners of the estate, and due to myself also," added Miss Busk, majestically, "to state my views about a measure so intimately associated with the ——, the——, in fact, what I may call the interests of civilisation. I had just received my plates of the last fashions from Dublin—you may remember them, ma'am, I showed them to you at Mrs. Cullenane's—well, when I was in the very middle of my explanation, who should come into the room but Miss Martin ——"

"Dressed in the old brown riding-habit?" interposed a fat old lady, with one eye.

"Yes, Mrs. Few, in the old brown riding-habit. She came up to the table, with a saucy laugh in her face, and said, 'Why uncle, are you going to give a fancy ball!'

"'It is the last arrival from Paris, Miss,' said I, 'the Orleans mantle, which, though not a "costume de Chasse," is accounted very becoming.'

"'Ah, you're laughing at my old habit, Miss Busk,' said she, seeing how I eyed her; 'and it really is very shabby, but I intend to give Dan Leary a commission to replace it one of these days.'"

"Dan Leary, of the Cross-roads!" exclaimed Captain Bodkin, laughing.

"I pledge you my word of honour, sir, she said it. 'And as to all this finery, Miss Busk,' said she, turning over the plates with her whip, 'it would be quite unsuitable to our country, our climate, and our habits; not to say, that the Orleans mantle would be worn with an ill grace when our people are going half naked!'"

"Positively indecent—downright indelicate!" shuddered Mrs. Cronan.

"And did Martin agree with her?" asked the Captain.

"I should like to know when he dared to do otherwise. Why, between my Lady and the niece he can scarcely call his life his own."

"They say he has a cruel time of it," sighed Mr. Clinch, the revenue-officer, who had some personal experience of domestic slavery.

"Tush—nonsense!" broke in his wife. "I never knew one of those hen-pecked creatures that wasn't a tyrant in his family. I'll engage, if the truth were known, Lady Dorothy has the worst of it."

"Faith, and he's much altered from what he was when a boy, if any one rules him," said the Captain. "I was at school with him and his twin-brother Barry; I remember the time when one of them had to wear a bit of red ribbon in his button-hole, to distinguish him from the other. They were the born images of each other; that is, in looks, for in real character they weren't a bit like. Godfrey was a cautious, quiet, careful chap, that looked after his pocket-money, and never got into scrapes: and Barry was a wasteful devil, that made the coin fly, and could be led by any one. I think he'd have given his life for his brother any day. I remember once when Godfrey wouldn't fight a boy—I forget what it was about—Barry stole the bit of ribbon out of his coat, and whent up and fought in his place, and a mighty good thrashing he got, too."

"I have heard my father speak of that," said a thin, pale, careworn little man, in green spectacles; "for the two boys were taken away at once, and it was the ruin of the school."

"So it was, Doctor; you're right there," broke in the

Captain; "and they say that Martin bears a grudge against you to this day."

"That would be hard," sighed the meek Doctor, "for I had nothing to do with it, or my father either. But it cost him dearly!" added he, mournfully.

"You know best, Doctor, whether it is true or not; but he certainly wasn't your friend when you tried for the Fever Hospital."

"That was because Pat Nelligan was on my committee," said the Doctor.

"And was that sufficient to lose you Mr. Martin's support, sir?" asked young Nelligan, with a degree of astonishment in his face, that, joined to the innocence of the question, caused a general burst of hearty laughter.

"The young gentleman knows more about *cubic* sections, it appears, than of what goes on in his own town," said the Captain. "Why, sir, your father is the most independent man in all Oughterard; and, if I know Godfrey Martin, he'd give a thousand guineas this night to have him out of it."

A somewhat animated "rally" followed this speech, in which different speakers gave their various reasons why Martin ought, or ought not, to make any sacrifice to put down the spirit of which Pat Nelligan was the chief champion. These arguments were neither cogent nor lucid enough to require repeating; nor did they convey to Joseph himself, with all his anxiety for information, the slightest knowledge on the subject discussed. Attention was, however, drawn off the theme by the clattering sound of a horse passing along the shingly shore at a smart gallop, and with eager curiosity two or three rushed to the door to see what it meant. A swooping gust of wind and rain, overturning chairs and extinguishing candles, drove them suddenly back again; and, half laughing at the confusion, half cursing the weather, the party barricaded the door, and returned to their places.

"Of course it was Miss Martin; who else would be out at this time of the night?" said Mrs. Clinch.

"And without a servant!" exclaimed Miss Busk.

"Indeed, you may well make the remark, ma'am," said Mrs. Crenan. "The young lady was brought up in a fashion that wasn't practised in my time!"

"Where could she have been down that end of the port, I wonder?" said Mrs. Clinch. "She came up from Garra Cliff."

"Maybe she came round by the strand," said the Doctor; "if she did, I don't think there's one here would like to have followed her."

"I wouldn't be her horse!" said one—"Nor her groom!" muttered another; and thus, gradually lashing themselves into a wild indignation, they opened at last a steady fire upon the young lady—her habits, her manners, and her appearance, all coming in for a share of criticism; and, although a few modest amendments were put in favour of her horsemanship and her good looks, the motion was carried that no young lady ever took such liberties before, and that the meeting desired to record their strongest censure on the example thus extended to their own young people.

If young Nelligan ventured upon a timid question of what it was she had done, he was met by an eloqnent chorus of half a dozen voices, recounting mountain excursions which no young lady had ever made before; distant spots visited, dangers incurred, storms encountered, perils braved, totally unbecoming to her in her rank of life, and showing that she had no personal respect, nor, as Miss Busk styled it—"a proper sense of the dignity of woman!"

"'Twas down at Mrs. Nelligan's, ma'am, Miss Mary was," said Mrs. Cronan's maid, who had been despatched special to make inquiry on the subject.

"At my mother's!" exclaimed Joseph, reddening, without knowing in the least why. And now a new diversion occurred, while all discussed every possible and impossible reason for this singular fact, since the family at the "Nest" maintained no intercourse whatever with their neighbours, not even seeming, by any act of their lives, to acknowledge their very existence.

Young Nelligan took the opportunity to make his escape during the debate; and as the society offers nothing very attractive to detain us, it will be as well if we follow him, while he hastened homeward along the dark and storm-lashed beach. He had about a mile to go, and, short as was this distance, it enabled him to think over what he had just heard, strange and odd as it seemed to his ears. Wholly given up, as he had been for years past, to the ambition of a College life, with but one goal before his eyes, one class of topics engrossing his thoughts, he had never even passingly reflected on the condition of parties, the feuds of opposing factions, and, stronger than either, the animosities that separated social ranks in Ireland. Confounding the occasional slights he had experienced by virtue of his class, with the jealousy caused by his successes, he had totally overlooked the disparagement men exhibited towards the son of the little country shopkeeper, and never knew of his disqualification for a society whose precincts he had not tried to pass. The littleness, the unpurpose-like vacuity, the intense vulgarity of his Oughterard friends, had disgusted him, it is true, but he had yet to learn that the foolish jealousy of their wealthy neighbour was a trait still less amiable, and ruminating over these problems—knottier far to him than many a complex formula, or many a disputed reading of a Greek play—he at last reached the solitary little cabin where his mother lived.

It is astonishing how difficult men of highly cultivated and actively practised minds, find it to comprehend the little turnings and windings of commonplace life, the jealousies and the rivalries of small people. They search for motives where there are merely impulses, and look for reasons when there are simple passions.

It was only as he lifted the latch that he remembered how deficient he was in all the information his mother would expect from him. Of the fortunes of the whist-table he actually knew nothing, and had he been interrogated as to the "toilette" of the party, his answers would have betrayed a lamentable degree of ignorance. Fortunately for him, his mother did not display her habitual anxiety on these interesting themes. She neither asked after the Captain's winnings—he was the terror of the party—nor whether Miss Busk astonished the company by another new gown. Poor Mrs. Nelligan was too brimful of another subject to admit of one particle of extraneous matter to occupy her. With a proud consciousness, however, of her own resources, she affected to have thoughts for other things, and asked Joe if he passed a pleasant day?

"Yes, very—middling—quite so—rather stupid, I thought," replied he, in his usual half-connected manner, when unable to attach his mind to the question before him.

"Of course, my dear, it's very unlike what you're used to up in Dublin, though I believe that Captain Bodkin, when he goes there, always dines with the Lord-Lieutenant; and Miss Busk, I know, is second cousin to Ram of Swainestown, and there is nothing better than that in Ireland. I say this between ourselves, for your father can't bear me to talk of family or connexions—though I am sure I was always brought up to think a great deal about good blood, and if my father was a Finnerty, my mother was a Moore of Crockbawn, and her family never looked at her for marrying my father."

"Indeed!" said Joe, in a dreamy semi-consciousness.

"It's true what I'm telling you. She often said it to me herself, and told me what a blessing it was, through all her troubles and trials in life—and she had her share of them, for my father was often in drink, and very cruel at times—'it supports me,' she used to say, 'to remember who I am, and the stock I came from, and to know that there's not one belonging to me would speak to me, nor look at the same side of the road with me, after what I done; and Matty,' said she to me, 'if ever it happens to you to marry a man beneath you in life, always bear in mind that, no matter how he treats you, you're better than him.' And, indeed, it's a great support and comfort to one's feelings after all," said she with a deep sigh.

"I'm certain of it," muttered Joe, who had not followed one word of the harangue.

"But mind that you never tell your father so. Indeed, I wouldn't let on to him what happened this evening."

"What was that?" asked the young man, roused by the increased anxiety of her manner.

"It was a visit I had, my dear," replied the old lady, with a simpering consciousness that she had something to reveal—"it was a visit I had paid me, and by an elegant young lady, too."

"A young lady? Not Miss Cassidy, mother. I think she left yesterday morning."

"No, indeed, my dear. Somebody very different from Miss Cassidy; and you might guess till you were tired before you'd think of Miss Martin."

"Miss Martin!" echoed Joe.

"Exactly so. Miss Martin of Cro' Martin; and the way it happened was this. I was sitting here alone in the room after my tea—for I sent Biddy out to borrow the *Intelligence* for me—and then comes a sharp knock to the door, and I called out, 'Come in,' but instead of doing so there was another rapping, louder than before, and I said, 'Bother you, can't you lift the latch;' and then I heard a something like a laugh, and so I went out, and you may guess the shame I felt as I saw a young lady fastening the bridle of her horse to the bar of the window. 'Mrs. Nelligan, I believe,' said she, with a smile and a look that warmed my heart to her at once; and as I curtseyed very low, she went on. I forget, indeed, the words, whether she said she was Miss Martin, or it was I that asked the question; but I know she came in with me to the room, and sat down where you are sitting now. 'Coming back from Kyle's Wood this morning,' said she, 'I overtook poor Billy with the post;

he was obliged to go two miles out of his way to ford the river; and what with waiting for the mail, which was late in coming, and what with being wet through, he was completely knocked up; so I offered to take the bag for him, and send it over to-morrow by one of our people. But the poor fellow wouldn't consent, because he was charged with something of consequence for you—a small bottle of medicine. Of course I was only too happy to take this also, Mrs. Nelligan, and here it is.' And with that she put it on the table, where you see it. I'm sure I never knew how to thank her enough for her good nature, but I said all that I could think of, and told her that my son was just come back from College, after getting the gold medal."

"You didn't speak of that, mother," said he, blushing till his very forehead was crimson.

"Indeed, then, I did, Joe; and I'd like to know why I wouldn't. Is it a shame or a disgrace to us! At any rate, *she* didn't think so, for she said, 'You must be very proud of him;' and I told her so I was, and that he was as good as he was clever; and, moreover, that the newspapers said the time was coming when men like young Nelligan would soar their way up to honours and distinctions in spite of the oppressive aristocracy that so long had combined to degrade them."

"Good Heavens! mother, you couldn't have made such a speech as that?" cried he, in a voice of downright misery.

"Didn't I, then? And didn't she say, if there were any such oppression as could throw obstacles in the way of deserving merit, she heartily hoped it might prove powerless; and then she got up to wish me good evening. I thought, at first, a little stiffly, that is, more haughty in her manner than at first; but when I arose to see her out, and she saw I was lame, she pressed me down into my chair, and said in such a kind voice, 'You mustn't stir, my dear Mrs. Nelligan. I, who can find my road over half of the county, can surely discover my way to the door.' 'Am I ever like to have the happiness of seeing you again, Miss?' said I, as I held her hand in mine. 'Certainly, if it would give you the very slightest pleasure,' said she, pressing my hand most cordially; and with that we parted. Indeed, I scarce knew she was gone when I heard the clattering of the horse over the shingle, for she was away in a gallop, dark as the night was. Maybe," added the old lady, with a sigh—"maybe, I'd have thought it was all a dream, if it wasn't that I found that glove of hers on the floor; she dropped it, I suppose, going out."

Young Nelligan took up the glove with a strange feeling of bashful reverence. It was as though he was touching a sacred relic; and he stood gazing on it steadfastly for some seconds.

"I'll send it over to the house by Biddy, with my compliments, and to know how the family is, in the morning," said Mrs. Nelligan, with the air of one who knew the value of conventional usages.

"And she'll make some stupid blunder or other," replied Joe, impatiently, "that will cover us all with shame. No, mother, I'd rather go with it myself than that."

"To be sure, and why not," said Mrs. Nelligan. "There's no reason why *you* should be taking up old quarrels against the Martins; for *my* part, I never knew the country so pleasant as it used to be long ago, when we used to get leave to go picnicking on the grounds of Cro' Martin, up to the Hermitage, as they called it; and now the gates are locked and barred like a gaol, and nobody allowed in without a ticket."

"Yes, I'll go myself with it," said Joe, who heard nothing of his mother's remark, but was following out the track of his own speculations. As little did he attend to the various suggestions she threw out for his guidance and direction, the several topics to which he might, and those to which he must not, on any account, allude.

"Not a word, for your life, Joe, about the right of pathway to Clune Abbey, and take care you say nothing about the mill-race at Glandaff, nor the shooting in Kyle's wood. And if by any chance there should be a talk about the tolls at Oughterard, say you never heard of them before. Make out, in fact," said she, summing up, "as if you never heard of a county where there was so much good-will and kindness between the people; and sure it isn't your fault if it's not true!" And with this philosophic reflection, Mrs. Nelligan wished her son good night and retired.

CHAPTER III.

AN AUTUMN MORNING IN THE WEST.

The Osprey's Nest was, I have said, like a direct challenge hurled at the face of western gales and Atlantic storms. With what succes, its aspect of dilapidation and decay but too plainly betrayed. The tangled seaweed, that hung in dripping festoons over the porch—the sea-shells that rattled against the window-panes, seemed like an angry denunciation of the attempt to brave the elements by the mere appliances of ease and luxury.

It was better, however, in the inside, where, in a roomy apartment, most comfortably furnished, a lady and gentleman sat at breakfast; the table stood in a little projection of the room, admitting of a wide sea-view over the bay and the distant islands of Lettermullen, but as carefully excluded all prospect of the port—a locality which held no high place in the esteem of the lady of the house, and which, by ignoring, she half fancied she had annihilated. Wild promontories of rocks, jutting out here and there, broke the coast line, and marked the shore with a foaming stream of white water, as the ever-restless sea dashed over them. The long booming swell of the great ocean bounded into many a rocky cavern with a loud report like thunder, and issued forth again with a whole cataract of falling stones, that rattled like the crash of small-arms. It was unceasing deafening clamour in the midst of deathlike desolation.

Let me, however, turn once more to the scene within, and present the living elements to my reader. They were both past the prime of life. The lady might still be called handsome; her features were perfectly regular, and finely cut, bearing the impress of a proud and haughty spirit, that never quailed beneath the conflict of a long life, and even yet showed a firm front to fortune. Her hair was white as snow, and as she wore it drawn back, after the fashion of a bygone time, it gave her the air of a fine lady of the old French Court, in all the pomp of powder and pomatum. Nor did her dress correct the impression, since the deep falls of lace that covered her hands, the lengthy stomacher, and trailing folds of her heavy brocade gown, all showed a lurking fondness for the distinctive toilette of that era. Lady Dorothea Martin had been a beauty and an Earl's daughter; two facts that not even the seclusion of the wild west could erase from her memory.

Mr. Martin himself was no unworthy "pendant" to this portrait. He was tall and stately, with a lofty forehead, and temples finely and well fashioned, while full, deep-set blue eyes, of the very sternest determination, and a mouth every line of which betrayed firmness, gave the character to a face that also could expand into the most genial good fellowship, and become at times the symbol of a pleasant and convivial Irish gentleman. In his youth he had been a beau of the Court of Versailles. Scandal had even coupled his name with that of Marie Antoinette; and more truthful narratives connected him with some of the most extravagant adventures of that profligate and brilliant period. After a career of the wildest dissipation and excess, he had married, late in life, the daughter of the Earl of Exmere, one of the proudest and poorest names in the British Peerage. Two or three attempts to shine in the world of London—not as successful as they were expected to have proved—an effort at ascendancy in Irish political life, also a failure, coupled with disappointment on the score of an only brother, who had married beneath him, and was reputed to have "lost himself," seemed to have disgusted Godfrey Martin with the world, and he had retired to his lonely mansion in the west, which now for eighteen years he had scarcely quitted for a single day.

His only son had joined a cavalry regiment in India a few years before the period our story opens, and which, I may now state, dates for about four or five-and-twenty years back; but his family included a niece, the only child of his brother, and whose mother had died in giving her birth.

Between Mr. Martin and Lady Dorothea, as they sat at breakfast, little conversation passed. He occupied himself with the newly-arrived newspapers, and she perused a mass of letters which had just come by that morning's post; certain scraps of the intelligence gleaned from either of these sources forming the only subjects of conversation between them.

"So, they have resolved to have a new Parliament. I knew it would come to that—I always said so—and, as usual, the dissolution finds us unprepared."

"Plantagenet's regiment is ordered to Curracheé, wherever that may be," said Lady Dorothea, languidly.

"Call him Harry, and we shall save ourselves some trouble in discussing him," replied he, pettishly. "At all events, he cannot possibly be here in time for the contest, and we must, I suppose, give our support to Kilmorris again."

"Do you mean, after his conduct about the harbour, and the shameful way he sneaked out of the Port Martin project?"

"Find anything better, Madam, there is the difficulty. Kilmorris is a gentleman, and no Radical; and, as times go, these are rather rare qualities."

"Lady Sarah Upton's match is off," said Lady Dorothea, reading from a note beside her. "Sir Joseph insisted upon the uncontrolled possession of all her Staffordshire property."

"And perfectly right."

"Perfectly wrong to give it to him."

"A fool if he married without it."

"A mean creature she, to accept him on such terms."

"The woman is eight-and-thirty—if not more. I remember her at Tunbridge. Let me see, what year was it?"

"I detest dates, and abhor chronologies. Reach me the marmalade," said Lady Dorothea, superciliously.

"What's this balderdash here from the *Galway Indicator*. 'The haughty and insolent, aye, and ignorant aristocracy will have to swallow a bitter draught ere long; and such petty despots as Martin of Cro' Martin will learn that the day is gone by for their ascendancy in this county.' They tell me we have a law of libel in the land, and yet see how this scoundrel can dare to drag me by name before the world; and I'll wager a thousand pounds I'd fail to get a verdict against him if I prosecuted him to-morrow," said Martin, as he dashed the newspaper to the ground, and stamped his foot upon it. "We are constantly reading diatribes about absentee landlords, and the evils of neglected property—but I ask, what inducements are there held out to any gentleman to reside on his estate, if every petty scribbler of the press can thus attack and assail him with impunity?"

"Is that Mary I see yonder?" asked Lady Dorothea, languidly, as she lifted her double eye-glass, and then suffered it to fall from her fingers.

"So it is, by Jove!" cried Martin, springing up, and approaching the window. "I wish she'd not venture out in that small boat in this treacherous season. What a swell there is, too. The wind is from the sea."

"She's coming in, I fancy," drawled out Lady Dorothea.

"How is she to do it, though?" exclaimed he, hurriedly; "the sea is breaking clear over the piers of the harbour. I can only see one man in the boat—what rashness—what folly! There, look, they're standing out to sea again!" And now, throwing open the window, Martin stepped out on the rocks, over which the white foam flashed by like snow. "What are they at, Peter—what are they trying to do?" cried he to an old fisherman, who, with the coil of a net he was just mending, on his arm, had now come down to the shore to watch the boat.

"They're doing right, your Honour," said he, touching his cap respectfully; "'tis Loony my Lady has in the boat, and there's no better man in trouble! He's just going to beat out a bit, and then he'll run in under the shelter of the blue rocks. Faix, she's a fine boat then for her size—look at her now!"

But Martin had covered his eyes with his hand, while his lips murmured and moved rapidly.

"May I never, but they're letting out the reef!" screamed the old man in terror.

"More sail, and in such a sea!" cried Martin in a voice of horror.

"Aye, and right to," said the fisherman, after a pause,—"she's rising lighter over the sea, and steers better, besides. It's Miss Mary has the tiller," added the old fellow, with a smile. "I'll lay a shilling she's singing this minute."

"You think so," said Martin, glad to catch at this gleam of confidence.

"I know it well, your Honour. I remember one day, off Lettermullen, it was worse than this. Hurrah!" screamed he out suddenly, "she took in a great sea that time!"

"Get out a boat, Peter, at once; what are we standing here for?" cried Martin, angrily; "man a boat this instant."

"Sure no boat could get out to sea with this wind, sir," remonstrated the old man, mildly; "she'd never leave the surf, if ye had forty men at her!"

"Then, what's to be done?"

"Just let them alone, themselves two, know as well what to do as any pair in Ireland, and are as cool besides. There now.

she's putting her about, as I said, and she'll run for the creek." The frail boat, a mere speck upon the dark green ocean, seemed now to fly, as with a slackened sheet she darted over the water. Her course was bent for a little cove, concealed from view by a rugged promontory of rock, up which the old fisherman now clambered with the alacrity of a younger man. Martin tried to follow, but, overcome by emotion, he was unable, and sat down upon a ledge of rock, burying his face within his hands.

By this time the whole fishing population of the little village had gathered on the beach around the cove, to watch the boat as she came in: numbers had gone out to meet her, and stood up to their waists in the white and boiling surf, ready to seize upon the skiff and run her high and dry upon the sand. Even they were obliged to be lashed together by a rope, lest the receding waves should carry them out to sea, or the "under tow" suck them beneath the surface. As the boat came within speaking distance, a wild shout arose from the shore to "down sail" and suffer her to come in on her way alone; but with all the canvas spread, they came flying along, scarce seeming more than to tip the waves as they skipped over them, while a shower of spray appeared to cover them as the sea broke upon the stern. Instead of rendering aid, the utmost the fishermen could do was to clear a path amongst them for the skiff to pass, as with lightning speed she flitted by and drove her bow high up on the hard beach.

A wild glad cheer of joy and welcome burst from the hearty fishermen as they crowded about the young girl, who stepped out of the boat with a heavy bundle in her arms. Her hair hung in great masses over her neck and shoulders, her cheeks were flushed, and her dark eyes gleamed with all the excitement of peril and triumph.

"Here, Margaret," said she to a young woman, who, pale with terror and with face streaming in tears, rushed towards her—"here's your little fellow, all safe and sound; I'd not have put back but for his sake." And with this she placed in his mother's arms a little boy of about three years of age, sound asleep. "He must wait for better weather if he wants to see his grandmother. And," added she, laughing, "I scarcely think you'll catch me going to sea again with so precious a cargo. Poor little man," and she patted his ruddy cheeks, "he behaved so well, like a stout fisherman's son as he is—never showed fear for a moment."

A murmur of delighted hearts ran through the crowd, some-thinking of the child, but many more in warm admiration of the brave and beautiful young girl before them. "Loony," said she to her boatman, "when you've got the tackle to rights, come up to the house for your breakfast." And with that, and a few words of grateful recognition as she passed, she clambered up the rock and hastened homeward.

As for her uncle, no sooner had he heard of her safe arrival on shore than he hurried back, anxious to reach the house before her. For a considerable time back Martin had schooled himself into an apparent indifference about his niece's perils. Lady Dorothea had probably given the initiative to this feeling, by constantly asserting that the young lady would incur few risks when they ceased to create alarm.

It was a somewhat ungracious theory, and excited in Martin's mind, when he first heard it, a sensation the very reverse of agreeable. Without accepting its truth, however, it made a deep impression upon him, and at last, by way of policy, he resolved to feign a degree of callous indifference very foreign to his nature, and, by dint of mere habit, he at length acquired a semblance of calm, under circumstances that sorely tested his powers of self-control.

"Has the heroine arrived safe on shore?" asked Lady Dorothea in her own languid drawl. And Martin almost started at the question, and seemed for a moment as if the indignation it excited could not be repressed; then smiling superciliously at the impassive air of her features, he said:

"Yes, and by rare good luck, too! The sea is a terrific one this morning!"

"Is it ever anything else in this heavenly climate?" said she, sighing. "I have counted two fine days since the 8th of June; and indeed it rained a little on one of them."

Martin winced impatiently under the remark, but never lifted his eyes from the newspaper.

"I had hoped your niece was making arrangements for our return to Cro' Martin," said she, querulously, "instead of planning marine excursions. I told her yesterday—or the day before, I forget which; but who could remember time in such a place!—that I was bored to death here. The observation seems to amuse you, Mr. Martin, but it is a simple fact."

"And you are bored to death at Cro' Martin too, if I mistake not?" said he, with a very significant dryness.

"I should think I was, sir, and nothing very astonishing in the confession besides."

"And Dublin, madam?"

"Don't speak of it. If one must endure prison discipline, at least let us have a cell to ourselves. Good morning, Miss Martin. I hope you enjoyed your party on the water?"

This speech was addressed to Mary, who now entered the room dressed in a plain morning costume, and in her quiet, almost demure look, resembling in nothing the dripping and dishevelled figure that sprung from the boat.

"Good morning, aunt," said she, gaily. "Good morning, uncle," kissing, as she spoke, his cheek, and patting him fondly on the shoulder. "I saw you out on the rocks as we were coming in."

"Pooh, pooh," said he, in affected indifference. "I knew there was no danger ——"

"Yes but there was though," said she, quickly. "If we hadn't set all sail on her she'd have been pooped to a certainty; and I can tell you I was in a rare fright too."

"Oh, indeed, you confess to such an ignoble emotion?" said Lady Dorothea, with a sneer.

"That I do, aunt, for I had poor Madge Lennan's little boy on my lap all the time, and if it came to a swim, I don't see how he was to be saved."

"You'd not have left him to his fate, I suppose?" said Lady Dorothea.

"I scarcely know what I should have done. I sincerely hope it would have been my best; but in a moment like that, within sight of home too ——" Her eyes met her uncle's as she said this; he had raised them from his newspaper, and bent them fully on her. There was that in their expression which appealed so strongly to her heart, that instead of finishing her speech she sprung towards him and threw her arms around his neck.

"Quite a scene; and I detest scenes," said Lady Dorothea, as she arose and swept out of the room contemptuously; but they neither heard the remark nor noticed her departure.

CHAPTER IV.

MAURICE SCANLAN, ATTORNEY-AT-LAW.

About an hour after the occurrence mentioned in our last chapter, the quiet little village of Kilkieran was startled by the sharp clattering sounds of horses' feet, as Mr. Scanlan's tandem came slinging along; and after various little dexterities amid stranded boats, disabled anchors, and broken capstans, drew up at the gate of the Osprey's Nest. When men devise their own equipage, they invariably impart to it a strong infusion of their own idiosyncrasy. The quiet souls who drag through life in chocolate-coloured barouches, with horses indifferently matched, give no clue to their special characteristics; but your men of tax-carts, and tandems, your Jehus of four-in-hand teams, write their own biographies in every detail of the "turn-out."

Maurice Scanlan was a sporting attorney, and from the group of game cocks neatly painted on the hind panel, to the wiry, well bred, and well looking screws before him, all was indicative of the man. The conveyance was high, and red-wheeled; the nags were a chesnut and a grey; he drove them without winkers or bearing-reins, wearing his white hat a very little on one side, and gracefully tilting his elbow as he admonished the wheeler with the "crop" of his whip. He was a good-looking, showy, vulgar, self-sufficient kind of fellow, with consummate shrewdness in all business transactions, only marred by one solitary weak point—an intense desire to be received intimately by persons of a station above his own, and to seem, at least, to be the admitted guest of very fashionable society. It was not a very easy matter to know if this Lord-worship of his was real, or merely affected, since certainly the profit he derived from the assumption was very considerable, and Maurice was entrusted with a variety of secret-service transactions, and private affairs for the Nobility, which they would never have dreamed of committing to the hands of their more recognised advisers.

If men would have been slow to engage his services in any grave or important suit, he was invaluable in all the ordinary and constantly-occurring events of this changeful world. He knew every one's difficulties and embarrassments. There was not a hitch in a settlement, nor a spavin in your stables, could escape him. He seemed to possess a kind of intuitive appreciation of a flaw; and he pounced upon a defect with a rapidity that counterfeited genius. To these gifts he added a consummate knowledge of his countrymen. He had emerged from the very humblest class of the people, and he knew them thoroughly; with all their moods of habitual distrust and momentary enthusiasm—with all their phases of sanguine hopefulness he was familiar; and he could mould, and fashion, and wield them to his will, as passive subjects as the heated bar under the hammer of the smith.

As an electioneering agent he was unequalled. It was precisely the sphere in which his varied abilities were best exercised; and it was, besides, an arena in which he was proud of figuring.

For a while he seemed—at least in his own eyes—to stand on a higher eminence than the candidate he represented, and to be a more prominent and far grander personage than his principal. In fact, it was only under some tacit acknowledgment of this temporary supremacy that his services were obtainable; his invariable stipulation being, that he was to have the entire and uncontrolled direction of the election.

Envious tongues and ungenerous talkers did, indeed, say that Maurice insisted upon this condition with very different objects in view, and that his unlimited powers found their pleasantest exercise in the inexplorable realms of secret bribery; however, it is but fair to say, that he was eminently successful, and that one failure alone in his whole career occurred to show the proverbial capriciousness of fortune.

With the little borough of Oughterard he had become so identified that his engagement was regarded as one of the first elements of success. Hitherto, indeed, the battle had been always an easy one. The Liberal party—as they pleasantly assumed to style themselves—had gone no further in opposition than an occasional burst of intemperate language, and an effort—usually a failure—at a street row during the election. So little of either energy or organisation had marked their endeavours, that the great leader of the day had stigmatised their town with terms of heavy censure, and even pronounced them unworthy of the cause. An emissary, deputed to report upon the political state of the borough, had described the voters as mere dependants on the haughty purse-proud proprietor of Cro' Martin, who seemed, even without an effort, to nominate the sitting member.

The great measure of the year '29—the Catholic Relief Bill—had now, however, suggested to even more apathetic constituencies the prospect of a successful struggle. The thought of being represented by "one of their own sort" was no mean stimulant to exertion; and the leading spirits of the place had frequently conferred together as to what steps should be taken to rescue the borough from the degrading thraldom of an aristocratic domination. Lord Kilmorris, it is true, was rather popular with them than the reverse. The eldest son of an Earl, who only cared to sit in Parliament on easy terms, till the course of time and events should call him to the Upper House, he never took any very decided political line, but sat on Tory benches and gave an occasional vote to Liberal measures, as though foreshadowing that new school who were to take the field under the middle designation of Conservatives. Some very remote relationship to Lady Dorothea's family had first introduced him to the Martins' notice; and partly from this connection, and partly because young Harry Martin was too young to sit in Parliament, they had continued to support him to the present time.

Mr. Martin, himself, cared very little for politics; had he even cared more he would not have sacrificed to them one jot of that indolent, lazy, apathetic existence which alone he seemed to prize. He was rather grateful than otherwise to Lord Kilmorris for taking upon him the trouble of a contest, if there should be such a thing. His greatest excuse through life, at least to himself, had ever been, that he was "unprepared." He had been in that unhappy state about everything since he was born, and so, apparently, was he destined to continue to the very last. With large resources, he was never prepared for any sudden demand for money. When called on for any exertion of mind or body—when asked to assist a friend, or rescue a relation from difficulty, he was quite unprepared; and so convinced was he that this was a fatality under which he laboured, that no sooner had he uttered the expression than he totally absolved himself from every shadow of reproach that might attach to his lukewarmness.

The uncontrolled position he occupied, joined to the solitary isolation in which he lived, had doubtless engendered this cold and heartless theory. There was no one to dispute his will—none to gainsay his opinions. There was not for him any occasion for the healthful exertion which is evoked by opposition, and he sunk gradually down into a moping, listless, well-meaning, but utterly good-for-nothing gentleman, who would have been marvellously amazed had any one arraigned him for neglect of his station and its great requirements.

That such an insolent possibility could be, was only demonstrated to him in that morning's newspaper. To be called a despot was bad enough, but a petty despot—and to be told that such despotism was already doomed—aroused in him a degree of indignation all the more painful that the sensation was one he had not experienced for many a year back. Whose fault was it that such an impertinence had ever been uttered? Doubtless, Kilmorris's. Some stupid speech, some absurd vote, some ridiculous party move had brought down this attack upon him; or perhaps it was Mary, with her new-fangled ideas about managing the estate, her school-houses, and her model-farms. The ignorant people had possibly revolted against her interference; or it might be Lady Dorothea herself, whose haughty manner had given offence; at all events, *he* was blameless, and strange to say, either he was not perfectly assured of the fact, or that the assumption was not pleasant, but he seemed very far from being satisfied with the explanation. In the agitated mood these feelings produced, a servant came to inform him that Mr. Scanlan had just arrived.

"Say I'm out—I'm unwell—I don't feel quite myself to-day. Call Miss Mary to him." And with an impatient gesture he motioned the servant away.

"Miss Mary will be down in a few minutes, Sir," said the man, entering the room where Mr. Scanlan stood arranging his whiskers before the chimney-glass, and contemplating with satisfaction his general appearance.

"It was Mr. Martin himself, Thomas, that I wanted to see."

"I know that, sir, but the Master isn't well this morning; he told me to send Miss Mary to you."

"All right," said Scanlan, giving a finishing touch to the tie of his cravat, and then gracefully bestowing his person into an easy-chair. To common observation he looked perfectly unconcerned in every gesture, and yet no man felt less at his ease at that moment than Mr. Maurice Scanlan; and though the cause involves something like a secret, the reader shall know it. Mr. Scanlan had seen a good deal of the world—that is, of *his* world.

He had mixed with Barristers and Solicitors, "Silk Gowns," Masters in Chancery, and even Puisne Judges had he come into contact with; he had mingled in turf experiences with certain sporting Lords and Baronets, swapped horses, and betted and handicapped with men of fortune; he had driven trotting-matches, and ridden hurdle-races against young heirs to good estates, and somehow always found himself not inferior in worldly craft and address to those he came into contact with—nay, he even fancied that he was occasionally rather a little more wide-awake than his opponents; and what with a little blustering, here, a little blarney, there, a dash of mock frankness to this man, or an air of impulsive generosity to the other—an accommodating elasticity, in fact, that extended to morals, manners, and principles—he found that he was, as he himself styled it, "a fair match with equal weights for anything going." There was but one individual alone in presence of whom he in reality felt his own inferiority deeply and painfully; strange to say, that was Miss Martin! At first sight this would seem almost unintelligible. She was not either a haughty beauty, presuming on the homage bestowed upon her by high and distinguished admirers, nor was she any greatly gifted and cultivated genius, dominating over lesser intelligences by the very menace of her acquirements. She was simply a high-spirited, frank, unaffected girl, whose good breeding and good sense seemed alike instinctive, and, who read with almost intuition the shallow artifices by which such natures as Scanlan's impose upon the world. She had seen him easily indolent with her uncle, obsequiously deferential to my Lady, all in the same breath, while the side-look of tyranny he could throw a refractory tenant appeared just as congenial to his nature.

It was some strange consciousness which told him he could not deceive *her*, that made Scanlan ever abashed in her presence, and by the self-same impulse was it that she was the only one in the world for whose good esteem he would have sacrificed all he possessed.

While he waited for her coming he took a leisurely survey of the room. The furniture, less costly and rich than at Cro' Martin, was all marked by that air of propriety and comfort so observable in rich men's houses. There were the hundred appliances of ease and luxury, that show how carefully the most trifling inconveniences are warded off, and the course of daily life rendered as untroubled as mere material enjoyments can secure. Scanlan sighed deeply, for the thought crossed his mind how was a girl brought up in this way ever to stoop to ally her fortune to a man like him? Was it, then, possible that he nourished such a presumption? Even so. Maurice was of an aspiring turn; he had succeeded in twenty things that a dozen years past he had never dared to dream of. He had dined at tables, and driven with men whose butlers and valets he once deemed very choice company; he had been the guest at houses where once his highest ambition had been to see the interior as a matter of curiosity. "Who could say where he might be at last?" Besides this, he knew from his own knowledge of family matters that she had no fortune, that her father was infinitely more likely to leave debts than an inheritance behind him, and that her uncle was the last man in the world ever to think of a marriage-portion for one he could not afford to part with. There was, then, no saying what turn of fortune might present him in an admissible form as a suitor. At all events, there was no rival in the field, and Maurice had seen many a prize won by a "walk over" purely for want of a competitor in the race.

Notwithstanding all these very excellent and reassuring considerations, Maurice Scanlan could not overcome a most uncomfortable sense of awkwardness as Mary Martin entered the room, and saluting him with easy familiarity, said, "I'm quite ashamed of having made you wait, Mr. Scanlan; but I was in the village when I got my uncle's message. I find that he is not well enough to receive you, and if I can ——"

"I'm sure it's only too much honour you do me, Miss Mary; I never expected to have the pleasure of this interview; indeed, it will be very hard for me to think of business at all at all."

"That would be most unfortunate after your coming so far on account of it," said she, half archly, while she seated herself on a sofa at some distance from him.

"If it were a question about the estate, Miss Mary," said he, in his most obsequious manner, "there's nobody equal to yourself; or if it were anything at all but what it is, I know well that you'd see your way out of it; but the present is a matter of politics—it's about the borough."

"That weary borough," said she, sighing; "and are we about to have another election?"

"That's it, Miss Mary; and Lord Kilmorris writes me to say that he'll be over next week, and hopes he'll find all his friends

" disposed towards him as ever."

en to my uncle?" asked Mary, hastily.

"No; and that's exactly what I came about; there was a kind of a coldness—more my Lady's, I think, than on Mr. Martin's part; and Lord Kilmorris feels a kind of delicacy—in fact, he doesn't rightly know how he stands at Cro' Martin"—here he paused, in hopes that she would help him by even a word, but she was perfectly silent and attentive, and he went on—"so that, feeling himself embarrassed, and at the same time knowing how much he owes to the Martin interest——"

"Well, go on," said she, calmly, as he came a second time to a dead stop.

"It isn't so easy, then, Miss Mary," said he, with a long sigh, "for there are so many things enter into it—so much of politics and party and what not—that I quite despair of making myself intelligible; though, perhaps, if I was to see your uncle he'd make out my meaning."

"Shall I try and induce him to receive you, then?" said she, quietly.

"Well, then, I don't like asking it," said he, doubtfully; "for, after all, there's nobody can break it to him as well as yourself."

"Break it to him, Mr. Scanlan?" said she, in astonishment.

"Faith, it's the very word, then," said he, "for do what one will, say what they may, it will be sure to surprise him, if it does no worse."

"You alarm me, sir; and yet I feel that if you would speak boldly out your meaning there is probably no cause for fear."

"I'll just do so, then, Miss Mary; but at the same time I'd have you to understand that I'm taking a responsibility on myself that his lordship never gave me any warrant for, and that there is not another ——" Mr. Scanlan stopped, but only in time, for, whether it was the fervour in which he uttered these words, or that Miss Martin anticipated what was about to follow, her cheek became scarlet, and a most unmistakable expression of her eyes recalled the worthy practitioner to all his wonted caution. "The matter is this, Miss Martin," said he, with a degree of deference more marked than before, "Lord Kilmorris is dissatisfied with the way your uncle supported him at the last election; he complains of the hard conditions imposed upon him as to his line of conduct in the House; and, above all, he feels insulted by a letter Lady Dorothea wrote him, full of very harsh expressions and hard insinuations—I never saw it myself, but that's his account of it. In fact, he's very angry."

"And means to throw up the borough, in short," broke in Mary.

"I'm afraid not, Miss Mary," said the other, in a half whisper.

"What then?—what can he purpose doing?"

"He means to try and come in on his own interest," said Scanlan, who uttered the words with an effort, and seemed to feel relief when they were out.

"Am I to understand that he would contest the borough with us?"

Scanlan nodded an affirmative.

"No, no, Mr. Scanlan, this is some mistake—some misapprehension on your part; his lordship may very possibly feel aggrieved—he may have some cause, for aught I know, about something in the last election, but this mode of resenting it is quite out of the question—downright impossible."

"The best way is to read his own words, Miss Martin. There's his letter," said he, handing one towards her, which, however, she made no motion to take.

"If you won't read it, then, perhaps you will permit me to do so. It's very short, too, for he says at the end he will write more fully to-morrow." Mr. Scanlan here muttered over several lines of the epistle until he came to the following: "I am relieved from any embarrassment I should have felt at breaking with the Martins by reflecting over the altered conditions of party, and the new aspect politics must assume by the operations of the Emancipation Act. The old ways and traditions of the Tories must be abandoned at once and for ever; and though Martin in his life of seclusion and solitude will not perceive this necessity, we here all see and admit it. I could, therefore, no longer represent his opinions, since they would find no echo in the House. To stand for the borough I must stand on my own views, which, I feel bold to say, include justice to both of the contending factions.'"

"Admirably argued," broke in Mary. "He absolves himself from all ties of gratitude to my uncle by adopting principles the reverse of all he ever professed."

"It's very like that, indeed, Miss Mary," said Scanlan, timidly.

"Very like it, sir; it is exactly so. Really the thing would be too gross if it were not actually laughable;" and as she spoke she arose and paced the room in a manner that showed how very little of the ludicrous side of the matter occupied her thoughts. "He will stand for the borough—he means to stand in opposition to us?"

"That's his intention—at least, if Mr. Martin should not come to the conclusion that it is better to support his lordship than risk throwing the seat into the hands of the Roman Catholics."

"I can't follow all these intrigues, Mr. Scanlan. I confess to you, frankly, that you have puzzled me enough already, and that I have found it no small strain on my poor faculties to conceive a gentleman being able to argue himself into any semblance of self-approval by such sentiments as those which you have just read; but I am a poor country girl, very ignorant of great topics and great people. The best thing I can do is to represent this affair to my uncle, and as early as may be."

"I hope he'll not take the thing to heart, Miss; and I trust he'll acquit *me* ——"

"Be assured he'll despise the whole business most thoroughly, sir. I never knew him take any deep interest in these themes: and if this be a fair specimen of the way they are discussed, he was all the wiser for his indifference. Do you make any stay in the village? Will it be inconvenient for you to remain an hour or so?"

"I'll wait your convenience, Miss, to any hour," said Scanlan, with an air of gallantry which, had she been less occupied with her thoughts, might have pushed her hard to avoid smiling at.

"I'll be down at Mrs. Cronan's till I hear from you, Miss Mary." And with a look of as much deferential admiration as he dared to bestow, Scanlan took his leave, and mounting to his box, assumed the ribbons with a graceful elegance and a certain lackadaisical languor that, to himself at least, appeared demonstrative of an advanced stage of the tender passion.

"Begad, she's a fine girl; devil a lie in it, but she hasn't her equal! and as sharp as a needle, too," muttered he, as he jogged along the shingly beach, probably for the first time in his whole life forgetting the effect he was producing on the bystanders.

CHAPTER V.

A STUDIO AND AN ARTIST.

"Is my uncle in the library, Terence?" asked Mary of a very corpulent old man, in a red-brown wig.

"No, Miss, he's in the—bother it, then, if I ever can think of the name of it."

"The studio, you mean," said she, smiling.

"Just so, Miss Mary," replied he, with a sigh, for he remembered certain penitential hours passed by himself in the same locality.

"Do you think you could manage to let him know I want him—that is, that I have something important to say to him?"

"It's clean impossible, Miss, to get near him when he's there. Sure, isn't he up on a throne, dressed out in goold and dimonds, and as cross as a badger besides, at the way they're tormenting him?"

"Oh, that tiresome picture, is it never to be completed?" muttered she, half unconsciously.

"The saints above know whether it is or no," rejoined Terence, "for one of the servants told me yesterday that they rubbed every bit of the master out and began him all again, for my Lady said he wasn't half haggard enough, or worn-looking; but by my conscience if he goes on as he's doing he ought to satisfy them."

"Why, I thought it was Henderson was sitting," said Mary, somewhat amused at the old man's commentaries.

"So he was; but they rubbed him out, too, for it seems now he ought to be bald, and they've sent him into Oughterard to get his head shaved."

"And what were *you*, Terry?"

"Arrah, who knows?" said he, querulously. "At first I was to be somebody's mother that was always cryin'; but they weren't pleased with the way I done it, and then they made me a monk, and after that they put two hundred-weight of armour on me, and made me lean my head on my arm as if I was overcome; and faith, so I was, for I dropped off asleep, and fell into a pot of varnish, and I'm in disgrace now, glory be to God! and I only hope it may last."

"I wish I shared your fortune, Terry, with all my heart," said Mary, with some difficulty preserving her gravity.

"Couldn't it catch fire—by accident, I mean, Miss—some evening after dark?" whispered Terry, confidentially. "Them's matarials that would burn easy! for upon my conscience if it goes on much longer there won't be a sarvant will stay in the sarvice. They had little Tom Regan holding a dish of charcoal so long that he tuk to his bed on Friday last, and was never up since; and Jinny Moore says she'd rather lave the place than wear that undacent dress; and whist, there's murder goin' on now inside!" And with that the old fellow waddled off with a speed that seemed quite disproportionate to his years.

While Mary was still hesitating as to what she should do, the door suddenly opened, and a man in a mediæval costume rushed out, tugging after him a large bloodhound, whose glaring eyeballs and frothy mouth betokened intense passion. Passing hurriedly forward, Mary beheld Lady Dorothea bending oves the fainting figure of a short little man, who lay on the floor, while her uncle, tottering under a costume he could barely carry, was trying to sprinkle water over him from an urn three feet in height.

"Mr. Crow has fainted—mere fright, nothing more!" said Lady Dorothea. "In stepping backward from the canvas he unluckily trod upon Fang's paw, and the savage creature at once sprung on him. That stupid wretch, Regan, one of your favourites, Miss Martin, never pulled him off till he had torn poor Mr. Crow's coat clean in two."

"Egad, if I hadn't smashed my sceptre over the dog's head the mischief wouldn't have stopped there; but he's coming to. Are you better, Crow? How do you feel, man?"

"I hope you are better, sir?" said Lady Dorothea, in an admirable blending of grand benevolence and condescension.

"Infinitely better—supremely happy besides, to have become the object of your Ladyship's kind inquiries," said the little man, sitting up, and looking around with a very ghastly effort at urbanity and ease.

"I never knew Fang to bite any one," said Mary.

"Doesn't she, by jingo!" exclaimed the artist, who with difficulty caught himself in time before he placed his hand on the supposed seat of his injuries.

"She shall be muzzled in future," said Lady Dorothea, haughtily, repressing the familiar tone of the discussion.

"I think—indeed I feel sure, I could get her in from memory, my Lady; she's a very remarkable creature, and makes an impression on one." As he uttered these words ruefully, he lifted from the floor the fragment of his coat-skirt, and gazed mournfully at it.

"I suppose we must suspend proceedings," said Lady Dorothea; "though really it is a pity to lose the opportunity of Miss Martin's presence—an honour she so very rarely accords us."

"I think after a few minutes or so, my Lady, I might feel equal," said Mr. Crow, rising and retreating to a wall, with a degree of caution that showed he entertained grave fears as to the state of his habiliments—"I might feel equal, if not exactly to delineate Miss Martin's classic features, at least to throw in ——"

"I couldn't think of such a thing; I should be wretched at the idea of engaging your attention at such a moment," said Mary, with a carelessness that contrasted strongly with her words; while she added with earnestness, "Besides, I'm not sure I could spare the time."

"You see, sir," said her Ladyship to the artist, "you have to deal with a young lady whose occupations are like those of a Premier. The Duke of Wellington can vouchsafe a sitting for his portrait, but Miss Martin cannot spare the time for it."

"Nay, aunt Dorothy, if I were the Duke of Wellington I should do as he does. It is being Mary Martin, whose picture can have no interest for any one, enables me to follow the bent of my own wishes."

"Humility is another of her perfections," said Lady Dorothea, with a look that but too palpably expressed her feeling towards her niece.

As Mary was assisting her uncle to get rid of some of his superfluous draperies, neither of them overheard this remark; while Mr. Crow was too deeply impressed with his own calamities to pay any attention to it.

"Mr. Scanlan has been very anxious to see you, uncle," whispered Mary in his ear. "He has something of importance to communicate about the borough."

"Can't you manage it yourself, Molly? Can't you contrive somehow to spare me this annoyance?"

"But you really ought to hear what he has to say."

"I perceive that Miss Martin has a secret of moment to impart to you; pray let me not trouble the interview by my presence," said Lady Dorothea. And she swept haughtily out of the room, throwing a most disdainful glance at her husband as she went.

"There, by George! you've secured me a pleasant afternoon at all events!" said Martin, angrily, to his niece, as, throwing off the last remnant of his regal costume, he rushed out, banging the door passionately behind him.

Mary sat down to compose her thoughts in quiet, for Mr. Crow had previously made his escape unobserved; and truly there was need of some repose for her agitated and wearied faculties. Her uncle's dependence upon her for everything, and her aunt's jealousy of the influence she had over him, placed her in a position of no common difficulty, and one of which every day seemed to increase the embarrassment. For a moment she thought she would have preferred a life of utter insignificance and obscurity, but as suddenly it occured to her: "What had I been without these duties and these cares? For me there are few, if any, of the ties that bind other girls to their homes. I have neither mother nor sister; I have none of the resources which education suggests to others. My mind cannot soar above the realities that surround me, and seek for its enjoyments in the realms of fancy; but, perhaps, I can do better," said she, proudly, "and make of these same every-day materials the poetry of an actual existence." As she spoke she threw open the window, and walked out upon the terrace over the sea. The fishermen's boats were all standing out from shore—a tiny fleet, whose hardy crews had done no discredit to the proudest three-decker. Though the heavy gale of the morning had gone down, it still blew fresh, and a long rolling swell thundered along in-shore, and sent a deep booming noise through many a rocky cavern. High above this deafening clamour, however, rose the hearty cheers of the fishermen as they detected Mary's figure where she stood, and many a tattered rag of showy bunting was hoisted to do her honour. Never insensible to such demonstrations, Mary felt at the moment almost overpowered with emotion. But a moment back and she bewailed her isolation and friendlessness; and see, here were hundreds who would have resigned life in her behalf. Still as the boats receded the wind bore to her ears the welcome sounds; and as she heard them, her heart seemed to expand and swell with generous thoughts and good wishes, while along her cheeks heavy tears were rolling.

"What need have I of other friends than such as these?" cried she, passionately. "*They* understand *me*, and I them; and as for the great world, we are not made for each other!"

"My own sentiments to a 'T,' Miss," said a soft, mincing voice behind her; and Mary turned and beheld Mr. Crow. He had arrayed himself in a small velvet skull-cap and a blouse, and stood mixing the colours on his palette in perfect composure. "I'm afraid, Miss Martin, there's an end of the great 'Historical.' Your uncle will scarcely be persuaded to put on the robes again, and it's a downright pity. I was getting a look of weariness—imbecility I might call it—into his features that would have crowned the work."

"I don't think I ever knew what your subject was!" said she, half indolently.

"Tho Abdication of Charles V., Miss Martin," said he, proudly. "This is the fourteenth time I have depicted it; and never, I am bound to say, with more favourable 'studies.' Your uncle is fine; my Lady, gorgeous; I don't say what I'd like of another lovely and gifted individual; but even down to that old rogue of a butler that would insist on taking snuff through the bars of his helmet, they were all grand, Miss—positively grand!" Seeing that she appeared to bestow some attention to him, Mr. Crow went on: "You see, Miss, in the beginning of a great effort of this kind there is no progress made at all. The sitters keep staring at one another, each amused at some apparent absurdity in costume or attitude; and then, if you ask them to call up a look of love, hate, jealousy, or the like,—it's a grin you get—a grin that would shame a hyena. By degrees, however, they grow used to the situation; they 'tone down,' as one might say, and learn to think less of themselves, and be more natural. It was sheer fatigue, downright exhaustion, and nothing else, was making your uncle so fine; and if he could have been kept on low diet—I didn't like to mention it, though I often wished it—I'd have got a look of cadaverous madness into his face that would have astonished you."

By this time Mr. Crow had approached his canvas, and was working away vigorously, the action of his brush appearing to stimulate his loquacity. Mary drew near to observe him, and insensibly felt attracted by that fascination which the progress of a picture invariably possesses.

"This is the Queen," continued he; "she's crying—as well she might,—she doesn't rightly know whether the old fellow's out of his mind or not; she has her misgivings, and she doesn't half like that old thief of a Jesuit that's whispering in the King's ear. This was to be you, Miss Martin; you were betrothed to one of the young Princes, but somehow you weren't quite right in your head, and you are looking on, rather more amused, you perceive, than in any way moved; you were holding up your beautiful petticoat, all covered with gold and precious stones, as much as to say, '*Ain't I fine this morning?*' *when you heard the herald's trumpet announce the Prince of Orange; and there he is—or there he ought to be—coming in at the door.* There's a chap pulling the curtain aside; but I suppose, now," added he, with a sigh, "we'll never see the Prince there!"

"But where could you have found a study for your Prince, Mr. Crow?"

"I have him here, Miss," said Crow, laying down his brush to take a small sketch-book from the pocket of his blouse. "I have him here; and there wouldn't have been a finer head in the canvas—pale, stern-looking, but gentle withal; a fellow that would say 'Lead them to the scaffold,' as easy as winking, and that would tremble and falter under the eye of a woman he loved. There he is, now—the hair, you know, I put in myself, and the bit of beard, just for a little Titian effect, but the eyes are his own, and the mouth not as good as his own."

"It's a striking head, indeed," said Mary, still contemplating it attentively.

"That's exactly what it is; none of your common brain-boxes, but a grand specimen of the classic head, civilised down to a mediæval period; the forty-first descendant of an Emperor or a Proconsul, living at the Pincian Hall, or at his Villa on the Tiber, sitting for his likeness to Giordano."

"There's a painful expression in the features, too," added she, slowly.

"So there is; and I believe he's in bad health."

"Indeed!" said Mary, starting. "I quite forgot there was an original all this time."

"He's alive; and what's more, he's not a mile from where we're standing." Mr. Crow looked cautiously about him as he spoke, as if fearful of being overheard, and then approaching close to Miss Martin, and dropping his voice to a whisper, said, "I can venture to tell you what I daren't tell my Lady—for I know well if she suspected who it was would be the Prince of Orange, begad I might abdicate too, as well as the King. That young man there is the son of a grocer in Oughterard—true, every word of it—Dan Nelligan's son! and you may fancy now what chance he'd have of seeing himself on that canvas if her Ladyship knew it."

"Is this the youth who has so distinguished himself at College?" asked Mary.

"The very one. I made that sketch of him when he was reading for the medal; he didn't know it, for I was in a window opposite, where he couldn't see me; and when I finished he leaned his chin in his hand and looked up at the sky, as if thinking, and the expression of his up-turned face, with the lips a little apart, was so fine that I took it down at once, and there it is," said he, turning over the page and presenting a few pencil lines lightly and spiritedly drawn.

"A young gentleman left this packet, Miss Mary, and said it was for you," said a servant, presenting a small sealed enclosure. Mary Martin blushed deeply, and she opened the parcel, out of which fell her own glove, with a card.

"The very man we were talking of," said Mr. Crow, lifting it up and handing it to her. "Joseph Nelligan. That's like the old proverb; talk of the ——" but she was gone ere he could finish his quotation.

"There she goes," said Crow, sorrowfully, "and if she'd have stayed ten minutes more I'd have had her all complete!" and he contemplated with glowing satisfaction a hasty sketch he had just made in his book. "It's like her—far more than anything I have done yet; but after all ——" and he shook his head mournfully as he felt the poor pretension of his efforts. "Small blame to me to fail, anyhow," added he, after a pause, "It would take Titian himself to paint her; and even he couldn't give all the softness and delicacy of the expression—that would take Raffaelle; and Vandyke for her eyes, when they flash out at times; and Giordano for the hair. Oh, if he could have seen it just as I did a minute ago, when the wind blew it back, and the sunlight fell over it! Arrah!" cried he, impatiently, as with a passionate gesture he tore the leaf from his book and crushed it in his hand—"arrah! What right have I even to attempt it?" And he sat down, covering his face with his hands, to muse and mourn in silence.

Simpson—or as he was more generally known, Simmy Crow—was neither a Michael Angelo nor a Raffaelle, but he was a simple-minded, honest-hearted creature, whose life had been a long hand-to-hand fight with fortune. Originally a drawing-master in some country academy, the caprice—for it was little else—of a whimsical old lady had sent him abroad to study; that is, sent him to contemplate the very highest triumphs of genius with a mind totally unprepared and uncultivated—to gaze on the grandest conceptions without the shadow of a clue to them—and to try and pick up the secrets of art when he stood in utter ignorance of its first principles. The consequence was, he went wild, in the enthusiasm of his admiration; he became a passionate worshipper at the shrine, but never essayed to be priest at the altar. Disgusted and dispirited by his own miserable attempts, he scarcely ever touched a pencil, but roved from city to city, and from gallery to gallery entranced—enchanted by a fascination that gradually insinuated itself into his very being, and made up the whole aim and object of his thoughts. This idolatry imparted an ecstasy to his existence that lifted him above every accident of fortune;—poor, hungry, and ill-clad, he still could enter a gallery or a church—sit down before a Guido or a Rembrandt, and forget all, save the glorious creation before him. By the sudden death of his patroness he was left, without a shilling, hundreds of miles from home. Humble as his requirements were, he could not supply them; he offered to teach, but it was in a land where all have access to the best models; he essayed to copy, but his efforts were unsaleable. To return home to his country was now his great endeavour, and after innumerable calamities and reverses, he did arrive in England, whence he made his way to Ireland, poorer than he had quitted it.

Had he returned in better plight—had he come back with some of the appearance of success, the chances are that he might have thriven on the accidents of fame; but he was famishing and in beggary. Some alleged that he was a worthless fellow, who had passed a life of idleness and debauch; others, that he was not without ability, but that his habits of dissipation rendered him hopeless; and a few—a very few—pitied him as a weak-brained enthusiast, who had no bad about him, but was born to failure!

In his utter destitution he obtained work as a house-painter—an employment which he followed for three or four years, and in which capacity he had been sent by his master to paint some ornamental stucco-work at Cro' Martin. The ability he displayed attracted Lady Dorothea's notice, and she engaged him to decorate a small garden villa with copies from her own designs. He was entirely successful, and so much pleased was her ladyship, that she withdrew him from his ignoble servitude and attached him to her own household, where now he had been living two years, the latter half of which period had been passed in the great work of which we have already made some mention. It so chanced, that poor Simmy had never sold but two copies in his life: one was the abdication of Charles V., the other, the Finding of Moses; and so, out of gratitude to these successes, he went on multiplying new versions of these subjects *ad infinitum*, eternally writing fresh variations on the old themes, till the King and the Lawgiver filled every avenue of his poor brain, and he ceased to have a belief that any other story than these could be the subject of high art.

Happy as he now was, he never ceased to feel that his position exposed him to many an ungenerous suspicion. "They'll say I'm humbugging this old lady," was the constant self-reproach he kept repeating. "I know well what they'll think of me—I think I hear the sneering remarks as I pass." And so powerfully had this impression caught hold of him, that he vowed, come what would of it, he'd set out on his travels again, and face the cold stern world, rather than live on what seemed to be the life of a flatterer and a sycophant. He could not, however, endure the thought of leaving his "Abdication" unfinished, and he now only remained to complete this great work. "Then I'm off," said he; "and then they'll see if poor Simmy Crow was the fellow they took him for." Better thoughts on this theme were now passing through his mind, from which at last he aroused himself to proceed with his picture. Once at work, his spirits rose; hopes flitted across his brain, and he was happy. His own creations seemed to smile benignly on him, too, and he felt towards them like a friend, and even talked with them, and confided his secret thoughts to them.

In this pleasant mood we shall leave him then, nor shall we linger to listen to the avowals he is making of his upright intentions, nor his willingness to bear the hardest rubs of fortune, so that none can reproach him for a mean subserviency.

CHAPTER VI.

A DASH OF POLITICS.

"WELL, what is it, Molly—what is it all about?" said Martin, as Mary entered the library, where he was sitting with an unread newspaper stretched across his knee.

"It is a piece of news Scanlan has brought, uncle, and not of the most agreeable kind, either."

"Then I'll not hear more of it," broke he in, pettishly.

"But you must, uncle, since without your own counsel and advice nothing can be done."

"Do nothing then," added he, sulkily.

"Come—come—I'll not let you off thus easily," said she, passing an arm over his shoulder. "You know well I'd not tease you if it could be avoided, but here is a case where I can be no guide. It is a question of the borough. Lord Kilmorris thinks himself strong enough to stand on his own merits, and repudiates your aid and his own principles together." Martin's attention being now secured, she went on: "He says—at least as well as I can follow his meaning—that with this new measure must come a total change of policy—abrogating all old traditions and old notions. That *you*, of course, are little likely to adopt this opinion, at least at once, and so he releases you from all obligations to support him, and himself from all tie to represent *you*."

"This is Lady Dorothy's doing," broke in Martin, passionately; "her confounded letter-writing has brought this upon us. I told her that those fellows were trimming; I warned her that they were only waiting for this Bill to pass, to turn round upon us as a barbarous old remnant of feudal oppression; but he daren't do it, Molly—Kilmorris hasn't a leg to stand upon in the borough. He couldn't count upon twenty—no, not ten votes, without me. It's a scurvy trick, too, and it shan't succeed, if I stand for the borough myself." And he blurted out the last words as though they were the expression of an enmity driven to its last resources.

"No, no, uncle," said she, caressingly; "after all you have yourself told me of a Parliamentary life, that must never be. Its unending intrigues and petty plotting—its fatiguing days and harassing nights—its jealousies, and disappointments, and defeats, all hard enough to be borne by those who must make a trade of their politics, but utterly insupportable to one who, like you, can enjoy his independence. Do not think of that, I beseech you."

"Then am I to see this man carry my own town in my very teeth?" cried he, angrily. "Is that your advice to me?"

"You often spoke of Harry. Why not put him forward now he is coming home?"

"Ay, and the very first thing he'll do will be to resign the seat because he had not been consulted about the matter before the election. You know him well, Molly; and you know that he exchanged into a regiment in India simply because I had obtained his appointment to the Blues. His amiable mother's disposition is strong in him!" muttered he, half to himself, but loud enough to be heard by his niece.

"At all events, see Scanlan," said she; "learn how the matter really stands; don't rely on my version of it, but see what Lord Kilmorris intends, and take your own measures calmly and dispassionately afterwards."

"Is Scanlan engaged for him?"

"I think not. I suspect that negotiations are merely in progress."

"But if he even was," broke in Martin, violently, "I have made the fellow what he is, and he should do as I ordered him. Let him come in, Molly."

"He is not in the house, uncle; he went down to the village."

"Not here? Why didn't he wait? What impertinence is this?"

"He wished to bait his horses, and probably to get some breakfast for himself, which I had not the politeness to offer him here."

"His horses? His tandem, I'll be sworn," said Martin, with a sneer. "I'll ask for no better evidence of what we are coming to, than that Maurice Scanlan drives about the county with a tandem."

"And handles them very neatly, too," said Mary, with a malicious sparkle of her eye, for she couldn't refrain from the spiteful pleasure of seeing her uncle in a regular fury for a mere nothing. All the more salutary, as it withdrew his thoughts from weightier themes.

"I'm sure of it, Miss Martin. I'm certain that he is a most accomplished whip, and as such perfectly sure to find favour in *your* eyes. Let him come up here at once, however. Say I want him immediately," added he, sternly; and Mary despatched a servant with the message, and sat down in front of her uncle, neither uttering a word, nor even looking towards the other.

"After all, Molly," said he, in the quiet, indolent tone so natural to him—"after all, what does it signify who's in or who's out? I don't care a brass farthing about party or party triumphs, and even if I did, I'm not prepared —— What are you laughing at—what is it amuses you now?" asked he, half testily, while she laughed out in all the unrestrained flow of joyous mirth.

"I have been waiting for that confession this half hour, uncle, and really I was beginning to be afraid of a disappointment. Why, dearest uncle, you were within a hair's breadth of forgetting your principles, and being actually caught, for once in your life, prepared and ready."

"Oh, is that it? Is it my embarrassment, then, that affords you so much amusement?"

"Far from it," said she, affectionately. "I was only laughing at that quiet little nook you retire to whenever you ought to be up and doing. Unprepared you say. Not a bit of it. Indisposed, indolent, unwilling, indifferent, any of these you like; but with a mind so full of its own good resources, and as ready to meet every contingency as any one's, don't say you are unprepared. Come, now, bear with me this once, dearest uncle, and don't be angry if I throw myself, like a rock or sandbank, betwixt you and your harbour of refuge. But I hear Mr. Scanlan's voice, and so I shall leave you. Be resolute, uncle, determined, and—'prepared!'" And with a gesture half menace and half drollery, she left the room as the attorney entered it.

Scanlan, like most of those who came but casually in contact with Martin, had conceived a low idea of his capacity—lower by far than it deserved, since behind his indolence there lay a fund of good common sense—a mine, it must be acknowledged, that he seldom cared to work. The crafty man of law had, however, only seen him in his ordinary moods of careless ease and idleness, and believed that pride of family, fortune, and position were the only ideas that found access to his mind, and that by a dexterous allusion to these topics it would always be an easy task to influence and direct him.

"What's this my niece has been telling me of Lord Kilmorris?" said Martin, abruptly, and without even replying to the salutations of the other, who hovered around a chair in an uncertainty as to whether he might dare to seat himself uninvited—"he's going to contest the borough with us, isn't he?"

Scanlan leaned one arm on the back of the chair, and in a half careless way replied:

"He is afraid that you and he don't quite agree, sir. He leans to measures that he suspects you may not altogether approve of."

"Come, come, none of this balderdash with me, Master Maurice. Has he bought the fellows already, or, rather, have you bought them? Out with it, man. What will he give? Name the sum, and let us treat the matter in a business-like way."

Scanlan sat down and laughed heartily for some minutes.

"I think you know me well enough, Mr. Martin, by this time," said he, "to say whether I'm a likely man to meddle with such a transaction."

"The very likeliest in Ireland; the man I'd select amidst ten thousand."

"I'm sorry to hear you say so, sir, that's all," said the other, with a half offended air; "nor do I see that anything in my past life warrants the imputation."

Martin turned fiercely round, about to make a reply which, if once uttered, would have ended all colloquy between them, when suddenly catching himself he said, "Have you taken any engagement with his Lordship?"

"Not as yet, sir—not formally, at least. My Lord has written me a very full statement of his ideas on polities, what he means to do, and so forth, and he seems to think that anything short of a very liberal line would not give satisfaction to the electors."

"Who told him so? Who said that the borough was not perfectly content with the representative, that—that"—he stammered and faltered—"that its best friends had fixed upon, to defend its interests? Who said that a member of my own family might not desire the seat?"

This announcement, uttered with a tone very much akin to menace, failed to produce either the astonishment or terror that

Martin looked for, and actually supposing that the expression had not been heard, he repeated it—"I say, sir, has any one declared that a Martin will not stand?"

"I am not aware of it," said Scanlan, quietly.

"Well, sir," cried Martin, as if unable to delineate the consequences, and wished to throw the weight of the duty on his opponent.

"There would be a warm contest no doubt, sir," said Scanlan, guardedly.

"No, sir; nor the shadow of a contest," rejoined Martin, angrily. "You'll not tell *me* that my own town—the property that has been in my family for seven centuries and more, would presume—that is, would desire—to—to—break the ties that have bound us to each other?"

"I wish I could tell you my mind, Mr. Martin, without offending you; that is, I wish you'd let me just say what my own opinion is, and take it for what it is worth, and in five minutes you'd be in a better position to make up your mind about this matter than if we went on discussing it for a week." There was a dash of independence in his utterance of these words that actually startled Martin; for, somehow, Scanlan had himself been surprised into earnestness by meeting with an energy on the other's part that he had never suspected; and thus each appeared in a new light to the other.

"May I speak out? Well, then, here is what I have to say: the Relief Bill is passed, the Catholics are now emancipated ——"

"Yes, and be ——" Martin caught himself with a cough, and the other went on:

"Well, then, if they don't send one of their own set into Parliament at once it is because they'd like to affect, for a little while at least, a kind of confidence in the men who gave them their liberties. O'Connell himself gave a pledge, that of two candidates, equal in all other respects, they'd select the Protestant; and so they would for a time. And it lies with you, and other men of your station, to determine how long that interval is to last; for an interval it will only be, after all. If you want to pursue the old system of 'keeping down,' you'll drive them at once into the hands of the extreme Papist party; who, thanks to yourselves, can now sit in Parliament; but if you'll moderate your views, take an humbler standard of your own power—conciliate a prejudice, here, obliterate an old animosity, there ——"

"In fact," broke in Martin, "swear by this new creed that

Lord Kilmorris has sent you a sketch of in his letter! Then I'll tell you what, sir—I'd send the borough and all in it to the ——"

"So you might, Mr. Martin, and you'd never mend matters in the least," broke he in, with great coolness.

There was now a dead silence for several minutes; at last Martin spoke, and it was in a tone and with a manner that indicated deep reflection:

"I often said to those who would emancipate the Catholics, 'Are you prepared to change places with them? You have been in the ascendant a good many years, are you anxious now to try what the other side of the medal looks like? for, if not, leave them as they are.' Well, they didn't believe me; and maybe now my prophecy is nigh its accomplishment."

"It is very likely you were right, sir; but whether or not, it's the law now, and let us make the best of it," said Scanlan, who had a practical man's aversion to all thet savoured of mere speculative reasoning.

"As how, for instance—in what way, Mr. Scanlan?" asked Martin, curtly.

"If you'll not support Lord Kilmorris ——"

"That I won't, I promise you; put that clean out of your head to begin with."

"Well, then, there is but one other course open. Come to some compromise with the Romanist party; if you don't like to give them a stray vote—and mark me, they'd make better terms with *you* than with a stranger—but if you don't like that, why take the representation alternately with them."

Martin rose from his chair and advanced close to where Scanlan was sitting, then, fixing his eyes steadfastly on him, said:

"Who commissioned you to make this proposition to *me?*"

"No one, upon my oath. There is not a man breathing who has ever so much as hinted at what I have just said to you."

"I'm glad of it; I'm heartily glad of it," said Martin, calmly reseating himself. "I'm glad there is not another fellow in this county your equal in impudence! Aye, Mr. Scanlan, you heard me quite correctly. I saw many a change going on amongst us, and I foresaw many more; but that a Martin of Cro' Martin should be taught his political duty by Maurice Scanlan, and that that duty consisted in a beggarly alliance with the riff-raff of a county town; that was, indeed, a surprise for which I was in nowise prepared."

"Well, sir, I'm sorry if I have given any offence, said Scanlan, rising, and, in a voice of the most quiet intonation, making his excuses: "Your rejection of the counsel I was bold enough to suggest leaves me, at least, at liberty to offer my services where they will not be rejected so contumeliously."

"Is this a threat, Mr. Scanlan?" said Martin, with a supercilious smile.

"No, sir; nothing of the kind. I know too well what becomes *my* station, and is *due* to *yours*, to forget myself so far; but as you don't set any value on the borough yourself, and as there may be others who do ——"

"Stay and eat your dinner here, Scanlan," said Martin.

"I promised Mrs. Cronan, sir ——"

"Send an apology to her; say it was *my* fault—that I detained you." And without waiting for a reply, Martin sauntered from the room, leaving the attorney alone with his reflections.

CHAPTER VII.

A COLLEGE COMPETITOR.

Young Nelligan had distanced all his competitors in his College career; some who were his equals in ability, were inferior to him in habits of hard and patient labour; and others, again, were faint-hearted to oppose one in whose success they affected to believe luck had no small share. One alone had the honest candour to avow that he deserved his pre-eminence, on the true ground of his being their superior. This was a certain Jack Massingbred, a young fellow of good family and fortune, and who, having been rusticated at Oxford, and involved in some outrage against authority in Cambridge, had come over to finish his College career in the "Silent Sister."

Although Irish by birth, and connected with Ireland by ties of family and fortune, he had passed all his life in England, his father having repaired to that country after the Union, exchanging the barren honour of a seat for an Irish borough for a snug Treasury appointment. His son had very early given proof of superior capacity. At Rugby he was distinguished as a scholar; and in his opening life at Oxford his talents won high praise for him. Soon after his entrance, however, he had fallen into a fast set—of hunting, tandem-driving, and occasionally hard-drinking men—in whose society he learnt to forget all his aim for College success, and to be far more anxious for distinction as a whip, or a stroke-oar, than for all the honours of scholarship. At first he experienced a sense of pride in the thought that he could hold his own with either set, and take the lead in the examination-hall as easily as he assumed the first place in the social meeting. A few reverses, however, taught him that his theory was a mistake, that no amount of ability will compensate for habits of idleness and dissipation, and that the discursive efforts of even high genius will be ever beaten by the steady results of patient industry. Partly indifferent to what had once been his great ambition—partly offended by his failures, Massingbred threw himself entirely into the circle of his dissipated companions, and became the very head and front of all their wildest excesses. An absurd exploit, far more ludicrous than really culpable, procured his rustication; a not less ridiculous adventure drove him from Cambridge; and he had at last arrived in Dublin, somewhat tamed down by his experiences, and half inclined to resume his long-abandoned desire for College distinction.

The habits of the Irish College were strikingly unlike those of either Oxford or Cambridge. Instead of a large class, consisting of men of great fortune and high expectations, he found a very slight sprinkling of such, and even they made up nothing that resembled a party; separated by age, political distinctions, and county associations, all stronger in the poorer county than in the richer one; they held little intercourse together, and were scarcely acquainted.

If there was less actual wealth, there was also less credit to be obtained by an Irish student. The Dublin shopkeeper acknowledged no prestige in the "gownsman;" he admitted him to no special privilege of book-debts, and as the great majority of the students resided with their families in the capital, there was no room for that reckless extravagance so often prosecuted by those who are temporarily removed from domestic supervision.

Massingbred was at first grievously disappointed. There were neither great names nor great fortunes amongst his new associates. Their mode of life, too, struck him as mean and contemptible. There were clever men reading for honours, and stupid men steering their slow way to a degree, but where were the fast ones? where the fellows who could tool a team or steer a six-oar? who could dash up to town for a week's reckless life at Crocky's and Tattersall's, make their book on the Oaks, or perhaps ride the winner at a steeplechase?

It was all grievously slow. Dublin itself was a poor affair. He had few acquaintances, the theatres were bad, and public amusements there were none. His fellow-students, too, stood aloof from him. It was not that he was richer, better dressed, rode blood horses, dined at Morrisson's, wore kid gloves, and carried scented pocket-handkerchiefs. It was not that he had a certain air of puppyism as he wended his way across the courts, or sauntered elegantly into chapel. They could have forgiven any or all of these better than one of his offendings, which was his accent. Strange as it may seem, his English voice and English pronunciation were the most unpopular things about him, and many a real defect in his character might have met a more merciful construction had he given no initial "H" to "humble," and evinced a more generous confusion about his "wills" and "shalls."

Somewhat bored by a life so unlike anything he had ever tried before, partly, perhaps, stimulated to show that he could do something beside canter his thorough-bred along Sackville-street, or lounge in the stage-box in solitary splendour—he went in for honours, and, to the surprise of all, succeeded. In fact, he beat two or three of the distinguished men of his time, till thrown by the chance of events into Nelligan's division, he found at once his superior, and saw that he was in presence of an intelligence considerably above his own. When he had adventured on the struggle and found himself worsted, he acknowledged defeat with all the generosity of an honourable nature, and forcing his way through the crowd as it issued from the examination-hall, was the very first to grasp Nelligan's hand and congratulate him on his success.

"That was all got up—he was bursting with jealousy. The fellow could have strangled Nelligan," muttered one.

"He certainly put a good face on the disaster," said another, more mercifully given; "though I suppose he feels the thing sorely enough at heart!"

That was exactly what he did not, however. Young Massingbred regarded a College distinction as no evidence whatever of a man's attainments. He had seen stupid fellows win the prize for which clever ones strove in vain; but, at all events, he regarded such successes as contributing in nothing to the great race of life, and had even a theory that such early efforts were often the very means of exhausting the energies that should be exerted for the high rewards of the world. Besides this, he felt a pleasure in manfully showing that he was above a petty jealousy, and fairly owning himself beaten in a fair struggle.

"You are the better man, Nelligan," said he, gaily; "I'll not try another fall with you, be assured."

Strange was it that in this very avowal he had asserted what the other felt, in his inmost heart, to be an immeasurable superiority over him; and that, in the very moment of striking his flag, he had proclaimed his victory. To be able to run him so hard for the race and yet not feel the struggle—to strive for the prize and care nothing for defeat, seemed to Nelligan the evidence of an ambition that soared above College triumph, and he could not but envy that buoyant high-hearted temperament that seemed to make light of difficulties and not even feel depressed by a defeat.

"Up to this time these two young men had scarcely known each other, but now they became intimate. The very difference in character served to draw them more closely together; and if Nelligan felt a degree of admiration for qualities whose brilliant display opened a new sense of enjoyment to him, the other was delighted with the gentle and almost childlike innocence of the student whose far-soaring intellect was mastering the highest questions of science.

Massingbred was one of those natures in whom frankness is an instinct. It seems to such a relief to open the secrets of the heart and avow their weaknesses and their short-comings, as though—by some Moral Popery—they would obtain the benefit of a free confession and go forth the better for their candour.

Not only did he tell Nelligan of his own career and its accidents, the causes for which he was not on good terms with his family, and so on, but he even ventured to discuss the public life of his father, and, in a spirit of banter, swore, that to his political subserviency did he owe his whole fortune in life.

"My father was one of the crew when the vessel was wrecked, Nelligan," said he; "there was plenty of talk of standing by the ship to the last and perishing with her. Some did so, and they are forgotten already. My father, however, jumped into the long-boat with a few more, and thought that probably they might find another craft more seaworthy; fortunately he was right, at least assuredly I'm not the man to say he was not."

"But was there no desertion of principle, Massingbred?" said Nelligan.

"No more than there is a desertion of your old coat when you discover it to be too threadbare to wear any longer. Irish Politics—as the men of that day understood them—had become impracticable, impossible, I might say; the only sensible thing to do was to acknowledge the fact. My father was keen-sighted enough to see it in that light, and here's his health for it."

Nelligan was silent.

"Come, Joe, out with it. Your family were honest Unionists.

Tell me so frankly, man. Own to me that you and yours look upon us all as a set of knaves and scoundrels, that sold their country, and so forth. I want to see you in a mood of good passionate indignation for once. Out with it, boy; curse us to your heart's content, and I'll hear it like an angel, for the simple reason that I know it to be just. You won't, won't you? Is your anger too deep for words? or are there any special and peculiar wrongs that make your dark consuming wrath too hot for utterance?"

Nelligan was still silent; but the blush which now covered his face had become almost purple. The allusion to his family as persons of political importance struck him, and for the first time, with a sense of shame. What would Massingbred think of them if he knew their real station? what would he think of *him* for having concealed it? Had he concealed it? had he ever divulged the truth? He knew not; in the whirlwind of his confusion he knew nothing. He tried to say some words to break the opprestive silence that seemed to weigh him down like an accusation, but he could not.

"I see it all, Nelligan. My foolish affectation of laughing at all principle has disgusted you, but the truth is I don't feel it: I do not. I own frankly that the bought patriot is a ruined man, and there is a moral Nemesis over every fellow that sells himself; I don't mean to say but that many who did so didn't make the best bargain their brains were worth, and my father, for one; he was a man of fair average abilities—able to say his commonplaces like his neighbours—and naturally felt that they would sound as well in England as in Ireland; I don't think he had a single conviction on any subject, so that he really sold a very unsaleable article when he vended himself. But there were others—your Governor for instance—come, now, tell me about him; you are so devilish close, and I want to hear all about your family. You won't; well, I'll give you one chance more, and then ——"

"What then?" asked Nelligan, breathlessly.

"I'll just go and learn for myself."

"How? what do you mean?"

"The easiest way in the world. The vacation begins next Tuesday, and I'll just invite myself to spend the first week of it under your paternal roof. You look terribly shocked, absolutely horrified; well, so you ought. It is about the greatest piece of impertinence I've heard of. I assure you I have a full consciousness of that myself; but no matter, I'll do it."

Nelligan's shame was now an agony. It had never occurred to him in his life to feel ashamed of his station or that of his family, for the simple reason, that he had never made pretension to anything higher or more exalted. The distinctions at which he aimed were those attainable by ability; social successes were triumphs he never dreamed of; but now came the thought of how he should stand in his friend's esteem when the fact was revealed that he was the son of very humble parents, all whose ways, thoughts, and habits, would be apt themes for ridicule and sarcasm. Over and over again had Massingbred annoyed him by the disparaging tone in which he canvassed "small people," the sneering depreciation in which he held all their doings, and the wholesale injustice by which he classed their sentiments with their good manners. It was the one feature of his friend's character that gave a check to his unbounded esteem for him. Had he not possessed this blemish, Nelligan would have deemed him nearly faultless.

Intensely feeling this, Nelligan would have given much for courage to say: "I am one of that very set you sneer at. All my associations and ties are with them. My home is amongst them, and every link of kindred binds me to them."

Yet, somehow, he could not bring himself to the effort. It was not that he dreaded the loss of friendship that might ensue; indeed, he rather believed that such would not occur; but he thought that a time might come when that avowal might be made with pride, and not in humiliation, when he should say: "My father, the little shopkeeper of Oughterard, gave me the advantages by which I became what I am. The class you sneer at had yet ambitions high and daring as your own; and talents to attain them, too! The age of noble and serf has passed away, and we live in a freer and more generous era, when men are tested by their own worth; and if birth and blood would retain their respect amongst us, it is by contesting with us more humbly-born, the prizes of life." To have asserted these things now, however, when he was nothing, when his name had no echo beyond the walls of a College, would have seemed to him an intolerable piece of presumption, and he was silent.

Massingbred read his reserve as proceeding from displeasure, and jestingly said:

"You mustn't be angry with me, Joe. The boldness of men like me is less impudence than you take it for, since—should I fulfil my threat, and pay your father a visit—I'd neither show surprise nor shame if he refused to receive me. I throw over all the claims of ceremony, but at the same time I don't want to impose the trammels on my friends. They are free to deal with me as frankly,—ay, and as curtly, as I have treated them; but enough of all this. Let us talk of something else."

And so they did, too; of their college life and its changeful fortunes—of their companions and their several characters, and of the future itself, of which Massingbred pretended to read the fate, saying: "You'll be something wonderful one of these days, Joe. I have it as though revealed to me—*you* astonishing the world by your abilities, and winning your way to rank and eminence; while *I*, like a sign-post that points to the direction, shall stand stock-still, and never budge an inch, knowing the road, but not travelling it."

"And why should it be so, Mass, when you have such a perfect consciousness of your powers for success?"

"For the simple reason, my boy, that I know and feel how the cleverness which imposes upon others has never imposed upon myself. The popular error of a man's being able to do fifty things which he has not done from idleness, apathy, carelessness, and so on, never yet deceived *me*, because I know well that when a fellow has great stuff in him it will come out, whether he likes or not. You might as well say, that the grapes in a wine-vat could arrest their own process of fermentation, as that a man of real genius—and mind, I am now speaking of no other—could suppress the working of his intelligence, and throw his faculties into torpor. The men who do nothing are exactly the men who can do no better. Volition, energy, the strong impulse for action, are part and parcel of every really great intellect; and your 'mute inglorious Milton,' only reminds me of the artist who painted his canvas all red to represent the passage of the Egyptians through the Red Sea. Believe me, you must take all untried genius in the same scale of credit as that by which you have fancied the chariots and horsemen submerged in the flood. They are there, if you like, and if you don't ——"

"Your theory requires that all men's advantages should be equal, their station alike, and their obstacles the same. Now, they are not so. See, for instance, in our University here. *I* am debarred from the fellowship-bench—or at least from attempting to reach it—because I am a Papist."

"Then turn Protestant; or if that doesn't suit you, address yourself to kick down the barrier that stands in your way. By-the-by, I didn't know you were a Roman; how comes that? Is it a family creed, or was it a caprice of your own?"

"It is the religion my family have always professed," said Nelligan, gravely.

"I have no right to speak of these subjects, because I have never felt strongly enough on them to establish strong convictions; but it appears to me, that if I were you—that is, if I had *your* head on *my* shoulders, I should think twice ere I'd sacrifice my whole future out of respect for certain dogmas that no more interfere with one's daily life and opinions than some obsolete usage of ancient Greece has a bearing upon a modern suit in Chancery. There, don't look fretful and impatient; I don't want to provoke you, nor is it worth your while to bring your siege artillery against my card-house. I appreciate everything you could possibly adduce by anticipation, and I yield myself as vanquished."

Thus, half in earnest, half jestingly, Massingbred talked away, little thinking how deeply many a random speech entered into his friend's heart, taking firm root there to grow and vegetate hereafter. As for himself, it would have been somewhat difficult to say how far his convictions ever went with his words. Any attempt to guide and direct him was, at any time, enough to excite a wilful endeavour to oppose it, and whatever savoured of opposition immediately evoked his resistance. The spirit of rebellion was the key-note of his character; he could be made anything, everything, or nothing; as authority, or, as he would have styled it, tyranny, decided.

It was just at this very moment that an incident occured to display this habit of his mind in its full force. His father, by employing much private influence and the aid of powerful friends, had succeeded in obtaining for him the promise of a most lucrative civil appointment in India. It was one of those situations which in a few years of very moderate labour, secure an ample fortune for the possessor. Mr. Massingbred had forgotten but one thing in all the arrangement of this affair, which was to apprise his son of it beforehand, and make him, as it were, a part of the plot. That one omission, however, was enough to secure its failure.

Jack received the first tidings of the scheme when it was a fact—not a speculation. It was a thing done, not, to do, and consequently a "gross piece of domestic cruelty to dispose of him and his future by an arbitrary banishment to a distant land, linking him with distasteful duties, uncongenial associates," and the rest of it. In a word, it was a case for resistance, and he did resist, and in no very measured fashion either. He wrote back a pettish and ill-tempered refusal of the place, sneered at the class by whom such appointments were regarded as prizes, and cooly said, that "it was quite time enough to attach himself to the serious business of life when he had tasted something of the pleasures that suited his time of life; besides," added he, "I must see which way my ambitions point, perhaps to a seat on the Treasury benches, perhaps to a bullock-team, a wood-axe, and a rifle in a new settlement. Of my resolves on either head, or on anything between them, you shall have the earliest possible intimation from your devoted, but perhaps not very obedient, to command,

"J. M."

His father rejoined angrily and peremptorily. The place had cost him everything he could employ or enlist of friendly patronage; he made the request assume all the weight of a deep personal obligation, and now the solicitation and the success were all to go for nothing. What if he should leave so very gifted a young gentleman to the unfettered use of his great abilities? What if he abstained from any interference with one so competent to guide himself? He threw out these suggestions too palpably to occasion any misconception, and Jack read them aright. "I'm quite ready for sea whenever you are pleased to cut the painter," said he; and the correspondence concluded with a dry intimation that two hundred a year, less than one-half of his former allowance, should be paid into Coutts's for his benefit, but that no expenditure above that sum would be repaid by his father.

"I'll emigrate—I'll agitate—I'll turn author, and write for the reviews—I'll correspond with the newspapers—I'll travel in Africa—I'll go to sea—be a pirate"—in fact, there was nothing for which he thought his capacity unequal, nor anything against which his principles would revolt. In speculation only, however, for, in sober reality, he settled down into a mere idler—discontented, dreamy, and unhappy.

Little momentary bursts of energy would drive him now and then to his books, and for a week or two he would work really hard, when a change as sudden would come over him, and he would relapse into his former apathy. Thus was it that he had lived for some time after the term had come to an end, and scarcely a single student lingered within the silent courts. Perhaps the very solitude was the great charm of the place;

ere was that in his lonely, unfriended, uncompanionable existence that seemed to feed the brooding melancholy in which he indulged with all the ardour of a vice. He liked to think himself an outcast and forgotten. It was a species of flattery that he addressed to his own heart when he affected to need neither sympathy nor affection. Still his was not the stuff of which misanthropy is fashioned, and he felt acutely the silence of his friend Nelligan, who had never once written to him since they parted.

"I'd scarcely have left *him* here," said he to himself one day; "had *he* been in my position, I'd hardly have quitted *him* under such circumstances. He knew all about my quarrel with my father. He had read our letters on each side. To be sure he had condemned *me*, and taken the side against me, still, when there was a breach, and that breach offered no prospect of reconciliation, it was but scant friendship to say good-by, and desert me. He might, at least, have asked me down to his house. I'd not have gone—that's certain. I feel myself very poor company for myself, and I'd not inflict my stupidity upon others. Still, *he* might have thought it kind or generous. In fact, in such a case I would have taken no refusal—*I*'d have insisted."

What a dangerous hypothesis it is when we assume to act for another; how magnanimously do we rise above all meaner motives, and only think of what is generous and noble; how completely we discard every possible contingency that could sway us from the road of duty, and neither look right nor left on our way to some high object. Jack Massingbred arguing thus, ended by thinking himself a very fine fellow, and his friend a very shabby one—two conclusions that, strangely enough, did not put him into half as much good-humour with the world as he expected. At all events, he felt very sore with Nelligan, and had he known where to address him, would have written a very angry epistle of mock gratitude for all his solicitude in his behalf; very unfortunately, however, he did not know in what part of Ireland the other resided, nor did his acquaintance with provincial dialect enable him to connect his friend with a western county. He had so confidently expected to hear from him, that he had never asked a question as to his whereabouts. Thus was it with Massingbred, as he sauntered along the silent alleys of the College Park, in which, at rare intervals, some solitary sizer might be met with—spare, sad-looking figures—in whose features might be read the painful conflict of narrow fortune and high ambition. Book in hand generally, they rarely exchanged a look as he passed them, and Massingbred scanned at his ease these wasted and careworn sons of labour, wondering within himself was "theirs the right road to fortune?"

Partly to shake off the depression that was over him by change of place, and in part to see something of the country itself, Massingbred resolved to make a walking tour through the south and west of Ireland, and with a knapsack on his back, he started one fine autumn morning for Wicklow.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME KNOTTY POINTS THAT PUZZLED JOE NELLIGAN.

This true history contains no record of the evening Mr. Scanlan passed at the Osprey's Nest; nor is it probable that in any diary kept by that intelligent individual there will yet be found materials to supply this historical void. Whether, therefore, high events and their consequences were discussed, or that, the meeting was only devoted to themes of lighter importance, is likely to remain a secret to all time. That matters beneath the range of politics occupied the consideration of the parties was, however, evident from the following few lines of a note received by young Nelligan the next morning:

"Dear Joe,—I dined yestesday at the 'Nest,' and we talked much of you. What would you think of paying a visit there this morning to see the picture, or anything else you can think of? I've a notion it would be well taken. At all events, come over and speak to me here.

"Ever yours,
"M. Scanlan."

"I scarcely understand your note, Maurice," said young Nelligan, as he entered the little room where the other sat at breakfast.

"Have you breakfasted?" said Scanlan.

"Yes, an hour ago."

"Will you taste that salmon? Well, then, just try Poll Hanigan's attempt at a grouse-pie; let me tell you, there is genius in the very ambition; she got the receipt from the cook at Cro' Martin, and the imitation is highly creditable. You're wrong to decline it." And he helped himself amply as he spoke.

"But this note?" broke in the other half impatiently.

"Oh—ay—the note; I'm sure I forgot what I wrote; what was it about? Yes, to be sure, I remember now. I want you to make yourself known, up there. It is downright folly, if not worse, to be keeping up these feuds and differences in Ireland any longer; such a course might suit the small politicians of Oughterard, but you and I know better, and Martin himself knows better."

"But I never took any part in the conflict you speak of; I lived out of it—away from it."

"And are, therefore, exactly suited to repair a breach to which you never contributed. I assure you, my boy, the gentry—and I know them well—will meet you more than half-way. There is not a prouder fellow living than Martin there; he has throughout his whole life held his head higher than any man in our county, and yet he is quite ready to make advances towards you. Of course, what I say is strictly between ourselves; but my opinion is, that, if you like it, you may be as intimate up there as ever you were at old Hayes's, at the Priory."

"Then, what would you have me do?" asked Nelligan.

"Just pay a visit there this morning; say that you are curious to see that great picture—and it is a wonderful thing, if only for the size of it; or that you'd like to have a look at Arran Island out of the big telescope at the top of the house; anything will serve as a reason, and then—why, leave the rest to chance."

"But really, Maurice, I see no sufficient cause for all this," said the youth, timidly.

"Look now, Joe," said the other, drawing his chair closer to him, and talking in the low and measured tone of a confidence,—"look now, you're not going to pass your life, as the successor to that excellent man, Dan Nelligan, of Oughterard, selling hides, and ropes, and tenpenny-nails, and making an estate the way old ladies make a patchwork quilt. You'll be able to start in life with plenty of tin and plenty of talent; you'll have every advantage that money and education can give, and only one drawback on your road to success—the mere want of blood—that dash of birth which forms the only real freemasonry in this world. Now mind me, Joe; the next best thing to having this oneself, is to live and associate with those who have, for in time, what with catching up their prejudices and learning their ways, you come to feel very much as they do; and, what is better still, they begin to regard you as one of themselves."

"But if I do not ambition this—if I even reject it?" said the other, impatiently.

"Then all I say is that Trinity College may make wonderful scholars; but turns out mighty weak men of the world!"

"Perhaps so!" said Nelligan, drily, and with a half-nettled air.

"I suppose you fancy there would be something like slavery in such a position?" said Scanlan, with a derisive look.

"I know it!" responded the other, firmly.

"Then what do you say to the alternative—and there is but one only open to you—what do you think of spending your life as a follower of Daniel O'Connell; of being reminded every day and every hour that you have not a privilege nor a place that he didn't win for you; that he opened Parliament to you, and made you free of every guild where men of ability rise to honour? Ay, Joe! and what's a thousand times worse—knowing it all to be true, my boy! Take service with him once, and if you leave him you're a renegade; remember that, and bethink you, that there's no saying what crotchet he may have in store for future agitation."

"But I never purposed any such part for myself," broke in Nelligan.

"Never mind, it will fall to your lot for all that if you don't quickly decide against it. What's Simmy Crow staring at? Look at him down there, he's counting every window in the street like a tax-gatherer." And he pointed to the artist, who, shading his eyes with one hand, stood peering at every house along the little street. "What's the matter, Simmy?" cried he, opening the casement.

"It's a house I'm looking for, down here, and I forget which it is; bother them, they're all so like at this time of the year when they're empty."

"Are you in search of a lodging, Simmy?"

"No, it isn't that!" said the other, curtly, and still intent on his pursuit. "Bad luck to the architect that wouldn't vary what they call the 'façade,' and give one some chance of finding the place again."

"Who is it you want, man?"

"Faix, and I don't even know that same!" replied the artist; "but"—and he lowered his voice to a whisper as he spoke—"he's an elegant study—as fine a head and face and as beautiful a beard as ever you saw. I met him at Kyle's Wood a week ago, begging; and what with his fine forehead and deep-set blue eyes, his long white hair, and his great shaggy eyebrows, I said to myself: 'Belisarius,' says I, 'by all that's grand—a Moses, a Marino Faliero, or a monk in a back-parlour discoursing to an old skull and a vellum folio—any one of these,' says I, 'not to speak of misers, money-lenders, or magicians, as well;' and so I coaxed him down here on Saturday last, and put him somewhere to sleep, with a good supper and a pint of spirits, and may I never, if I know where I left him."

"Three days ago?"

"Just so; and worse than all, I shut up the place quite dark, and only made a hole in the roof, just to let a fine Rembrandt light fall down on his head. Oh, then, it's no laughing matter, Maurice! Sure if anything happened to him ——"

"Your life wouldn't be worth sixpence before any jury in the county."

"Begad! it's what I was thinking; if they wouldn't take it as a practical joke."

"You're looking for ould Brennan!" cried a weather-beaten hag; "but he's gone to Oughterard for a summons. You'll pay dear for your tricks this time, anyhow."

"Come up here, Simmy, and never mind her," said Scanlan; then, turning to Nelligan, he added, "There's not such a character in the county!"

"I want my friend, Mr. Nelligan, here—Mr. Nelligan—Mr. Crow—I want him, I say, to come up and have a look at the great 'Historical'—eh, Simmy!—wouldn't it astonish him?"

"Are you a votary of art, sir?" asked Crow, modestly.

"I've never seen what could be called a picture, except those portraits in the College Examination Hall might be deemed such."

"Indeed, and they're not worthy the name, sir. Flood, mayhap, is like, but he's hard and stiff, and out of drawing; and Lord Clare is worse. It's in the Low Countries you'd see portraits, real portraits! men that look down on you out of the canvas, as if *you* were the intruder, there, and that *they* were waiting to know what brought you. A sturdy old Burgomaster, for instance, with a red-brown beard and a fierce pair of eyes, standing up firm as a rock on a pair of legs that made many a drawbridge tremble as he walked home to dinner on the Grand Canal, at Rotterdam, after finishing some mighty bargain for half a spice island, or paying a million of guilders down as a dowry for that flaxen-haired, buxom damsel in the next frame. Look at the dimples in her neck, and mark the folds in her satin. Isn't she comely, and calm, and haughty, and housewifery, all together? Mind her foot, it isn't small, but see the shape of it, and the way it presses the ground—ay, just so—my service to you; but you are one there's no joking with, even if one was alone with you." And he doffed his hat, and bowed obsequiously as he spoke.

"You're an enthusiast for your art?" said Nelligan, interested by the unmistakable sincerity of his zeal.

"I am, sir," was the brief reply.

"And the painter's is certainly a glorious career."

"If for nothing else," burst in Crow, eagerly, "that it can make of one like me—poor, ignorant, and feeble, as I am—a fellow-soldier in the same army with Van Dyke, and Titian, and Velasquez—to know that in something that they thought, or hoped, or dared, or tried to do, I too have my share! You think me presumptuous to say this; you are sneering at such a creature as Simmy Crow for the impudence of such a boast, but it's in humility I say it, ay, in downright abject humility; for I'd rather have swept out Rembrandt's room, and settled his rough boards on Cuyp's easel, than I'd be a—a—battle-axe guard, or a lord-in-waiting, or anything else you like, that's great and grand at Court."

"I envy you a pursuit whose reward is in the practice rather than in the promise," said Nelligan, thoughtfully. "Men, like myself, labour that they may reach some far-away land of rewards and successes, and bear the present that they may enjoy the future."

"Ay, but it will repay you well, by all accounts," said Crow. "Miss Mary told us last night how you had beat every one out of the field, and hadn't left a single prize behind you."

"Who said this?" cried Joe, eagerly.

"Miss Mary—Miss Martin. She said it was a credit to us all of the west, here, that there was one, at least, from Galway, who could do something besides horse-racing and cock-fighting ——"

"So she did," said Scanlan, interrupting, with some confusion. "She said somebody had told her of young Nelligan. She called you 'Young Nelligan.'"

"No, no; it was to myself she said it, and the words were, 'Mr. Joseph Nelligan;' and then, when her uncle said, 'Why don't we know him? ——"

"My dear Simmy, you make a most horrible confusion when you attempt a story—out of canvas. Mind, I said out of canvas; for I confess that in your grand 'Historical,' the whole incident is admirably detailed. I've just said to my friend here, that he has a great pleasure before him, in seeing that picture."

"If you'll do me the honour to look at it," said Crow, bowing courteously, "when you come to dinner to-day."

"Attend to *me*, Joe," said Scanlan, passing an arm within Nelligan's, and leading him away to another part of the room; "that fellow is little better than an idiot. But I was just going to tell you what Martin said. 'You are intimate with young Nelligan,' said he; 'you know him well, and you could possibly do, without awkwardness, what with more formality might be difficult. Don't you think, then, that he would possibly waive ceremony ——' "

"I must be off," broke in Crow, hastily. "I have a sitting at twelve o'clock, so I hope we shall see you at seven, Mr. Nelligan—your note said seven, sharp." And without waiting for more, he seized his hat and hurried down the stairs.

"A downright fool!" said Scanlan, angrily. "Mr. Martin said he'd write to you, if—if—if in fact you stood upon that punctilio; but that he'd be all the better pleased if you'd just accept acquaintance as freely as he offered it, and come and dine there to-day, like a friend."

"Isn't there, or has there not, been some difference between him and my father?" asked Joe.

"A trifle—and a mistake; the kind of thing that two men of calm heads, and common sense, could have settled in five minutes, and which, to say the truth, Martin was right in throughout. It's all passed and over now, however, and it would be worse than foolish to revive it. There's Miss Martin!" cried he, "and I have a word to say to her;" and hurried off, without waiting for more. As he passed from the room, however, a letter fell from his pocket, and as Nelligan stooped to take it up he saw that it was addressed to himself. He looked hesitatingly at it for a moment or two, scarcely knowing whether or not he ought to break the seal. "It was meant for me, at all events," said he, and opened it. The contents were as follows:

"Mr. Martin presents his respects to Mr. Joseph Nelligan, and will feel happy if—excusing the want of formal introduction—Mr. Nelligan will admit him to the honour of acquaintance and give him the pleasure of his society at dinner, to-morrow, at seven o'clock. Mr. Martin does not hesitate to say, that to accept this unceremonious proposal, will be felt as a very great favour indeed by him and his family."

"What does Scanlan mean by all this? Why not have handed me this note at once?" was Nelligan's question to himself, as he descended the stairs and gained the street. He was not sorry that Scanlan was not in sight, and hastened homeward to think over this strange communication. Joe well knew that his mother was not peculiarly endowed with worldly wisdom or acuteness, and yet such was his need of counsel at the moment, that he determined, at least in part, to lay the case before her. "She can certainly tell me," said he, "if there be any reason why I should decline this proposal." And with this resolve he entered the cottage.

"Don't you remember Catty Henderson, Joe?" said his mother, as he came into the room, and presenting a young girl, very plainly but neatly dressed, who arose to receive him with an air of well-bred composure—"Catty, that used to be your playfellow, long ago?"

"I didn't know you were in Ireland, Miss Henderson. I should never have recognised you," said Nelligan, in some confusion.

"Nor was I till a few days back," said she, in an accent very slightly tinged with a foreign pronunciation. "I came home on Tuesday"

"Isn't she grown, Joe? and such a fine girl, too. I always said she'd be so; and when the others would have it that your nose was too long for the rest of your features, I said, 'Wait till she grows up—wait till she's a woman;' and see now if I'm not right."

It must be owned that Joe Nelligan's confusion during the delivery of this prophetic criticism was far greater than Catty's own, who received the speech with a low, gentle laugh, while Mrs. Nelligan went on: "I made her stay till you came back, Joe, for I wanted her to see what a tall creature you are, and not more than twenty, her own age to a month; and I told her what a genius you turned out, indeed to the surprise of us all, and myself especially."

"Thank you, mother," said he, smiling.

"No, indeed, my dear, 'tis your father you may thank for all your talents and abilities; a wonderful man he is, beginning the world without a sixpence, and there he is now, with I'm sure I don't know how many hundreds a year in land—ay, Catty, in broad acres; just like any squire in the county. Well, well, there's many a change come over the country since you were here—how many years is it now?"

"Upwards of twelve," said the young girl.

"Dear me, how time flies. It seems like yesterday that you and Joe had the measles together, in the yellow room up at Broom Lodge, and your poor mother was alive then, and would insist on giving you everything cool to drink, just because you liked it, though I told her that was exactly the reason it was sure to be bad for you, for there's nothing so true in life—that everything we wish for is wrong."

"An unpleasant theory, certainly," said Catty, laughing, "but I hope not of universal application, for I have been long wishing to see you again."

"Well, well, who knows whether it may be good or bad," said she, sighing; "not but I'm pleased to see you growing up the image of your poor dear mother—taller, maybe, but not so handsome, nor so genteel-looking; but when you have your trials and troubles, as she had, maybe that will come too, for I often remarked, there's nothing like affliction to make one genteel."

"Why, mother, you are profuse in unhappy apothegms this morning, said Joe.

"And are you coming to stay amongst us now, Catty, or are you going back to France again?" said Mrs. Nelligan, not heeding the remark.

"I scarcely know as yet," replied the young girl. "My father's letter to summon me home, said something about placing me as a governess, if I were capable of the charge."

"Of course you are, my dear, after all your advantages; not but that I'd rather see you anything else—a nice light business, for instance, in baby-linen or stationery, or in Miss Busk's establishment, if that could be accomplished."

A very slight flush—so slight as to be nearly imperceptible—crossed the young girl's cheek, but not a syllable escaped her, as Mrs. Nelligan resumed.

"And there was an excellent opening the other day at the Post here, in the circulating library way, and lending out a newspaper or two. I don't know how much you might make of it. Not but maybe you'd rather be companion to a lady, or what they call a 'nervous invalid.'"

"That, too, has been thought of," said the girl, smiling, "but

I have little choice in the matter, and happily as little preference for one as the other of these occupations. And now I must take my leave, for I promised to be back by two o'clock."

"Well, there's Joe will see you home with pleasure, and I'm sure you have plenty to say to each other about long ago. Not but I hope you'll agree better than you did then. You were the torment of my life, the way you used to fight."

"I couldn't think of trespassing on Mr. Joseph's time; I should be quite ashamed of imposing such trouble on him. So good-by, godmamma—good-by, Mr. Joseph," said she, hurriedly throwing her shawl around her.

"If you will allow me to accompany you," said Joseph, scarcely knowing whether she rejected or accepted his escort.

"To be sure she will, and you have both more sense than to fall out now; and mind, Joseph, you're to be here at four, for I asked Mrs. Cronan to dinner."

"Oh, that reminds me of something," said Joe, hurriedly; and he leaned over his mother's chair, and whispered to her, "Mr. Martin has invited me to dine with him to-day; here is his note, which came to me in rather a strange fashion."

"To dine at the Nest! May I never. But I scarcely can believe my eyes," said Mrs. Nelligan, in ecstasy. "And the honour, and the pleasure, too; well, well, you're the lucky boy."

"What shall I do, mother; isn't there something between my father and him?"

"What will you do, but go; what else would you do? I'd like to know. What will they say at the Post when they hear it?"

"But I want you to hear how this occurred."

"Well, well; I don't care—go you must, Joe. But there's poor Catty walking away, all alone; just overtake her, and say that a sudden invitation from the Martins—mention it as if you were up there every day ——"

But young Nelligan did not wait for the conclusion of this artful counsel, but hurrying after Catty Henderson, overtook her as she had gained the beach.

"I have no need of an escort, Mr. Joseph," said she, good-humouredly. "I know every turn of the way here."

"But you'll not refuse my companionship?" said he. "We have scarcely spoken to each other yet." And, as he spoke, he drew his arm within her own, and they walked along in silence.

"My mother thinks we did nothing but quarrel long ago," said he, after a pause; "but if my memory serves me truly, it was upon this very pathway we once swore to each other vows of a very different kind. Do you recollect anything of that, Miss Henderson?"

"I do, Mr. Joseph," said she, with a sly half-glance as she uttered the last word.

"Then why 'Mr. Joseph?'" said he, half reproachfully.

"Why 'Miss Henderson?'" said she, with a malicious smile at the other's confusion, for somehow Joseph's manner was far less easy than her own.

"I scarcely know why," replied he, after a short silence, "except that you seem so changed—and I myself, too, am probably in your eyes as much altered—from what we both were, that—that ——"

"That, in short, it would be impossible to link the past with the present," said she, quickly; "and you were quite right. I'm convinced the effort is always a failure, and prejudices in a hundred ways the good qualities of those who attempt it. Let us, therefore, begin our acquaintance here—learn to know each other as we are—that is, if we are to know each other at all."

"Why do you say that?" asked he, eagerly.

"For many reasons. We may not meet often; perhaps not at all; perhaps under circumstances where to renew intimacy might be difficult. Assuredly, although the path here might once have sufficed us, our roads in life lie widely apart, now, and the less we travel together the more we shall each go towards his own goal, and—and the less regret we shall feel at parting; and so now, good-by!"

"You wish it?" said he, reproachfully. "You desire this?"

"What matters it whether I wish it or not. I know it must be. Good-by."

"Good-by, then—good-by," said he, affecting as much indifference as he could; and then, slightly raising his hat, he turned away on the road homeward.

Joseph Nelligan's reflections were not of the pleasantest as he sauntered slowly back. He was not exactly satisfied with himself—he felt, he could not just say how, that the young girl had had the mastery over him—she was more calm, or self-possessed—she had more tact, or she knew more of life—had more of self-control, or breeding, or some other quality, whatever it might be, than he had. At all events, he was ill at ease and discontented. Then he doubted whether he ought to have taken her at her word when she talked of parting. It might, possibly, have been meant by her to evoke some show of resistance on his part—that same inequality of station she seemed to hint at might, perhaps, demand from him a greater deference. In fact, whichever way he turned the matter over, he saw little cause for self-gratulation, nor did he discover that it mended matters when he tried to accuse her of French frivolity, and such other traits as he fancied of foreign origin.

In this not over-pleasant mood was it that he re-entered the cottage, where his mother was busy in preparing a very formidable cravat for the approaching dinner-party.

"Ah, Joe!" said she, anxiously, "if you were to dress now, and then stay quiet, you'd be quite fresh when the time came; for remember, it's not like your father you are, that has the world about him, and can converse about everything that comes uppermost; but with all your learning, you know, you always feel somehow ——"

"Stupid, mother?"

"Not stupid, my dear, but depressed—out of spirits in society; so that my advice to you is, now, dress yourself in good time, take a small glass of ginger-cordial, and throw your eye over the second chapter of 'Social Hints,' with an account of conversation before and at dinner, and some excellent advice about 'compliments, meet for every season of the year.'"

"Do you think such preparations quite necessary, mother?" asked Joe, slily; for he rather relished the simplicity of her counsels.

"To be sure I do; for yours is no common difficulty, Joe. If you talk of country matters, you'll get into Kyle's Wood and the Chancery suit; if you touch politics, or religion, it will be worse again. The Martins, I hear, never play cards, so you can't allude to them; and they'll be too grand to know anything about poor Miss Cuddy going off with the sergeant of police, or what Con Kelly did with his aunt's furniture."

"So that really the topics open to me are marvellously few."

"Well, there's shooting; but to be sure you know nothing about that, nor fishing either; and I suppose farming, if you did understand it, wouldn't be genteel. Indeed, I see little that isn't dangerous, except the dearness of everything. I remark that's a subject nobody ever tires of, and all can take their share in."

"And I conclude it to be fact, mother?"

"A very melancholy fact, my dear; and so I said to Betty

Gargan, yesterday. 'It's well for *you*,' said I, 'and the likes of you, that use nothing but potatoes; but think of us, that have to pay sixpence a pound for mutton, six-and-a-half for the prime pieces, and veal not to be had under eightpence.' They talk of the poor, indeed! but sure they never suffer from a rise in butcher's meat, and care nothing at all what tea costs. I assure you I made the tears come into her eyes, with the way I described our hardships."

"So that this will be a safe subject for me, mother?"

"Perfectly safe, my dear, and no ways mean, either; for I always remarked that the higher people are, the stingier they are, and the more pleasure they take in any little sharp trick that saves them sixpence. And when that's exhausted, just bring in the Rams."

"The Rams!"

"I mean my aunt Ram, and my relations in Wexford. I'm sure, with a little address, you'll be able to show how I came to be married beneath me, and all the misery it cost me."

"Well, mother, I believe I have now ample material," said Joe, rising, with a lively dread of an opening which he knew well boded a lengthy exposition, "and to my own want of skill must it be ascribed if I do not employ it profitably." And with this he hurried to his room to prepare for the great event.

The "Gentlemen of England" do not deem it a very formidable circumstance to repair towards seven, or half-past, to a dinner-party, even of the dullest and most rigid kind. There is a sombre "routine" in these cases, so recognised that each goes tolerably well prepared for the species of entertainment before him. There is nothing very exhilarating in the prospect, and as little to depress. It is a leaf torn out of one of the tamest chapters in life's diary, where it is just as rare to record a new dish as a new idea, and where the company and the cookery are both foreknown.

No one goes with any exaggerated expectations of enjoyment; but as little does he anticipate anything to discompose or displease him. The whole thing is very quiet and well-bred, rather dull, but not unpleasant. Now, Joseph Nelligan had not graduated as a "diner out;" he was about as ignorant of these solemn festivals as any man well could be. He was not, therefore, without a certain sense of anxiety as to the conversational requisites for such occasions. Would the company rise to themes, and places, and people of which he had never as much as heard? or would they treat of ordinary events, and if so, on what terms? If politics came to be discussed, would Mr. Martin expect him to hear in silence opinions from which he dissented? Dare he speak his sentiments, at the cost of directing attention to himself?—a course he would fain have avoided. These, and innumerable other doubts, occupied him as he was dressing, and made him more than once regret that he had determined to accept this invitation; and when the hour at last came for him to set out, he felt a sense of shrinking terror of what was before him greater than he had ever known, as he mounted the dreaded steps of the College Examination Hall.

He might, it is true, have bethought him of the fact, that where Simmy Crow and Maurice Scanlan were guests, he too might pass muster without reproach; but he did not remember this, or at least it failed to impress him sufficiently. Nor was his dread without a certain dash of vanity, as he thought of the contrast between the humble place he was perhaps about to occupy at a great man's table, and the proud one he had achieved in the ranks of scholarship and science. Thus musing, he sauntered slowly along till he found himself in front of the little garden of the Osprey's Nest. He looked at his watch—it was exactly seven; so he pulled the bell, and entered.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MARTIN ARMS.

In the small and not over-neat parlour of the Martin Arms at Oughterard, a young man sat at his breakfast, at times, casting his eyes over the columns of the *Vindicator*, and anon, strolling to the window to watch the gathering of the country people at the weekly market. The scene was one of that mingled bustle and languor so characteristically Irish. Cart-loads of turf, vegetables, fruit, or turkeys blocked up the narrow passage between booths of fancy wares, gilt jewellery, crockery, and cutlery; the vendors all eagerly vociferating commendations of their stores, in chorus with still more clamorous beggars, or the discordant notes of vagrant minstrelsy. Some animal monstrosity, announced by a cracked-voiced herald and two clarionets, added to a din, to which loud laughter contributed its share of uproar.

The assemblage was entirely formed of the country people, many of whom made the pretext of having a pig or a lamb to sell the reason of their coming, but, in reality, led thither by the native love of a gathering—that fondness to be where their neighbours were—without any definite aim or object. There was, then, in strong contrast to the anxious solicitation of all who had aught to sell, the dreary, languid, almost apathetic look of the mere lounger, come to while away his weary hour and kill time just like any very bored fine gentleman who airs his listlessness along St. James's-street, or lazily canters his *ennui* down Rotten-row.

Jack Massingbred, for he was the traveller, whose straw hat and knapsack stood upon a table near, was amused at a scene so full of its native characteristics. The physiognomy, the dress, the bearing of the people, their greetings as they met, their conduct of a bargain, all bespoke a nation widely differing from the sister country, and set him a dreaming as to how it was that equality of laws might very possibly establish anything but equality of condition amongst people so dissimilar.

While thus musing, his eye chanced to rest upon the half-effaced inscription over a shop door in front, and where the name of Daniel Nelligan figured as "licensed for all kinds of groceries and spirits." "Nelligan," repeated he to himself; "I shall certainly quiz my friend Joe, when we meet, about his namesake in Oughterard. How good it would be to pick up some details of our friend opposite to torment him with. What rare fun to affect to have discovered a near relative in this man of hides, glue, sugar, and Jamaica rum! Eh, gad, I'll try it." And with this resolve he crossed the street at once, and soon found himself in the compact crowd which thronged the doorway of this popular shop.

It was, indeed, a busy scene, since many who were there came as much sellers as buyers, giving all the complexity of barter to their several transactions. Here, was a staid countrywoman exchanging her spunyarn, or her "cloth," as it is called, for various commodities in tea, candles, and such like; here, a farmer, with a sample of seed oats in his pocket-handkerchief, of which he wanted the value in certain farm utensils; here, was another, with a stout roll of home-made frieze to dispose of; some were even fain to offer a goose or a hen as the medium for a little tobacco, or some equally tempting luxury of cottier life. But there was another class of customers, who, brushing their way through the throng, made for a small, dingy-looking chamber behind the shop, in which Mr. Nelligan performed the functions of banker and money-lender, discounting small bills, advancing loans, and transacting all the various duties of a petty capitalist; means by which, it was alleged, he had already amassed a very ample fortune.

An announcement in writing on the glass-door of this sanctum informed Massingbred that "bank-notes" were exchanged, and "small loans advanced on good security," suggesting to him at once the means of opening an acquaintance with the interior. Without any very definite purpose, however, he now found himself one of a very closely-packed crowd within the chamber. At a small desk, around which ran a railing of about a foot in height, serving, as it were, to "filter the stream" of solicitation that poured in upon him, sat a dark-eyed, bilious-looking man of about fifty; a black wig cut in two deep arches over the temples showed a strongly-formed, massive head, very favourably in contrast to the features beneath it, which were only indicative of intense shrewdness and cunning. The eyes, in particular, were restless and furtive-looking, distrust and suspicion giving their entire expression—qualities it was to be owned in very active employment in the intercourse of his daily life.

The anxious looks around him—careworn, eager, tremulous with anxiety as they were, seemed the very opposite to his own, full of the security that a strong purse bestows, and stern in the conscious strength of his affluence.

"It won't do, Hagan," said he, with a half-smile, as he pushed back through the grating a very dirty discoloured piece of paper. "You'll be off to America before it comes due. I wouldn't take the Lord-Lieutenant's note at six months, as times go."

"See now, Mr. Nelligan," replied the other, pressing his face close to the cage, and talking with intense eagerness. "May I never see Christmas, but I'll pay it. 'Twas marryin' the daughter left me low in cash; but with the blessing of God and your help ——"

"I hope you're more certain of the blessing than the help. What's this with a string round it?" continued Nelligan, addressing another applicant.

"'Tis a roll of notes I wanted to ax your honour about. Molly never 'let on' she had them till Friday last; and now that James is going away and wants a trifle to fit him out ——"

"Why, they're French's Bank, man, that broke years ago; they're not worth a farthing!"

"Arrah, don't say so, and God reward you," cried the poor fellow, while his eyes filled up and his lip trembled convulsively; "don't take the hope out of my heart all at onst. Look at them again, your honour, and maybe you'll think different!"

"If I did I'd be as great a fool as yourself, Patsy. The bank is closed, and the banker dead this many a day, and I wouldn't give you sixpence for sixty thousand of them. Take him out in the fresh air—give him a mouthful of water," added he, hastily, as the wretched countryman staggered back, sick, and almost fainting with the sad tidings.

"Mrs. Mooney," said he, addressing a pale, mild-featured woman in a widow's cap and black gown, "you can't expect to hear from Dublin for a week or ten days to come. It takes some time to administer; but if you are in want of a few pounds ——"

"No, sir, thank you," said she, in a low voice; "but as I can't go back to the place again—as I'll never be able to live there, now ——"

"Don't be in a hurry, Mrs. Mooney; do nothing rash. None of us know what we can do till we're tried. There's Miles Dogherty never thought he'd be paying me that eight pound fifteen he owes me, and see now if he isn't come with it, to-day."

"Faix, and I am not," sturdily responded a very powerfully built man in the comfortable dress of a substantial farmer. "I don't owe it, and I'll never pay it; and what's more, if you get a decree against me to-morrow, I'd sell every stick and stone in the place and go to 'Quaybec.'"

"Indeed you wouldn't, Miles, not a bit more than I'd go and take the law of an old friend and neighbour."

"Faix, I never thought you would," said the stout man, wiping his forehead, and appearing as if he had forgotten his wrath.

"And now, Miles, what about that water-course?" said Nelligan, good-humouredly; "are you content to leave it to any two fair men ——"

As he got thus far, his eye for the first time fell upon Massingbred, who, with folded arms, was leaning against a wall, an attentive spectator of the whole scene.

"That is a stranger yonder; what can he want here?" said Nelligan, who watched the attentive look of Massingbred's face with considerable distrust. He whispered a few words into the ear of a man beside him, who, making his way through the crowd, addressed the young man with,

"It's the master, sir, wants to know if he could do anything for your honour?"

"For *me?* oh, you spoke to *me?*" said Massingbred, suddenly recalled to himself. "Yes, to be sure; I wanted to know—that is, I was thinking ——" And he stopped to try and remember by what device he had purposed making Mr. Nelligan's acquaintance.

While he thus stood doubting and confused, his eyes suddenly met the black, searching, deep-set orbs that peered at him behind the grating, and without knowing how or why, he slowly approached him.

"In what way can I be of any use to you, sir?" said Nelligan, in a tone which very palpably demanded the reason of his presence there.

Jack Massingbred was eminently "cool;" that is, he was possessed of that peculiar assurance which rarely suffers itself to be ruffled by a difficulty. In the intercourse of society, and with men of the world, he could have submitted to any test unabashed, and yet now, in presence of this shrewd-looking and very commonplace personage, he, somehow, felt marvellously ill at ease, and from the simple reason that the man before whom he stood was not of his "world," but one of a set of whose habits and thoughts and ways he was in utter ignorance.

Nelligan's question was a second time addressed to him, and in the same words, before he thought of framing a reply to it. For a second or two it occurred to him to say that he had strolled in, half inadvertently, and apologising for the intrusion, to withdraw; but his pride was offended at the notion of defeat this conduct implied, and with an assumption of that conventional impudence far more natural to him, he said:

"It was your name, sir, attracted me; the name 'Nelligan,' which I read over your door, being that of a very dear and valued friend of mine, suggested to me to inquire whether you might not be relatives."

The cool indifference which accompanied these words, uttered as they were in a certain languid drawl, were very far from predisposing Nelligan in favour of the speaker; while the pretence of attaching any singularity to a name so common as his own struck him at once as indicative of covert impertinence.

"Nelligan is not a very remarkable name down here, sir," drily responded he.

"Very possibly," replied Jack, with all his accustomed ease "I know little or nothing of Ireland. Your namesake, or your relative, perhaps, was a college friend of mine, but to what part of the country he belonged I never knew."

The words, a "college friend," roused the other's anxiety, and leaning forward eagerly, and dropping his voice to a whisper he said,

"Where? In what College may I ask, sir?"

"In Trinity, Dublin."

"The Medallist of this year, you mean?" said the other almost breathless in his anxiety.

"Just so. The same fellow who has been sweeping away all the honours of his day. You have heard of him, it would seem?"

"He is my son, sir. I'm Joe Nelligan's father!"

Massingbred's astonishment did not betray itself by any change of feature; not a word escaped him; but his eye ranged over the scene around him, and came back to rest upon old Nelligan's face with an expression of the calmest meaning.

"What a fortunate accident—for *me*, I mean," continued he. "Joe and I are very dear friends, and it is a great happiness for me to make his father's acquaintance. Is he with you now?"

"No, sir; he's at the sea—a place called Kilkieran, about twenty miles away; but we'll have him back by to-morrow if you'll stay with us, and I'm sure you'll not refuse me that pleasure. The young gentleman who is my son's friend, is mine also, if he'll permit me to call him so; and now just tell me what name shall I say?—who is it that I'm to tell Joe has arrived here?"

"Say that Jack Massingbred is come, and I'll lay my life on't you'll see him here as fast as may be."

"And now, Mr. Massingbred, just take up your quarters with us. Where are you stopping? I'll send over the boy for your trunks, for I needn't say that this must be your home while you stay at Oughterard." The genial tone of warm hospitality in which he now spoke made him seem a very different man from the hard-featured old money-lender he had appeared when Jack first beheld him, and Massingbred returned his cordial shake hands with a pressure equal to his own, while he said,

"Be assured that I accept your offer most heartily. My whole baggage is a knapsack and a fishing-rod, so that if you admit me as your guest you must dispense with all beyond the very humblest requirements. I have no coat, except this on me; and, when I brush my hair, I have dressed for dinner."

"You are amongst very humble people, Mr. Massingbred—a country shopkeeper, and his wife, and son—and they'll be only too happy to feel that you don't despise their company. Come, and I'll show you your room." And so saying, Nelligan led him up a narrow stair, and at the end of a corridor opened a door into a neatly-furnished chamber, which looked out into a spacious garden. The whole interior was scrupulously clean and comfortable; and as Jack surveyed his new dominions, he inwardly blessed his good fortune that had piloted him into such a haven.

"I'll just step down and write to Joe. Meanwhile, you'll have your things brought over to you. Make yourself at home here—at least, as much as you can in such a place—and when you want anything, just ask for it." And with these words old Nelligan left him to his own thoughts.

Whatever savoured of an adventure was the delight of Jack Massingbred. He was one of those men whose egotism takes the shape of playing hero to themselves—a tolerably large category amongst the spoiled children of this world. To be thrown into any strange or novel position, with associates he was unused to, and amidst circumstances totally unlike all he had ever met before, was his great happiness; and although, here, there was nothing like actual peril to heighten the zest of the enjoyment, there was a certain dash of embarrassment in the situation that increased its piquancy. This embarrassment lay in his approaching meeting with young Nelligan.

All the reserve his young college friend had maintained with regard to his family was at once explained; and Jack began to think over how often it must have occurred to him to say the most galling and offensive things in his ignorance of Nelligan's real station. "If he had been frank and open with me," said he to himself, "this would never have happened." But therein Jack made two errors, since Nelligan was in nowise bound to make such revelations, nor was Massingbred the man to distinguish himself amongst his associates by a close friendship with the son of a country shopkeeper. He had been trained in a very different school, and taught to estimate his own station by the standard of his companionship. Indeed, he had witnessed the lenity which met his transgressions when they occurred in high company, and saw his father pay the debts he had contracted amongst titled associates with a far more generous forgiveness than had they taken their origin with more plebeian friends. "What could have induced the man to become a Fellow-Commoner," said he, over and over; "it is such a palpable piece of presumption?" The truth was, Jack felt excessively irritated at never having even suspected his friend's pretensions, and was eager to throw the blame of a deception where none had ever been practised.

"They told me I should find everything very different here from in England, but they never hinted at anything like this." There came then another phrase over his reflections, as he asked himself, "But what affair is it of mine? Nelligan never thrust himself on *me*, it was *I* that sought him. He never proposed introducing me to his family, it was I that made them out—I, in fact, who have imposed myself upon them. If *I* deemed the old grocer *infra dig.*, I need never have known him; but I have not felt this to be the case. He may be—indeed, Joe Nelligan's father ought to be—a very superior fellow, and at all events the whole situation is new, and must be amusing."

Such were the course of his thoughts as he arranged his clothes in the little chest of drawers, put out his few books and papers on the table, and proceeded to make himself perfectly at home and comfortable in his new quarters.

The embarrassments of selfish men are always lighter than those of other people, their egotism filling, as it does, such a very large space in the sea of their troubles. Thus was it that Massingbred suffered little discomfort at the thought of his friend Nelligan's probable shame and awkwardness, his thoughts being occupied by how he, clever fellow that he was, had traced out his home and origin—won, by a few words, the old father's esteem, and established himself, by his own sharp wits, a guest of his house.

"It is a downright adventure," said he; he even thought how the thing would tell afterwards at some convivial meeting, and set about dramatising to himself his own part in the incident, to heighten the piquancy of the narrative. He resolved to conform in everything to the habits of the household—to accommodate himself in all respects to old Nelligan's tastes, so that Joe should actually be amazed at the versatile resources of his nature, and struck with astonishment at this new evidence of his powers.

Nor was Mr. Nelligan idle during all this time: the thought of a fellow-Collegian of his son Joe being a guest under his roof was a very proud and inspiring reflection. It was such a recognition of Joe's social claims—so flat a contradiction to all the surmises of those who deprecated his College life, and said "that old Dan was wrong to put his boy into Trinity"—that he already regarded the incident as the full earnest of success.

"What would have brought him here, if it wasn't for Joe? How would he ever have been under my roof, if he wasn't Joe's friend?" There was a palpable triumph here that nothing could gainsay, and with a proud heart he locked up his desk, resolving to do no more business that day, but make it one of enjoyment.

"Who will I get to dine with us," thought he, "since Joe can't have the letter before this evening, and do his best he won't be here before morning?" The question of those who should fill the places around his board was a difficulty he had never experienced before, for Mr. Nelligan was the first man in Oughterard, and never had any trouble about his dinner company. His politics—very decided as they were—drew the line amongst his acquaintances, and the Liberal party well knew that they alone were the partakers of his hospitalities. There now, however, came the thought that the most respectable residents of the town—Dr. Dasy, of the Infirmary; Mr. Scanlan, the Attorney; and Morris Croft, the Adjutant of the Galway ——, were Conservatives. These were the fit company to meet young Massingbred, at least for the first day; afterwards, he might be introduced to their own set. And yet, Father Neal Rafferty would be outraged at all this. Peter Hayes, of the Priory, would never enter his doors again; and Peter Hayes had made a will in favour of Joe Nelligon, and left him every sixpence he had in the world. "What if we mixed them all together?" said Dan, fairly puzzled by all the conflicting interests. "A good dinner, some excellent port wine, and 'lashings' of whisky-punch, might mould the ingredients together—at least, when under the restraint of a stranger's presence—sufficiently to pass muster!"

From his doubts as to how the experiment would succeed, came others as to whether the guests would condescend to meet; and thus his embarrassments went on increasing around him without his finding a way through them.

"That's an elegant salmon I saw Catty bringing home to you, Nelligan?" said a red-faced man, with large white whiskers, and a most watery look in his eyes.

"Yes, Brierley, there's a young gentleman just come down here—a friend of Joe's in College, to stop a day or two with us."

"A nob?" said the other, with a wink.

Nelligan nodded assent, and went on:

"And I'm just bothered how to get two or three, to make company for him."

"If it's grandeur you want, why don't you go over to the barracks there, and ask Captain Downie and the two others? Faix! it's a hearty welcome you'd get, for they've never seen the inside of Cro' Martin since the detachment came here."

"It's my own acquaintances I'd like to ask to my house, Mat Brierley," said Nelligan, proudly; "and the time was when they weren't shy of coming there."

"What do you say to Peter Hayes, then?" said the other. "If you mean to do the civil thing, you'll ask him before he buys that old highwayman of a goose he's cheapening yonder; and there's Father Rafferty in the snuff-shop, and Tom

Magennis, and myself; and that makes six, just the right number for the little round table."

Nelligan paused, and seemed to reflect over the proposition.

"You'll be quizzing the Englishman—'taking a rise' out of the Saxon, Brierley?" said Nelligan, distrustfully.

"Devil a bit; I know better manners than that!"

"Tom Magennis would have at him about politics; I know he couldn't refrain. And I needn't tell you that English notions are not ours upon these topics."

"Give Tom a hint, and he'll never touch the subject."

"And Father Neal, will you vouch for him that he won't attack the Established Church, and abuse the Protestants?"

"That I will, if he's not provoked to it."

"Can you answer for yourself, Mat Brierley, that you won't try to borrow a five-pound note of him before the evening's over?" said Nelligan, laughingly.

"I've a friend here," said Brierley, tapping the other on the breast, "that would never see me in want of such a trifle as that."

Nelligan made no other reply to this speech than a somewhat awkward grimace, and walked hurriedly on to overtake a tall and very fat man that was just turning the corner of the street. This was Father Neal Rafferty. A very flourishing wave of his Reverence's hand, and an urbane bend of his body, betokened the gracious acceptance he gave to the other's invitation; and Brierley walked away, muttering to himself: "They may thank me for this dinner, then; for old Dan was going to feed the 'swells,' if I hadn't stopped him."

CHAPTER X.

A DINNER PARTY.

People who live much together, in small and secluded districts, grow at length to feel a very great distrust for all strangers. Their own ways and their own topics have become such a perfect world to them, that to feel ignorant of these themes appears like affectation or contempt; and the luckless man, who drops down into such a "coterie," is invariably deemed impertinent or a fool. Jack Massingbred fully appreciated this difficulty; but it imparted such a piquancy to his "adventure," as he persisted in calling it to himself, that he wouldn't have dispensed with it, had he been able. It was in this temper he entered the room where the guests were now assembled, and, rather impatiently, awaiting his arrival.

It is a very cold, calculating sort of interval, that ten minutes before dinner; and men regard the stranger presented to them with feelings far more critical than kindly. Massingbred did not go through the ordeal unscathed; and it was easy to see in the constraint and reserve of all present, how little his appearance contributed to the promise of future conviviality. He made no effort to dispel this impression, for, after saluting each in turn, he walked to the window, and amused himself with what was passing in the street.

The dinner was announced at last, and passed off drearily enough; none liked to adventure on any topic of local interest, and they knew of little others. Brierley was stiffly polite; the Priest blandly tranquil; the host himself uneasy and anxious; and poor old Peter Hayes, of the Priory, downright melancholy. Massingbred saw the effect he was producing, and saw it with pleasure. His calculation was this. Had I started "at speed" with these fellows, they would have blown me at once. All my efforts to assimilate myself to their tastes, to join in their habits and adopt their notions, would have been detected in a trice. They must be brought to believe that they have made a convert of me themselves; the wider the space between us at first, the greater will be their merit in making me forget it in the end.

As the whisky-punch made its appearance, and the bottle of port was passed up beside the stranger, Massingbred thought the time was come when he might change his tactics, and open the campaign in force. "No," said he, as the host pushed the wine towards him, "I've come over here to try and learn something about Ireland, and I must give myself every advantage of judging from a native point of view. This excellent old port may strengthen a man to stand by many an old prejudice, but my object is to lay in a new stock of ideas, and I'd rather try a new regimen."

"That's your bottle, then, sir. Try that," said Brierley, pushing towards him a small square decanter of a faint greenish fluid.

"That is 'poteen,' Mr. Massingbred," said the host. "It's the small still that never paid the King a farthing."

"I like it all the better, for that reason," said Jack. "There's something independent in the very thought of a liquor that never submitted to the indignity of a guager."

"That's not a very English sentiment, sir," said the priest, slily.

"I don't know whether it be or not," rejoined Massingbred; "but I can neither perceive common sense or justice in a law that will not allow a man to do what he likes with his own. Why, if Parliament declared to-morrow you shouldn't boil your potatoes in Ireland, but eat them fried—or that you shouldn't make bread of your corn, but eat it with milk as the Neapolitans do ——"

"I wish we could do the same here, with all my heart," said the priest. "It's little wheat or even barley-meal one of our poor people ever sees."

"A wet potatoe and water is their diet," said old Hayes, as he sipped his punch.

"I can believe it well," said Massingbred, with great semblance of feeling. "I witnessed dreadful poverty and destitution as I came along, and I couldn't help asking myself—What are the gentry about in this country; do they or do they not see these things? If they do, are they indifferent to them?"

"They are indifferent to them; or even worse, they rejoice in them," broke in a deep-voiced, energetic-looking man, who sat at the foot of the table, and had, although silent, taken a deep interest in the conversation. "They see, sir, in the destitution of Ireland another rivet in the chains of her bondage. As my 'august leader' remarked, it's the rust on the fetters, though—and if it proclaims the length of the captivity, it suggests the hope of freedom."

"Mr. Magennis is the dearest friend and trusty agent of Mr. O'Connell," said Nelligan in a whisper to Massingbred.

"Here's his health, who ever said that!" cried Jack, enthusiastically, and as if not hearing the host's observation.

"That's a toast; we'll all drink—and standing, too," exclaimed Magennis. "'Daniel O'Connell, gentlemen; hip, hip, hurra!'" And the room rang again with the hearty acclamation of the company.

"By Jove! there was something very fine—it was chivalrous—in the way he brought the Catholic question to issue at last. The bold expedient of testing the event by an individual experience was as clever as it was daring," exclaimed Massingbred.

"You were in favour of the measure then, sir?" said Father Neal, with a bland smile that might mean satisfaction or suspicion.

"I was always an Emancipationist; but I am little satisfied with the terms on which the bill has been passed. I'd have had no restrictions—no reservations. It should, according to me, have been unconditional or nothing."

"You've heard the old proverb about half a loaf, sir?" said Hayes, with a dry laugh.

"And a poor adage it is, in its ordinary acceptation," said Jack, quickly. "It's the prompting spirit to many a shabby compromise! What disabilities should apply to any of us here, in regard to any post or position in our country's service, by reason of opinions which are between ourselves and our own hearts—I say any of us, because some here—one I perceive is"—and he bowed to Father Rafferty—"a Catholic; and I for myself avow, that, if for no other reason than this proscription, I'd be on this side."

"You're not in Parliament, sir, are you?" asked old Peter, with a seriousness that sorely tested the gravity of those at either side of him.

"No," said Jack, frankly. "My father and I don't agree on these subjects; and, consequently, though there is a seat in my family, I have not the honour to occupy it."

"Are you any relation to Colonel Moore Massingbred, sir?" asked Magennis.

"His son, sir."

The questioner bowed, and a brief silence ensued; short as it was, it enabled Jack to decide upon his next move, and take it.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I'm fully aware that my name is not a favourite in Ireland; and shall I own to you, till I came to this country myself, I half believed that this same humble opinion of us was to our credit! I used to hear such narratives of Irish barbarism, Irish brutality, priestcraft, superstition, and Heaven knows what besides, that I fully persuaded myself that our small repute was very nigh to a eulogium on us. Well, I came over to Trinity College strongly impressed with the notion that, because I had gained successes at Oxford, here, I should be triumphant. It is in no boastfulness I say that I had acquitted myself well at home; I had attained to rather a reputation. Well, as I said, I came over to Trinity and pitted myself against the best man going, and a very pretty beating he gave me. Yes, gentlemen, he beat me in everything, even in those which we Oxford men fancy our specialities. I soon learned that I had not the shadow of a pretension to stand against him, and I learned, also, that it was no disgrace to me to be thus vanquished, since he was not alone the foremost man of his time, but the best scholar the University had seen for a full century; and shall I add, as unpretending and as modest in the midst of all his triumphs as he was unapproachable by all competitors. And now, gentlemen, I will ask your leave to drink his health; doubtless it has been many a time toasted before over the same table, but none ever more ardently followed the sentiment with his whole heart than do I in proposing to you, 'Three cheers for Joe Nelligan.'"

The rambling opening of this brief speech was quite forgotten in the enthusiasm that greeted its close. In every respect it was a happy diversion. It relieved the company from a discussion that promised but gloomily. It brought back their minds to a pleasant theme, and enabled them, so to say, to pay off in grateful cheers to their host his own hospitable reception of them. As for Nelligan himself, he was sincerely, deeply affected; and, though he twice essayed to speak, he could get no further than "my son Joe"—"my boy"—and sat down murmuring—"Thank you—God bless you for it"—and covered his face with his hands.

Awkward as was the moment, it was relieved by the company filling their glasses and nodding in most friendly fashion to Massingbred as they drank his health; while a low murmur of approbation went round the table, of which he was most unmistakably the object.

"Are you fond of shooting, sir?" asked Brierley. "Well, then, I hope you'll not leave the country without giving me a day or two up at my little place in the mountains. There's some snipe left; and, upon my conscience, I'll be proud to see you at Kilmaccud."

"And there's worse quarters, too!" broke in Magennis. "My 'august leader" spent a day and a half there."

"I'll drive you over there myself," whispered Father Neal, "if you'll finish the week at the 'Rookery'—that's what they call the priest's house."

Massingbred accepted everything, and shook hands across the table in ratification of half a dozen engagements.

"You don't think I'll let you cheat me out of my guest so easily," said Nelligan. "No, gentlemen. This must be Mr. Massingbred's head-quarters as long as he stays here, for, faith, I'd not give him up to Mr. Martin himself."

"And who may he be?" asked Jack.

"Martin of Cro' Martin."

"The owner of half the county."

"Of the town you're in, this minute."

"The richest proprietor in the West."

Such were the pattering replies that poured in upon him, while words of intense astonishment at his ignorance were exchanged on all sides.

"I believe I have given you a fair guarantee for my ignorance, gentlemen," said Jack, "in confessing that I never so much as heard of Martin of Cro' Martin. Does he reside on his estate here?"

"Yes, sir," said Nelligan, "he lives at Cro' Martin Castle, about sixteen miles from this; and certainly, while in this part of the country, you ought to pay the place a visit. I have never been there myself, but I hear the most astonishing accounts of the splendour of the furniture and the magnificence of the whole establishment."

"There's pictures there," said the priest, "that cost the grandfather of the present man a quarter of a million sterling."

"Why, the three statues in the hall, they say, are worth ten thousand pounds," said Brierley.

"Be gorra! when a man would give four hundred for a bull, there's no saying what he'd stop at," broke in Peter Hayes. "I went up to see him myself, and indeed he's a beauty, there's no denying it — but four hundred pound! Think of four hundred pound!"

"The stable is the best thing in the place," said Father Neal; "they've mighty nice cattle there, for every kind of work."

"Thanks to his niece for that," cried Magennis; "she knows a horse with any man in the West of Ireland."

"And can break him, too," chimed in Brierley, "I don't care what his temper is. Let Miss Mary get her hand on him, and he'll turn out well."

"I'm driving an old chesnut mare this minute that she trained," said the priest; "and though she hasn't a good leg amongst the four, and is touched in the wind, she's as neat a stepper, and as easy in the mouth as a five-year old."

"She's a fine young woman!" said old Hayes, drinking off his glass, as though toasting her to himself, "and not like any Martin ever I seen before."

"No pride about her!" said Brierley.

"I wouldn't exactly say that, Matthew," interposed Father Neal. "But her pride isn't the common kind."

"She's as proud as Lucifer!" broke in Nelligan, almost angrily. "Did you ever see her drive up to a shop-door in this town, and make the people come out to serve her, pointing with her whip to this, that, and t'other, and maybe giving a touch of the lash to the boy if he wouldn't be lively enough?"

"Well, I'd never call her proud," rejoined old Hayes, "after seeing her sitting in Catty Honan's cabin, and turning the bread on the griddle for her, when Catty was ill."

"Is she handsome?" asked Massingbred, who was rather interested by the very discrepancy in the estimate of the young lady.

"We can agree upon that, I believe, sir," said the priest; "there's no disputing about her beauty."

"I never saw her in a room," said Magennis; "but my 'august leader' thought her masculine."

"No, no," said Nelligan; "she's not. She has the Martin manner—overbearing and tyrannical—if you like; but she can be gentle enough with women and children."

"You have certainly given me a strong curiosity to see her," said Massingbred. "Does she always live here?"

"Always. I don't believe she was ever beyond the bounds of the county in her life!"

"And how does she pass her time?" asked he, with some astonishment.

"She manages the whole estate," said Nelligan; "her uncle's a conceited old fool, incapable of anything, and lets her do what she likes; and so she drains, and plants, and encloses, makes roads, bridges, and even harbours; has all the new-fangled inventions about farming, and, if what I hear be true, is spending more money on the property than the fee-simple is worth."

"Yes, sir," chimed in Magennis; "and she's trying hard to bring back the old feudal devotion to the Chief, which was the bane of Ireland. She wants the tenants to have no will of their own, but just to vote whatever the landlord tells them. She had the impudence to tell my 'august leader' that they had no need of him down there—that the county was too poor to waste its energies in factious squabbles."

"If she'd let the people alone about their religion, I'd think better of her," said Father Neal. "What does *she* know about controversial points and disputed dogmas?"

"Maybe you're wrong about that," broke in Peter Hayes. "She came to me the other day for ten shillings for a school, and she said, 'Come over, Mr. Hayes; come and tell me if there's anything you are dissatisfied with.'"

"And did you go?" asked the priest.

"Faix! I did not," said Peter, with a dry look. "I thought the visit might cost me ten shillings, and so I stayed at home."

The manner in which he uttered these words produced a hearty laugh, in which he himself most good-humouredly took part.

"Well, she's good to the poor, anyhow," said Brierley; "and it's a new thing for one of her name to be so!"

"All policy—all scheming!" said Magennis. "She sees how the family influence has declined, and is fast becoming obliterated in this country, by reason of their worthlessness, insolence, and neglect of the people; and she's just shrewd enough to see how far a little cajolery goes with poor Paddy; but, as my 'august leader' observed, it is not a frieze coat, nor a pair of brogues, that can compensate for the loss of that freedom, that is every man's birthright; and it is not by an ounce of tea, or a dose of physic, we'll ever see Ireland great, glorious, and free."

"'First gem of the earth, and first flower of the sea!'" exclaimed Hayes, with enthusiasm.

Nor in the moment was the blunder of his quotation noticed by any but Massingbred. "You are an admirer of Tommy Moore, I see, sir?" said he to the old man.

"I'm fond of 'The Meeting of the Waters,' sir," said Hayes, meekly, and like a man who was confessing to a weakness.

"And here's the man to sing it!" cried Brierley, clapping the priest familiarly on the shoulder; a proposal that was at once hailed with acclamation.

"'Tis many a long day I haven't sung a note," said Father Neal, modestly.

"Come—come, Father Neal; we'll not let you off that way. It's not under this roof that you can make such an excuse!"

"He'd rather give us something more to his own taste," said Brierley. "'To Ladies' eyes around, boys'—eh, Father Rafferty?"

"That's my favourite of all the songs he sings," broke in Magennis.

"Let it be, 'To Ladies' eyes!'" cried Massingbred; "and we'll drink 'Miss Martin's.' 'I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.'" And he sang the line with such a mellow cadence that the whole table cheered him.

To the priest's song, given with considerable taste, and no mean musical skill, there followed in due course others, not exactly so successful, by Brierley and Magennis, and, at last, by old Peter himself, who warbled out a wonderful ditty, in a tone so doleful that two of the company fell fast asleep under it, and Brierley's nerves were so affected, that, to support himself, he got most completely drunk, and in a very peremptory tone told the singer to desist!

"Don't you perceive," cried he, "that there's a stranger present—a young English cub—come down to laugh at us? Have you no discretion—have you no decency, Peter Hayes, but you must go on with your stupid old 'croniawn' about dimples and the devil knows what?"

"Another tumbler, Mr. Massingbred—one more?" said the host, with the air, however, of one who did not exact compliance.

"Not for the world," said Jack, rising from table. "Have I your permission to light a cigar?"

"To do just whatever you please," said Nelligan, rather astonished at the formal preparations for smoking he now perceived brought forth, and which at the time we tell of were not so popular as in our own day.

The priest alone accepted Massingbred's offer of a "weed;" and Nelligan, opening a door into an adjoining room where tea was laid, threw also wide a little sash-door that led into the garden, whose cool and fragrant air was perfectly delicious at the moment. Jack strolled down the steps and soon lost himself in the dark alleys, not sorry to be left alone with his own thoughts, after a scene in which his convivial powers had been taxed to no mean extent.

"A clever young fellow! There's stuff in him," said the priest, in a whisper to Nelligan.

"And no impudence about him," said Brierley; "he's just like one of ourselves."

"He has a wonderful opinion of Joe!" said Nelligan.

"He's the very man for my 'august leader,'" said Magennis. "I'd like to bring them together!"

"His father's a Treasury Lord," said Nelligan, swelling at the thought of his being the host of such company!

"And I'll tell you what, Dan Nelligan," said the priest, confidentially, "talents won't do everything, now-a-days, without high connections; mark my words, and see if that young man doesn't stand high, yet. He has just got every requirement of success. He has good family, good looks, good abilities, and"—here he dropped his voice still lower—"plenty of brass. Ay, Dan, if Joe could borrow a little of his friend's impudence, it would be telling him something."

Nelligan nodded assentingly; it was about the only quality in the world which he could have believed Joe stood in any need of getting a loan of.

"Joe beat him out of the field," said Dan, proudly. "He told me so himself this morning."

"No doubt; and he would again, where the contest was a college one; but 'Life,' my dear friend—life demands other gifts beside genius."

"Ganius!" broke in old Hayes, with an accent of the profoundest contempt—"Ganius! I never knew a 'Ganius' yet that wasn't the ruin of all belonging to him! And whenever I see a young fellow that knows no trade, nor has any livelihood—who's always borrowing, here, and begging, there—a torment to his family and a burden to his friends, I set him down at once for a 'Ganius.'"

"It's not *that* I was alluding to, Mr. Hayes," said the priest, in some irritation. "I spoke of real ability, sterling powers of mind and thought, and I hope that they are not to be despised."

"Like my 'august leader's!'" said Magennis, proudly.

"Ay, or like that young gentleman's there," said Father Neal, with the tone of a man pronouncing upon what he understood. "I watched him to-day at dinner, and I saw that every remark he made was shrewd and acute, and that whenever the subject was new to him, he fell into it as he went on talking, picking up his facts while he seemed to be discussing them! Take my word for it, gentlemen, he'll do!"

"He doesn't know much about flax, anyhow," muttered old Hayes.

"He took his punch like a man," said Brierley, bearing testimony on a point where his evidence was sure to have weight.

"He'll do!" said Father Neal once more, and still more authoritatively than before.

"Joe carried away every premium from him," said old Nelligan, with a degree of irritation that proclaimed how little he enjoyed the priest's eulogy of his guest.

"I know he did, sir; and no man has a higher respect for your son's great abilities than myself; but here's how it is, Mr. Nelligan"—and he drew himself up like a man about to deliver a profound opinion—"here's how it is. The mind that can master abstract science, is one thing; the faculties that can deal with fellow-mortals, is another. This world is not a University!"

"The Lord be praised for that same!" cried old Hayes, "or I'm afraid I'd fare badly in it."

"To unite both descriptions of talent," resumed the priest, oratorically, "is the gift of but few."

"My 'august leader' has them," broke in Magennis.

"Show me the man that can deal with men!" said Father Neal, dictatorially.

"Women is twice as hard to deal with!" cried old Hayes. "I'll back Nancy Drake against any man in the barony."

"Faith, and I remember her a pretty woman," said Brierley, who would gladly have enticed the conversation out of its graver character. "A prettier girl than Mary Martin herself!" continued the inexorable Brierley, for the company did not appear to approve of his diversion.

"We are now discussing politics—grave questions of state, sir," said Father Neal—"for we have come to times when even the most indifferent and insignificant amongst us cannot refrain feeling an interest in the progress of our country. And when I see a fine young man like that there, as one may say going a-begging for a party, I tell you that we are fools—worse than fools—if we don't secure him."

"Do you mean for the borough?" asked Nelligan.

"I do, sir;—I mean for the borough!"

"Not till we have consulted my 'august leader,' I hope," broke in Magennis.

"I'm for managing our own affairs ourselves," said the priest. "What we want is a man of our own; and if that young gentleman there will take the pledges we should propose, I don't know that we'd readily get the like of him."

The silence that now fell upon the party was ominous; it was plain that either the priest's proposition was not fully acquiesced in, or that the mode of announcing it was too abrupt. Perhaps this latter appeared the case to his own eyes, for he was the first to speak.

"Of course what I have said now is strictly among ourselves, and not to be mentioned outside of this room; for until my friend Dan Nelligan here consents to take the field against the Martin interest, there is no chance of opening the borough. Let him once agree to *that*, and the Member for Oughterard will be his own nominee."

"Do you really think so?" asked Nelligan, eagerly.

"I know it, sir—and every gentleman at this table knows it."

A strong chorus in assent murmured around the board.

"It would be a great struggle," muttered Nelligan.

"And a great victory!" said the priest.

"What a deal of money, too, it would cost!"

"You have the money, Dan Nelligan; and let me tell you one thing"—here he leaned over his chair and whispered some words in the other's ear.

Old Nelligan's face flushed as he listened, and his eyes sparkled with intense excitement.

"If I thought *that*—if I only thought that, Father Rafferty—I'd spend half my fortune on it to-morrow."

"It's as true as I'm a living man," said the priest, solemnly; and then with a motion of his hand gestured caution, for Massingbred was slowly ascending the steps, and about to enter the room.

With an instinctive readiness all his own, he saw in the embarrassed and conscious looks around that he had himself been the object of their discussion, and with the same shrewdness he detected their favourable feeling towards him.

"I have made them my own!" muttered he to himself.

"He'll do our work well!" said the priest in his heart.

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG NELLIGAN—AS INTERPRETED IN TWO WAYS.

"I RATHER like that young Nelligan," said Martin, the day after Joseph had made his first appearance at dinner. "He talks pleasantly, and nothing of a pedant, as I half dreaded he might be."

"I thought his manner respectful, and very proper for his station," said Lady Dorothea, with an air of dignity.

"He spoke of politics, too, with less of prejudice, less of class bitterness, than I could have expected."

"Some policy, perhaps, in that," remarked her ladyship.

"Possibly!" said Martin, with a careless shrug of the shoulders.

"He was in a measure on his trial amongst us, and felt the importance of making a favourable first impression."

"It was more trouble than his father would have taken, then," said Martin, smiling. "Old Dan, as they call him, is not a very conciliating personage."

"I cannot imagine that the disposition of such a person is a matter of much moment; doesn't the man deal in tea, candles, and such like?"

"That he does, and in loans, and in mortgages too; not to add, that he exercises a very considerable share of influence in his town of Oughterard."

"A very shocking feature of the time we live in!" exclaimed Lady Dorothea.

"So it may be; but there it is—just like the wet weather, and the typhus, and the sheep-rot, and fifty other disagreeable things one can't help."

"But at least they can avoid recurring to them in conversation, sir. There is no necessity to open the window when the look-out is a dreary one."

Martin made no reply, and a pause of some moments ensued.

"What arrangement did you come to with him about his party in the borough?" said she at last.

"I didn't even allude to the topic," replied he, half testily. "These things are not to be done in that hasty fashion; they require management, discretion, and a fitting opportunity, too."

"Why, you talk of your grocer's boy as if he were a Cabinet Minister, Mr. Martin; you treat him like a great diplomatist!"

"It was not exactly on the first occasion of his being in my house, that I could have broached the matter."

"Which implies that you mean to invite him again."

"Possibly!" was the abrupt rejoinder.

"And must the odious attorney always be of the party?"

"No, madam, the odious attorney has set out for Dublin; but I shortly expect here one whom your ladyship will, doubtless, call an odious lawyer—though he happens to be one of the foremost men of the Irish bar."

"A class I detest," said her ladyship.

"He has one consolation, at least, madam," said Martin; "he figures in a pretty long category."

"And why should he not, sir? What have I ever met in the dreary eighteen years and seven months I have passed here, except unmitigated self-conceit, vulgarity, and presumption—the very type of all three being your Dublin barrister."

"Their countrymen certainly entertain another estimate of them," said Martin, laughing, for he had a lazy man's enjoyment of any passionate excitement of another's temper.

"And it was," resumed she, "in some sort, the contrast presented to such which pleased me in that young man's manner yesterday. Not but I feel assured that ere long you and Miss Martin will spoil him."

"I! aunt?" said Mary, looking up from her work; "how am I to exercise the evil influence you speak of?"

"By the notice—the interest you vouchsafe him, Miss Martin,—the most flattering compliment to one in his station."

"If he bears Collegiate honours so meekly, aunt," said Mary, quietly, "don't you think his head might sustain itself under *my* attentions?"

"Possibly so, young lady, if not accompanied by the accessories of your rank in life," said Lady Dorothea, haughtily; "and as to College honours," added she, after a pause, "they are like school distinctions, of no earthly value out of the class-room."

"Faith, I don't know that," said Martin. "At least, in my own experience, I can say, every fellow that has made a figure in life gave indications of high ability in his College years. I could go over the names of at least a dozen."

"Pray don't, sir—spare your memory, and spare us. Miss Martin and I will take it for granted that this young man is destined to be Lord Chancellor—Ambassador at St. Petersburg—or anything else you please. I have no doubt that the time is approaching when such things are very possible."

"It has come already, my lady," said Martin; and in the manner he uttered the words there was no saying whether the sentiment was pleasurable or the reverse.

"And yet I trust that there is a little interval still left to us ere that consummation," said she, with pretentious dignity. "Birth and blood have not lost all their *prestige!*"

"But they soon would," said Mary, "if they feared to enter the lists against those less well-born than themselves."

"Miss Martin!" exclaimed her ladyship, "what words are these?"

"I hope they are void of offence, aunt. Assuredly I never conceived that I could wound any susceptibilities here by saying that the well-born are ready to meet the plebeian on any ground."

"There is no necessity for such trials, Miss Martin; the position of each has been so accurately defined by—by—by providence," said she, at last, blushing slightly as she uttered the word, "that the contest is almost impossible."

"The French Revolution reveals another story, aunt, and tells us, besides, how inferior were the nobles of that country in the day of struggle."

"Upon my word, these are very pretty notions, young lady. Have they been derived from the intelligent columns of the *Galway Monitor*, or are they the teachings of the gifted Mr. Scanlan? Assuredly, Mr. Martin," said she, turning to him, "Papa was right, when he said that the Irish nature was essentially rebellious."

"Complimentary, certainly," said Martin, laughing.

"He founded the remark on history. Papa was uncommonly well read, and used to observe that there seemed something in the Celtic nature incompatible with that high-souled, chivalrous loyalty Englishmen exhibit."

"But how much of the Celt have Mary and myself got in us, if your observation is meant for us. Why, my lady, what with intermarriage centuries ago, and change of blood ever since, the distinctive element has been utterly lost."

"And yet we are not English, uncle," said Mary, with something that smacked of pride. "Confess it: we have our nationality, and that our people have traits of their own."

"That they have; but I never heard them made matter of boastfulness before," said Lady Dorothea, sneeringly.

"Well, aunt, it is not too late to hear it now; and I, for one, am proud of my country—not of its political station, for it is dependent—not of its wealth, for it is poor—but of its genial courtesy, its free-hearted hospitality, its manly patience under many a crushing calamity, and, not least of all, its gallantry on every field where England has won honour."

"I have read of all these things; but my own experiences are limited to the rags and restlessness of a semi-barbarous people. Nay, Miss Martin, I'm not going to discuss the matter. *I* have lived elsewhere—you have not. *I* have acquired habits—prejudices, perhaps you'd call them—in behalf of twenty things that Irish civilisation sees no need of."

"Would it not be kind, aunt, were you to aid us by the light of these same experiences?" said Mary, with an air of well-assumed humility.

"Certainly not, at the price of intercourse with the natives!" exclaimed her ladyship, haughtily. "I detest, on principle, the Lady Bountiful character. The whole of the hymn-book, castor-oil, and patent-barley sympathy, is shockingly vulgar. Like many things, well done at first, it fell into low hands, and got spoiled."

The tone of sarcasm in which this was spoken made Mary's cheeks crimson, and the flush spread itself over her neck. Still she made no reply, but, bending down her head, continued to work more assiduously.

"When are we to leave this place, Mr. Martin?" asked her ladyship, abruptly.

"I believe we are only waiting here till it be your pleasure to quit."

"And I dying to get away this fortnight past! Some one certainly told me that Cro' Martin was not ready for us. Was it *you*, Miss Martin?"

"No, aunt."

"It ran in my head it was you, then. Well, can we go at once—to-day—this afternoon?"

"To-morrow we might, perhaps," said Mary.

"Scarcely so," said Martin, interposing, "seeing that I have asked Repton to come down here and see the place."

"But you can drive him over from Cro' Martin. It would be intolerable, the idea of remaining here just for him. So we shall go to-morrow, Miss Martin." And with this, uttered in the tone of an order, her ladyship swept proudly out of the room, from which Martin, not over-anxious for a *tête-à-tête* with his niece, stepped noiselessly at the same moment by another door.

Scarcely had the door closed behind Lady Dorothea, when it was reopened to admit Joe Nelligan, who had met her ladyship in the corridor, and been received with such palpable coldness of manner, that he entered the room bashful and awkward, and hardly knowing whether to advance or retire.

"I fear I have made my visit at an untimely hour, Miss Martin," said he, blushing; "but the truth is, I know next to nothing of society and its habits, and if you would only be kind enough to tell me when I am a transgressor ——"

"The notion of learning from *me* is perfect," said Mary, interrupting him with a pleasant laugh. "Why, Mr. Nelligan, I never could be taught anything, even of the most ordinary rules of ceremonial life! though," added she, slily, "I have lived certainly in the midst of great opportunities."

"But, then, *I* have not," said Nelligan, gravely, and accepting the speech in all seriousness.

"Well, it comes pretty much to the same thing," said she, smiling, "since I have profited so little by them."

"I came thus early, however," said he, earnestly, "because I was impatient to correct an impression which might have remained from something that fell from me last night. You smile, I perceive," said he, "that I should attach so much importance to my own words!"

"It was not at that I smiled," said Mary, archly.

"No matter, continued he. "It is better, at the cost of a little wounded vanity, that I should escape a misconception. When your uncle spoke to me, last night, about the division of parties in the borough —— You are smiling again, Miss Martin!"

"Don't you perceive, sir, that what amuses me is the mistaken estimate you have formed of me, by addressing me on such topics?"

"But I came here expressly to speak to you," said he, with increased eagerness; "for I have always heard—always understood—that none ever took a deeper interest in all that regarded the country than yourself."

"If you mean, by the country, the lives and fortunes of those who live in it—the people by whose toil it is fertilised—by whose traits it is a nation—I tell you frankly that I yield to none for interest in all that touches them; but if you come to talk of privileges and legislative benefits, I know nothing of them; they form a land of whose very geography I am ignorant."

"But the subject is the same, and the mind which comprehends one, could embrace the other."

"In the one, however, I can labour usefully and fittingly, without much risk of mistake—never, indeed, of any mistake that might prove of serious moment. The other involves great questions, and has great hazards, perils, to affright stronger heads than mine!"

"There is much in what you say," said he, reflectingly.

"There is far more than I am able to express," said she, warmly. "Just remember, for a moment, that of all the laws you great and wise men are making, over which you rant and wrangle, and assail each other so vindictively, how few ever touch the interests or descend to the fortunes of those for whom you assume to make them—that the craftiest devices of your legislation never uproot an old prejudice, nor disturb an antiquated superstition; while I, and such as I—and there need be nothing more humble—can by a little timely help in trouble—a little care, or even a little counsel—comfort many a failing heart—cheer up many a sinking spirit—and, better still, do good service by teaching the poor man that he is of one family with those better off than himself, and that he is not an outcast because he is lowly!"

As Mary went on, her eyes shone more brilliantly, and her cheeks glowed, till Nelligan forgot even the words she spoke in admiration of the speaker.

"But here comes my uncle," cried she, hastily, "to rescue you from further amplification of the theme. Come in, uncle,"—for Martin was already about to retire—"it is Mr. Nelligan who wants to speak to you."

"Oh, I was in terror of a regular morning visitor!" said Martin, shaking the young man's hand cordially. "They didn't tell me you were here."

"I came, sir," said Joseph, hesitatingly, "to rectify what might, perhaps, require correction, in an observation I made last night. We were talking about the proper basis of a representation ——"

"My dear boy," broke in Martin, laughingly, "there's nothing kills me like asking me to go over the past, either in reading an old letter, or recalling an old conversation. And as to calling on me to justify something I once defended in argument, I'd give up the cause at once, and say I was all wrong, in preference."

"Then I need not fear you will hold me responsible ——"

"Not for anything, except your pledge to dine here to-morrow at seven."

Notwithstanding all the ease and frankness of Martin's manner—and as manner it was perfect—the young man felt far from satisfied. His want of breeding—that cruel want strong enough to mar the promise of high ability, and even impair the excellence of many a noble nature—seemed to hold him fast bound to the object of his visit. He had come for an explanation, and he couldn't go away without it. Mary read his difficulty at once, and as she passed him to leave the room, said, in a low voice, "To-morrow evening."

Nelligan started at the words, and his face became scarlet. What could she have meant? Was it that she wished him to come, and had thus condescended to remind him of his promise? or was it to suggest a more fitting moment to return to the late discussion?

"Are you coming to luncheon, Nelligan?" said Martin, rising.

"No, sir; not to-day. I have a call—a visit—some miles off." And while he was yet stammering out his excuses, Martin waved a familiar good-by with his hand, and passed into the adjoining room.

"And what can this mean?" said Nelligan to himself. "Is this the cordial treatment of an intimate, or is it contemptuous indifference for an inferior?" And, far more puzzled than he should have been with the knottiest problem of the "Principia," he quitted the house and strolled homewards.

He was led along the shore, and consequently in front of that straggling row of cottages which formed the village. It chanced to be the last day of the month, and, by the decree of the almanack, the close of the bathing season. The scene then going forward was one of unusual and not unpicturesque confusion. It was a general break-up of the encampment, and all were preparing to depart to their homes, inland. Had young

Nelligan been—what he was not—anything of a humorist, he might have been amused at the variety of equipage and costume around him. Conveyances the most cumbrous and most rickety, drawn by farm horses, or even donkeys, stopped the way before each door, all in process of loading by a strangely attired assemblage, whose Welsh wigs, flannel dressing-gowns, and woollen nightcaps, showed how, by a common consent, all had agreed to merge personal vanity in the emergency of the moment. The innumerable little concealments which had sheltered many a narrow household, the various little stratagems that had eked out many a scanty wardrobe, were now abandoned with a noble sincerity; and had there been a cork leg or a glass eye in the company, it would not have shrunk from the gaze of that open-hearted community.

Such of the travellers as had taken their places were already surrounded with the strangest medley of household gods it is possible to conceive. Like trophies, birdcages, candlesticks, spits, cullenders, fenders, and bread-baskets bristled around them, making one marvel how they ever got in, or, still more, how they were ever to get out again; the croaking of invalids, with crying children, barking terriers, and scolding owners, making a suitable chorus to the confusion.

Still, amidst all the discomforts of the moment, amidst the last wranglings with landlords, and the last squabbles over broken furniture and missing movables, it must be owned that the prevailing temper of the scene was good-humour and jollity. The Irish temperament seems ever to discover something congenial in those incidents of confusion and bustle which to other people are seasons of unmitigated misery; and even out of its own sources of discomfiture can derive matter for that quaint humour with which it can always regard life. In this wise was it that few now dwelt much upon their own inconveniences, so long as they were free to laugh at those of their neighbours.

Before he was well aware of it, young Nelligan found himself in the very midst of this gathering, whose mirthful accents suddenly subsided at his approach, and an air of constraint and reserve seemed to take their place. Never very quick to appreciate such indications, he drew nigh to a very lofty "conveniency," in which, with an air of stately dignity, Mrs. Cronan sat enthroned on a backgammon-table, with a portentous-looking cap-case in her lap.

"My mother will be sorry not to have seen you before you went away, Mrs. Cronan," said he to that lady, whose demure and frigid demeanour made the speech sound like a bold one.

"I'd have left my card and my compliments, sir, if I wasn't so pressed for time," responded she, with a haughty gravity.

"With P. P. C. on the corner," said the Captain from his pony-gig alongside; "which means, pour prendre 'congo,' or 'congee,' I never knew which."

"She'll be very lonely now, for the few days we remain," resumed Joe, conscious of some awkwardness, without knowing where or how.

"Not with the society of your distinguished acquaintances at 'the Nest,' sir!" the sarcastic import of which reply was more in the manner than the mere words; while the old Captain murmured:

"Begad, she gave it to him there—a regular double-headed shot!"

"We hope to follow you by the end of the week," said Nelligan, trying to seem at ease.

"If you can tear yourselves away, I suppose," said Miss Busk, through a double veil of blue gauze, for that lady's auburn ringlets reposed at the moment in the small mahogany casket beside her.

"There is not much attraction in the spot just now," said Joseph, smiling.

"Not for the like of us, perhaps, sir," retorted Mrs. Cronan—"not for persons in our station; but your fashionable people, I believe, always prefer a place when the vulgar company have left it."

"Good again—grape and canister!" chuckled out the Captain, who seemed to derive a high enjoyment from the scene.

"Would you move a little to one side, Mr. Nelligan?" said the Doctor; "my pony won't stand."

"Oh, he's mettlesome," said Joe, good-humouredly, as he stepped out of the way.

"That he is, sir, though he never was leader in a four-in-hand; but, you see, poor creatures of quadrupeds forget themselves down here, just like their betters!"

And the success of this sally was acknowledged by a general laugh from the company. The tone of the speakers, even more than their words, convinced Joseph that, from some cause or other, he was the object of their sarcasms; and although slow to take offence—even to the verge of what many might have called an unfeeling indifference—he felt their treatment most acutely. It was, then, in something like a haughty defiance that he wished them a careless good-by, and continued his way.

"The world seems bent on puzzling me this morning," muttered he, as he sauntered slowly on. "People treat me as though I were playing some deep game to their detriment—I, who have no game—almost no future!" added he, despondingly. "For what avails it to attain eminence amidst such as these; and, as for the others, I was not born for them."

To these moody thoughts succeeded others still gloomier. It had only been within a short time back that the young man had begun to appreciate the difficulties of a position to which his early successes imparted increasing embarrassment; and darkly brooding over these things, he drew near his mother's cottage. She was already at the door to meet him, with a letter in her hand.

"This is from your father, Joe," said she. "He wants you in all haste up at the town; and I've packed your clothes, and sent off Patsey for Mooney's car; so come in and eat something at once."

Joseph took the note from her hand, and perused it in silence. It was brief, and ran thus:

"DEAR JOE,—I want you up here, as soon as possible, to meet a friend whom you'll be surprised to see. I say no more, but that I expect you by dinner-time.—Yours ever,

"D. N."

"What does that mean, Joe?" asked his mother.

He only shrugged his shoulders in reply.

"And who can it be?" said she, again.

"Some of the townspeople, of course," said he, carelessly.

"No, no, Joe; it must be a stranger. Maybe it's Morgan Drake; his aunt expected him back from Jamaica before Christmas. Or it's Corny Dwyer's come home from Africa; you know he went on the deploring expedition ——"

"Exploring! mother; exploring!"

"Well, exploring, or deploring—it's all the same—he went four years ago, and all the tidings they've had of him was an elephant's tooth he sent home to his stepfather. I know it's Corny, for your father always liked him and the funny stories he told."

"Perhaps so!" replied Joe.

"I wonder, is he grown any bigger? he was little better than a dwarf when he went away, and the same age as yourself. *No, indeed, he was older—fourteen months older.* It was Catty Henderson was running in my head. Isn't she a fine young woman, Joe?"

"Remarkably so," said he, with more animation in his tone.

"A little bit too haughty-looking and proud, maybe, considering her station in life, and that she has to go to service ——"

"Go to service, mother?"

"To be sure she has. If they can't get her a place as a governess or a companion, she'll have to take what she can get. Her father's married again, my dear Joe; and when men do that!" And here Mrs. Nelligan uplifted her hands and eyes most expressively. "Ay, indeed," continued she, with a heavy sigh, "and if it was once, it was fifty times, Catty's poor mother said to me, 'Sarah,' says she—she never called me Sally, but always Sarah—'Sarah,' says she, 'I've but one comfort, and that is, that Catty will never want a mother while you live. You'll be the same to her as myself—just as fond, and just as forgiving;' them was her very words!"

"And I hope you have never forgotten them, mother?" said Joe, with emotion.

"Don't you see I haven't; an't I repeating them to you this minute?"

"Yes; but I mean the spirit and the meaning of them," rejoined he, "and that you feel the obligation they've laid upon you."

"To be sure I feel it; don't I fret over it every time I'm alone? for I can't get it out of my head that maybe she'd appear to me ——"

"Who?—Catty?"

"No, but her mother. Oh, it's nothing to laugh at, Joe. There was Eliza Keane came back every Easter Monday, for two-and-twenty years, to search for a gravy spoon. Well, if it's laughing you are, I won't say any more; but here's the car now, and it's late enough we'll be on the road!"

"I'm not thinking of going, mother. I never meant to go," said Joe, resolutely.

"Never meant to go, after your father's note to you, Joe?" cried she, in half horror. "Surely it's all as one as ordering you up there."

"I know all that," said he, calmly; "but I see no reason why I should forego the pleasure of a party at the Martins' for the sake of meeting the convivial celebrities of Oughterard."

"But what will you say?"

"Say I'm engaged, have accepted another invitation; or, better still, leave you to make my excuses, mother. Come, come, don't look so terribly shocked and terrified; you know well enough that my father's four-year old mutton and his crusty port will compensate the company for heavier inflictions than my absence."

"They were always fond of you, Joe," said Mrs. Nelligan, half reproachfully.

"Nothing of the kind, mother; they never cared for me, nor was there any reason why they should. I'm sure I never cared for them. We endured one another, that was all."

"Oh, dear, but I'm glad your father is not listening to you," said she, with a stealthy glance around, as though not perfectly assured of secrecy. "So then, I suppose, there's nothing for it but to go up myself, and make the best of it; and sure it's all a lottery what temper he's in, and how he'll take it. I remember when they put the new duty on——what was it, Joe? I think it was hides ——"

"Not the least matter, mother; you've only to say that Mr. Martin has been kind enough to show me some attentions, and that I am silly enough—if you like to say so—to prefer them to the festive pleasures of Oughterard. In another week or so I shall have to go back to College. Let me, at least, enjoy the few days of my vacation in my own fashion."

Mrs. Nelligan shook her head mournfully over these signs of rebellion, and muttering many a gloomy foreboding, she went off to her room, to make her preparations for the journey.

CHAPTER XII.

A VERY "CROSS EXAMINATION."

THE morning was bright and sunny, the air, sharp, crisp, and bracing, as the heavy travelling-carriage, which conveyed Mr. Martin and Lady Dorothea, rolled smoothly along the trimly-kept approach to Cro' Martin. Many a beautiful glade—many a lovely vista opened on them as they passed along deep-bosomed woods and gently-swelling slopes, dotted over with cattle, stretched away on either side, while far in the distance could be seen the battlemented towers of the princely residence.

The lover of nature might have felt intense pleasure at a scene so abounding in objects of beauty. A painter would have lingered with delight over effects of light and shade, glorious displays of colour, and graceful groupings of rocks, and trees, and gnarled stumps. A proud man might have exulted in the selfish enjoyment of feeling that these were all his own, while a benevolent one would have revelled in the thought of all the channels through which such wealth might carry the blessings of aid and charity.

Which of these feelings predominated now in the minds of those who, snugly encased in furs, occupied the respective corners of the ample coach? Shall we own it?—not any of them. A dreamy, unremarking indifference was the sentiment of each; and they sat silently, gazing on a prospect which suggested nothing, nor awoke one passing emotion in their. hearts. Had any one been there to express his admiration of the landscape, praised the trees, the cattle, or the grassy-slopes, Martin might have heard him with pleasure, and listened even with interest to his description. My Lady, too, might not unwillingly have lent an ear to some flattery of the splendid demesne of which she was mistress, and accepted, as half homage, the eulogy of what was hers. None such was, however, there; and so they journeyed along, as seemingly unconscious as though the scene were wrapt in midnight darkness.

Martin had known the spot, and every detail of it, from his boyhood. The timber, indeed, had greatly grown—graceful saplings had become stately trees, and feathery foliage deepened into leafy shade; but he himself had grown older too, and his sense of enjoyment, dulled and deadened with years, saw nothing in the scene to awaken pleasure. As for Lady Dorothea, she had reasoned herself into the notion that the walls of her own grounds were the boundaries of a prison, and had long convinced herself that she was a suffering martyr to some mysterious sense of duty. From the drowsy langour in which they reclined they were both aroused, as the pace of the carriage gradually diminished from a smooth brisk trot to an uneven jolting motion, the very reverse of agreeable.

"What have they done? Where are they going?" said Lady Dorothea, peevishly.

And Martin called out from the window, in tones even less gentle. "Oh! it's the new approach; the road is not quite completed," said he, half sulkily, as he resumed his place.

"Another of Miss Martin's clever devices, which, I must say I never concurred in."

"Why, you always professed to hate the old road by the stables."

"So I did; but I never agreed to passing round the back of the house, and thus destroying the privacy of the flower-garden—the only spot I may dare to call my own. Oh, dear! I shall be shaken to death. Have they broken the carriage? I'm certain they've smashed the spring at my side!"

Martin gave a cold, supercilious smile, the only reply to these words.

"They've only broken a trace, I perceive," said he, casting a hurried glance through the window, as the carriage came to a dead stop.

"You are equanimity itself, sir, this morning," said her ladyship, in a voice almost tremulous with anger. "I wonder if this admirable temper will befriend you when you shall see the cost of this precious piece of road-making?"

"It employs the people," said he, coolly.

"Employs the people! How I hate that cant phrase. Can't they employ themselves on their own farms? Haven't they digging and draining, and whatever it is, to do of their own?

Must they of necessity depend on us for support, and require that we should institute useless works to employ them?"

As if to offer a living commentary on her speech, a number of half-fed and less than half-clad men now drew near, and in accents of a most servile entreaty, begged to offer their services. Some, indeed, had already busied themselves to repair the broken harness, and others were levelling the road, carrying stones to fill up holes, and in every possible manner endeavouring to render assistance, but all were vociferous in asserting that the delay would not be above a minute or two—that the road was an elegant one, or would be soon—and that it was a "raal blessing" to see her ladyship and the master looking so well. In fact, they were thankful and hopeful together; and, notwithstanding the evidences of the deepest destitution in their appearance, they wore an air of easy, jaunty politeness, such as many a professional diner-out might have envied. Lady Dorothea was in no mood to appreciate such traits; indeed, if the truth must be told, they rather ruffled than soothed her. Martin saw nothing in them: he was too much accustomed to the people to be struck with any of their peculiarities, and so he lay back in silent apathy, and took no notice of them.

With all their alacrity and all their good-will—and there was no lack of either—there was yet such a total absence of all system and order, that their efforts were utterly useless. Some tugged away manfully to raise stones too heavy to lift; others came rudely in contact with fellows heavily laden, and upset them. The sturdy arms that spoked the hind wheels were resolutely antagonised by as vigorous struggles to move the fore ones. Every one shouted, cried, cursed, and laughed, by turns, and a more hopeless scene of confusion and uproar need not be conceived. Nor was Lady Dorothea herself an inactive spectator; for, with her head from the carriage-window, she directed a hundred impossible measures, and sat down at last, overcome with rage and mortification at their blunders.

The tumult was now at the highest, and the horses, terrified by the noise around them, had commenced plunging and rearing fearfully, when Mary Martin came galloping up to the spot at full speed.

"Let go that bridle, Hogan," cried she, aloud; "you are driving that horse mad. Loose the leaders' traces—unbuckle the reins, Patsey—the wheelers will stand quietly. There, lead them away. Speak to that mare, she's trembling with fear. I told you not to come by this road, Barney; and it was only by accident that I saw the wheel-tracks. A thousand pardons, aunt Dora, for this mishap. Barney misunderstood my orders. It will be all right in a moment. Once over this bad spot, the road is hard and level."

"Having no taste, nor any genius for adventures, Miss Martin," began her ladyship —— But Mary did not await the remainder of the speech, for, turning her horse sharply round, and beckoning to some of the people to follow her, she was away across the lawn at a smart canter. Having arrived at a small wooden bridge over a river, she ordered the men to lift some of the planking, by the aid of which they soon constructed a firm and safe passage for the carriage; and, as her presence was the signal for quiet obedience and prompt action, in less than ten minutes the difficulty was surmounted, the horses reharnessed, and all in readiness to proceed on their way.

Martin looked on in silent satisfaction, not offering a single suggestion, or even seeming to feel interested in the events, but enjoying, with all a lazy man's pleasure, the activity displayed around him. Not so Lady Dorothea. If she did not like "an adventure," she loved a "grievance." Whatever ministered to her selfishness, even in the remotest degree, was grateful to her. Mary's opportune arrival had now converted what might have passed for a calamity into a mere momentary inconvenience; and she could not conceal her discontent. "Your heroines are a perfect torment, at least to us souls of commoner clay. They live only for disasters."

"I must say that Mary extricated us from what might have become one," said Martin, drily.

"We are indebted to her, however, for the possibilty. This detestable road, which I promise you I'll never come again, is entirely her own invention. I hope, Miss Martin," added she, from the window, "that the other approach is to be kept in repair—at least for me." But Mary did not hear the appeal, for she was bandaging the arm of a poor country fellow, who had been sorely cut.

"There, drive on, Barney," cried Lady Dorothea. "I shall be taken ill if I stay here. Really, Mr. Martin, your niece's accomplishments are the least feminine one can conceive." And improving this theme, she continued the entire way till the carriage drew up at the door of the Castle.

"Yes, sir," said she, as she descended, "that heavy sigh shows you are indeed greatly to be pitied. No martyrdom ever exceeded yours. I am quite aware of all my imperfections, and can at least fancy everything you could say of me and my temper.—What did you say, Collins?" said she, addressing the obsequious-looking servant, who, with an air of gloomy joy, very respectful—but meant to mean more—had whispered something in her ear.

"A young lady, did you say, Collins?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Then you were very wrong, Collins. You meant to say a young person."

"Yes, my lady—a young person, like a lady."

"Not in the least, except to such appreciation as yours. Where is she?"

"In your ladyship's library."

"Did she come alone?"

"No, my lady. Mr. Henderson drove her over in his car, and said he'd pass this way again in the evening."

And now her ladyship swept proudly by, scarcely noticing the bowing servants who had formed into a line along the hall, and who endeavoured to throw into their sorrowful faces as much of joy as might consist with the very deepest humility. Nor was she more condescending to old Catty, who stood curtseying at the top of the stairs, with a basket of keys on her arm that might have served to lock up all Newgate.

"How cold every place feels! Collins, are you sure the rooms are properly aired?" cried she, shuddering. "But I suppose it's the climate. Have another stove put there," said she, pointing to an impossible locality.

"Yes, my lady," replied Collins.

"And warmer carpets on these passages."

"Yes, my lady; it shall be done to-morrow."

"No, sir; to-day."

"Yes, my lady; this afternoon."

"I don't remember if the windows are double along here."

"Yes, my lady, they are all double towards the north."

"Then they fit badly, for I feel the draft acutely here. It's like the keen air of a mountain;" and Collins gave a slight sympathetic shudder, and really looked cold. A somewhat haughty glance from her ladyship, however, as quickly reproved him, for Collins ought to have known that it was not by such as himself changes of temperature could be appreciable. And now she passed on and entered that part of the mansion peculiarly her own, and where, it must be owned, her spirit of fault-finding would have been at a loss what to condemn.

Lady Dorothea's library occupied an angle of the building, and from this circumstance, included within its precincts an octagonal tower, the view from which comprised every varied character of landscape. This favoured spot was fitted up in the most luxurious taste—with rarest gems of art, and cabinet pictures of almost fabulous value—to supply which foreign dealers and connoisseurs had been for years back in correspondence with her ladyship. Now, it was some rare treasure of carved ivory, or some sculptured cup of Benvenuto, that had been discovered accidentally, and which, despite the emulous zeal of Princes and Cardinals to obtain, was destined for herself. Now, it was some choice mosaic, of which but one other specimen existed, and that in the Pope's private collection at the Quirinal. Such was her ardour in this pursuit of excellence, that more than once had every object of this precious chamber been changed, to give place to something more costly, more precious, and rarer. For about two years back, however, the resources of the old world seemed to offer nothing worthy of attention, and the vases, the "statuettes," the bronzes, the pictures, and medallions had held their ground undisturbed.

Such was the sanctity of this spot, that, in showing the house to strangers, it was never opened, nor, without a special order from Lady Dorothea—a favour somewhat more difficult to obtain than a firman from the Sultan—could any one be admitted within its walls. The trusty servant in whose charge it was, was actually invested with a species of sacred character in the household, as one whose feet had passed the threshold of the tabernacle. Our reader may then picture to himself something of Lady Dorothea's varied sensations—for, indeed, they were most mingled—as she heard a slight cough from within the chamber, and, drawing nearer, perceived a female figure seated in front of one of the windows, calmly regarding the landscape.

With a degree of noise and bustle sufficient to announce her approach, Lady Dorothea entered the tower; while the stranger, rising, retired one step, and curtseyed very deeply. There was in all the humility of the obeisance a certain degree of graceful dignity that certainly struck her ladyship; and her haughty look, and haughtier tone, were some little modified, as she asked by what accident she found her there?

"My intrusion was a pure accident, my lady," replied the other, in a low, soft voice; "mistaking the door by which I had entered a room, I wandered on through one after another until I found myself here. I beg your ladyship to believe that nothing was further from my thoughts than to obtrude upon your privacy."

"Your name?" began her ladyship; and then, as suddenly correcting herself, she said, "You are Miss Henderson, I suppose?"

"Yes, my lady," she replied, with a slight bend of the head.

"I sent for you," said Lady Dorothea, in a half careless tone, while she turned over some books on the table, as if in search of something—"I sent for you, partly at the request of your mother ——"

"My stepmother, my lady," interposed the girl, calmly.

Lady Dorothea stared at her for a second or two, as though to say, how had she dared to correct her; but either that the reproof had not met its full success, or that she did not care to pursue it, she added: "At the request of your friends, and partly out of curiosity." And here Lady Dorothea raised her glass to her eye, and quietly surveyed her; an examination which, it must be owned, none could have borne with more unshaken fortitude, not the slightest tremor of a limb, not the faintest change of colour, betokening that the ordeal was a painful one.

"I do see that you have been educated in France," said her ladyship, with a smile of most supercilious import, while a curtsey from the young girl admitted the fact.

"Were you brought up in Paris?" asked she, after a pause.

"For four years, my lady."

"And the remainder of the time, where was it passed?"

"We travelled a great deal, my lady, in Germany and Italy."

"'We'—who were the 'we' you speak of? Please to bear in mind that I know nothing of your history."

"I forgot that, my lady. I thought my stepmother had, perhaps, informed your ladyship."

"Of nothing whatever, child," said she, haughtily, "save of your having a foreign education, and wishing, or hoping, to find some engagement as a governess or a teacher;" and the last words were drawled out languidly, as though they were suggestive of all that was wearisome and a bore. "So you must be good enough to explain who '*we*' were."

"The Duchesse de Luygnes and her family, my lady."

"You travelled with them—and in what capacity, pray?"

"I was called companion to the Princesse de Courcelles, the eldest daughter of the Duchess, my lady."

"Companion!—why, you must have been a mere child at the time?"

"A mere child, my lady; but they took me from the Pensionnat, to speak English with the young Princess."

"And then they took the charge of your education, I conclude?"

"Yes, my lady."

"And to what extent—or rather, in what direction; I mean, what object had they in view in choosing your studies?"

"They gave me the same Masters as to the young Princess, my lady; and I was instructed in all respects as she was."

"And treated like her also, I conclude?" said Lady Dorothea, with a sneering smile.

"Madame la Duchesse was ever most kind to me," said the girl, half proudly.

"Kind—yes, of course—kind, if you conducted yourself properly and to her satisfaction. A person of her condition would be kind; but I trust this did not proceed so far as to spoil you? I hope it never made you forget your station?"

"I trust it did not, my lady."

"With what part of the establishment did you live? Where did you dine?"

"With the Princess, my lady; except on *fete* days, when we were invited to the table of the Duchess."

"I never heard of anything more absurd—outrageously absurd. Why, are you aware, young woman, that these same friends of yours have done you irreparable mischief? They have, so to say, ruined your entire future, for how can I, and others in my station, avail myself of your services, with such habits and expectations as these?"

"Certainly not expectations, my lady. I never did or can expect such condescension from another."

"No matter; your head is filled with ideas unbefitting your condition, usages, habits, associations, all foreign to a menial station. You have been admitted to privileges, the want of which would be felt as hardships. In fact, as I said before, they have done you irreparable injury. You must feel it yourself."

A very faint smile, half in deprecation of the appeal, was the only reply of the young girl.

"You are certain to feel it later on in life, if you are not sensible of it at present, that I can vouch for, young woman," said Lady Dorothea, with all the firmness with which she could utter an unpleasant speech. "Nothing but unhappiness ever resulted from such ill-judged indulgence. Indeed, if your mother had mentioned the circumstance, I scarcely think I should have sent for you"—she paused to see if any strong signs of contrite sorrow displayed themselves in the young girl's features; none such were there, and Lady Dorothea more sternly added—"I may safely say, I never should have asked to see you."

When a speech meant to be severe has failed to inflict the pain it was intended to produce, it invariably recoils with redoubled power upon him who uttered it; and so Lady Dorothea now felt all the pang of her own ungenerous sentiment. With an effort to shake off this unpleasant sensation, she resumed:

"I might go further, and observe, that unless you yourself became thoroughly penetrated with the fact, you must always prove very unsuitable to the station you are destined to occupy in life. Do you understand me?"

"I believe I do, my lady," was the calm reply.

"And also," resumed she, still more dictatorially—"and also, that acquiring this knowledge by yourself will be less painful to your feelings than if impressed upon you by others. Do you fully apprehend me?"

"I think so, my lady."

Now, although the tone and manner of the young girl were unexceptionable in all that regards deference and respect, Lady Dorothea was not a little provoked at her unbroken composure. There was no confusion, not even a semblance of constraint about her. She replied to even sarcastic questions without the faintest shadow of irritation, and exhibited throughout the most perfect quietude and good breeding. Had the "young person" been overwhelmed with shame, or betrayed into any access of temper, her ladyship's manner would have presented a pattern of haughty dignity and gracefulness, and her rebukes would have been delivered in a tone of queen-like superiority; but Miss Henderson afforded no opportunity for these great qualities. She was deference itself: but deference so self-possessed, so assured of its own safeguard, as to be positively provoking.

"Under all these circumstances, therefore," resumed Lady Dorothea, as if having revolved mighty thoughts within her mind, "it appears to me you would not suit me."

But even this speech failed to call up one trait of dissappointment, and the young girl received it with only a deep curtsey.

"I'm sorry for it," continued my lady, "on your mother's account; your education has of course cost her and your father many sacrifices, which your duty requires you to repay." She paused, as if asking for some assent to this speech.

Another deep curtsey was the reply.

"There, that will do," said Lady Dorothea, angrily; for any attempt to provoke seemed an utter failure. I think I have nothing more to say. When I shall see your mother I can explain more fully to her. Good morning."

"I wish your ladyship good morning," said the girl, with a deep obeisance, and in a voice of perfect deference, while she retired towards the door. Before she had reached it, however, Lady Dorothea again addressed her:

"You forgot, I think, to tell me, why you left the Duchesse de Luygnes?"

"I left on the marriage of the Princess, my lady."

"Oh, I remember; she married a Russian, I think."

"No, my lady; she married the Duc de Mirecourt, French Ambassador at St. Petersburg."

"Ah, to be sure. I knew there was something Russian about it. And so they sent you away then?"

"The duchess most kindly invited me to accompany her, my lady, but my father desired I should return to Ireland."

"And very properly," said Lady Dorothea; "he took a most just view of the case; your position would only have exposed you to great perils. I'm sure you are not of my opinion, for, distrust of yourself does not appear one of your failings."—It is possible that this ungenerous remark was evoked by a very slight curl of the young girl's lip, and which, faint as it was, did not escape her ladyship's keen glances.—"Good morning."

Again had Miss Henderson gained the door; her hand was already on the lock, when her ladyship called out: "In the event of anything occurring to me likely to suit you, I ought to know what you can teach; and mind, don't bore me with a mere catalogue of hard names, but say what you really know."

"Some modern languages, my lady, with music."

"No Greek or Latin?" said Lady Dorothea, half sneeringly.

"Latin, perhaps; but though I can read some Greek, I could not venture to teach it."

"Nor Hebrew?"

"No, my lady."

"And the modern tongues—which of them do you profess to know?"

"French, Italian, Spanish, and German."

"And don't you draw?—they showed me what they called yours."

"Yes, my lady, but I cannot teach drawing."

"And of course you are thoroughly versed in history. Have you studied any scientific subjects?—mathematics, for instance."

"Only a few of the French initial books, my lady."

"Why, you are quite an Admirable Crichton for acquirement. I feel really abashed to find myself in such company." But even this coarse speech failed to irritate, and Lady Dorothea walked angrily towards the window and looked out.

It so chanced that, through an opening of the wood, she caught sight of a large assemblage of workpeople, who, headed by Miss Martin on horseback, were on their way to the quarries; and as she looked, a sudden thought flashed across her: "Why not retain the 'young person' as a companion for her niece? How admirably would all this girl's knowledge contrast with Mary's ignorance. What an unceasing source of disparagement would their contact afford at the very moment that the arrangement might seem dictated by the very best and highest of motives."

It may doubtless appear to many, that the individual who could reason thus, must be animated by a most corrupt and depraved nature, but unhappily the spiteful element in the human heart is one which never measures its modes of attack, but suffers itself to be led on, from acts of mere petty malice, to actions of downright baseness and badness. Lady Dorothea was not devoid of good traits, but once involved in a pursuit, she totally forgot the object which originally suggested it, but engaged all her zeal and all her ardour for success. She would have been shocked at the bare possibility of actually injuring her niece; she would have resented with indignation the mere mention of such; but yet she would have eagerly grasped at whatever afforded a chance of dominating over her. Mary's influence in the household—her rule over the peasantry of the estate—was a perpetual source of annoyance to her ladyship, and yet she never knew how to thwart it, till now that chance seemed to offer this means.

"You need not go back just yet: I'll speak to Mr. Martin about you," said she, turning towards Miss Henderson; and, with a respectful curtsey, the girl withdrew, leaving her ladyship to her own somewhat complicated reflections.

In less than half an hour after Lady Dorothea proceeded to Mr. Martin's study, where a cabinet council was held, the substance of which our reader can readily conceive; nor need he have any doubts as to the decision, when we say that Lady Dorothea retired to her own room with a look of satisfaction so palpably displayed, that Mademoiselle Hortense, her maid, remarked to herself, "Somebody or other was sure to pass a *mauvais quart d'heure* when *Miladi* goes to her room with an air of such triumphant meaning as that."

CHAPTER XIII.

"A HOUSEKEEPER'S ROOM."

Cro' Martin was replete with every comfort and luxury. All its arrangements betokened wealth; not a single appliance of ease or enjoyment but was to be found within its well-ordered walls; and yet there was one want which seemed to mar all, and infuse a sense of almost dreary coldness over everything, and this was—the absence of a numerous family—the assemblage of various ages, which gives to a home its peculiar interest, embodying the hopes and fears, and passions and motives of manhood, in every stage of existence, making up that little world within doors which emblematises the great one without; but, with this singular advantage, of its being bound up in one holy sentiment of mutual love and affection.

This charm is it which gives the whole vitality to home—this mingling of the temperaments of youth, and manhood, and deep age, blending hopes of the future with memories of the past, and making of every heart a portion of one human biography, in which many are sharers. To the stranger, who came to see the house and its gorgeous decorations, all seemed suggestive of habitable enjoyment. The vast drawing-rooms appeared as if only waiting for a splendid company; the dark-wainscoted dining-room, with its noble fireplace of gigantic dimensions, looked the very scene where hospitable conviviality might be enacted; the library, calm, quiet, and secluded, seemed a spot wherein a student might have passed a lifelong. Even in the views, that presented themselves at the several windows, there was a certain appropriateness to the character of the room, and the same importunate question still arose to one's mind: Who is there to enjoy all this? What words of glad welcome echo through this vaulted hall—what happy daughter sings through these gilded chambers—where is the social pleasantry that circles the blazing fire of the ample hearth? Alas! all was sombre, splendid, and dreary. No, we are wrong!—not all! There was one corner of this great house where cheerfulness was the very type of comfort. It was a small, and not lofty room, whose two windows projected beyond the walls, giving a wide view over the swelling landscape for miles of space. Here the furniture was of the most ordinary kind, but scrupulously neat and well-kept. The chairs—there were but four of them—all with arms and deep cushions; the walnut table a perfect mirror of polish; the cloth curtains, that closed the windows and concealed the door, massive and heavy-folded,—all breathed of snugness; while the screen that surrounded the fire had other perfections than those of comfortable seclusion, containing a most strange collection of the caricatures of the time, and the period before the Union. It is but necessary to add that this was Mrs. Broon's apartment—the snug chamber where old Catty enjoyed herself, after the fatigues and duties of the day. Here now she sat at tea, beside a cheerful fire, the hissing kettle on the hob harmonising pleasantly with the happy purring of an enormous cat, who sat winking at the blaze; and while evidently inconvenienced by the heat, lacking energy to retreat from it. Catty had just obtained the newspaper—as the master had gone to dinner—and was really about to enjoy a comfortable evening. Far from devoid of social qualities, or a liking for companionship, she still lived almost entirely to herself, the other servants being chiefly English, whose habits and ways were all strange to her, and all whose associations were widely different from her own. Catty Broon had thus obtained a reputation for unsociability which she by no means deserved, but to which, it must be owned, she was totally indifferent. In fact, if *they* deemed *her* morose and disagreeable; *she*, in turn, held *them* still more cheaply, calling them a set of lazy devils that "were only in each other's way," and "half of them not worth their salt."

Catty had also survived her generation; all her friends of former years had either died or emigrated, and except two or three of the farm-servants, none of the "ould stock," as she called them, were in existence. This brief explanation will show that Catty's comparative isolation was not entirely a matter of choice. If a sense of loneliness did now and then cross her mind, she never suffered it to dwell there, but chased away the unpleasant thought by some active duty; or if the season of that were over, by the amusing columns of the *Intelligence*—a journal which realised to Mrs. Broon's conceptions the very highest order of literary merit.

Catty did not take much interest in politics; she had a vague dreamy kind of notion that the game of party was a kind of disreputable gambling, and Parliament itself little better than a "Hell," frequented by very indifferent company. Indeed, she often said it would be "well for us if there was no politics, and maybe then, there would be no taxes either." The news she liked was the price of farming stock at fairs and markets. What Mr. Hynes got for his "top lot" of hoggets, and what Tom Healey paid for the "finest heifers ever seen on the fair-green." These, and the accidents—a deeply interesting column —were her peculiar tastes, and her memory was stored with every casualty, by sea, fire, and violence, that had graced the *Intelligence* for forty years back; in truth they formed the stations of her chronology, and she would refer to events as having occurred the same year that Joe Ryan was hanged, or "the very Christmas that Hogan fired at Captain Crossley." An inundation of great extent also figured in these memorabilia, and was constantly referred to, by her saying, "This or that happened the year after the Flood," suggesting a rather startling impression as to her longevity.

On the evening we now refer to, the newspaper was more than commonly adorned with these incidents. Public news having failed, private calamities were invoked to supply the place. Catty was, therefore, fortunate. There was something, too, not altogether unpleasant in the whistling storm that raged without, and the heavy plashing of the rain as it beat upon the window-panes. Without imputing to her, as would be most unjust, the slightest touch of ill-nature, she felt a heightened sense of her own snugness as she drew closer to the bright hearth, while she read of "a dreadful gale in the Bay of Biscay."

It was just in the most exciting portion of the description that her door was rudely opened, and the heavy curtain dashed aside with a daring hand; and Catty, startled by the sudden interruption, called angrily out:

"Who's there—who are ye, at all?"

"Can't you guess, Catty?" cried out a pleasant voice. "Don't you know that there's only one in this house here, who'd dare to enter in such a fashion?"

"Oh, Miss Mary, is it you? And, blessed Virgin, what a state ye're in," cried she, as she gazed at the young girl, who, throwing away her riding hat, wrung out the rain from her long and silky hair, while she laughed merrily at old Catty's dismayed countenance.

"Why, where in the world were you—what happened you, darling?" said Catty, as she assisted her to remove the dripping costume.

"I was at the Wood, Catty, and up to the quarries, and round by Cronebawn, and then, seeing a storm gathering, I thought I'd turn homeward, but one of Kit Sullivan's children—my little godchild, you know—detained me to hear him recite some verses he had learned for my birthday; and, what with one thing and another, it was pitch dark when I reached the 'New Cut,' and then, to my annoyance, I found the bridge had just been carried away—there, Catty, now for a pair of your own comfortable slippers—and, as I was saying to you, there was no bridge!"

"The bridge gone!" exclaimed Catty, in horror.

"All Tom Healey's fault. I told him that the arch had not span enough, and that the buttresses would never stand the first heavy fall of rain from the mountains, and there's not a vestige of them now!"

"And what did you do?"

"I rode for the Low Meadows, Catty, with all speed. I knew that the river, not being confined there between narrow banks, and spreading over a wide surface, couldn't be very deep. Nor was it. It never touched the girths but once, when we got into a hole! But she is such a rare good beast, that little Sorrel; she dashed through everything, and I don't think I took forty minutes from Kane's Mill to this door, though I never saw a spot of the road all the while, except when the lightning showed it. There now, like a good old dear, don't wring your hands and say, 'Blessed hour!' but just put some more tea in the teapot, and fetch me your brown loaf!"

"But surely you'll die of cold!—you'll be in a fever!"

"Nonsense, Catty; I have been out in rain before this. I'm more provoked about that bridge than all else. My excellent aunt will have such a laugh at my engineering skill, when she hears of it. Can't be helped, however. And so there's a dinner-party up stairs, I hear. Fanny told me there were three strangers."

"So I hear. There's a lawyer from Dublin; and a lady from

I don't know where; and young Nelligan, old Dan's son. I'm sure I never thought I'd see the day he'd be eating his dinner at Cro' Martin."

"And why not, Catty? What is there in his manners and conduct that should not make him good company for any one here?"

"Isn't he the son of a little huckster in Oughterard? Old Dan, that I remember without a shoe to his foot!"

"And is it a reproach to him that he has made a fortune by years of patient industry and toil?"

"In-dus-try! toil! indeed," said Catty, sneeringly. "How much in-dus-try or toil there is, weighing out snuff and sugar, in a snug shop. Ayeh! he's an old Niggar, the same Dan. I know him well."

"But that is no reason why you should disparage his son, Catty, who is a young gentleman of the highest ability and great promise. I never heard you speak so ungenerously before."

"Well, well, darling, don't look angry with your ould Catty, anyway. It isn't for the like of Dan Nelligan, or his son either, you'd be cross with *me!*"

"Never, Catty, never—for anybody or anything," said the young girl, taking her hand with both her own. "But you haven't told me who the lady is. How did she arrive, and when?"

"I know nothing of her. Peter came to say that the blue bedroom was wanting to-night, and he wished to tor-ment me into asking who for?—but I wouldn't, just for that same; and so I gave him the keys without a word."

"I wonder if this note, that I found on my dressing-table, will explain anything," said Mary, as she proceeded to break the seal. "Of all the absurd ways of my lady aunt, she has not a more ridiculous one than this trick of writing little notes, instead of speaking. She sees me every day, and might surely say whatever she wanted to say, without embalming it in a despatch. This, I perceive, is number four hundred and seventy-six, and I presume she's correct in the score. Only think, Catty—four hundred little epistles like this!"

And with these words she carelessly unfolded the letter and began to read it. All her indifference of manner, however, soon gave way to an expression of considerable eagerness, and she had no sooner finished the epistle than she recommenced and re-read it.

"You'd never guess what tidings this brings me, Catty," said she, laying down the paper, and looking with an expression half sad, half comical.

"Maybe I might then," said Catty, shaking her head knowingly.

"Come, out with your guess, then, old lady, and I promise to venerate your wisdom ever after if you be right—that is, if nobody has already given you a hint on the subject."

"Not one in the world," said Catty, solemnly; "I pledge you my word and faith I never heard a syllable about it."

"About it! about what?"

"About what's in the letter there," said Catty, stoutly.

"You are therefore quite certain that you know it," said Mary, smiling, "so now let's have your interpretation."

"It's a proposial," said Catty, with a slight wink.

"A what?"

"A proposial—of marriage, I mean."

But before the words were out, Mary burst into a fit of laughter, so hearty, and with such good-will, that poor Catty felt perfectly ashamed of herself.

"My dear Catty," said she, at length, "you must have been reading Fairy Tales this morning; nothing short of such bright literature could have filled your mind with these imaginings. The object of the note is, I assure you, of a quite different kind;" and here she ran her eye once more over the epistle. "Yes," continued she, "it is written in my dear aunt's own peculiar style, and begins with a 'declaratory clause,' as I think Mr. Scanlan would call it, expressive of my lamentably neglected education, and then proceeds to the appropriate remedy, by telling me that I am to have a Governess!"

"A what!" cried Catty, in angry amazement.

"A Governess, Catty—not a governor, as you suspected."

"Ayeh, ayeh!" cried the old woman, ringing her hands; "what's this for? Don't you know how to govern yourself by this time? And what can they teach you that you don't understand already?"

"Ah, my dear Catty," said the young girl, sadly, "it is a sad subject you would open there,—one that I have wept over many a dreary hour! No one knows—no one even could guess—how deeply I have deplored my illiterate condition. Nor was it," added she, ardently, "till I had fashioned out a kind of existence of my own—active, useful, and energetic—that I could bury the thought of my utter want of education. Not even you.

Catty, could fathom all the tears this theme has cost me, nor with what a sinking of the heart I have thought over my actual unfitness for my station."

"Arrah, don't provoke me! don't drive me mad!" cried the old woman, in real anger. "There never was one yet as fit for the highest place as yourself; and it isn't me alone that says it, but hundreds of ——"

"Hundreds of dear, kind, loving hearts," broke in Mary, "that would measure my poor capacity by my will to serve them. But, no matter, Catty; I'll not try to undeceive them. They shall think of me with every help their own affection may lend them, and I will not love them less for the over-estimate."

As she spoke these words, she buried her face between her hands; but the quick heaving of her chest showed how deep was her emotion. The old woman respected her sorrow too deeply to interrupt her, and for several minutes not a word was spoken on either side. At last, Mary raised her head, and throwing back the long, loose hair, which in heavy masses shaded her face, said with a firm and resolute voice:

"I'd have courage to go to school to-morrow, Catty, and begin as a mere child to learn, if I knew that another was ready to take my place here. But who is to look after these poor people, who are accustomed now to see me amongst them, on the mountains, in the fields, at their firesides?—who gain new spirit for labour when I ride down in the midst of them, and look up, cheered, by seeing me, even from a sick-bed. Her ladyship would say, Mr. Henderson could do all this far better than myself."

"Mr. Henderson, indeed!" exclaimed Catty, indignantly; "the smooth-tongued old rogue!"

"And perhaps he might, in England," resumed Mary; "but not here, Catty—not here! We care less for benefits than the source from which they spring. We Irish cherish the love of motives as well as actions; and, above all, we cherish the links that bind the lowliest in the land with the highest, and make both better by the union."

She poured out these words with rapid impetuosity, rather talking to herself than addressing her companion: then, suddenly changing her tone, she added:

"Besides, Catty, *they* are used to *me*, and *I* to *them*. A new face and a new voice would not bring the same comfort to them."

"Never, never," muttered the old woman to herself

"And I'll not desert them."

"That you won't, darling," said the old woman, kissing her hand passionately, while tears swam in her eyes, and trickled down her cheeks.

"There is but one thought, Catty, that makes me at all faint-hearted about this, and whenever it crosses me I do feel very low and depressed." She paused, and then murmured the words, "My father!"

"Your father, my darling! What about *him?*"

"It is thinking, Catty, of his return; an event that ought to be—and would be, too—the very happiest of my life; a day, for whose coming I never sleep without a prayer; and yet, even this bright prospect has its dark side, when I recal all my own deficiences, and how different he will find his daughter from what he had expected her."

"May the blessed Saints grant me patience!" cried Catty, breaking in. "Isn't it too bad to hear you talking this way? Sure, don't I know Master Barry well? Didn't I nurse him; and wasn't I all as one as his own mother to him? and don't I know that you are his own born image? 'Tis himself and no other ye are every minute of the day."

"And even that, Catty," said Mary, smiling, "might fail to satisfy him. It is something very different indeed he might have imagined his daughter. I'm sure nobody can be more ignorant than I am, of what a person in my station ought to know. I cannot hide this from myself in my sad moments. I do not try to do so, but I have always relied upon the consolation that, to an existence such as mine is like to be, these deficiencies do not bring the same sense of shame, the same painful consciousness of inferiority, as if I were to mingle with the world of my equals. But if he were to come back—he, who has seen society in every shape and fashion—and find me the poor, unlettered, unread, untaught thing I am, unable to follow his very descriptions of far-away lands without confusion and mistake; unable to benefit by his reflections from very want of previous knowledge—oh, Catty, dearest, what a miserable thing is self-love after all, when it should thus thrust itself into the foreground, where very different affections alone should have the place."

"He'd love you like his own heart," said Catty. "Nobody knows him like me; and if there was ever one made for him to dote on, it's your own self."

"Do you indeed think so?" cried Mary, eagerly.

"Do I know it—could I swear it?" said Catty. "He was never much given to study himself, except it was books of travel like 'Robinson Crusoe,' and the like; and then, after reading one of them books he'd be off for days together, and we'd be looking for him over the whole country, and maybe find him in the middle of Kyle's Wood up a tree; or once, indeed, it was in the island of Lettermullen we got him. He built a mud-house, and was living there with a goat and two rabbits that he reared himself, and if he wasn't miserable when they brought him away home! I remember his words well—'Maybe,' says he, 'the time will come that I'll go where you can't come after me;' and ye see that's what he's done, for nobody knows where he wasn't wandering these last eight or nine years."

When Catty got upon this theme she could not be brought to quit it—nor, indeed, did Mary try—for though she had heard these stories of her father's boyish days over and over again, she never wearied of them; they had all the fascination of romance for her, with the stronger interest that grew out of her love for one who, she was told, had so loved herself. Besides this, she felt in her own heart the same promptings to a life of action and adventure. All the incidents and accidents of an eventful existence were the very things to delight her, and one of her happiest day-dreams was to fancy herself her father's companion in his wanderings by flood and field.

And thus they sat till a late hour of the night talking and listening, old Catty answering each inquiry of the young girl by some anecdote or trait of him she still persisted in calling "Master Barry," till, in the ardour of listening, Mary herself caught up the phrase, and so designated her own father.

"How unlike my uncle in everything!" exclaimed Mary, as she reflected over some traits the old woman had just recorded. "And were they not very fond of each other?"

"That they were: at least, I can answer for Master Barry's love; and to be sure, if having a reason was worth anything, your uncle ought to love him more than one man ever did another." Old Catty uttered these words with a slow and almost muttering accent; they seemed as if the expression of a thought delivered involuntarily—almost unconsciously.

Mary was attracted by the unwonted solemnity of her accent, but still more by an expression of intense meaning which gathered over the old woman's brows and forehead. "Ay, ay," muttered she still to herself, "there's few brothers would do it. Maybe there's not another living but himself would have done it."

"And what was it, Catty?" asked Mary, boldly.

"Eh!—what was I saying, darling?" said Catty, rousing herself to full consciousness.

"You were telling of my father, and some great proof of affection he gave my uncle."

"To be sure he did," said the old woman, hastily. "They were always fond of each other, as brothers ought to be."

"But this one particular instance of love—what was it, Catty?"

The old woman started, and looked eagerly around the room, as though to assure herself that they were alone; then, drawing her chair close to Mary's, she said, in a low voice, "Don't ask me any more about them things, darling. 'Tis past and gone many a year now, and I'd rather never think of it more, for I've a heavy heart after it."

"So, then, it is a secret, Catty?" said Mary, half proudly.

"A secret, indeed," said Catty, shaking her head mournfully.

"Then you need only to have said so, and I'd not have importuned you to tell it; for, to say truth, Catty, I never knew you had any secrets from *me*."

"Nor have I another, except this, darling," said Catty; and she buried her face within her hands. And now both sat in silence for some minutes—a most painful silence to each. At last Mary arose, and, although evidently trying to overcome it, a feeling of constraint was marked in her features.

"You'd never guess how late it is, Catty," said she, trying to change the current of her thoughts. "You'd not believe it is past three o'clock; how pleasantly we must have talked, to forget time in this way."

But the old woman made no reply, and it was clear that she had never heard the words, so deeply was she sunk in her own reflections.

"This poor hat of mine will scarcely do another day's service," said Mary, as she looked at it half laughingly. "Nor is my habit the fresher of its bath in the 'Red River;' and the worst of it is, Catty, I have overdrawn my quarter's allowance, and must live on, in rags, till Easter. I see, old lady, you have no sympathies to waste on me and my calamities this evening," added she, gaily, "and so I'll just go to bed and, if I can, dream pleasantly."

"Rags, indeed," said Catty. "It's well it becomes you to wear rags!" and her eyes sparkled with indignant passion. "Faith, if it comes to that"—here she suddenly paused, and a pale hue spread over her features like a qualm of faintish sickness—"may the Holy Mother give me help and advice, for sometimes I'm nigh forgetting myself!"

"My dear old Catty," said Mary, fondly, "don't fret about me and my foolish speech. I only said it in jest. I have everything—far more than I want—a thousand times more than I desire. And my excellent aunt never said a truer thing in her life, than when she declared that 'everybody spoilt me.' Now, good night." And kissing the old woman affectionately, Mary gathered up the stray fragments of her riding gear, and hurried away, her merry voice heard cheerfully as she wended her way up many a stair and gallery to her own chamber.

If Mary Martin's character had any one quality pre-eminently remarkable, it was the absence of everything like distrust and suspicion. Frankness and candour itself in all her dealings, she never condescended to impute secret motives to another; and the very thought of anything like mystery was absolutely repugnant to her nature. For the very first time in her life, then, she left old Catty Broon with a kind of uneasy, dissatisfied impression. There was a secret, and she was somehow or other concerned in it; so much was clear. How could she convince the old woman that no revelation, however disagreeable in itself, could be as torturing as a doubt? "Can there be anything in my position or circumstances here that I am not aware of? Is there a mystery about me in any way?" The very imagination of such a thing was agony. In vain she tried to chase away the unwelcome thought, by singing as she went, by thinking over plans for the morrow, by noting down, as she did each night, some stray records of the past day; still Catty's agitated face and strange emotion rose before her, and would not suffer her to be at rest.

To a day of great excitement and fatigue now succeeded a sleepless, feverish night, and morning broke on her unrefreshed, and even ill.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FINE OLD IRISH BARRISTER.

Can any one tell us what has become of that high conversational power for which Ireland, but more especially Dublin, was once celebrated? Have the brilliant talkers of other days left no successors? Has that race of delightful convivialists gone and disappeared for ever? Or are we only enduring an interregnum of dulness, the fit repose, perhaps, after a period of such excitement? The altered circumstances of the country will doubtless account for much of this change. The presence of a Parliament in Ireland imparted a dignity and importance to society, while it secured to social intercourse the men who made that Senate illustrious. The Bar, too, of former days was essentially the career of the highest class, of those who had the ambition of political success, without the necessity of toiling for it through the laborious paths of the law, and thus the wit, the brilliancy, and the readiness which gives conversation its charm, obtained the high culture which comes of a learned profession, and the social intercourse with men of refined understanding.

With the Union this spirit died out. Some of the brightest and gayest retired from the world, sad, dispirited, and depressed; some felt that a new and very different career was to open before them, and addressed themselves to the task of conforming to new habits and acquiring new influences; and others, again, sought in the richer and greater country the rewards which they once were satisfied to reap in their own. With the Union, society, in Dublin—using the word in its really comprehensive sense—ceased to exist. The great interests of a nation departed, men sank to the level of the small topics that engaged them, and gradually the smallest and narrowest views of mere local matters usurped the place of great events and liberal speculations. Towards the end of the first quarter of the present century, a few of those who had once made companionship with Curran, and Grattan, and Lysaght, and Parsons, were still in good health and vigour. A fine, high-hearted, manly class they were, full of that peculiar generosity of character which has ever marked the true Irish gentleman, and with a readiness in humour and a genial flow of pleasantry which rendered their society delightful.

Of this school—and probably the last, for he was then the Father of the Bar—was Valentine Repton, a man whose abilities might have won for him the very highest distinctions, but who, partly through indolence, and partly through a sturdy desire to be independent of all party, had all his life rejected every offer of advancement, and had seen his juniors pass on to the highest ranks of the profession, while he still wore his stuff-gown, and rose to address the Court from the outer benches.

He was reported in early life to have professed very democratic opinions, for which he more than once had incurred the deep displeasure of the authorities of the University. The principles of the French Revolution had, however, been gradually toned down in him by time, and probably by a very aristocratic contempt for the party who advocated them; so that soon after he entered on his career at the Bar he seemed to have abandoned politics, nor, except by a sly jest or an epigram upon a party leader, no matter of which side, did he ever advert to the contests of statecraft.

Though closely approaching seventy, he was hale and vigorous, his grey eyes quick and full of fire, his voice clear, and his whole air and bearing that of one many years younger. He had been a "Beau" in his youth, and there was in the accurately-powdered hair, the lace ruffles in which he still appeared at dinner, and the well-fitting silk stocking, an evidence that he had not forgotten the attractions of dress. At the Bar he still maintained the very highest place. His powers of cross-examination were very great; his management of a jury unrivalled. A lifelong acquaintance with Dublin had familiarised him with the tone and temper of every class of its citizens, and had taught him the precise kind of argument, and the exact nature of the appeal, to address to each. As he grew older, perhaps he did not observe all his wonted discretion in the use of this subtle power, and somewhat presumed upon his own skill. Nor was he so scrupulous in his deference to the Court—a feature which had once pre-eminently distinguished him—but upon the whole he had kept wonderfully clear of the proverbial irritability of age, and was, without an exception, the favourite amongst his brethren.

The only touch of years observable about his mind was a fondness for recurring to incidents or events in which he himself had borne a part. A case in which he held a brief—the dinner at which he had been brilliant—the epigram he had dashed off in Lady Somebody's drawing-room—were bright spots he could not refrain from adverting to; but, generally speaking, he had skill enough to introduce these without any seeming effort, or any straining, and thus, strangers, at least, were in wonderment at his endless stores of anecdote and illustration. No man better than he knew how to throw a great name into the course of a conversation, and make an audience for himself, by saying, "I remember one day at the Priory with Curran ——" or, "We were dining with poor Grattan at Tinnehinch, when ——" "As Flood once remarked to me ——" and so on.

The flattery of being addressed by one who had stood in such intimate relation to those illustrious men never failed of success. The most thoughtless and giddy hearers were at once arrested by such an opening, and Repton was sure of listeners in every company.

The man who finds his place in every society is unquestionably a clever man. The aptitude to chime in with the tone of others infers a high order of humour—of humour in its real sense—meaning thereby the faculty of appreciating, and even cultivating, the individual peculiarities of those around him, and deriving from their display a high order of pleasure.

From these scattered traits let my reader conjure up Valentine Repton before him, and imagine the bustling, active, and brisk-looking old gentleman, whose fidgetiness nearly drove Martin mad, as they held converse together in the library after breakfast. Now seated, now, rising to pace the room, or drawing nigh the window to curse the peltering rain without, Repton seemed the incarnation of uneasiness.

"Very splendid—very grand—very sumptuous—no doubt," said he, ranging his eyes over the gorgeous decorations of the spacious apartment, "but would kill me in a month; what am I saying?—in a week!"

"What would kill you, Repton?" said Martin, languidly.

"This life of yours, Martin—this sombre quiet—this unbroken stillness—this grave-like monotony. Why, man, where's your neighbourhood—where are your gentry friends?"

"Cosby Blake, of Swainestown, is abroad," said Martin, with an indolent drawl. "Randal Burke seldom comes down here now. Rickman, I believe, is in the Fleet. They were the nearest to us!"

"What a country! and you are spending——What did you tell me last night—was it upwards of ten thousand a year, here?"

"What with planting, draining, bridging, reclaiming waste lands, and other improvements, the wages of last year alone exceeded seven thousand!"

"By Jove! its nigh incredible," said the lawyer, energetically. "My dear Martin, can't you perceive that all this is sheer waste—so much good money actually thrown into Lough Corrib? Tell me, frankly, how long have you been pursuing this system of improvement?"

"About three years; under Mary's management."

"And the results—what of them?"

"It is too early to speak of that; there's Kyle's Wood, for instance—we have enclosed that at considerable cost. Of course we can't expect that the mere thinnings can repay us, the first year or two."

"And your reclaimed land—how has *it* prospered?"

"Not over well. They pushed draining so far, that they've left a large tract perfectly barren and unproductive."

"And the harbour—the pier I saw yesterday?"

"That's a bad business—its filling up the bay with sand! but we'll alter it in summer."

"And now for the people themselves—are they better off, better fed, clothed, housed, and looked after, than before?"

"Mary says so. She tells me that there is a wonderful change for the better in them."

"I don't believe a word of it, Martin—not a word of it. Ireland is not to be redeemed by her own gentry. The thing is sheer impossibility! They both know each other too well. Do you understand me? They are too ready to make allowances for shortcomings that have their source in some national prejudice. Whereas your Saxon or your Scotchman would scout such a plea at once. Ireland wants an alternative, Martin—an alternative; and, amidst our other anomalies, not the least singular is the fact, that the Englishman, who knows nothing about us, nor ever will know anything, is precisely the man to better our condition."

"These are strange opinions to hear from your lips, Repton. I never heard any man so sarcastic as yourself on English ignorance regarding Ireland."

"And you may hear me again on the same theme whenever you vouchsafe me an audience," said the lawyer, sharply. "It was but the other day I gave our newly-arrived secretary, Mr. Muspratt, a gentle intimation of my sentiments on that score. We were dining at the Lodge. I sat next his Excellency, who, in the course of dinner, directed my attention to a very graphic picture the secretary was drawing of the misery he had witnessed that very day, coming up from Carlow. He did the thing well, I must own. He gave the famished looks, the rags, the wretchedness, all their due; and he mingled his pathos and indignation with all the skill of an artist; while he actually imparted a Raffaelle effect to his sketch, as he portrayed the halt, the maimed, the blind, and the palsied that crowded around the carriage as he changed horses, exclaiming, by way of peroration, 'Misery and destitution like this no man ever witnessed before, all real and unfeigned as it was sure to be.'

"'Naas is a miserable place, indeed,' said I, for he looked directly towards me for a confirmation of his narrative. 'There is no denying one word the gentleman has said. I came up that way from circuit three weeks ago, and was beset in the same spot, and in the same manner as we have just heard. I can't attempt such a description as Mr. Muspratt has given us, but I will say, that there was not a human deformity or defect that didn't appear to have its representative in that ragged gathering, all clamorous and eager for aid. I looked at them for a while in wonderment, and at last I threw out a "tenpenny" in the midst. The "blind" fellow saw it first, but the "lame cripple" had the foot of him, and got the money!'"

Repton leaned back in his chair, and laughed heartily as he finished. "I only wish you saw his face, Martin; and, indeed, his excellency's too. The aides-de-camp laughed; they were very young, and couldn't help it."

"He'll not make you a chief justice, Repton," said Martin, slily.

"I'll take care he don't," said the other. "*Summum jus summa injuria.* The chief justice is a great humbug, or a great abuse, whichever way you like to render it."

"And yet they'd be glad to promote you," said Martin, thoughtfully.

"To be sure they would, sir; delighted to place me where they had no fear of my indiscretions. But your judge should be ever a grave animal. The temptation to a joke should never sit on the ermine. As Flood once remarked to me of old Romney: 'A man, sir,' said he—and Flood had a semi-sarcastic solemnity always about him—'a man, sir, who has reversed the law of physics; for he rose by his gravity, and only fell by his lightness.' Very epigrammatic and sharp, that. Ah! Martin, they don't say these things now-a-days. By the way, who is the young fellow who dined with us yesterday?"

"His name is Nelligan; the son of one of our Oughterard neighbours."

"Pleasing manners, gentle, too, and observant," said Repton, with the tone of one delivering a judgment to be recorded.

"He's more than that," said Martin; "he is the great prize man of the year in Trinity. You must have surely heard of his name up in town."

"I think somebody did speak of him to me—recommend him, in some shape or other," said Repton, abstractedly—"these things are so easily forgotten; for, to say the truth, I hold very cheaply all intellectual efforts accomplished by great preparation. The cramming, the grinding, the plodding, the artificial memory work, and the rest of it, detract terribly, in my estimation, from the glory of success. Give me your man of impromptu readiness, never unprepared, never at a loss. The very consciousness of power is double power." And as he spoke he drew himself up, threw his head back, and stared steadfastly at Martin, as though to say: "Such is he who now stands before you."

Martin was amused at the display of vanity, and had there been another there to have participated in the enjoyment, would have willingly encouraged him to continue the theme; but he was alone, and let it pass.

"I'll make a note of that young man. Mulligan, isn't it?"

"Nelligan."

"To be sure. I'll remember poor Curran's epigram:

Oh, pity poor Tom Nelligan!
Who walking down Pall Mall,
He slipt his foot,
And down he fell,
And fears he won't get well again.

Glorious fellow, sir; the greatest of all the convivialists of his time was Curran. A host in himself; but, as he once said, you couldn't always depend on the 'elevation.'"

Martin smiled faintly; he relished the lawyer's talk, but he felt that it demanded an amount of attention on his part that wearied him. Anything that cost him trouble was more or less of a "bore," and he already began to wish for his accustomed ease and indolence.

"Well, Repton," said he, "you wished to see the quarries, I think?"

"To see everything and everybody, sir, and with my own eyes, too. As Lysaght said, when I read the book of nature, 'I let no man note my brief for me.'"

"I thought of being your companion, myself; but somehow, this morning, my old enemy, the gout, is busy again; however, you'll not regret the exchange, Repton, when I give you in charge to my niece. She'll be but too happy to do the honours of our poor country to so distinguished a visitor."

"And a very artful plan to put me in good humour with everything," said Repton, laughing. "Well, I consent. I offer myself a willing victim to any amount of seduction. How are we to go?—do we drive, walk, or ride?"

"If Mary be consulted, she'll say ride," said Martin; "but perhaps ——"

"I'm for the saddle, too," broke in Repton. "Give me something active and lively, light of mouth and well up before, and I'll show you, as Tom Parsons said, that we can cut as good a figure at the wall as the 'Bar.'"

"I'll go and consult my niece, then," said Martin, hastening out of the room, to conceal the smile which the old man's vanity had just provoked.

Mary was dressed in her riding-habit, and about to leave her room as her uncle entered it.

"I have just come in the nick of time, Molly, I see," cried he. "I want you to lionise an old friend of mine, who has the ambition to 'do' Connemara under your guidance."

"What a provoke," said Mary, half aloud. "Could he not wait for another day, uncle? I have to go over to Glencalgher and Kilduff; besides, there's that bridge to be looked after, and they've just come to tell me that the floods have carried away the strong paling around the larch copse. Really, this old gentleman must wait." It was a rare thing for Mary Martin to display anything either of impatience or opposition to her uncle. Her affection for him was so blended with respect, that she scarcely ever transgressed in this wise; but this morning she was ill and irritable—a restless, feverish night following on a day of great fatigue and as great excitement—and she was still suffering, and her nerves jarring when he met her.

"But I assure you, Molly, you'll be pleased with the companionship," began Martin.

"So I might at another time; but I'm out of sorts to-day, uncle. I'm cross and ill-tempered, and I'll have it out on Mr. Henderson—that precious specimen of his class. Let Mr. Nelligan performe cicerone, or persuade my lady to drive him out; —do anything you like with him, except give him to *me*."

"And yet that is exactly what I have promised him. As for Nelligan, they are not suited to each other; so, come, be a good girl, and comply."

"If I must," said she, pettishly—"And how are we to go?"

"He proposes to ride, and bespeaks something lively for his own mount."

"Indeed! That sounds well!" cried she, with more animation. "There's 'Cropper' in great heart; he'll carry him to perfection. I'll have a ring-snaffle put on him, and my word for it but he'll have a pleasant ride."

"Take care, Molly—take care that he's not too fresh. Remember that Repton is some dozen years or more my senior."

"Let him keep him off the grass, and he'll go like a lamb. I'll not answer for him on the sward, though; but I'll look to him, uncle, and bring him back safe and sound." And so saying, Mary bounded away down the stairs and away to the stables, forgetting everything of her late discontent, and only eager on the plan before her.

Martin was very far from satisfied about the arrangement for his friend's equitation; nor did the aspect of Repton himself, as attired for the road, allay that sense of alarm—the old lawyer's costume being a correct copy of the coloured prints of those worthies who figured in the early years of George the Third's reign—a grey cloth spencer being drawn over his coat, fur-collared and cuffed, high riding-boots of black polished leather, reaching above the knee, and large gauntlets of bright-yellow doeskin, completing an equipment which Martin had seen nothing resembling for forty years back.

"A perfect cavalier, Repton!" exclaimed he, smiling.

"We once could do a little that way," said the other, with a touch of vanity. "In our early days, Martin, hunting was essentially a gentleman's pastime. The meet was not disfigured by aspiring linendrapers or ambitious hardwaremen, and the tone of the field was the tone of society; but, nous avons changé tout cela. Sporting men, as they call themselves, have descended to the groom vocabulary, and the groom morals, and we, of the old school, should only be laughed at for the pedantry of good manners, and good English, did we venture amongst them."

"My niece will put a different estimate on your companionship; and here she comes. Molly, my old and valued friend Mr. Repton."

"I kiss your hand, Miss Martin," said he, accompanying the speech by the act, with all the grace of a courtier. "It's worth while being an old fellow, to be able to claim these antiquated privileges."

There was something in the jaunty air and well-assumed gallantry of the old lawyer which at once pleased Mary, who accepted his courtesy with a gracious smile. She had been picturing to herself a very different kind of companion, and was well satisfied with the reality.

"I proposed to young Mr. Nelligan to join us," said Repton, as he conducted her to the door; "but it seems he is too deeply intent upon some question, or point of law, or history, I forget which, whereupon we differed last night, and has gone into the library to search for the solution of it. As for me, Miss Martin, I am too young for such dry labours; or, as the Duc de Nevers said, when somebody rebuked him for dancing at seventy, 'Only think what a short time is left me for folly.'"

We do not propose to chronicle the subjects or the sayings by which the old lawyer beguiled the way; enough if we say that Mary was actually delighted with his companionship. The racy admixture of humour, and strong common sense, acute views of life, flavoured with, now, a witty remark, now, a pertinent anecdote, were conversational powers totally new to her. Nor was he less charmed with her. Independently of all the pleasure it gave him to find one who heard him with such true enjoyment, and relished all his varied powers of amusing, he was equally struck with the high-spirited enthusiasm and generous ardour of the young girl. She spoke of the people and the country with all the devotion of one who loved both; and if at times with more of hopefulness than he himself could feel, the sanguine forecast but lent another charm to her fascination.

He listened with astonishment as she explained to him the different works then in progress—the vast plans for drainage—the great enclosures for planting—the roads projected, here, the bridges, there. At one place were strings of carts, conveying limestone for admixture with the colder soil of low grounds; at another they met asses, loaded with seaweed for the potato land. There was movement and occupation on every side. In the deep valleys, on the mountains, in the clefts of the rocky shore, in the dark marble quarries, hundreds of people were employed; and by these was Mary welcomed with eager enthusiasm the moment she appeared. One glance at their delighted features was sufficient to show that theirs was no counterfeit joy. Wherever she went the same reception awaited her; nor did she try to conceal the happiness it conferred.

"This is very wonderful, very strange, and very fascinating, Miss Martin," said Repton, as they moved slowly through a rocky path, escarped from the side of the mountain; "but, pardon me, if I venture to suggest one gloomy anticipation in the midst of such brightness. What is to become of all these people when *you* leave them—as leave them you will, and must, one day?"

"I never mean to do so," said Mary, resolutely.

"Stoutly spoken," said he, smiling; "but, unfortunately, he who hears it could be your grandfather. And again I ask, how is this good despotism to be carried on when the despot abdicates? Nay, nay; there never was a very beautiful girl yet, with every charm under heaven, who didn't swear she'd never marry; so let us take another alternative. Your uncle may go to live in London—abroad. He may sell Cro' Martin ——"

"Oh! that is impossible. He loves the old home of his family, and his name, too dearly; he would be incapable of such a treason to his house!"

"Now, remember, my dear young lady, you are speaking to the most suspectful, unimpulsive, and ungenerously-disposed of all natures, an old lawyer, who has witnessed so many events in life he would have once pronounced impossible—ay, just as roundly as you said the word yourself—and seen people and things, under aspects so totally the reverse of what he first knew them, that he has taught himself to believe that change is the law, and not permanence, in this life, and that you, and I, and all of us, ought ever to look forward to anything, everything, but the condition in which at present we find ourselves. Now, I don't want to discourage you with the noble career you have opened for yourself here; I am far more likely to be fascinated—I was going to say fall in love—with you for it, than to try and turn your thoughts elsewhere; but as to these people themselves, the experiment comes too late."

"Is it ever too late to repair a wrong, to assist destitution, relieve misery, and console misfortune?" broke in Mary, eagerly.

"It is too late to try the feudal system in the year of our Lord 1829, Miss Martin. We live in an age where everything is to be redressed by a Parliament. The old social compact between proprietor and peasant is repealed, and all must be done by "the House." Now, if your grandfather had pursued the path that you are doing to-day, this crisis might never have arrived; but he did not, young lady. He lived like a real gentleman; he hunted, and drank, and feasted, and rack-rented, and horsewhipped all around him; and what with duelling of a morning and drinking over-night, taught the people a code of morals that has assumed all the compactness of a system. Ay, I say it with grief, this is a land corrupted from the top, and every vice of its gentry has but filtered down to its populace! What was that I heard?—was it not a shot?" cried he, reining in his horse to listen.

"I thought so too; but it might be a blast, for we are not far from the quarries."

"And do you preserve the game, Miss Martin?—are you sworn foe to the poacher?"

"I do so; but in reality more for the sake of the people than the partridges. Your lounging country fellow, with a rusty gun and a starved lurcher, is but an embryo highwayman."

"So he is," cried Repton, delighted at the energy with which she spoke; "and I have always thought that the worst thing about the game-laws was the class of fellows we educate to break them. Poor old Cranbury wasn't of that opinion, though. You could never have seen him, Miss Martin; but he was a fine specimen of the Irish Bench in the old time. He was the readiest pistol in the Irish house; and, as they said then, he "shot up" into preferment. He always deemed an infraction of the game-laws as one of the gravest crimes in the statute. Juries, however, didn't concur with him, and, knowing the severity of the penalty, they invariably brought in a verdict of Not Guilty, rather than subject a poor wretch to transportation for a jack-snipe. I remember once—it was at Maryborough: the fellow in the dock was a notable poacher, and, worse still, the scene of his exploits was Cranbury's own estate. As usual, the jury listened apathetically to the evidence; they cared little for the case, and had predetermined the verdict. It was, however, so palpably proven, so self-evident that he was guilty, that they clubbed their heads together to concert a pretext for their decision. Cranbury saw the movement, and appreciated it, and, leaning his head down upon his hand, mumbled out, as if talking to himself, in broken sentences, 'A poor man—with a large family—great temptation—and, after all, a slight offence—a very slight offence.' The jury listened and took courage; they fancied some scruples were at work in the old judge's heart, and that they might venture on the truth, innocuously. 'Guilty, my lord,' said the foreman. 'Transportation for seven years!' cried the judge, with a look at the jury-box that there was no mistaking. They were 'done,' but there never was another conviction in that town afterwards."

"And were such things possible on the justice-seat?" exclaimed Mary, in horror.

"Ah! my dear young lady, I could tell you of far worse than that. There was a time in this country when the indictment against the prisoner was secondary in importance to his general character, his party, his connections, and fifty other things, which had no bearing upon criminality. There goes another shot! I'll swear to that," cried he, pulling up short and looking in the direction from which the report proceeded.

Mary turned at the same moment, and pointed with her whip towards a beech wood that skirted the foot of the mountain.

"Was it from that quarter the sound came?" said she.

The sharp crack of a fowling-piece, quickly followed by a second report, now decided the question; and, as if by mutual consent, they both wheeled their horses round, and set off at a brisk canter towards the wood.

"I have taken especial pains about preserving this part of the estate," said Mary, as they rode along. "It was my cousin Harry's favourite cover when he was last at home, and he left I can't say how many directions about it when quitting us, though, to say truth, I never deemed any precautions necessary till he spoke of it."

"So that poaching was unknown down here?"

"Almost completely so; now and then some idle fellow with a half-bred greyhound might run down a hare, or with a rusty firelock knock over a rabbit, but there it ended. And as we have no gentry neighbours to ask for leave, and the Oughterard folks would not venture on that liberty, I may safely say that the report of a gun is a rare event in these solitudes."

"Whoever he be, yonder, is not losing time," said Repton;—"there was another shot."

Their pace had now become a smart half-gallop, Mary, a little in advance, leading the way, and pointing out the safe ground to her companion. As they drew nigh the wood, however, she slackened speed till he came up, and then said:

"As I know everybody hereabouts, it will be enough if I only see the offender, and how to do that is the question."

"I am at your orders," said Repton, raising his whip to a salute.

"It will be somewhat difficult," said Mary, pondering; "the wood is so overgrown with low copse that one can't ride through it, except along certain alleys. Now we might canter there for hours and see nothing. I have it," cried she, suddenly, "you shall enter the wood and ride slowly along the green alley, yonder, till you come to the cross-road, when you'll turn off to the left, while I will remain in observation outside here, so that if our friend make his exit I am sure to overtake him. At all events, we shall meet again at the lower end of the road."

Repton made her repeat her directions, and then, touching his hat in respectful salutation, rode away to fulfil his mission. A low gate, merely fastened by a loop of iron without a padlock, admitted the lawyer within the precincts, in which he soon discovered that his pace must be a walk, so heavy was the deep clayey soil, littered with fallen leaves and rotting acorns. Great trees bent their massive limbs over his head, and, even leafless as they were, formed a darksome, gloomy aisle, the sides of which were closed in with the wild holly and the broom, and even the arbutus, all intermingled inextricably. There was something solemn even to sadness in the deep solitude, and so Repton seemed to feel as he rode slowly along, alone, tinging his thoughts of her he had just quitted with melancholy.

"What a girl, and what a life!" said he, musingly. "I must tell Martin that this will never do! What can all this devotion end in but disappointment. With the first gleam of their newly-acquired power the people will reject these benefits; they will despise the slow-won fruits of industry as the gambler rejects a life of toil. Then will come a reaction—a terrible reaction—with all the semblance of black ingratitude! She will herself be disgusted. The breach once made will grow wider and wider, and at last the demagogue will take the place of the landed proprietor. Estrangement at first, next distrust, and finally dislike, will separate the gentry from the peasantry, and then —— I tremble to think of what then!"

As Repton had uttered these words, the sharp bang of a gun startled him, and at the same instant a young fellow sprang from the copse in front of him into the alley. His coarse fustian shooting-jacket, low-crowned oil-skin hat, and leather gaiters, seemed to bespeak the professional poacher, and Repton dashed forward with his heavy riding-whip, upraised, towards him.

"Take care, old gentleman," said the young man, facing about; "my second barrel is loaded, and if you dare ——"

"By Heaven! I'll thrash you, you scoundrel!" said Repton, whose passion was now boiling over by a sudden bound of the cob, which had nearly thrown him from the saddle—a mischance greeted by a hearty burst of laughter from the stranger.

"I fancy you have quite enough to do at this moment!" cried he, still laughing.

Half mad with anger, Repton pressed his spurs to the cob's flanks, while he gave him a vigorous cut of the whip on the shoulder. The animal was little accustomed to such usage, and reared up wildly, and would inevitably have fallen back with his rider had not the stranger, springing forward, seized the bridle, and pulled him down by main force. Whether indifferent to his own safety, or so blinded by passion as not to recognise to what he owed it, the old man struck the other a heavy blow with his whip over the head, cutting through his hat, and covering his face with blood.

The young man passing his arm through the bridle, so as to render the other's escape impossible, coolly removed his hat and proceeded to stanch the bleeding with his handkerchief—not the slightest sign of excitement being displayed by him, nor any evidence of feeling that the event was other than a mere accident.

"Let loose my bridle-rein—let it loose, sir," said Repton, passionately—more passionately, perhaps, from observing the measured calmness of the other.

"When I know who you are, I shall," said the young man.

"My name is Valentine Repton; my address, if you want it, is Merrion-square North, Dublin; and can you now tell me where a magistrate's warrant will reach *you?*"

"My present residence is a house you may have seen on the side of the mountain as you came along, called, I think, Barnagheela; my name is Massingbred."

"You presume to be a gentleman, then?" said Repton.

"I have not heard the matter disputed before," said Jack, with an easy smile, while he leisurely bound the handkerchief round his head.

"And, of course, you look for satisfaction for this?"

"I trust that there can be no mistake upon that point, at least," replied he.

"And you shall have it, too; though, hang me, if I well know whether you should not receive it at the next assizes—but you shall have it. I'll go into Oughterard this day; I'll be there by nine o'clock, at the Martin Arms."

"That will do," said Massingbred, with a coolness almost like indifference; while he resumed his gun, which he had thrown down, and proceeded to load the second barrel.

"You are aware that you are poaching here?" said Repton—"that this is part of the Martin estate, and strictly preserved?"

"Indeed! and *I* thought it belonged to Magennis," said Jack, easily; but a preserve without a gamekeeper, or even a notice, is a blockade without a blockading squadron." And without a word more, or any notice of the other, Massingbred shouldered his gun and walked away.

It was some time before Repton could summon resolution to leave the spot, such was the conflict of thoughts that went on within him. Shame and sorrow were, indeed, uppermost in his mind, but still not unmingled with anger at the consummate ease and coolness of the other, who by this line of conduct seemed to assume a tone of superiority the most galling and insulting. In vain did he endeavour to justify his act to himself—in vain seek to find a plausible pretext for his anger. He could not, by all his ingenuity, do so, and he only grew more passionate at his own failure. "Another would hand him over to the next justice of the peace—would leave him to quarter sessions; but not so Val Repton"—"No, by Jove, he'll find a man to his humour there, if he wants fighting," said he aloud, as he turned his horse about and rode slowly back.

It was already dusk when he joined Miss Martin, who, uneasy at his prolonged absence, had entered the wood in search of him. It required all the practised dissimulation of the old lawyer to conceal the signs of his late adventure; nor indeed were his replies to her questions quite free from a certain amount of inconsistency. Mary, however, willingly changed the subject, and led him back to speak of topics more agreeable and congenial to him. Still he was not the same sprightly companion who had ridden beside her in the morning. He conversed with a degree of effort, and, when suffered, would relapse into long intervals of silence.

"Who inhabits that bleak-looking house yonder?" said he, suddenly.

"A certain Mr. Magennis, a neighbour, but not an acquaintance of ours."

"And how comes it that he lives in the very middle, as it were, of the estate?"

"An old lease, obtained I can't say how many centuries back, and which will expire in a year or two. He has already applied for a renewal of it."

"And, of course, unsuccessfully?"

"Up to this moment it is as you say, but I am endeavouring to persuade my uncle not to disturb him; nor would he, if Magennis would only be commonly prudent. You must know that this person is the leading Radical of our town of Oughterard, the man who sets himself most strenuously in opposition to our influence in the borough, and would uproot our power there, were he able."

"So far, then, he is a courageous fellow."

"Sometimes I take that view of his conduct, and at others I am disposed to regard him as one not unwilling to make terms with us."

"How subtle all these dealings can make a young lady!" said Repton, slily.

"Say, rather, what a strain upon one's acuteness it is to ride out with a great lawyer, one so trained to see spots in the sun, that he won't acknowledge its brightness if there be a speck to search for."

"And yet it's a great mistake to suppose that we are always looking on the dark side of human nature," said he, reflectively; "though," added he, after a pause, "it's very often our business to exaggerate baseness, and make the worst of a bad man."

"Even that may be more pardonable than to vilify a good one," said Mary.

"So it is, young lady; you are quite right there." He was thoughtful for a while, and then said—"It is very singular, but nevertheless true, that, in my profession, one loses sight of the individual, as such, and only regards him as a mere element of the case, plaintiff or defendant as he may be. I remember once, in a southern circuit, a hale, fine-looking young fellow entering my room to present me with a hare. He had walked twelve miles to offer it to me. 'Your honour doesn't remember me,' said he, sorrowfully, and evidently grieved at my forgetfulness. 'To be sure I do,' replied I, trying to recal his features; 'you are—let me see—you are—I have it—you are Jemmy Ryan.'

"'No, sir,' rejoined he, quickly, 'I'm the boy that murdered him!'

"Ay, Miss Martin, there's a leaf out of a lawyer's note-book, and yet I could tell you more good traits of men and women, more of patient martyrdom under wrong, more courageous suffering to do right, than if I were—what shall I say?—a chaplain in a nobleman's family."

Repton's memory was well stored with instances in question, and he beguiled the way by relating several, till they reached Cro' Martin.

"And there is another yet," added he, at the close, "more strongly illustrating what I have said than all these, but I cannot tell it to *you*."

"Why so?" asked she, eagerly.

"It is a family secret, Miss Martin, and one that in all likelihood you shall never know. Still, I cannot refrain from saying that you have in your own family as noble a specimen of self-sacrifice and denial as I ever heard of."

They were already at the door as he said this, and a troop of servants had assembled to receive them. Mary, therefore, had no time for further inquiry, had such an attempt been of any avail.

"There goes the first dinner-bell, Miss Martin," said Repton, gaily. "I'm resolved to be in the drawing-room before you!" And with this he hopped briskly up stairs, while Mary hastened to her room to dress.

CHAPTER XV.

"A RUINED FORTUNE."

No stronger contrast could be presented than that offered by the house which called Mr. Magennis master, to all the splendour and elegance which distinguished Cro' Martin. Built on the side of a bleak, barren mountain, without a trace of cultivation—not even a tree beside it—the coarse stone walls, high pitched roof, and narrow windows, seemed all devised in some spirit of derision towards its graceful neighbour. A low wall, coped with a formidable "frize" of broken bottles and crockery, enclosed a space in front once destined for a garden, but left in its original state of shingle, intermixed with the remnants of building materials and scaffold planks. A long shed, abutting on the house, sheltered a cow and a horse; the latter standing with his head above a rickety half door, and looking ruefully out at the dismal landscape beneath him.

Most of the window were broken—and in some no attempt at repair had been made—indicating that the rooms within were left unused. The hall-door stood ajar, but fastened by a strong iron chain; but the roof, more than all besides, bespoke decay and neglect, the rafters being in many places totally bare, while in others some rude attempts at tiling compensated for the want of the original slates. A strong colony of jackdaws had established themselves in one of the chimneys; but from another, in the centre of the building, a thick volume of dark-blue smoke rolled continually, conveying, indeed, the only sign of habitation about this dreary abode.

The inside of the house was, if possible, more cheerless than the out. Most of the rooms had never been finished, and still remained in their coarse brown plaster, and unprovided with grates or chimney-pieces. The parlour, *par excellence*, was a long, low-ceilinged chamber, with yellow-ochre walls, dimly lighted by two narrow windows; its furniture, a piece of ragged carpet beneath a rickety table of black mahogany, some half-dozen crazy chairs, and a small sideboard, surmounted by something that might mean buffet or bookcase, and now served for both, being indifferently garnished with glasses, decanters, and thumbed volumes, intermingled with salt-cellars, empty sauce-bottles, and a powder-flask.

An atrociously painted picture of an officer in scarlet uniform hung over the fireplace, surmounted by an infantry sword, suspended by a much-worn sash. These were the sole decorations of the room, to which even the great turf fire that blazed on the hearth could not impart a look of comfort.

It was now a little after nightfall; the shutters were closed, and two attenuated tallow candles dimly illuminated this dreary chamber. A patched and much-discoloured tablecloth, with some coarse knives and forks, bespoke preparation for a meal, and some half-dozen plates stood warming before the fire. But the room had no occupant; and, except for the beating of the shutters against the sash, as the wind whistled through the broken window, all was silent within it. Now and then a loud noise would resound through the house; doors would bang, and rafters rattle, as the hall-door would be partially opened to permit the head of a woman to peer out and listen if any one were coming; but a heavy sigh at each attempt showed that hope was still deferred, and the weary footfall of her steps, as she retired, betrayed disappointment. It was after one of these excursions that she sat down beside the kitchen fire, screening her face from the blaze with her apron, and then, in the subdued light, it might be seen that, although bearing many traces of sorrow and suffering, she was still young and handsome. Large masses of the silkiest brown hair, escaping from her cap, fell in heavy masses on her neck; her eyes were large and blue, and shaded by the longest lashes; her mouth, a little large, perhaps, was still beautifully formed, and her teeth were of surpassing whiteness. The expression of the whole face was of gentle simplicity and love—love in which timidity, however, deeply entered, and made the feeling one of acute suffering. In figure and dress she was exactly like any other peasant girl, a gaudy silk handkerchief on her neck being the only article of assumed luxury in her costume. She wore shoes, it is true—not altogether the custom of country girls—

but they were heavy and coarsely made, and imparted to her walk a hobbling motion that detracted from her appearance.

A large pot which hung suspended by a chain above the fire seemed to demand her especial care, and she more than once removed the wooden cover to inspect the contents; after which she invariably approached the window to listen, and then came back sorrowfully to her place, her lips muttering some low sounds inaudibly. Once she tried to hum a part of a song to try and beguile the time, but the effort was a failure, and, as her voice died away, two heavy tears stole slowly along her cheeks, and a deep sob burst from her; after which she threw her apron over her face, and buried her head in her lap. It was as she sat thus that a loud knocking shook the outer door, and the tones of a gruff voice rose even above the noise; but she heard neither. Again and again was the summons repeated, with the same result; and at last a handful of coarse gravel struck the kitchen window with a crash that effectually aroused her, and, springing up in terror, she hastened to the door.

In an instant she had unhooked the heavy chain, and sheltering the candle with her hand, admitted a large, powerfully-built man, who was scarcely within the hall, when he said, angrily, "Where the devil were you, that you couldn't hear me?"

"I was in the kitchen, Tom," said she.

"Don't call *me* Tom, d—n you:" replied he, violently. "Don't keep dinning into me the infernal fool that I've made of myself, or it will be the worse for you."

"Sure I never meant any harm by it; and it was your own self bid me do it," said she, meekly, as she assisted him to remove his dripping great-coat.

"And don't I rue it, well," rejoined he, through his half-closed teeth. "Isn't it this confounded folly that has shut me out of the best houses in the county! My bitter curse on the day and the hour I first saw you."

"Oh, don't say them words—don't, or you'll break my poor heart," cried she, clinging to him as he strode angrily into the parlour.

"Be off with you—be off to the kitchen, and leave me quiet," said he, rudely.

"There's your slippers, sir," said she, meekly, as, bending down, she untied his heavy shooting-shoes, and replaced them by a pair of list ones.

"Is the dinner ready?" asked he, sternly.

"It is, sir; but Massin'bred isn't come back."

"And who the devil is Massingbred? Don't you think he might be Mister Massingbred out of *your* mouth?"

"I ax your pardon, sir, and his too; but I didn't mean ——"

"There, there—away with you!" cried he, impatiently. "I'm never in a bad humour that you don't make me worse." And he leaned his face between his hands over the fire, while she slipped noiselessly from the room.

"Maybe he thinks he's doing me honour by staying here," burst he forth suddenly, as he sprung to his legs and stared angrily around him. "Maybe he supposes that it's great condescension for him to put up with my humble house! Ay, and that it's *my* bounden duty to wait for *him* to any hour he pleases. If I thought he did—if I was sure of it!" added he, with a deep guttural tone, while he struck his clenched fist violently against the chimney-piece. Then, seizing the large iron poker, he knocked loudly with it against the back of the fireplace—a summons quickly answered by the appearance of the girl at the door.

"Did he come in since morning?" asked he, abruptly.

"No, sir, never," replied she, with a half curtsey.

"Nor say what time he'd be back?"

"Not a word, sir."

"Then, maybe, he's not coming back—taken French leave, as they call it, eh, Joan?"

The sound of her name, spoken, too, in an accent of more friendly meaning, lighted up her face at once, and her large eyes swam in tears of gratitude towards him as she stood there.

"But he'd scarcely dare to do that!" said he, sternly.

"No, sir," said she, echoing half unconsciously his opinion.

"And what do *you* know about it?" said he, turning savagely on her. "Where were you born and bred, to say what any gentleman might do, at any time, or in any thing? Is it Joan Landy, the herd's daughter, is going to play fine lady upon us! Faix, we're come to a pretty pass now, in earnest. Be off with you. Away! Stop, what was that? Didn't you hear a shot?"

"I did, sir—quite near the house, too."

A sharp knocking now on the hall-door decided the question, and Magennis hastened to admit the arrival.

It is a strange fact, and one of which we are satisfied merely to make mention, without attempting in the least to explain, but no sooner was Magennis in the presence of his young guest, than not only he seemed to forget all possible cause of irritation towards him, but to behave with a manner of, for him, the most courteous civility. He aided him to remove his shot-belt and his bag; took his hat from his hands, and carefully wiped it; placed a chair for him close to the fire; and then, as he turned to address him, remarked for the first time the blood-stained handkerchief which still bound his forehead.

"Did you fall—had you an accident?" asked he, eagerly.

"No," said the other, laughing; "a bit of an adventure only, which I'll tell you after dinner."

"Was it any of the people? Had you a fight——"

"Come, Magennis, you must exercise a little patience. Not a word, not a syllable, till I have eaten something, for I am actually famishing."

A stout knock of the poker on the chimney summoned the dinner, and almost in the same instant the woman entered with a smoking dish of Irish stew.

"Mrs. Joan, you're an angel," said Massingbred; "if there was a dish I was longing for, on this cold, raw day, it was one of your glorious messes. They seem made for the climate, and, by Jove! the climate for them. I say, Mas, does it always rain in this fashion here?"

"No; it sleets now and then, and sometimes blows."

"I should think it does," said Jack, seating himself at the table. "The pleasant little slabs of marble one sees on the cabin-roofs to keep down the thatch, are signs of your western zephyrs.—Mrs. Joan has outdone herself to-day. This is first-rate."

"There's too strong a flavour of hare in it," said Magennis, critically.

"That's exactly its perfection; the wild savour lifts it out of the vulgar category of Irish stews, and assimilates it, but not too closely to the ragoût. I tell you, Mac, there's genius in the composition of that gravy."

The partial pedantry of this speech was more than compensated for by the racy enjoyment of the speaker, and Magennis was really gratified at the zest with which his young friend relished his meal.

"It has one perfection, at least," said he, modestly—"it's very unlike what you get at home."

"We have a goodish sort of a cook," said Jack, languidly—"a fellow my father picked up after the Congress of Verona.

Truffles and treaties seem to have some strong sympathetic attraction, and when diplomacy had finished its work, a *chef* was to be had cheap! The worst of the class is, they'll only functionate for your grand dinners, and they leave your every-day meal to some inferior in the department."

It was strange that Magennis could listen with interest always whenever Massingbred spoke of habits, people, and places, with which he had never been conversant. It was not so much for the topics themselves he cared—they were, in reality, valueless in his eyes—it was some singular pleasure he felt in thinking that the man who could so discuss them was his own guest, seated at his own table, thus connecting himself by some invisible link with the great ones of this world!

Massingbred's very name—the son of the celebrated Moore Massingbred—a Treasury Lord—Heaven knows what else besides—certainly a Right Honourable—was what first fascinated him in his young acquaintance, and induced him to invite him to his house. Jack would probably have declined the invitation, but it just came at the moment when he was deeply mortified at Nelligan's absence—an absence which old Dan was totally unable to explain or account for. Indeed, he had forgotten that, in his note to his son, he had not mentioned Massingbred by name, and thus was he left to all the embarrassment of an apology without the slightest clue as to the nature of the excuse.

No sooner, then, was it apparent to Massingbred that young Nelligan did not intend to return home, than he decided on taking his own departure. At first he determined on going back to Dublin. But suddenly a malicious thought sprung up of all the mortification it might occasion Joe to learn that he was still in the neighbourhood; and with the amiable anticipation of this vengeance, he at once accepted Magennis's offer to "accompany him to his place in the mountains and have some shooting."

It would not have been easy to find two men so essentially unlike in every respect as these two, who now sat discussing their punch after dinner. In birth, bringing-up, habits, instincts, they were widely dissimilar, and yet, somehow, they formed a sort of companionship palatable to each. Each had something to tell the other, which he had either not heard before, or not heard in the same way. We have already adverted to the strong fascination Magennis experienced in dwelling on the rank and social position of his young guest. Massingbred experienced no less delight in the indulgence of his favourite pastime—adventure hunting! Now, here was really something like adventure: this wild, rude mountain home—this strange compound of gloom and passion—this poor simple country girl, more than servant, less than wife—all separated from the remainder of the world by a gulf wider than mere space. These were all ingredients more than enough to suggest matter for imagination, and food for after-thought in many a day to come.

They had thus passed part of a week in company, when the incident occurred of which our last chapter makes mention, and an account of which, now, Massingbred proceeded to give his host, neither exaggerating nor diminishing in the slightest particular any portion of the event. He even repressed his habitual tendency to sarcasm, and spoke of his antagonist seriously and respectfully. "It was quite clear," said he, in conclusion, "that he didn't know I was a gentleman, and consequently never anticipated the consequence of a blow."

"And he struck you?" broke in Magennis, violently.

"You shall see for yourself," said Jack, smiling, as, untying the handkerchief, he exhibited a deep cut on his forehead, from which the blood still continued to ooze.

"Let Joan doctor you—she's wonderful at a cut. She has something they call Beggarman's Balsam. I'll fetch her. And without waiting for a reply he left the room. The young woman speedily after appeared with some lint and a small pot of ointment, proceeding to her office with all the quiet assiduity of a practised hand, and a gentleness that few "regulars" could vie with. Her skill was more than recompensed by the few muttered words of praise Magennis bestowed, as he grumbled out, half to himself, "Old Cahill himself couldn't do it better. I'd back her for a bandage against the College of Surgeons. Ain't ye easier now?—to be sure you are. She's good for *that*, if she is for nothing else!" And even this much of eulogy made her bosom heave proudly, and brought a flush of joy over her cheek that was ecstasy itself.

The world is not deficient in acts of kindness, benevolence, and good-will. There is a large fountain of these running in ten thousand rills; but how many more might there not be—how much of this wealth might there not be dispensed—and nobody living one jot the poorer! How many are there toiling away in obscurity and narrow fortune, to whom one single word of praise—one chance syllable of encouragement—would be life's blood! What sunken cheeks and lacklustre eyes would glow and gladden again by even a look of sympathy, withheld from no lack of kindliness, but mere want of thought! Oh ye, who have station, and fame, genius, or greatness, bethink ye that these gifts are never higher than when they elevate the humble and cheer the lowly, and there is no physician like him who animates the drooping heart, and gives new vigour to wearied faculties and failing energy. Joan was made happy by the two or three words of grateful thanks Massingbred addressed to her, and stole quietly away, leaving the two companions once more alone.

If there was any incident in life participation in which could convey intense gratification to Magennis, it was that sort of difference or misunderstanding that might lead to a duel. Whenever the affair offered no other alternative, his delight was unbounded. There were, it was rumoured, events in his own early life which would imply that the taste for mortal combat extended only to cases where his friends were concerned, and had no selfish application whatever. Of these we know nothing; nor, indeed, have we any information to convey regarding him, save by chance and stray words dropped by himself in the ungarded hours of after-dinner converse. There are, however, many who like the subordinate parts in this world's comedy—who would rather be best man than bridegroom, and infinitely prefer performing second, to principal.

We are not, however, going into the inquiry as to the cause; enough when we repeat that this was Magennis's great passion, and these were the kind of events for whose conduct and management he believed himself to possess the most consummate tact and ability.

"You're in luck, Massingbred," cried he, as the other concluded his recital—"you're in luck, sir, to have for your friend, one that, though I say it myself, hasn't his equal for a case like this in the three kingdoms. It was I, sir, took out Cahill when he shot Major Harris, of the Fusiliers. I handled him that morning in a way that made the English officers confess there was no chance against us! A duel seems an easy thing to arrange. You'd say that any fool could put up two men, twelve, or even ten, paces asunder, and tell them to blaze away; and if that was all there was in it, it would be simple enough; but consider for a minute the real case, and just remember how much the nature of the ground, whether level or uneven, has to do with it; what's behind, if a wall, or trees, or only sky; the state of the light; how the sun stands; whether there's wind, and what way it's coming. These are *not all. There's the* pistols—how they '*throw*,' and *with what charge; and then* there's the size of your man. *Ay, Massingbred, and let me tell* you, you now see before you the man that invented the 'invulnerable position.'"

"By Jove! that's a most valuable fact to me just now," said Jack, helping himself to a fresh tumbler. "I'm glad you have not been retained by the other side."

"The 'invulnerable position!'" continued Magennis, perfectly heedless of the other's remark; while, taking up the poker, he stalked out to the middle of the room, drawing himself up to his full height, and presenting, as though with a pistol—"Do you see what I mean?" cried he.

"I can't say I do," said Jack, hesitatingly.

"I thought not," rejoined the other, proudly, "nobody ever did that wasn't 'out' often. Pay attention now, and I'll explain it. My head, you perceive, is carried far behind my right shoulder, so as to be completely protected by my pistol-hand and the pistol. I say the pistol, because it has been proved scientifically that the steadiest eye that ever fired never could aim at the antagonist's pistol. Morris Crofton practised it for eight years in his own garden, and though he did succeed, he told me that for practical purposes it was no use. Now we come to the neck, and you may observe the bend of my elbow. Ay, that little angle that nobody would remark masks the jugular arteries, and all the other vital nerves in that part. John Toler used to say that the head and neck was like the metropolis, and that a shot elsewhere was only like a 'row' in the provinces: and a very true and wise remark it was. Not that I neglect the trunk," added he, proudly, "for you see how I stand—three-quarters of the back towards the enemy, so as not to expose the soft parts. As for the legs," cried he, contemptuously, "let them crack at them as long as they like."

"And that's the 'invulnerable position,'" said Massingbred; with less enthusiasm, however, than the discovery might seem to warrant.

"It is, sir, and if it wasn't for it there's many a strapping fellow walking about this day, that would be lying with a marble counterpane over him. Billy Welsh, that fought Brian of Deanstown, was the first man I ever 'put up' in it. Billy had a slight crick of the neck, and couldn't get the head far enough round to the right, and the ball took him in the bridge of the nose, and carried that feature clean off, but never damaged him in any other respect whatever!"

"I must say that the loss was quite sufficient for a man who had the benefit of the 'invulnerable position,'" said Massingbred, quietly.

"He thinks nothing of it. A chap in the Crow-street Theatre made him a better nose than ever he had, out of wax, I believe; and he has a winter one, with a blush of red on it, to make believe it was cold, and they tell me you'd never discover it wasn't his own."

Magennis had now resumed his place at table, and seemed bent on making up for lost time by giving double measure of whiskey to his punch.

"You say that he's to be in Oughterard to-night; well, with the blessing of the Virgin"—an invocation he invariably applied to every act of dubious morality—"we'll be with him before he's out of bed to-morrow!"

"I wish he had not given me a blow," said Jack, musingly. "He seemed such a stout-hearted, spirited old fellow, I'm really grieved to quarrel with him."

"I'm glad that there's nobody to hear them words but myself, Mr. Massingbred," said the other, with all the slowness and deliberation of incipient drunkenness—"I'm rejoiced, sir, that it's in the confidential intercourse of friendly—friendly—communication—that the son of my old and valued friend—Moore Massingbred—used expressions like that."

Jack started with amazement at this speech; he had not the slightest suspicion till that moment that Magennis and his father had ever known each other, or even met. A very little patience, however, on his part served to solve the difficulty, for he discovered that one of the peculiarities of this stage of his friend's ebriety was to fancy himself the intimate and associate of any one whose name he had ever heard mentioned.

"Ay, sir, them's words your father would never have uttered. I was with him in his first blaze. 'Moore,' says I, 'haven't you a pair of black breeches?'—he wore a pair of web 'tights' of a light pattern——What are you laughing at, sir?" cried he, sternly, and striking the table with his clenched knuckles, till the glasses all rang on it.

"I was laughing at my father's costume," said Jack; who really told the truth, such a portrait of his parent's appearance being manifestly unlike anything he had ever imagined.

"And the worse manners yours, sir," rejoined Magennis, rudely. "I'll not suffer any man to laugh at an old friend—and—and—schoolfellow!"

It was with the very greatest difficulty that Jack could restrain himself at this peroration, which indignation—the same, probably, that creates poets—had suggested. He had, however, tact enough to preserve his gravity, whilst he assured his companion that no unfilial sentiment had any share in his thoughts.

"So far, so well," said Magennis, who now helped himself to the whiskey, unadulterated by any water, "otherwise, sir, it's not Lieutenant Magennis, of the —9th Foot, would handle you on the ground to-morrow!"

"So, then, you've served, Mac? Why, you never broke that to me before!"

"Broke!" cried the other, with a voice shrill from passion, while he made an effort to rise from his chair, and sunk back again—"broke! who dares to say I was 'broke.' I left the scoundrels myself. I shook the dust off my feet after them. There never was a court-martial about it. Never—never!" To the deep crimson that suffused his face before, there now succeeded an almost death-like pallor, and Massingbred really felt terrified at the change. Some heartrending recollection seemed suddenly to have cleared his brain, routing in an instant all the effects of intoxication, and restoring him to sobriety and sorrow together.

"Ay," said he, in a low, broken voice, and still speaking to himself, "that finished me! I never held my head up again! Who could, after such a business? I came here, Mr. Massingbred," continued he, but addressing his guest in a tone of deep respect—"I came back here a ruined man, and not eight-and-twenty! You see me now, a dirty, drunken sot, not better dressed, nor better mannered, than the commonest fellow on the road, and yet I'm a gentleman born and bred, well nurtured, and well educated. I took a college degree, and went into the army." He paused, as if trying to gather courage to go on; the effort was more than he could accomplish, and, as the heavy tears stole slowly down his cheeks, the agony of the struggle might be detected. Half mechanically he seized the decanter of whisky and poured the tumbler nearly full; but Jack good-humouredly stretched out his hand towards the glass, and said, "Don't drink, Mac; there's no head could stand it."

"You think so, boy," cried he, with a saucy smile. "Little you know the way we live in the west, here;" and he tossed off the liquor before the other could stop him. The empty glass had scarcely been replaced on the table, when all the former signs of drunkenness had come back again, and in his bloodshot eyes and swollen veins might be seen the very type of passionate debauch.

"Not ask me to their houses!" cried he, hoarse with passion. "Who wants them? Not invite me! Did I ever seek them? The dirty, mean spalpeens, don't I know the history of every one of them? Couldn't I expose them from one end of the county to the other? Who's Blake of Harristown? He's the son of Lucky Magarry, the pedlar. You don't believe me. I had it from Father Cole himself. Lucky was hanged at Ennis. 'Ye want a confession!' says Lucky, when he came out on the drop—'ye want a confession! Well, I suppose there's no use in keeping anything back now, for ye'll hang me at any rate, and so here it's for you. It was *I* murdered Mr. Shea, and there was nobody helping me at all. I did it all myself with a flail; and be the same token, it's under Mark Bindon's tombstone this minute. There now, the jury may be azy in their minds, and the judge, and the hangman too, if he cares about it. As for his honour the high sheriff,' said he, raising his voice, 'he's a fine man, God bless him, and the county may be proud of him, for it was he ferreted out all about this business! And faix, notwithstanding all, I'm proud of him myself, for he's my own son!' And as he said that he dropped on his knees and cried out that he might never see glory if there was a word of lie in anything he said then! So that's what Blake got for his zeal for justice!"

And as Magennis finished, he burst into a wild, fiendish laugh, and said:

"There's the country gentry—there's the people won't know Magennis and his wife!—ay, sir, his lawful, married wife! Let me see that you or any other man will deny it, or refuse to treat her as becomes her station.—Joan! Joan!" shouted he, striking the poker violently against the chimney; and with hot haste and intense anxiety the poor girl rushed into the room the moment after. "Sit down here, ma'am," said Magennis, rising, and placing a chair for her beside his own, with an affectation of courtesy that savoured of mockery—"sit down, I say," cried he, stamping his foot passionately. "That's my wife, sir! No man that sits at *my* board shall behave to her as anything else."

"I have ever treated her with respect," said Massingbred, "and shall always continue to do so."

"And it's better for you to do so," said the other, fiercely, the bullying spirit rising on what he deemed the craven submission of his guest.

Meanwhile the girl sat trembling with terror, not knowing what the scene portended, or how it was to end.

"The herd's daughter, indeed! No, sir, Mrs. Magennis, of Barnagheela, that's her name and title!"

At these words the poor girl, overcome with joy and gratitude, fell down upon her knees before him, and, clasping his hand, covered it with kisses.

"Isn't that pretty breeding!" cried Magennis, violently. "Get up, ma'am, and sit on your chair like a lady. The devil a use in it, do what you will, say what you will—the bad 'drop' is in them; and whatever becomes of you in life, Massingbred, let me give you this advice—never marry beneath you!"

Jack contrived at this juncture to signal to the girl to step away, and by appearing to attend with eagerness to Magennis, he prevented his remarking her exit.

"A man's never really ruined till then," continued he, slowly, and evidently sobering again as he went on. "Friends fall away from you, and your companions are sure to be fellows with something against them! You begin by thinking you're doing a grand and a courageous thing! You string up your resolution to despise the world, and, take my word for it, the world pays you off at last. Ay," said he, after a long pause, in which his features settled down into an expression of deep sorrow, and his voice quivered with emotion—"ay, and I'll tell you something worse than all—you revenge all your disappointment on the poor girl that trusted you! and you break *her* heart to try and heal your own!"

With these last words he buried his head between his hands and sobbed fearfully.

"Leave me now—leave me alone," said he, without lifting his head. "Good night—good night to you!"

Massingbred arose without a word, and, taking a candle, ascended to his chamber, his last thoughts about his host being very unlike those with which he had first regarded him. From these considerations he turned to others more immediately concerning himself, nor could he conquer his misgivings that Magennis was a most unhappy selection for a friend in such an emergency.

"But then I really am without a choice," said he to himself.

"Joe Nelligan, perhaps, might —— but no, he would have been infinitely more unfit than the other. At all events, Nelligan has himself severed the friendship that once existed between us." And so he wandered on to thoughts of his former companionship with him. Regretful and gloomy enough were they, as are all memories of those in whose hearts we once believed we had a share, and from which we cannot reconcile ourselves to the exclusion.

"He had not the manliness to meet me when I had become aware of his real station! What a poor-spirited fellow! Just as if *I* cared what or who his father was. My theory is—Jack Massingbred can afford to know any man he pleases! Witness the roof that now shelters me, and the character of him who is my host!"

It was a philosophy he built much upon, for it was a form of self-love that simulated a good quality, many of his acquaintances saying, "At all events, there's no snobbery about Massingbred; he'll know, and even be intimate with, anybody." Nor did the deception only extend to others. Jack himself fancied he was an excellent fellow—frank, generous, and openhearted.

It is a very strange fact—and fact it certainly is—that the men who reason most upon their own natures, look inwardly at their own minds, and scrutinise most their own motives, are frequently the least natural of all mankind! This self-inquiry is such thorough self-deception, that he who indulges in it, often becomes an actor. As for Massingbred, there was nothing real about him save his egotism! Gifted with very good abilities, aided by a strong "vitality," he had great versatility; but of all powers, this same plastic habit tends most to render a man artificial.

Now, his present difficulty was by no means to his taste. He did not like his "quarrel;" he liked less the age and station of his adversary; and, least of all, was he pleased with the character of his "friend." It was said of Sheridan, that when consulted about the music of his operas, he only asked, "Will it grind?"—that is, would it be popular enough for a street-organ, and become familiar to every ear? So Jack Massingbred regarded each event in life by the test of how it would "tell"—in what wise could a newspaper report it—and how would it read in the Clubs? He fancied himself discussing the adventure at "White's," and asking, "Can any one say what Massingbred's row was about? Was he poaching?—or how came he there?

Was there a woman in it? And who is his friend Magennis?" In thoughts like these he passed hour after hour, walking his room from end to end, and waiting for morning.

At length he bethought him how little likely it was that Magennis would remember anything whatever of the transaction, and that his late debauch might obliterate all memory of the affair. "What if this were to be the case, and that we were to arrive to late at Oughterard? A pretty version would the papers then publish to the world!" Of all possible casualties this was the very worst, and the more he reflected on it, the more probable did it seem. "He is the very fellow to wake up late in the afternoon, rub his eyes, and declare he had forgotten the whole thing."

"This will never do!" muttered he to himself; and at once determined that he would make an endeavour to recal his friend to consciousness, and come to some arrangement for the approaching meeting. Massingbred descended the stairs with noiseless steps, and gently approaching the door of the sitting-room, opened it.

Magennis was asleep, his head resting upon the table, and his heavy breathing denoting how deeply he slumbered. On a low stool at his feet sat Joan, pale and weary-looking, her cheeks still marked with recent tears, and the dark impression of what seemed to have been a blow beneath her eye. Jack approached her cautiously, and asked if it were his custom to pass the night thus?

"Sometimes, when he's tired—when he has anything on his mind," replied she, in some confusion, and averting her head so as to escape notice.

"And when he awakes," said Jack, "he will be quite refreshed, and his head all clear again?"

"By coorse he will!" said she, proudly. "No matter what he took of a night, nobody ever saw the signs of it on him, the next morning."

"I did not ask out of any impertinent curiosity," continued Massingbred, "but we have, both of us, some rather important business to-morrow in Oughterard—we ought to be there at an early hour ——"

"I know," said she, interrupting. "He bid me bring down these;" and she pointed to a case of pistols lying open beside her, and in cleaning which she had been at the moment engaged. "I brought the wrong ones, first." Here she stammered out something, and grew crimson over her whole face; then suddenly recovering herself, said, "I didn't know it was the 'Terries' he wanted."

"The 'Terries?'" repeated Jack.

"Yes, sir. It was these Terry Callaghan shot the two gentlemen with, the same morning, at Croghaglin—father and son they were!" And saying these words in a voice of the most perfect unconcern possible, she took up a flannel rag and began to polish the lock of one of the weapons.

"They're handsome pistols," said Jack, rather amused with her remark.

"They're good, and that's better!" replied she, gravely. "That one in your hand has seven double crosses on the stock and nine single."

"The seven were killed on the ground, I suppose?"

A short nod of assent was her reply.

"Such little events are not unfrequent down here, then?"

"Anan!" said she, not understanding his question.

Jack quickly perceived that he had not taken sufficient account of Joan's limited acquaintance with language, and said:

"They often fight in these parts?"

"Ayeh! not now," replied she, in a half-deploring tone. "My father remembers twenty duels for one that does be, now-a-days."

"A great change, indeed."

"Some say it's all for the better," resumed she, doubtfully. "But hush—he's stirring; leave him quiet, and I'll call you when he's ready."

"And I can depend ——"

"To be sure you can. He forgets many a thing, but no man living can say that he ever misremembered a duel." And with these words, in a low whisper, she motioned Massingbred to the door.

Jack obeyed in silence, and, ascending to his room, lay down on the bed. He determined to pass the interval before morning in deep thought and self-examination; but, somehow, he had scarcely laid his head on the pillow when he fell off into a heavy sleep, sound and dreamless.

The day was just breaking when he was aroused by a somewhat rude shake, and a voice saying:

"Come, up with you. We've a sharp ride before us!"

Jack started up, and in an instant recalled all the exigencies of the hour.

"I have sent 'the tools' forward by a safe hand," continued Magennis; "and Joan has a cup of tea ready for us, below stairs. So, lose no time now, and let us be off."

The humble meal that awaited them was soon despatched, and they were speedily mounted on the pair of mountain ponies Magennis had provided, and whose equipments, even in the half-light of the morning, rather shocked Massingbred's notions of propriety—one of his stirrup-leathers being a foot shorter than the other, while an old worsted bell-rope formed the snaffle-rein of his bridle.

The road, too, was rugged and precipitous, and many a stumble and scramble had they in the uncertain light; while the swooping rain dashed violently against them, and effectually precluded all thought of conversation. Two hours, that seemed like ten, brought them at length upon the high road; after which, by a brisk canter of forty minutes, they reached Oughterard.

"Let us dismount here," said Jack, as they gained the outskirts of the town, not fancying to make a public appearance on his humble steed.

"Why so?" answered Magennis. "It's ashamed of the pony you are! Oh, for the matter of that, don't distress yourself; we're too well used to them in these parts to think them ridiculous."

There was a soreness and irritation in his tone which Jack quickly remarked, and as quickly tried to obviate, by some good-natured remark about the good qualities of the animals; but Magennis heard him without attention, and seemed entirely immersed in his own thoughts.

"Turn in there, to your left," cried he, suddenly, and they wheeled into an arched gateway that opened upon the stable-yard of the inn. Early as it was, the place was full of bustle and movement, for it was the market-day, and the farmers were already arriving.

Carts, cars, gigs, and a dozen other nameless vehicles, crowded the spot, with kicking ponies and mules of malicious disposition; grooming, and shoeing, and unharnessing went on, with a noise and merriment that was perfectly deafening; and Massingbred, as he threaded his way through the crowd, soon perceived how little notice he was likely to attract in such an assembly. Magennis soon dismounted, and having given directions about the beasts, led Jack into the house, and up a narrow, creaking stair, into a small room, with a single window, and a bed in one corner. "This is where I always put up," said he, laying down his hat and whip, "and it will do well enough for the time we'll want it."

CHAPTER XVI.

"A CHALLENGE."

"HE's here; he arrived last night," said Magennis, as he entered the room after a short exploring tour through the stables, the kitchen, and every other quarter where intelligence might be come at. "He came alone; but the major of the detachment supped with him, and that looks like business!"

"The earlier you see him the better, then," said Massingbred.

"I'll just go and get my beard off," said he, passing his hand across a very grizzly stubble, "and I'll be with him in less than half an hour. There's only a point or two I want to be clear about. Before he struck you, did you gesticulate, or show any intention of using violence?"

"None. I have told you that I caught his horse by the bridle, but that was to save him from falling back."

"Ah, that was indiscreet, at all events."

"Wouldn't it have been worse to suffer him to incur a severe danger which I might have prevented?"

"I don't think so; but we'll not discuss the point now. There was a blow?"

"That there was," said Jack, pointing to the spot where a great strap of sticking-plaister extended across his forehead.

"And he seemed to understand at once that reparation was to be made for it?"

"The suggestion came from himself, frankly and speedily."

"Well, it's pretty evident we have to deal with a gentleman!" said Magennis, "and that same's a comfort; so I'll leave you now for a short time: amuse yourself as well as you can, but don't quit the room." And with this caution Magennis took his departure, and set off in search of Mr. Repton's chamber.

"Where are you bringing the mutton chops, Peter?" said he to a waiter, who, with a well-loaded tray of eatables, was hastening along the corridor.

"To the ould counsellor, from Dublin, sir. He's breakfastin' with the major."

"And that's his room, No. 19?"

"Yes, sir."

"They're merry, at all events," said Magennis, as a burst of hearty laughter was heard from within the chamber.

"'Tis just that they are, indeed," replied Peter. "The counsellor does be telling one story after another, till you'd think he'd no end of them. He began last night at supper, and I could scarce change the plates for laughin'."

Muttering some not very intelligible observation to himself, Magennis passed down the stairs, and issuing into the street, wended his way to the barber's.

If the Oughterard Figaro had not as brilliant a vocation as his colleague of Seville, his occupations were scarcely less multifarious, for he kept the post-office, was clerk at petty sessions, collected the parish cess, presided over "the pound," besides a vast number of inferior duties. Whether it was the result of a natural gift, or by the various information of his official life, Hosey Lynch was regarded in his native town as a remarkably shrewd man, and a good opinion on a number of subjects.

He was a short, decrepid old fellow, with an enormous head of curly black hair, which he seemed to cultivate with all the address of his craft; probably intending it as a kind of advertisement of his skill, displaying as it did all the resources of his handiwork. But even above this passion was his ardour for news—news, political, social, legal, or literary; whatever might be the topic, it always interested him, and it was his especial pride to have the initiative of every event that stirred the hearts of the Oughterard public.

The small den in which he performed his functions occupied the corner of the street, giving a view in two directions, so that Hosey, while cutting and curling, never was obliged to lose sight of that world without, in whose doings he felt so strong an interest. In the one easy-chair of this sanctum was Magennis now disposed, waiting for Mr. Lynch, who had just stepped down to "the pound," to liberate the priest's pig. Nor had he long to wait, for Hosey soon made his appearance, and slipping on a very greasy-looking jean-jacket, proceeded to serve him.

"The top of the morning to you, Captain"—he always styled him by the title—"it's a rare pleasure to see you so early in town; but it will be a bad market to-day—cut and curled, Captain?"

"No; shaved!" said Magennis, bluntly.

"And shaved you shall be, Captain—and beautifully shaved, too, for I have got an excellent case from Lamprey's; they came yesterday—came with the writ against Jones Creegan."

"At whose suit?"

"Mrs. Miles Creegan, the other brother's widow," said Hosey, lathering away and talking with breathless rapidity. "There was a clause in old Sam's will, that if ever Tom, the chap that died at Demerara—you'd like more off the whiskers, it's more military. It was only yesterday Major Froode remarked to me what a soldierlike looking man was Captain Magennis."

"Is he in command of the detachment?"

"He is in his Majesty's—1st Foot—the 'Buccaneers,' they used to be called; I suppose you never heard why?"

"No, nor don't want to hear. What kind of a man is the major?"

"He's a smart, well-made man, with rather a haughty look," said Hosey, drawing himself up, and seeming to imply that there was a kind of resemblance between them.

"Is he English or Irish?"

"Scotch, Captain—Scotch; and never gives more than fivepence for a cut and curl, pomatum included.—No letters, Mrs. Cronin," cried he, raising up the movable shutter of the little window; then bending down his ear he listened to some whispered communication from that lady, after which he shut the panel, and resumed his functions. "She's at law with O'Reilly about the party wall. There's the major now going down to the barracks, and I wonder who's the other along with him;" and Hosey rushed to the door to find some clue to the stranger. In less than a quarter of a minute he was back again, asking pardon for absence, and informing Magennis "that the man in plain clothes was a Dublin counsellor, that arrived the night before. I think I can guess what he's here for."

"What is it?" cried Magennis, eagerly.

"There's an election coming on, and the Martins expect a contest.—Nothing for you, Peter," said he to an applicant for a letter outside. "He's looking to be made barony constable these four years, and he's as much chance as I have of being—what shall I say ——"

"Are you done?" asked Magennis, impatiently.

"One minute more, sir—the least touch round the chin—and, as I was saying, Captain, the Martins will lose the borough."

"Who thinks so besides you?" asked Magennis, gruffly.

"It is, I may say, the general opinion; the notion current in —— There's Miss Martin, herself," cried he, running to the window. "Well, really, she handles them ponies elegant!"

"Does she come often into town?"

"I don't think I saw her in Oughterard—let me see when it was—it's two years—no, but it's not far off—it's more than ——"

"Are you done?" said Magennis, impatiently. "I told you that I was pressed for time this morning."

"You're finished now, Captain," said Hosey, presenting him with a small cracked looking-glass. "That's what I call a neat chin and a beautiful sweep of whisker. Thank you, Captain. It's a pleasure and an honour—not to say that it's ——"

Magennis did not wait for the peroration, but, striding hastily out of the little shop, issued into the street that led to the inn. On arriving there, he heard that Mr. Repton had gone out, leaving word that he would be found at Major Froode's quarters. Thither Magennis now repaired, with all the solemn importance befitting his mission.

As he sent in his name, he could overhear the short colloquy that passed within, and perceive that Repton was about to retire; and now the servant ushered him into the presence of a smart, light-whiskered little man, with a pair of shrewd grey eyes, and a high forehead.

"A brother officer, I perceive, sir," said he, looking at the card, whereupon the title Captain was inscribed; "pray take a chair."

"You anticipate the reason of this visit, Major Froode," said the other, with some degree of constraint, as though the preliminaries were the reverse of pleasant to him. The major bowed, and Magennis went on: "I suppose, then, I'm to treat with you as the friend of Mr. Valentine Repton?"

"And you are Mr. Massingbred's?" said the major, answering the question with another.

"I have that honour, sir," said Magennis, pompously; "and now, sir, how soon can it come off?"

"Don't you imagine, Captain Magennis, that a little quiet discussion of the question at issue between two old soldiers, like you and myself, might possibly be advisable? Is there not a chance that our united experience might not suggest an amicable arrangement of this business?"

"Quite out of the question—utterly, totally impossible!" said Magennis, sternly.

"Then perhaps I lie under some misconception," said the major, courteously.

"There was a blow, sir!—a blow!" said Magennis, in the same stern tone.

"I opine that everything that occurred was purely accidental—just hear me out—that a hasty word and a hurried gesture, complicated with the impatient movement of a horse ——"

A long whistle from Magennis interrupted the speech, and the major, reddening to the very top of his high forehead, said:

"Sir, this is unbecoming—are you aware of it?"

"I'm quite ready for anything when this is settled," said Magennis, but with less composure than he desired to assume. "What I meant was, that, for a blow there is but one reparation."

"Doubtless, if the injury admit of no explanation," said the major, calmly; "but in that lies the whole question. Consider two things, Captain Magennis: first of all, the equivocal appearance of *your* friend, the age and standing of *mine*."

"By Jove! you'll kill me in trying to save my life," said Repton, bursting into the room. "I didn't want to play eavesdropper, Froode, but these thin partitions are only soundboards for the voice. This gentleman," added he, turning to Magennis, "is perfectly correct. There was a blow, and a blow has only one consequence, and that one I'm ready for. There may be, for aught I know, twenty ways of settling these matters in London or at the clubs, but we're old-fashioned in our notions in Ireland here; and I don't think that even when we pick up new fashions that we're much the better for them, so that if your friend is here, captain, and ready ——"

"Both, sir; here and ready!"

"Then so am I; and now for the place. Come, Froode, you don't know Ireland as well as I do; just humour me this time, and whenever I get into a scrape in Scotland you shall have it all your own way. Eh, captain, isn't that fair?"

"Spoke like a trump!" muttered Magennis.

"For *me*, did you say?" said Repton, taking a letter from the servant, who had just entered the room

"Yes, sir; and the groom says there's an answer expected."

"The devil take it, I've forgotten my spectacles. Froode, just tell me what's this about, and who it comes from."

"It's Miss Martin's hand," said Froode, breaking the seal and running over the contents. "Oh, I perceive," said he; "they're afraid you have taken French leave of them at Cro' Martin, and she has driven into town to carry you back again."

"That comes of my leaving word at the little post-office to forward my letters to Dublin if not asked for to-morrow. Take a pen, Froode, and write a couple of lines for me: say that a very urgent call—a professional call—will detain me here to-day, but that if not back by dinner-time—Captain Magennis thinks it not likely," added he, turning towards him as he sat, with a very equivocal expression, half grin, half sneer, upon his features—"that I'll be with them at breakfast next morning," resumed Repton, boldly. "Make some excuse for my not answering the note myself—whatever occurs to you. And so, sir," said he, turning to Magennis, "your friend's name is Massingbred? Any relation to Colonel Moore Massingbred?"

"His son—his only son, I believe."

"How strange! I remember the father in the 'House'—I mean the Irish House—five-and-thirty years ago; he was always on the government benches. It was of him Parsons wrote those doggrel lines:

A man without a heart or head,
Who seldom thought, who never read,
A witty word who never said,
One at whose board none ever fed,
Such is the Colonel M—g—b—d.

He couldn't call him a coward, though; for when they went out—which they did—Massingbred's manner on the ground was admirable."

"Will that do?" said Froode, showing a few lines he had hastily jotted down.

"I can't read a word of it, but of course it will," said he; "and then, sir," added he, addressing Magennis, "the sooner we place ourselves at your disposal the better."

Froode whispered something in Repton's ear, and by his manner seemed as if remonstrating with him, when the other said aloud:

"We're in Ireland, major; and, what's more, we're in Galway; as Macleweed said once to a prisoner: 'With a Yorkshire jury, sir, I'd hang you. Your sentence now is, to pay five marks to the king, and find bail for your good behaviour.' You see what virtue there is in locality."

"There's a neat spot about two miles off, on the road to Maum," said Magennis to the major. "We could ride slowly forward, and you might keep us in view."

"In what direction did you say?"

"Take the second turn out of the market-place till you pass the baker's shop, then, to the left, and straight on afterwards. You can't miss it."

"Stop a moment, sir," said Froode to Magennis, as he moved towards the door; "one word, if you please. It is distinctly understood that I have been overruled in this business—that, in fact, I have submitted ——"

"Your point has been reserved," said Repton, laughing, while he led him away; and Magennis at the same moment took his departure.

It was, indeed, with no slight feeling of triumph that this gentleman now hastened back to the Martin Arms. Never did a great diplomatist experience more pride in the conclusion of some crowning act of negotiation than did he in the accomplishment of this affair.

"There's many a man," said he to himself, "who'd have accepted an apology here—there's many a man might have let himself be embarrassed by the circumstances; for, certainly, the taking hold of the bridle was an awkward fact, and if the major was a 'cute fellow he'd have made a stand upon it. I must say that the counsellor showed no backwardness; he comes of that fine old stock we used to have before the Union."

And with this profound reflection he entered the room where Massingbred sat awaiting him.

"It's all settled. We're to meet at the Priest's Gap within an hour," said Magennis, with the air of a man who had acquitted himself cleverly. "And though I say it, that shouldn't, if you were in other hands this morning you wouldn't have got your shot."

"I always relied implicitly upon your skill!" said Massingbred, humouring his vanity.

"Have you anything to arrange—a letter or so to write—for I'll step down to Doctor Hearkins to tell him to follow us?"

Massingbred made no reply as the other left the room. Once more alone, he began to think gravely over his present situation. Nor could all his habitual levity steel him against the conviction that five minutes of common-sense talk might arrange a dispute which now promised a serious ending. "However," thought he, "we are not in the land where such differences admit of amicable solution, and there's no help for it."

A sharp tap at the door startled him from these musings, and before he could well reply to it Daniel Nelligan entered the room, and advanced towards him with an air of mingled ease and constraint.

"I hope you'll forgive me, Mr. Massingbred," he began. "I feel certain that you will at some future day at least, for what I'm going to do." Here he stopped and drew a long breath, as if not knowing in what terms to continue. Massingbred handed him a chair, and took one in front of him without speaking.

"I know what brought you here to-day—I am aware of it all."

He paused, and waited for the other to speak; but Massingbred sat without offering a word, and evidently relying on his own social tact to confound and embarrass his visitor.

"I know, sir, that you are likely to regard my interference as impertinent," resumed Nelligan; "but I trust that the friend of my son, Joe ——"

"I must set you right, upon one point at least, Mr. Nelligan," said Massingbred, with an easy smile. "If you be only as accurate in your knowledge of my affairs as you are with respect to my private friendships, this visit has certainly proceeded from some misconception. Your son and I were friends once upon a time. We are so no longer!"

"I never heard of this. I never knew you had quarrelled!"

"We have not, sir. We have not even met. The discourtesy he has shown me since my arrival here—his avoidance of me, too marked to be explained away—is an offence. The only misfortune is, that it is one which can be practised with impunity."

"My son asks for none such," said Dan, fiercely. "And if your observation is meant for an insult ——" He stopped suddenly, as if checked by something within, and then said, but in a voice full and measured: "I'm a magistrate of this town, sir, and I come here upon information that has reached me of your intentions to commit a breach of the peace."

"My dear Mr. Nelligan," began Massingbred, in his most seductive of manners,—but the other had already witnessed the rupture of the only tie which bound them—the supposed friendship between Joe and Massingbred—and cared nothing for all the blandishments he could bestow,—"my dear Mr. Nelligan, you cannot, surely, suppose that a mere stranger as I am in your county—scarcely ten days here—should have been unfortunate enough to have incurred the animosity of any one."

"I hold here a statement, sir," said Nelligan, sternly, "which, if you please to pledge your honour to be incorrect ——"

"And this is Galway!" exclaimed Massingbred—"this glorious land of chivalrous sentiment of which we poor Englishmen have been hearing to satiety! The Paradise of Point of Honour, then, turns out a very common-place locality after all!"

"I'm proud to say that our county has another reputation than its old one; not but"—and he added the words in some temper—"there are a few left would like to teach you that its character was not acquired for nothing."

"Well, well!" sighed Jack, as he closed his eyes, and appeared as if indulging in a reverie, "of all the mockeries I have lived to see unmasked, this is the worst and meanest."

"I have not come here to listen to this, sir," said Nelligan, haughtily, as he arose. "I waited upon you, intending to accept your solemn pledge, by word of honour, to commit no act hostile to the public peace. Now, sir, I shall call upon you to give me the legal guarantee for this security—good and sufficient bail, and that within an hour!"

"My dear Mr. Nelligan," replied Massingbred, with all the quiet ease of an unruffled temper, "I have not a single friend here, except yourself, upon whom I could call in such an emergency. I am utterly unknown in these parts—my very name unheard of before my arrival. If I *did*, by any unhappy circumstance find myself in such an involvement as you speak of, I solemnly assure you my first thought would be to address myself to Mr. Nelligan."

The easy impertinence of this speech would have been perfectly successful a short time previous, when Nelligan yet believed in the close friendship with his son. It came now, however, too late, and the old man listened to it with something bordering on anger.

"Good and sufficient bail, sir—yourself and two others," repeated he, slowly, and moving towards the door.

"One word, I pray," said Jack, rising, and speaking with more earnestness and apparently with more sincerity. "I do not ask you any details as to the circumstances you impute to me, but perhaps you would, as a favour, tell me how this information has reached you?"

"I will not, sir," was the abrupt reply.

"I'm sure no friend of mine could have ——"

"It's no use, Mr. Massingbred; all your address will avail you nothing. You shall not cross-examine *me!*"

"You must, however, see, sir," said Massingbred, "that unknown and unfriended as I am here, bail is out of the question."

"The Bench will hear anything you desire to say on that subject," said Nelligan, coldly. "Good morning to you." And with these words he left the room, and descended into the street.

The passionate warmth which Massingbred had so successfully controlled in the presence of his visitor burst forth the first moment he found himself alone. He inveighed against the country, the people, their habits, and all belonging to them; cursed his own fate at being ever thrown into such companionship; and wound up by resolving to submit to any terms by which he might quit Galway for ever, and forget, for the rest of his days, that he had ever entered it. While he was yet fuming in this fashion, the waiter entered and presented him with a very dirty-looking note, fastened by two wafers, and inscribed "Most private." Massingbred opened it and read:

"MY DEAR MR. M.,

"We're found out—I believe by Hosey Lynch, where I dropped a bullet-mould this morning when he was shaving me. At all events, we're blown, and as I am under 250*l.* recognisances to keep the peace for three years, I'm off to the mountains till this passes over.. I'm sure, from what I saw of the counsellor, that he'll keep himself open to a proposal elsewhere. Meanwhile, there's nothing for it but to give your bail and satisfy the blackguards—bad luck to them—that spoiled the sport! You can go back to the house when all's over, and I'll return as soon as it is safe for

"Your sincere friend,

"T. M."

Scarcely had he finished reading this epistle, when Major Froode presented himself in his chamber, the door of which the waiter was yet holding ajar. Having introduced himself, he briefly informed Massingbred of his position as Mr. Repton's friend, and as briefly stated that the counsellor had been obliged to pledge himself against any hostile intentions—a step which, he foresaw, would also be required of him. "For this reason I have come," continued he, "to say, that any assistance I can be of to you, is frankly at your service. I have learned that you are a stranger here, and not likely to have many acquaintances."

"If they would be satisfied with my word," began Jack.

"Of course they will, and shall," interrupted Froode; "and now, what is there in the way of *amende* my friend can make, for what he is prepared to confess was a mere accident?"

"The acknowledgment is ample. I ask for nothing beyond it," said Massingbred. "I am not quite certain but that my own conduct might require a little explanation; but as your friend's vigour put matters beyond negotiation, at the time, we'll not go back upon bygones."

"And now, sir," burst in Repton, who had waited outside the door—"and now, sir, I beg you to accept the humblest apology I can tender for what has happened. I'm not as safe on my saddle as I used to be forty years ago; and when the nag reared and threatened to fall back upon me, I am ashamed to own that I neither saw nor cared what I struck at. I'd have said all this to you, Mr. Massingbred, after your fire, had we been permitted to go to the ground; and although there is some additional humiliation in saying it, here, I richly deserve all the pain it gives me, for my want of temper. Will you give me your hand?"

"With sincere pleasure," said Jack, shaking him warmly and cordially with both his own.

"There's but one thing more to be done," said Repton. "These borough magistrates, vulgar dogs as they are, will want you to give a bail bond; take no notice of them, but just drive out with me to Cro' Martin, and we'll settle it all there."

"I am not acquainted with Mr. Martin."

"But you shall be. He'll be charmed to know you, and the place is worth seeing. Come, you mustn't leave the West, with only its barbarism in your memory. You must carry away some other recollections."

The new turn affairs had just taken was by no means distasteful to Massingbred. It promised another scene in that drama of life he loved to fashion for himself, with new scenery, new actors, and new incidents. "The counsellor," too, struck his fancy; there was a raciness in the old man's manner, a genial cordiality, united with such palpable acuteness, that he promised himself much pleasure in his society, and so he accepted the proposal with all willingness, and pledged to hold himself ready for his friend within an hour.

Repton and the major had but just left the room, when the former re-entered it hurriedly, and said, "By the way, I must leave you to your own guidance to find your road to Cro' Martin, for there's a young lady below stairs has a lien upon me. You shall be presented to her when you come out, and I promise you it will repay the journey."

"This must be the Mary Martin I've been hearing of," thought Massingbred, when again alone; "and so the morning's work will probably turn out better than I had anticipated."

CHAPTER XVII.

A COUNTRY-HOUSE.

When Massingbred arrived at Cro' Martin, he found Repton at the door awaiting him. "I find," said he, "there is little need of introducing you here. Your father was an old acquaintance of Martin's; they sat together for years in Parliament, and Lady Dorothea was related to your family. But here he comes." And Martin approached, with his hand extended in cordial welcome. No one ever knew better how to do the honours of his house, nor could throw more graceful courtesy into the first steps of acquaintanceship. Massingbred, too, was well calculated to appreciate this gift; he had a most intense esteem for "manner," and enjoyed even the necessity it imposed upon himself of exertion to please. With sincere satisfaction was it that he accepted an invitation to pass some days there, and at once despatched a servant to Magennis's house for his trunks.

The adventure of the morning was alluded to but once, and then in a jocular strain, as an incident of no moment whatever, and Massingbred retired to his room to dress for dinner, wondering within himself if he should find the other members of the family as much to his liking as the worthy host had been.

A dinner-party was a rare event at Cro' Martin. The isolation in which they lived was rarely broken by a visitor, and when, by rare accident, some solitary stranger did present himself with a letter of introduction, his stay was merely of a few hours. Now, however, the company included, in addition to the family, Repton, Massingbred, and Nelligan, besides Miss Henderson, who was on that day to appear at dinner. The quondam college friends had not met, neither had Miss Martin ever seen her governess; so that there was no small degree of anticipation as to how such elements would harmonise and agree.

When Massingbred entered the drawing-room, he found Miss Henderson there alone, and at once believing she could be no other than Miss Martin, he proceeded to introduce himself in the best manner he could. Her reception was perfect in ease and self-possession, and they soon found themselves engaged in a lively discussion as to the scenery, the people, and their habits, of which they both appeared to have a very similar appreciation. Lady Dorothea next made her appearance, and advancing towards Massingbred, welcomed him with what, for her, was the extreme of cordiality. "Your mother was a Caradoc, Mr. Massingbred, and the Caradocs are all of our family, so let me claim relationship, at once."

With all the pretensions of a very fine lady, Lady Dorothea knew how to unite very agreeable qualities, not the less successful in her captivations, that she never exercised them without a real desire to please; so that Massingbred soon saw how in the wilds of dreary Connemara there existed a little oasis of polish and civilisation that would have done honour to the most splendid society of London or Paris.

Nor was Massingbred himself less pleasing to her. It was so long—so many, many years since she had met with one fresh from that great world which alone she valued!

Correspondence had kept her to a certain extent informed upon the changes and vicissitudes of society—the births, deaths, marriages, separations, quarrels, and other disasters of those dear friends for whose griefs, absence and time offer so many consolations! But then, the actual appearance, the *coup d'œil* of that world could only be imparted by an observer, imbued with all the spirit that gives observation its peculiar piquancy. This, she found in him, and so agreeably exercised was it, that she actually heard dinner announced without attending, and only as she arose from her seat was reminded to present him to Miss Martin, by the brief phrase: "My niece—Mr. Massingbred;" while she took his arm, with a glance at Mr. Repton, that plainly said—"You are deposed."

The passage to the dinner-room lay through three spacious and splendid rooms, which now were brilliantly lighted up, and lined with servants in rich liveries, a degree of state Massingbred was not a little pleased at, partly suspecting that it was intended to do himself honour. As they moved slowly through the last of these, the door suddenly opened, and young Nelligan entered. He had returned late from a long ride, and heard nothing whatever of Massingbred's arrival. With an exclamation of "Jack!—Massingbred!" he bounded forward; but the other showed no recognition of him, and directing Lady Dorothea's attention to the richness of a picture-frame, passed calmly on into the dinner-room.

"You must bring up the rear alone, Nelligan," said Martin, who had given his arm to Miss Henderson; and Joe followed, almost overwhelmed with mingled shame and amazement.

For an instant the possibility of mistake assuaged his sense of mortification, but no sooner did he find himself at table, and directly opposite to Massingbred, than he perceived there was no ground whatever for this consolation. It was indeed Massingbred, just as he had seen him the first day in the Common's Hall at dinner, and when his cold, supercilious manner had struck him so disagreeably.

What a terrible vengeance for all the superiority Nelligan had displayed over him in the Examination Hall was Massingbred's present success, for success it was. With all that consummate readiness the habit of society imparts, Jack could talk well on a great variety of topics, and possessed besides that especial tact to make others so far participators in his observations, that they felt a partnership in the agreeability. Lady Dorothea was perfectly charmed with him; it was the triumph, as it were, of one of her own set. His anecdotes—not very pointed or curious in themselves—had the marked characteristic of always referring to distinguished individuals, so that what was deficient in wit was more than compensated by the rank of the actors. Martin enjoyed his conversation with all his own complacent ease, and felt delighted with one who could play all the game without an adversary. Mary was pleased and astonished together—the pleasure being even less than the amazement—at all he seemed to know of life and the world, and how intimately one so young seemed to have mixed in society. As for Repton, he relished the other's powers with the true zest of a pleasant talker; they were of different styles, and no disagreeable rivalry marred the appreciation.

Amidst all these silent or spoken testimonies sat poor Nelligan, overwhelmed with shame. Massingbred had refused to recognise him! and it was left to his own gloomy thoughts to search out the reason. At first Joe avoided meeting the other's look; he dreaded he knew not what of impertinence or insult, to which the time and place could offer no reparation; but gradually he grew to perceive that Massingbred's cold eye met his own, without a spark of meaning, nor was there in voice, manner, or bearing, a single evidence of constraint or awkwardness to be detected.

Miss Henderson alone seemed to listen to him with easy indifference; and more than once, when Jack put forth his most showy pretensions, he was secretly mortified to see how little impression he had made on the dark beauty with the haughty smile. This was exactly the kind of defiance that Massingbred never declined, and he determined within himself to attempt the conquest. As the party returned to the drawing-room he asked Lady Dorothea to present him more formally to the young lady, whose acquaintance he had dared to obtrude upon before dinner, but she coldly said:

"Oh! it's no matter, she's only the governess." An explanation she deemed quite sufficient to subdue any rising feeling of interest regarding her.

"And the gentleman who sat next her at dinner?" asked he.

"A neighbour—that is, the son of one of our borough people. I have not introduced him to you, for of course you are not likely to meet again. As you were remarking, a while ago, society in England is gradually undergoing that change which in France was accomplished in a year or two."

"With the aid of the guillotine and the 'lanterne,'" said Jack, smiling.

"Just so; they used sharp remedies for a quick cure. But I own to you that I have not yet reconciled myself, nor do I see how I shall ever reconcile myself, to intimacy with a class not only whose habits and instincts, but whose very natures are adverse to our own. That young man now, for instance, they speak of him as quite a college wonder. I'm ashamed to say I don't know wherein his great successes lie; but they tell me that he has distanced every competitor of his day, and stands alone in his pre-eminence, and yet we saw him to-day not venturing on a remark, nor even hazarding an opinion on the topics we talked of, and silent where he ought to have been heard with advantage."

"Is he bashful?" said Jack, with a lazy drawl.

"I don't think it's that; at least not altogether."

"Supercilious, perhaps?"

"Oh! certainly not," replied she, hastily. "The company in which he found himself is the best answer to that. He could not presume ——"

"It was, then, downright fear," broke in Massingbred; "the terror that even clever men cannot shake off when thrown amongst a class they're unused to."

"And very naturally so. I'm sure he must be puzzled to imagine why he is here. Indeed, we have only known him a few days back. It was one of Mr. Martin's sudden caprices to ask him to Cro' Martin. He fancied he ought to conciliate—I believe that's the phrase in vogue—the borough people, and this young man's father is the chief of them." And now Lady Dorothea turned from the topic as one unworthy of further thought, and entered upon the more congenial theme of her own high relatives and connexions in England. It was strange enough that Massingbred's remote alliance with her family was sufficient to induce an intimacy and familiarity with him, which years of mere acquaintanceship could not have effected. That his grand-aunt had been a Conway, and his great-grandfather's half-brother was married to a Jernyngham, were all a species of Freemasonry by which he was admitted at once to the privilege of confidential discussion.

It was no small mortification to Massingbred to spend his evening in these genealogical researches; he had seen the two young girls move off into an adjoining room, from which at times the sounds of a piano, and of voices singing, issued, and was half mad with impatience to be along with them. However, it was a penalty must be exacted, and he thought that the toll once paid he had secured himself against all demands for the future.

Not caring to participate in the many intricacies of those family discussions wherein the degrees of relationship of individuals seem to form the sole points of interest, we shall betake ourselves to the little blue drawing-room, where, seated at the piano together, the two young girls talked, while their fingers strayed along the notes as though affording a species of involuntary accompaniment to their words. Nelligan, it is true, was present; but, unnoticed by either, he sat apart in a distant corner, deep in his own brooding thoughts.

Mary had only made Miss Henderson's acquaintance on that evening, but already they were intimate. It was, indeed, no common boon for her to obtain companionship with one of her own age, and who, with the dreaded characteristics of a governess, was in reality a very charming and attractive person. Miss Henderson sang with all the cultivated knowledge of a musician; and, while she spoke of foreign countries where she had travelled, lapsed at times into little snatches of melody, as it were, illustrative of what she spoke. The delight Mary experienced in listening was unbounded; and if at moments a sad sense of her own neglected education shot through her mind, it was forgotten the next instant in her generous admiration.

"And how are *you*, who have seen this bright and brilliant world you speak of," said Mary, "to sit quietly down in this unbroken solitude, where all the interests are of the humblest and more ordinary kind?"

"You forget that I saw all these things, as it were, on sufferance," replied she. "I was not born to them, nor could ever hope for more than a passing glance at splendours wherein I was not to share. And as for the quiet monotony here, an evening such as this, companionship like yours, are just as much above my expectations."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Mary, eagerly. "You were as surely destined for a salon, as I was for the rude adventures of my own wayward life. You don't know what a strange existence it is."

"I have heard, however!" said the other calmly.

"Tell me—do tell me—what you have been told of me, and don't be afraid of wounding my vanity; for, I pledge you my word, I do think of myself with almost all the humility that I ought."

"I have heard you spoken of in the cabins of the poor as their only friend, their comforter, and their hope; the labourer knows you as his succour—one by whose kind intervention he earns his daily bread; their children love you as their own chosen protector."

"But it's not of these things I'm speaking," said Mary, rapidly. "Do they not call me self-willed, passionate, sometimes imperious?"

"Yes; and capricious at times!" said the other, slowly.

Mary coloured, and her voice faltered as she said:

"There, they were unjust. The impracticable tempers I have to deal with — the untutored minds and undisciplined natures—often lead me into seeming contradictions."

"Like the present, perhaps," said Miss Henderson.

"How! the present?" cried Mary.

"That, while claiming the merit of humility, you at once enter upon a self-defence."

"Well, perhaps I *am* capricious!" said Mary, smiling.

"And haughty?" asked the other, slowly.

"I believe so!" said Mary, with a degree of dignity that seemed to display the sentiment while confessing to it.

"I have never heard a heavier accusation against Miss Martin than these," said she, "and I have lived with those who rarely scruple how to criticise their betters."

Mary was silent and thoughtful: she knew not how to interpret the mingled praise and censure she had just listened to.

"But tell me rather of yourself," said Mary, as though willing to turn the topic of conversation. "I should like to hear your story."

"At thirteen years of age—I believe even a year later—I was the playfellow of the young gentleman you see yonder," said Kate Henderson, "but who, to-night, seems incapable of remembering anything or anybody."

"Of Mr. Nelligan?" repeated Mary. And Joseph started as he heard his name, looked up, and again relapsed into reverie.

"I'm not sure that we were not in love. I almost confess that I was, when my father sent me away to France to be educated. I was very sad—very, very sad—at being taken away from home and thrown amongst strangers, with none of whom I could even interchange a word; and I used to sit and cry for hours by myself, and write sorrowful love-letters to "dearest Joseph," and then imagine the answers to them; sometimes I actually wrote them, and would suffer agonies of anguish before I dared to break the seal and learn the contents. Meanwhile, I was acquiring a knowledge of French, and knew a little of music, and used to sing in our choir at chapel, and learned to believe the world was somewhat larger than I had hitherto thought it, and that St. Gudule was finer than the mean little church at Oughterard; and worse still—for it *was* worse—that the sous-lieutenants and cadets of the Military College had a much more dashing, daring look about them than "poor Joseph;" for so I now called him to myself, and gave up the correspondence soon after.

"Remember, Miss Martin, that I was but a child at this time—at least, I was little more than fourteen—but in another year I was a woman, in all the consciousness of certain attractions, clever enough to know that I could read and detect the weak points in others, and weak enough to fancy that I could always take advantage of them. This incessant spirit of casuistry, this passion for investigating the temper of those about you, and making a study of their natures for purposes of your own, is the essence of a convent life; you have really little else to do, and your whole bent is to ascertain why Sister Agnes blushes, or why Beatrice fainted twice at the Angelus. The minute anatomy of emotions is a very dangerous topic. At this very moment I cannot free myself from the old habit; and as I see young Mr. Nelligan there sitting with his head in his hand, so deep in thought as not to notice us, I begin to examine why is it he is thus, and on what is he now brooding?"

"And can you guess?" asked Mary, half eagerly.

"I could be certain, if I were but to ask him a question or two."

"Pray do, then, if only to convince me of your skill."

"But I must be alone, and that is scarcely possible—scarcely becoming."

"Let us contrive some way—think of something."

"It is too late now; he is about to leave the room," said Kate, cautiously. "How pale he looks, and how anxious his eye has become. I thought at first there was some constraint at meeting *me* here; he feared, perhaps,—but no, that would be unworthy of him."

She ceased, for Nelligan had now drawn nigh to where they sat, and stood as if trying to collect himself to say something.

"Do you sing, Mr. Nelligan?" asked Kate.

"No; I am ignorant of music," said he, half abstractedly.

"But you like it?" asked Mary.

"Yes, I believe I do—that is, it calms and quiets me. If I could understand it, it would do more."

"Then why not understand it, since that is the way you phrase it?" asked Kate. "Everybody can be a musician to a certain degree of proficiency. There is no more ear required than you want to learn a language."

"Then you shall teach *me*," cried Mary, eagerly.

Kate took up her hand and pressed it to her lips for a reply.

"Foreigners—men, I mean—are all so well aware of this, that they cultivate music as a necessary part of education; few attain high eminence, but all know something of it. But somehow we have got to believe that cultivation in England must always tend to material profit. We learn this, that, and t'other, to be richer, or greater, or higher, but never to be more acceptable in society—more agreeable or pleasanter company."

"We haven't time," said Nelligan, gravely.

"For what have we not time? Do you mean we have no time to be happy?" cried Repton, suddenly stepping in amongst them. "Now, my dear young ladies, which of you will bid highest for the heart of an old lawyer—by a song?"

"It must be Miss Henderson," said Mary, smiling, "for I don't sing."

"Not a ballad?—not even one of the Melodies?"

"Not even one of the Melodies," said she, sorrowfully.

"Shame upon me for that 'even,'" said Repton; "but you see what comes of surviving one's generation. I lived in an age when the 'Last Rose of Summer,' and the 'Harp that Once,' were classical as Homer's 'Hymns,' but I have now fallen upon times when English music is estimated in the same category with English cookery, and both deemed very little above barbarous. To be sure," added he, "it does seem very like a poetical justice for the slavish adherence of *our* education to Greek and Roman literature, that our ladies should only sing to us in the languages of Italy or Germany."

"I hope you would not imply that we are as little versed in these as great scholars are in the others?" said Kate Henderson, slily.

"Sharply said, Miss, and truthfully insinuated too! Not to mention that there is courage in such a speech before Mr. Nelligan, here."

"Yes—very true—a just remark!" said Joseph, who only overheard a reference to himself without understanding to what it alluded. And now a very joyous burst of laughter from the others startled him, while it covered him with confusion.

"We must make them sing, Nelligan," said Repton, gaily. "They'll vanquish us in these tilting matches of word-fence.—Now, Miss Henderson, something very plaintive and very sentimental, to suit the tenderness of a feeling heart."

"I'll sing for you with pleasure," said Kate. "Will this suit you?" And with a short prelude she sang one of those brilliant little snatches of Venetian melody, which seem like the outburst of a sudden inspiration—wild, joyous, floating as they are—wherein such is the expression, that sounds usurp the place of language, and the mind is carried away by a dreamy fascination impossible to resist.

"How often have I heard that on the Lido!" said Massingbred, entering the room hastily; "and what a glorious thing it is!"

"Then you know this?" said Kate, running her fingers over the notes, and warbling out another of the popular airs of the same class.

"The last time I heard that," said Jack, musingly, "was one night when returning home from a late party, along the Grand Canal at Venice. There is a single word at the end of each verse which should be uttered by a second voice. Just as I passed beneath a brilliantly-lighted salon, the sounds of this melody came floating forth, and as the stanza finished I supplied the 'refrain.'"

"You?" cried Kate, eagerly.

"Yes; but why do you ask?"

"Do you remember the exact spot?" said she, not heeding his question.

"As well as though I were there only yesterday."

"Shall I tell you where it was?" He waited, and she went on—"It was under the balcony of the Mocenigo Palace."

"Why this is witchcraft," cried Jack; "you are perfectly correct."

"The bouquet that was thrown to you from the window fell into the water."

"But I regained it. I have it still," cried he, more eagerly; "and yours was the hand that threw it?"

She nodded assent.

"How strange, is it not, that we should meet here?" He paused for a minute or two, and then said, "It was the Duchesse de Courcelles lived there at the time?"

"Yes, we passed the winter in that palace."

"Miss Henderson was the companion of the young Princess," said Lady Dorothea, who had just joined the group, and experienced no slight shock at observing the tone of easy familiarity in which the conversation was conducted. But Massingbred seemed wonderfully little moved by the intelligence, for, drawing his chair closer to Kate's, he led her to talk of Venice and its life, till, imperceptibly as it were, the discourse glided into Italian! What a dangerous freemasonry is the use of a foreign language, lifting the speakers out of the ordinary topics, and leading them away to distant scenes and impressions, which, constituting a little world apart, give a degree of confidential feeling to intercourse. Massingbred would willingly have lent himself to the full enjoyment of this illusion, but Kate, with quicker tact, saw all the difficulties and embarrassment it would occasion, and under pretext of searching for some music, escaped at once from the spot.

"How I envy you, dear girl," said Mary, following her, and passing her arm affectionately around her. "What a happiness must it be to possess such gifts as yours, which, even in their careless exercise, are so graceful. Tell me frankly, is it too late for me to try ——"

"You overrate *me* as much as you disparage yourself," said Kate, mildly; "but if you really will accept me, I will teach you the little that I know, but, in return, will you make *me* your friend?"

Mary pressed the other's hand warmly within her own.

"Here are some vows of everlasting friendship going forward, I'll be sworn," said old Repton, stepping in between them; "and you ought to have a legal opinion as to the clauses—eh, young ladies, am I not right?"

"When was Mr. Repton wrong?" said Mary, laughing.

"When he waited till his present age to fall in love!" said he, gaily. "But, seriously, what have you done with our young student? Of all the woebegone faces I ever beheld, his was the very saddest, as he moved into the large drawing-room a while ago. Which of you is to blame for this?"

"Not guilty, upon my honour," said Mary, with mock solemnity.

"I'm half afraid that our showy friend has eclipsed him in *your* eyes, as I own to you he has in *mine*, clever fellow that he is."

"Are you not charmed with yourself that you did not shoot him this morning?" said Mary, laughing.

"I am sincerely gratified that he has not shot *me*, which, taking his pistol performance on the same level with his other acquirements, was not so very improbable!"

"There's your uncle stealing away to bed," said Repton, "and fancying that nobody remarks him. Shall I be cruel enough to mar the project? Martin—Martin—come here for a moment; we want your opinion on a knotty point."

"I know what it is," said Martin, smiling; "the question under discussion is, 'Whether you or Mr. Massingbred were the more successful to-day?'"

"I think Mr. Massingbred may claim the prize," said Mary Martin, with a sly whisper; "he made Lady Dorothea cry."

"Ay," said Repton, "but *I* made young Nelligan laugh!"

And now the party broke up, Massingbred lingering a little behind to say something to Miss Henderson, and then betaking himself to his chamber, well satisfied with his day, and the change it had wrought in his fortunes. Perhaps a few passages from a letter that he, on that same night, penned to one of his friends in Dublin, will not be ill-timed as an exponent of his sentiments. The letter was written, directing certain articles of dress to be forwarded to him at once, by coach, and contained these paragraphs:

"You now know how I came here: the next thing is to tell you of the place itself. The house is large and admirably 'montée'—abundance of servants, well drilled, and orderly. The master a nonentity, apparently; easy-tempered and good-humoured; liking the quiet monotony of his humdrum life, and only asking that it may not be interfered with. His wife, a fine lady of the school of five-and-forty years ago—a nervous terrorist about mob encroachments and the democratic tendencies of the times—insufferably tiresome on genealogies and 'connections,' and what many would call downright vulgar in the amount of her pretension. Gratitude—for I have the honour of being a favourite already—seals my lips against any further or harsher criticism. As for the niece, she is decidedly handsome; a great deal of style about her too; with a degree of—shall I call it daring? for it is more like courage than any other quality—that tells you she is the uncontrolled ruler over the wild regions and wild people around her. With more of manner, she would be very charming; but perhaps she is better in the unfettered freedom of her own capricious independence: it certainly suits her to perfection. And now I should have completed my catalogue, if it were not for the governess. Ay, Harry, the governess! And just fancy, under this unimposing title, a dark-eyed, haughty-looking girl—I don't think she can be above twenty or twenty-one—with a carriage and port that might suit an Archduchess of Austria. She has travelled all over Europe—been everywhere—seen everything, and stranger again, everybody; for she was what they style a companion. By Jove! she must have been a very charming one; that is, if she liked it; for if she did not, Hal!——At all events, here she is; only having arrived the very day before myself; so that we are free to discuss the family, and compare notes together, in the most confidential fashion.

"Of course I needn't tell *you* Jack Massingbred does not fall in love—the very phrase implies it must be beneath one—but I already see that if such a girl were a Lady Catherine, or a Lady Agnes, with a father in the Upper House, and two brothers in the 'Lower,' her dowry anything you like above thirty thousand — that, in short, even Jack himself might exhibit the weakness of inferior mortals—for she is precisely one of those types that are ever looking upward—a girl with a high ambition, I'll be sworn, and formed to make the man, whose fortunes she shared, stand forward in the van and distinguish himself.

"These are our whole *dramatis personæ*, if I include an old barrister, with a racy humour and a strong stock of Bar anecdotes; and young Nelligan, the Medal man, whom you quizzed me so much for noticing in Dublin. You were right then, Harry; he *is* a low fellow, and I was wrong in ever thinking him otherwise. I chanced upon his father's acquaintance rather oddly; and the son has not forgiven it. When we met here, yesterday, he fancied that we were to speak, and was actually rushing forward to shake hands with the most enthusiastic warmth; but with that manner which you have often admired, and once encouraged, when you called me the 'Cool of the day,' I pulled him up dead short, stared, and passed on. At dinner, I managed to ignore him so utterly that everybody else fell into the trap, and he dined as a tutor, or the chaplain, or the agent's son might—mingling his sighs with the soup, and sipping his claret in all dreariness.

"You will see, even from these hasty lines, that there is enough here to interest and amuse; food for observation, and opportunity for malice. What can a man want more? The 'joint and the pickles.' They have asked me to stay,—they have even entreated; and so I mean to pass a week—perhaps two—here. I conclude that will give me enough of it: however, you shall hear frequently of my *res gestæ*, and learn all that befals

"JACK MASSINGBRED.

". . . . When you pass that way, pray see what letters there may be lying for me in my chambers. If any of my father's—he writes in a large splashy hand—and the seal, two maces, saltierwise—forward them here. I am, or I shall soon be, in want of money; and as I have overdrawn my allowance already, I shall be obliged to issue bonds, bearing a certain interest. Can you recommend me to a safe capitalist?—not Fordyce—nor Henniker—nor yet Sloan—with all of whom I have held dealings, mutually disagreeable. It is a sad reflection, that the stamp worth five shillings upon a piece of unsullied paper, is absolutely valueless when the words 'Jack Massingbred' are inscribed beneath. Try, and, if you can, solve this curious problem.

"At all events, write to me here: supply me freely with news, for I am supposed to be acquainted with all that goes on, socially and politically, and I shall be driven to imagination if you do not store me with fact."

CHAPTER XVIII.

STATECRAFT.

It was a cabinet council; they were met in Lady Dorothea's boudoir, Martin and Mr. Repton being summoned to her presence. A letter had that morning reached her ladyship from a very high quarter; the writer was the Marquis of Reckington, a very distant connection, who had suddenly been graciously pleased, after a long interval of utter obliviousness, to remember that Lady Dorothea was his relative, and yet living! Whatever pride her ladyship might have summoned to her aid to repel the slights or impertinences of the vulgar, she displayed a most Christian forgiveness as she broke the seal of an epistle from one who had left several of her own without answers, and even replied to her application for a staff appointment for her son, by a cold assurance that these were times when "nothing but fitness and superior qualifications entitled any man to advancement in the public service." Oh dear, were there ever any other times since the world was made! Is not merit the only passport to place? and high desert and capacity the sole recommendation to favour? Of all the immense advantages of a representative government, is there any more conspicuous than the unerring certainty with which men of ability rise to eminence without other aid than their own powers; and that, in a system like ours, family influence, wealth, name, connections, and Parliamentary support, are just so much mere dross?

If any one be incredulous of the virtue of public men, let him only ask for a place; let him entreat his great friend—everybody has at least one great friend—mine is a Coroner—to make him a Junior Lord, or a Vice-Something, and see what the answer will be. Polite, certainly; nothing more so; but what a rebuke to self-seeking!—what a stern chastisement to the ignorant presumption that places are awarded by means of favour, or that the public service is ever filled through the channels of private influence! Far from it. He is told that our age is an incorruptible one, that Ministers pass sleepless nights in balancing the claims of treasury clerks, and that Lord Chancellors suffer agonies in weighing the merits of barristers of six years' standing. "We have but one rule for our guidance: the best man in the best place." A high-sounding maxim, which it would be excessively uncivil to disparage by asking what constitutes "a best man." Is he some unscrupulous partisan, who first gave his fortune, and afterwards his fame, to the support of a party? Is he the indisputable disposer of three, or perhaps four, votes in the House? Is he a floating buoy to be anchored in either roadstead of politics, and only to be secured to either, for a consideration? Is he the dangerous confidant of some damaging transaction? Or is he the deserter from a camp, where his treason may sow disaffection? These several qualifications have ere this served to make up "a best man;" and, strangely enough, are gifts which fit him for the Army, the Navy, the Home Service, or the Colonies.

Let us turn from this digression, into which we have fallen half inadvertently, and read over some parts of Lord Reckington's letter. It was somewhat difficult to decipher, as most great men's letters are, and displayed in more than one place the signs of correction. Although it had been, as we have said, a very long time since any correspondence had occurred between the "cousins," his lordship resumed the intercourse as though not a week had intervened. After a little playful chiding over the laxity of her ladyship's writing habits—three of hers had been left unreplied to!—and some of that small gossip of family changes and events, never interesting to any but the direct actors, his lordship approached the real topic of his letter; and, as he did so, his writing grew firmer, and larger, and bolder, like the voice of a man who spoke of what truly concerned him:

"I thought, my dear Dora, I had done with it all. I flattered myself that I had served my time in public capacities, and that neither the Crown nor its advisers could reasonably call upon me for further sacrifices. *You* know how little to my taste were either the cares or ambitions of office. In fact, as happens to most men who are zealous for the public service, my official career imposed far more of sacrifices than it conferred privileges. Witness the occasions in which I was driven to reject the claims of my nearest and dearest friends, in compliance with that nervous terror of imputed favouritism so fatal to all in power! I thought, as I have said, that they had no fair claim upon me any longer. I asked nothing; indeed, many thought I was wrong there. But so it was, I quitted office without a pension, and without a ribbon! It was late on a Saturday evening, however, when a Cabinet messenger arrived at 'Beech Woods' with an order for me to repair at once to Windsor. I was far from well; but there was no escape. Immediately on arriving I was summoned to the presence, and before I had paid my respects, His Majesty, who was much excited, said, 'Reckington, we want you. You must go to Ireland!' I believe I started, for he went on: 'I'll have no refusal. There is but one settlement of this question that I will accept of. You shall go to Ireland!' The king then entered with considerable warmth, but with all his own remarkable perspicuity, into a detail of late changes and events in the Cabinet. He was excessively irritated with B——, and spoke of G—— as one whom he never could forgive. He repeatedly said, 'I have been duped—I have been tricked;' and, in fact, exhibited a degree of emotion which, combined with the unbounded frankness of his manner towards me, affected me almost to tears. Of course, my dear Dora, personal considerations ceased at once to have any hold upon me, and I assured his Majesty that the remainder of my life was freely at his disposal, more than requited, as it already was, by the precious confidence he had, that day, reposed in me. I must not weary you with details. I accepted and kissed hands as Viceroy on Monday morning; since that I have been in daily communication with G——, who still remains in office. We have discussed Ireland from morning to night, and I hope and trust have at last come to a thorough understanding as to the principles which must guide the future administration. These I reserve to talk over with you when we meet: nor do I hesitate to say that I anticipate the very greatest benefit in the fruits of your long residence and great powers of observation of this strange people." The letter here went off into a somewhat long-winded profession of the equal-handed justice which was to mark the acts of the admistration. It was to be, in fact, a golden era of equity and fairness; but, somehow, as codicils are occasionally found to revoke the body of the testament, a very suspicious little paragraph rather damaged this glorious conclusion. "I don't mean to say, my dear coz, that we are to neglect our followers—the Government which could do so never yet possessed, never deserved to possess, able support—but we must discriminate—we must distinguish between the mere partisan who trades on his principles, and that high-minded and honourable patriot who gives his convictions to party. With the noisy declaimer at public meetings, the mob-orator or pamphleteer, we shall have no sympathy. To the worthy country gentleman—independent by fortune as well as by principle—extending the example of a blameless life to a large neighbourhood—aiding us by his counsels as much as by the tender of his political support—to him, I say, we shall show our gratitude, not grudgingly nor sparingly, but freely, openly, and largely. You now know in what ranks we wish to see our friends, in the very van of which array I reckon upon yourself." We shall again skip a little, since here the writer diverged into a slight dissertation on the indissoluble ties of kindred, and the links, stronger than adamant, that bind those of one blood together. After a brief but rapid survey of the strong opposition which was to meet them, he went on: "Of course all will depend upon our parliamentary support; without a good working majority we cannot stand, and for this must we use all our exertions." A few generalities on the comfort and satisfaction resulting from "safe divisions" ensued, and then came the apparently careless question, "What can *you* do for us? Yes, my dear Dora, I repeat, what can *you* do for us? What we need, is the support of men who have courage enough to merge old prejudices and old convictions in their full trust in us; who, with the intelligence of true statesmanship, will comprehend the altered condition of the country, and not endeavour to adapt the nation to *their* views, but rather *their* views to the nation. In a word, a wise and liberal policy, not based upon party watchwords and antiquated symbols, but on the prospect of seeing Ireland great and united. Now, will Martin come to our aid in this wise? He ought to be in parliament for his county. But if he be too indolent, or too happy at home, whom can he send us? And again, what of the borough? They tell me that Kilcock, seeing his father's great age, will not stand where a contest might be expected, so that you must necessarily be prepared with another."

Again the writer launched out upon the happiness he felt at being able to appeal thus candidly and freely to his own "dearest kinswoman," inviting her to speak as frankly in return, and to believe that no possible difference of political opinion should ever throw a coldness between those whose veins were filled with the same blood, and whose hearts throbbed with the same affections. Her ladyship's voice slightly faltered as she read out the concluding paragraph, and when she laid the letter down, she turned away her head and moved her handkerchief to her eyes.

As for Martin, he sat still and motionless, his gaze firmly directed to Repton, as though seeking in the impassive lines of the old lawyer's face for some clue to guide and direct him.

"You used to be a Tory, Martin?" said Repton, after a pause.

"Yes, to be sure, we were always with that party."

"Well, there's an end of them now," said the other; "what's to follow and fill their place, my Lord Reckington may be able to say, *I* cannot. I only know that *they* exist no longer, and the great question for you—at least one of the great questions—is, have you spirit enough to join a travelling party without knowing whither they're journeying?"

"And what may be the other great question, sir?" asked Lady Dorothea, haughtily.

"The other is, what will it cost in money?—ay, my lady, in money—because any other outlay will not require searches nor title-deeds, loans, mortgages, nor bond-debts."

"To contest the county would cost ten thousand pounds—Scanlan says so," rejoined Martin.

"And the borough?" asked Repton.

"A few hundreds would suffice; at least they have done so hitherto."

"Then remain content with the cheap luxury of the borough," said Repton. "You don't want anything from these people, Martin. You don't covet a Peerage—you wouldn't accept a Baronetcy. You remember what Langton said, when told that the King was going to give him 'the Red Hand.' 'If I have been unfortunate enough to incur his Majesty's displeasure, I must deplore it deeply, but surely my innocent son should not be included in the penalty of my offence. Therefore, in all humility, I beseech and entreat the royal favour to commute the sentence into Knighthood, so that the disgrace may die with me.'"

"There were times when such insolence would have cost him dearly," said her ladyship, sternly.

"I am not sorry that we don't live in them, my lady," replied Repton. "But to return: as I was saying, you ask for no favours; why should you expend ten or fifteen thousand pounds to advocate views of whose tendencies you know nothing, and principles whose very meaning you are in ignorance of?"

"I anticipated every word of this," said Lady Dorothea. "I told Mr. Martin, this morning, almost literally, the exact advice you'd proffer."

"I am proud that your ladyship should have read me so justly," said Repton, bowing.

An insolent toss of her head was the significant answer to this speech.

"But were I to speak my mind more candidly, I'd even say, let the borough go after the county; and for this plain reason," said Repton, speaking with increased firmness and animation, "you neither seek for the ambition of political life, nor want to make a trade of its casualties."

"Is it not possible, sir, that we might desire the natural influence that should arise out of our station in society and our rank in this county?" said Lady Dorothea, proudly.

"And your ladyship has it, and can never lose it. Having a vote or two to throw into a Ministerial division would never repay you for the anxieties and cares of contested elections. Ah, my lady, what do *you* care for the small flatteries of London attentions."

"We should have these, sir, as our right," broke she in.

"To be sure you would, and much happiness do I hope they would confer," added he, in a tone only overheard by Martin; then continued aloud: "As to the patronage at your disposal, would you take a present of it? Whom do you want to make tide-waiters, gaugers, barony constables, or even clerks of the peace? Of all men living, who is so free of hungry dependents or poor relations!"

"I must say, sir, that you reduce the question of political support to a very intelligible one of material benefit," said her ladyship, with a sneer; "but, just for argument sake, imagine that there should be such a thing as a little principle in the matter."

"I'm going to that part of the case, my lady," said Repton. "Martin is a Tory; now, what are the men coming into power? I wish you could tell me. Here, for instance, is one of their own journals"—and he opened a newspaper and ran his eye over the columns—"ay, here it is: 'With regard to Ireland, Lord Reckington's appointment as Viceroy is the best guarantee that the rights of Irishmen of every persuasion and every denomination will be respected.' So far so good;" and he read on in a low, humdrum voice for some minutes, till he came to the following: "'No privileged class will any longer be tolerated —no exceptional loyalty admitted as an excuse for insufferable oppression and tyranny—the wishes and benefits of the people —the real people of that country, will at length enter into the views of an administration, and Ireland as she is—not the possible Ireland of factious enthusiasts—be governed by men determined to redress her grievances and improve her capacities.' Now, Martin, you want no augur to interpret that oracle. They are going to rule you by the people; but the people must be represented. Now, who represents them? Not the demagogue —he is merely their tool; the real representative is the priest— don't laugh, my dear friend, at such a shadowy possibility, the thing is nearer than you dream of. No administration ever yet tried to govern Ireland except by intimidation; the Beresfords were undertakers once, and they did their work very well, let me tell you—they advanced their friends and whipped their enemies; and what with peerages for one set, and pitched caps for the other, they ruled Ireland. Then there came the Orangemen, who rather blundered their work; there were too many heads amongst them, and the really clever fellows were overborne by brawling, talkative fools, who always had the masses with them because they *were* fools. Still they ruled Ireland. They preserved the country to the King's crown; and I say once more, that was no small matter. And now we have arrived at a new era: we have obtained Emancipation, and must look out for another stamp of administrators, and I see nothing for it but the priest. Of course you, and every man of your station, sneer at the notion of being dictated to by Father Luke, in the greasy leather small-clothes and dirty black boots—only, himself, a cottier once removed—a plant of the wild growth of the fields, cultivated, however, in the hot-beds of Maynooth—a forcing-house whose fruits you are yet to taste of! Sneer away, Martin; but my name is not Val Repton if those men do not rule Ireland yet! Ay, sir, and rule it in such a fashion as your haughty Beresfords, and Tottenhams, and Tisdalls never dreamed of! They'll treat with the Government on equal terms—so much, for so much—and, what's more, it won't be higgling for a place, here, or a peerage, there; but they'll have the price paid down in hard legislative coin—Acts of Parliament, sir,—privileges for themselves and their order, —benefits to 'the Church,'—and, when nothing better or more tempting offers, insults and slights to their antagonists. You, and all like you, will be passed over as if you never existed: the Minister will not need you: you'll be so many general officers on the retired list, and only remarked when you swell the crowd at a levee."

"So, sir, according to this special prediction of yours, we have nothing left us but to live on our estates, enjoy what we can of our fortunes, and leave the interests of the nation to those our inferiors in rank, station, and property?"

"Such a period as your ladyship has pictured forth—a little strongly, perhaps—is before you. Whether the interval be destined to be long or short, will, in great measure, depend upon yourselves."

"That agrees with what Scanlan said the other day," said Martin.

"Scanlan!" echoed her ladyship, with most profound contempt.

"Who is this Scanlan?" asked Repton.

"There he comes to answer for himself," said Martin. "The fellow drives neatly: see how cleverly he swept round that sharp turn! He may be 'at fault' about the world of politics, but, *my* word for it! he is a rare judge of a hack"

"And, now that you suggest it," said Repton, musingly, "what an instinctive shrewdness there is on every subject—I don't care what it is—about fellows that deal in horseflesh. The practice of buying and selling, searching out flaws, here, detecting defects, there, gives a degree of suspectful sharpness in all transactions; besides that, really none but a naturally clever fellow ever graduates in the stable. You smile, my lady, but some of our very first men have achieved the triumphs of the turf."

"Shall we have Scanlan in and hear the news?" asked Martin.

"Not here. If you please, you may receive him in the library, or your own room."

"Then, come along, Repton. We can resume this affair in the afternoon, or to-morrow." And, without waiting for a reply, he passed his arm within the other's and led him away. "You have been too abrupt with her, Repton; you have not made due allowances for her attachment to family influences," said he, in a whisper, as they went along.

Repton smiled half contemptuously.

"Oh, it's all very easy for you to laugh, my dear fellow, but, trust me, there's nothing to be done with my lady in that fashion."

"Turn the flank—eh?" said the old lawyer, slily. "Ah, Martin, don't teach *me* how to deal with humanity. If you have not the courage to tell your wife that your estate cannot bear fresh encumbrances, new loans, and new debts ——"

"Hush!" said Martin, cautiously.

"Then, I say, let me prevent the casualty, that's all."

"How are you, Scanlan?" said Martin, as the attorney came, bowing and smiling, forward to pay his respects. "My friend, Mr. Repton, wishes to make your acquaintance."

"I have the honour of being known to Mr. Repton, already, sir, if he has not forgotten me."

"Eh—how? where?" cried the lawyer, sharply.

"In Reeves *versus* Dockery and another, sir, in Hilary, 24. It was *I* supplied the instructions ——"

"To be sure—perfectly right. Maurice Scanlan; isn't that the name? You did the thing well, sir; and if we failed, we retreated without dishonour."

"That was a grand shot you fired at the Bench, sir, when all was over," said Scanlan. "I don't suppose they ever got such a complete 'set down' before."

"I forget it," said Repton, but with a bright twinkle of his eye which more than contradicted his words.

"Then sir, it's more than their lordships ever will," said Scanlan. "The Chief Baron it was," said he, addressing Martin, "that overruled every objection made by Counsellor Repton, and at last declared that he wouldn't hear any more citations whatsoever. 'But I have a stronger case still, my lord,' says the counsellor. 'I'll not hear it, sir,' said the Court. 'It is in Crewe and Fust, Term Reports, page 1438.'

"'I don't care where it is, sir,' was the answer.

"'In a charge delivered by Lord Eldon ——'

"'Oh, let us hear my Lord Eldon,' said Plumridge, the Puisne Judge, who was rather ashamed of the Chief Baron's severity. 'Let us hear my Lord Eldon.'

"'Here it is, my lords,' said the counsellor, opening the volume, and laying his hand upon the page, 'Crewe and Fust's Pleas of the Crown, page 1438. My Lord Eldon says: "I may here observe the Courts of Law in Ireland are *generally* wrong! The Court of Exchequer is *always* wrong!"'"

Repton tried to smother his own delighted laugh at the reminiscence, but all in vain, it burst from him long and joyously; and as he shook Scanlan's hand, he said, "The incident loses nothing by your telling, sir; you have done it admirable justice."

"You make me very proud indeed, counsellor," said Scanlan, who really did look overjoyed at the speech.

"Have you any news for us, Scanlan?" said Martin, as they entered the library.

"Yes, sir; the Ministry is out."

"We know that already, man!"

"And the Marquis of Reckington comes here as Lord-Lieutenant."

"That we know also."

"Colonel Massingbred to be Chief Sec ——

"Moore Massingbred!" cried both in a breath.

"Yes, sir; he that was a Treasury Lord."

"Are you quite sure of this, Scanlan?" asked Martin.

"I had it from Groves, sir, at the Castle, yesterday morning, who told me there would be an immediate dissolution; and showed me a list of government candidates."

"You may talk them all over together, then," said Martin, "for I'm heartily tired of politics this morning." And, so saying, he left them.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STUDIO.

It is one of the most inestimable privileges of Art, that amidst all the cares and contentions of the world, amidst strife, and war, and carnage, its glorious realm is undisturbed, its peace unbroken, and its followers free to follow their own wayward fancies, without let or hinderance. Your great practical intelligencies—your men of committees, and corn, and railroads, and ship-canals—sneer at the fictitious life, for so does it seem to them, of the mere painter or musician. They have a sort of pitying estimate for capacities only exercised upon the ideal, and look down with a very palpable contempt upon those whose world is a gallery or an orchestra. After all, this division of labour is a wise and happy provision, carrying with it many and varied benefits, and making of that strange edifice of mankind a far more pleasing and harmonious structure than we should otherwise have seen it. The imagination is to the actual, in the world of active life, what flowers are to nutritious herbs and roots. It is the influence that adorns, elevates, and embellishes existence. That such gifts have been confided to certain individuals is in itself a sufficient evidence, just as we see in the existence of flowers, that pleasure has its place assigned in the grand scheme of creation, and that the happiness which flows from gratified sense has not been denied us.

In that petty world which lived beneath the roof of Cro' Martin Castle, all the eager passions and excitements of political intrigue were now at work. My lady was full of plans for future greatness; Repton was scheming, and suggesting, and thwarting everybody in turn; and even Martin himself, engulphed in the "Maëlstrom" of the crisis, was roused into a state of semi-preparation that amounted to a condition of almost fever. As for Massingbred, whatever he really did feel, his manner affected a most consummate indifference to all that went forward; nor did the mention of his father's appointment to high office elicit from him anything beyond a somewhat contemptuous opinion of the new party in power. While, therefore, secret councils were held, letters read and written, conferences conducted in every room, one little space was devoid of all these embarrassments and anxieties, and that was an oval chamber, lighted from the top, and originally destined for a summer ball-room, but now appropriated to Mr. Crow's use for the completion of the Grand Historical, which had lately been transferred from Kilkieran to its place there.

The unlucky masterpiece was doomed to many a difficulty. The great events in prospect had totally banished all thought of "art" from Lady Dorothea's mind. The fall of a recent administration was a far more imminent circumstance than the abdication of a king a few centuries back. Martin of course had enough on his head, without the cares of mock royalty. Mary was overwhelmed with occupations; the floods, and a threatened famine were casualties not to be overlooked, and she was absent every day from dawn to late night; while, to complete the list of defaulters, young Nelligan—the future Prince of Orange of the picture—was gone!

Men deplore their past youth, their bygone buoyancy of heart, their old loves and extinct friendships, but of all departed pleasures, there is a peculiar poignancy about one, and that is an artist's grief over a "lost sitter." You ladies and gentlemen whose thumbs have never closed on a palette, nor whose fingers have never felt the soft influence of varnish, may smile at such a sorrow, but take my word for it, it is a real and tangible affliction.

The waving locks, the noble brow, the deep square orbits, and the finely-cut chin, are but the subtle suggestions out of which inspirations are begotten and poetic visions nurtured. The graceful bearing and the noble port, the tender melancholy or the buoyant gladness, have each in turn struck some chord of secret feeling in the artist's breast, revealing to him new ideas of beauty, and imparting that creative power which displays itself in new combinations.

Poor Simmy Crow was not a Titian nor a Vandyke, but unhappily the sorrows of genius are very often experienced by those who are not gifted with its greatness, and the humble aspirant of excellence can catch every malady to which the triumphant in all the wild enthusiasm of his powers is exposed. He sat down before his canvas, as some general might before a fortified town, which had resisted all his efforts of attack. He was depressed and discouraged.

The upper part of the young student's head was already half finished, and there was enough done to impart a kind of promise of success, that glorious vista which opens itself so often in imagination to those whose world is but their own fancy. He half thought he could finish it from memory, but before he had proceeded many minutes, he laid down the brush in despair. It seemed like a fatality that something must always interpose to bar the road to success. One time it was sickness, then, it was poverty, a disparaging criticism had even done it; and now, when none of these threatened, there arose a new impediment. "Ah! Simmy, Simmy," he exclaimed aloud, "you were born under an unkindly planet. That's the secret of it all!"

"I confess I cannot concur in that opinion," said a low, soft voice behind him. He started up and beheld Kate Henderson, who, leaning on the back of a chair, continued to gaze steadfastly at the canvas, perfectly regardless of his astonishment. "There is a great deal to admire in that picture!" said she, as though talking to herself.

Simmy crept stealthily back and stationed himself behind her, as if to hear her remarks, while viewing the picture from the same point.

"You have grouped your figures admirably," continued she, now addressing him, "and your management of the light shows a study of Rembrandt."

"Very true, ma'am—miss, I mean. I have copied nearly all his great pieces."

"And the drapery—that robe of the King's—tells me that you have studied another great master of colour; am I right, sir, in saying Paul Veronese?"

Simmy Crow's face glowed till it became crimson, while his eyes sparkled with intense delight.

"Oh dear me!" he exclaimed, "isn't it too much happiness to hear this, and only a minute ago I was in black despair!"

"Mine is very humble criticism, sir, but as I have seen good pictures ——"

"Where? In the galleries abroad?" broke in Crow, hurriedly.

"All over Germany and Italy. I travelled with those who-really cared for and understood art. But to come back to yours—that head is a noble study."

"And that's exactly what I'm grieving over; he's gone."

"Young Mr. Nelligan?"

"Himself; he started this morning for Oughterard."

"But probably to return in a day or two."

Crow looked stealthily around to see if he were not likely to be overheard, and then, approaching Kate, said in a whisper,

"I don't think he'll ever cross the doors again."

"How so? has he received any offence?"

"I can't make out what it is," said Simmy, with a puzzled look, "but he came to my room late last night, and sat down without saying a word; and at last, when I questioned him if he were ill, he said suddenly,

"'Have you found, Mr. Crow, that in your career as an artist, you have been able to withdraw yourself sufficiently from the ordinary events of life as to make up a little world of your own, wherein you lived indifferent to passing incidents?'

"'Yes,' said I, 'I have, whenever I was doing anything really worth the name.'

"'And at such times,' said he again, 'you cared nothing, or next to nothing, for either the flatteries or the sarcasms of those around you?'

"'I couldn't mind them,' said I, 'for I never so much as heard them.'

"'Exactly what I mean,' said he, rapidly. 'Intent upon higher ambitions, you were above the petty slights of malice or envy, and with your own goal before you, were steeled against the minor casualties of the journey. Then why should not I also enjoy the immunity? Can I not summon to my aid a pride like this, or am I to be discouraged and disgraced to my own heart by a mere impertinence?'

"I stared at him, not guessing what he could mean.

"'Rather quit the spot with which it is associated—quit it for ever,' muttered he to himself, as he paced the room, while his face grew deathly pale.

"'As for me,' said I, for I wanted to say something—anything, in short—just to take his attention a little off of himself, 'whenever the world goes hard with me, I just step into my studio, lock the door, and sit down before a fresh canvas. I throw in a bit of brown, with a dash of bluish grey over it—half sky, half atmosphere, and I daub away till something like an effect—maybe a sunset, maybe a sullen-looking sea-shore, maybe a long, low prairie swell rises before me. I don't try for details, I don't even trace an outline, but just throw in an effect here and there, and by good luck it often comes right, in some fine harmony of colour, that's sure to warm up my heart and cheer my spirits; for, as there are sounds that, swelling up, fill the whole nature of man with ecstasy, there are combinations of colour and tint that enter the brain by the eye, and just produce the same sense of delight.'"

"And how did he accept your consolation?" asked she, smiling good-naturedly.

"I don't well know if he listened to me," said Simmy, sorrowfully; "for all he said afterwards was,

"'Well, Mr. Crow, good-by. I hope you'll come to see me when you visit Dublin. You'll easily find out my chambers in the college.'

"Of course I said 'I'd be delighted;' and there we parted."

"Poor fellow!" said Kate, but in an accent so peculiar it would have been very difficult to pronounce whether the words were of kindness or of disparagement.

"And your Prince, Mr. Crow?" said she, changing her tone to one of real or affected interest; "what's to be done now that Mr. Nelligan has left us?"

"I'm thinking of making a background figure of him, miss," said Simmy. "Burnt sienna reduces many an illustrious individual to an obscure position."

"But why not ask Mr. Massingbred to take his place—you've seen him?"

"Only passing the window, miss. He is a handsome young man, but that same look of fashion, the dash of style about him, is exactly what destroys the face for *me*. I feel I could make nothing of it; I'd be always thinking of him standing inside the plate-glass window of a London Club, or cantering along the alleys of the Park, or sipping his iced lemonade at Tortoni's. There's no poetising your man of gold chains and embroidered waistcoats!"

"I half suspect you are unjust in this case," said she, with one of her dubious smiles.

"I'm only saying what the effect is upon myself, miss," said Crow.

"But why not make a compromise between the two?" said she. "I believe the great painters—Vandyke, certainly—rarely took the studies from a single head. They caught a brow here, and a mouth there, harmonising the details by the suggestions of their own genius. Now, what if preserving all this here"—and she pointed to the head and eyes—"you were to fill up the remainder, partly from imagination, partly from a study." And as she spoke she took the brush from his hand, and by a few light and careless touches imparted a new character to the face.

"Oh, go on; that's admirable—that's glorious!" exclaimed Crow, wild with delight.

"There is no necessity to lose the expression of haughty sorrow in the eye and brow," continued she; "nor does it interfere with the passing emotion he may be supposed unable to control, of proud contempt for that priestly influence which has dominated over the ambition of a king." And now, as though carried away by the theme, she continued to paint as rapidly as she spoke, while Crow busied himself in preparing the colours upon the palette.

"My hardihood is only intended to encourage you, Mr. Crow," said she, "by showing that if one like me can point the road, the journey need not be deemed a difficult one." As she retired some paces to contemplate the picture, she casually glanced through a low glass door which opened upon the lawn, and where, under the shelter of a leafy beech, a young country girl was standing; her blue cloth cloak, with the hood thrown over her head, gave a certain picturesque character to the figure, which nearer inspection more than confirmed, for her features were singularly fine, and her large, soft, blue eyes beamed with a gentle earnestness, that showed Kate she was there with a purpose.

Opening the door at once, Kate Henderson approached her, and asked what she wanted.

With an air of half pride, half shame, the country girl drew herself up, and stared full and steadfastly at the speaker, and so continued till Kate repeated her question.

"Sure you're not Miss Mary?" replied she, by questioning her in turn.

"No, but if I can be of any use to you ——"

"I don't think you can," broke she in, with a manner almost haughty; "it's somebody else I'm wanting."

"If you wish to see Miss Martin, I'll go and fetch her," said Kate.

"I didn't say it was her I wanted to see," replied she, with a calm and almost severe composure.

"Maybe her ladyship?" asked Kate, far more interested than repelled by the other's manner.

"It's none of them at all," rejoined she. "I came here to speak to one that I know myself," added she, after a long pause; "and if he isn't gone, I want to see him."

"Oh, I think I can guess now," said Kate, smiling. "It is the counsellor from Dublin, Mr. Repton."

"It is no such thing," said the girl, promptly.

"Then it must be Mr. Crow, here."

An indignant toss of the head gave the negative to this surmise.

"I have gone through all our names here," said Kate; "and except Mr. Massingbred——"

"And there's the very one I want," said the girl, boldly.

"Step in here and rest yourself, and I'll send for him," said Kate, and with such persuasive courtesy were the words uttered, that almost, as it seemed, against her very will, the girl followed her into the studio and sat down. While Mr. Crow proceeded in search of Massingbred, Kate Henderson, resuming brush and palette, returned to her painting; not, however, on the grand canvas of the "Historical," but dexterously interposing a piece of fresh board, she seized the opportunity to sketch the beautiful head then before her, while occupying the girl's attention with the objects around.

Notwithstanding her intense astonishment at all she saw, the country girl never uttered a word, nor vouchsafed a single question as to the paintings; she even tried to moderate the eager pleasure they afforded by an endeavour not to admire them. Touched by the native pride of this struggle—for struggle it was—the features had assumed a look of haughty composure that well became the character of her beauty, and Kate caught up the expression so rapidly, that her sketch was already well-nigh completed when Massingbred entered.

"My dear Mistress Joan," cried he, shaking her cordially by both hands, "how glad I am to see you again. It was but this very moment I was inquiring how I could go over and pay you a visit."

Hurriedly as these words were uttered, and in all the apparent fervour of hearty sincerity, they were accompanied by a short glance at Kate Henderson, who was about to leave the room, that plainly said, "Remain where you are, there is no mystery here."

"I thank yer honer kindly," said Joan Landy, "but it's no good coming, he isn't there."

"Not there!—how and why is that?"

"Sure *you* ought to know better than *me*," said she, fixing her large eyes full upon him. "Ye left the house together, and *he* never came back since."

"Oh, perhaps I can guess," said Jack, pausing for a moment to reflect. "He might have deemed it safer to keep out of the way for a day or two."

"It's no good deceivin' me, sir," said she, rising from her seat; "tell me the whole truth. Where is he?"

"That is really more than I can say, my dear Mistress Joan. We parted in Oughterard."

"And you never saw him after?"

"Never, I assure you."

"And you never tried to see him?—you never asked what became of him?"

"I concluded, indeed I was certain, that he returned home," said Jack, but not without some confusion.

"Ay, that was enough for you," said she, angrily. "If you were a poor labourin' man, you'd not desert him that had you under his roof and gave you the best he had; but because ye're a gentleman ——"

"It is precisely for that reason I can't suffer you to think so meanly of me," cried Jack. "Now just hear me for one moment, and you'll see how unjust you've been." And, drawing his chair closer to hers, he narrated in a low and whispering voice the few events of their morning at Oughterard, and read for her the short note Magennis had written to him.

"And is that all?" exclaimed Joan, when he concluded.

"All, upon my honour!" said he, solemnly.

"Oh, then, wirra! wirra!" said she, ringing her hands, sorrowfully, "why did I come here?—why didn't I bear it all patient? But sure my heart was bursting, and I could not rest nor sleep, thinking of what happened to him! Oh, yer honer knows well what he is to *me!*" And she covered her face with her hands.

"You have done nothing wrong in coming here," said Jack, consolingly.

"Not if he never hears of it," said she, in a voice tremulous with fear.

"That he need never do," rejoined Jack; "though I cannot see why he should object to it. But come, Mrs. Joan, don't let this fret you; here's a young lady will tell you, as I have, that nobody could possibly blame your natural anxiety."

"What would a young lady know about a poor creature like *me?*" exclaimed Joan, dejectedly. "Sure, from the day she's born, she never felt what it was to be all alone and friendless!"

"You little guess to whom you say that," said Kate, turning round and gazing on her calmly; "but if the balance were struck this minute, take my word for it, you'd have the better share of fortune."

Jack Massingbred's cheek quivered slightly as he heard these words, and his eyes were bent upon the speaker with an intense meaning. Kate, however, turned haughtily away from the gaze, and coldly reminded him that Mrs. Joan should have some refreshment after her long walk.

"No, miss—no, yer honer; many thanks for the same," said Joan, drawing her cloak around her, "I couldn't eat a bit—my heart's heavy inside me. I'll go back now."

Kate tried to persuade her to take something, or at least to rest a little longer, but she was resolute, and eager to return.

"Shall we bear you company part of the way, then?" said Jack, with a look of half entreaty towards Kate.

"I shall be but too happy," said Kate, while she turned the nearly-completed sketch to the wall, but not so rapidly as to prevent Massingbred's catching a glimpse of it.

"How like!" exclaimed he, but only in a whisper audible to himself. "I didn't know that this also was one of your accomplishments."

A little laugh, and a saucy motion of her head was all her reply, while she went in search of her bonnet and shawl. She was back again in a moment, and the three now issued forth into the wood.

For all Jack Massingbred's boasted "tact," and his assumed power of suiting himself to his company, he felt very ill at ease as he walked along that morning. "His world" was not that of the poor country girl at his side, and he essayed in vain to find some topic to interest her. Not so Kate Henderson. With all a woman's nice perception, and quite without effort, she talked to Joan about the country and the people, of whose habits she knew sufficient not to betray ignorance; and although Joan felt at times a half suspicious distrust of her, she grew at length to be pleased with the tone of easy familiarity used towards her, and the absence of anything bordering on superiority.

Joan, whose instincts and sympathies were all with the humble class from which she sprung, described in touching language the suffering condition of the people, the terrible struggle against destitution maintained for years, and daily becoming more difficult and hopeless. It was like a shipwrecked crew reduced to quarter-rations, and now about to relinquish even these!

"And they are patient under all this?" asked Kate, with that peculiar accent so difficult to pronounce its meaning.

"They are indeed, miss," was the answer.

"Have they any hope? What do they promise themselves as the remedy for these calamities?"

"Sorrow one of me knows," said she, with a sigh. "Some goes away to America, some sinks slowly under it, and waits for God's time to leave the world, and a few, but very few, gets roused to anger, and does something to be transported or put in gaol."

"And Miss Martin—does she not relieve a good deal of this misery? Is she not of immense benefit by her exertions here?"

"Arrah, what can a young lady do after all. Sure it's always them that talks most and best gets over her. Some are ashamed, and some are too proud to tell what they're suffering; and I believe in my heart, for one that's relieved there are twenty more angry at seeing how lucky he was."

They walked along now for some time in silence, when Joan, stopping short, said—"There's the house, miss; that's the place I live in."

"That house far away on the mountain side?"

"Yes, miss; it's four miles yet from this."

"But surely you haven't to walk all that way?"

"What signifies it? Isn't my heart lighter than when I came along this morning? And now I won't let you come any farther, for I'll take a short cut here across the fields."

"May I go and see you one of these days?" asked Kate.

Joan grew crimson to the very roots of her hair, and turned a look on Massingbred, as though to say—"You ought to answer this for me." But Jack was too deep in his own thoughts even to notice the appeal.

"I can scarcely ask *you* to come to *me*," said Kate, quickly perceiving a difficulty, "for I'm not even a visitor at Cro' Martin."

"I'm sure I hope it's not the last time we'll meet, miss; but maybe"—she faltered, and a heavy tear burst forth, and rolled slowly along her cheek—"maybe you oughtn't to come and see me."

Kate pressed her hand affectionately, without speaking, and they parted.

"Is Joan gone" asked Massingbred, raising his head from an attitude of deep reverie. "When did she leave us?"

"There she goes yonder," said Kate, pointing. "I fear me her spirits are not as light as her footsteps. Are her people very poor?"

"Her father was a herd, I believe," said he, carelessly; "but she doesn't live at home."

"Is she married, then?"

"I'm not sure that she is; but at least she believes that she is."

"Poor thing!" said Kate, calmly, while, folding her arms, she continued to gaze after the departing figure of the country girl. "Poor thing!" repeated she once more, and turned to walk homewards.

Massingbred fixed his eyes upon her keenly as she uttered the words; few and simple as they were, they seemed to reveal to him something of the nature of her who spoke them. A mere exclamation—a syllable—will sometimes convey "whole worlds of secret thought and feeling," and it was evidently thus that Massingbred interpreted this brief expression. "There was nothing of scorn in that pity," thought he. "I wish she had uttered even one word more! She is a strange creature!"

And it was thus speaking to himself that he walked along at her side.

"This wild and desolate scene is not very like that of which we talked the other night—when first we met—Miss Henderson."

"You forget that we never met," said she, calmly.

"True, and yet there was a link between us even in those few flowers thrown at random."

"Don't be romantic, Mr. Massingbred—do not, I pray you," said she, smiling faintly. "You *know* it's not your style, while it would be utterly thrown away upon *me*. I am aware that fine gentlemen of your stamp deem this the fitting tone to assume towards 'the governess,' but I'm really unworthy of it."

"What a strange girl you are," said he, half thinking aloud.

"On the contrary, how very commonplace," said she, hastily.

"Do you like this country?" asked Massingbred, with an imitation of her own abrupt manner.

"No," said she, shortly.

"Nor the people?"

"Nor the people!" was the answer.

"And is your life to be passed amongst them?"

"Perhaps," said she, with a slight gesture of her shoulders. "Don't you know, Mr. Massingbred," added she, with more energy, "that a woman has no more power to shape her destiny than a leaf has to choose where it will fall? If I were a man—you, for instance—I would think and act differently."

"I should like to hear what you would do if in my place," said Jack, with a degree of deep interest in the remark.

"To begin. I'll tell you what I would not do," said she, firmly. "I'd not waste very good abilities on very small objects; I'd neither have small ambitions, nor small animosities. You have both."

"As how?" asked he, frankly, and with no touch of irritation.

"Am I to be candid?"

"Certainly."

"Even to rudeness?"

"Cut as deeply as you like," said he, smiling.

"Then here goes:—For the 'small ambition' I speak of, it was displayed yesterday at dinner, when, in rivalry with that old lawyer, you condescended to play agreeable, to out-talk him, out-quote, and out-anecdote him. It is true you succeeded, but what a poor success it was; how inadequate to the forces that were mustered to effect it!"

"And now for the other count of the indictment," said he, with a half smile.

"First, do you plead guilty to this one?" asked she.

"Yes; with an 'attenuating circumstance.'"

"What is that?"

"Why, that *you* were present," said Jack, with a glance of more than mere passing gallantry.

"Well," said she, after a pause, "I *did* take some of the display to my own share. I saw that you didn't care to captivate the young lady of the house, and that 'my lady' bored you."

"Insufferably!" exclaimed Jack, with energy.

"Your manner showed it," said she, "even more than such polish ought to have betrayed."

"But I'm sure I never exhibited any signs of my martyrdom," said he; "I stood my torture well."

"Not half so heroically as you fancied. I noticed your weariness before the dinner was half over, as I detected your splenetic dislike to young Mr. Nelligan——"

"To young Nelligan?—then he has told you——"

"Stop—be cautious," broke she in hurriedly; "don't turn evidence against yourself. *He* has told me nothing."

"Then what do you know?"

"Nothing; I only surmise."

"And what is your surmise?"

"That he and you had met before—that you had even been intimate—and now, from some misunderstanding, you had ceased to be friends. Mind, I don't want confessions—I don't seek to learn your secrets."

"But you shall hear this from me," said Massingbred, with earnestness, "and perhaps you, so ready to blame me for some things, may see reason to think well of me in this." He then related, briefly but simply, the history of his acquaintance with Nelligan; he dwelt, not without feeling, upon the passages of their student-life, and at last spoke of his chance visit to Oughterard, and the accident by which he became old Nelligan's guest. "What can you make of Joseph's conduct," cried he, "or how explain his refusal to meet me at his father's table? One of two reasons there must be. He either discredits me in the character of his friend, or shrinks, with an ignoble shame, from appearing there in his real position—the son of the country shopkeeper! I scarcely know if I'd not prefer he should have been actuated by the former motive; though more offensive to *me*, in *him* it were more manly."

"Why not have asked him which alternative he accepted?" asked Kate.

"Because the opportunity to wound him deeply—incurably—first presented itself. I knew well that nothing would hurt him like the cool assumption of not recognizing him, and I determined not to lose my vengeance."

"I'm a woman," said Kate, "and I'd not have stooped to *that!*"

It was rarely that Massingbred's emotions gave any evidence of their working, but now his cheek grew crimson, as he said, "A man can only measure a man's indignation."

"You are angry without cause," said she, calmly; "you wish me to pronounce a verdict on an act, and are displeased because I think differently from you. How right I was in my guess [illegible] small animosities were amongst your failings! You want now to quarrel with me!"

Massingbred walked along for some moments without speaking, and then said, "You knew Nelligan formerly?"

"Yes, we were playfellows together as children; lovers, I believe, a little later on ——"

"And now?" broke he in.

"And now very good friends, as the world uses that phrase. At all events," added she, after a brief pause, "enough his friend to be able to say that you have wronged him by your suspicions. Joe Nelligan—or I'm much mistaken—may feel the inequality of his position as a something to overcome, a barrier to be surmounted—not as a disability to contest the prizes of life even with such as Mr. Massingbred."

"It is *you* now would quarrel with *me*," said Jack, retorting her own words upon her. "And yet," he added, in a lower tone, "I would wish to have you my friend."

"So you can, upon one condition," replied she, promptly.

"I accept, whatever it be. Name it."

"That you be your own friend, that you address yourself to the business of life seriously and steadily; resolving to employ your abilities as a means of advancement, not as a mere instrument for amusement; determine, in fact, to be something besides a *dilettante* and an idler."

"Is it a bargain, then, if I do this?" asked he, eagerly.

"Yes; I promise you the high and mighty boon of *my* friendship," replied she, with mock solemnity.

"And so we seal our contract," said he, pressing her hand to his lips, but with an air of such respectful gallantry, that the action implied nothing bordering on a liberty.

"And now I leave you," said she, as she opened the wicket-gate of a small flower-garden; "such conferences as ours must not be repeated, or they might be remarked upon. Good-by." And without waiting for his reply, she passed on into the garden, while Massingbred stood gazing after her silently and thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XX.

AN ELECTION ADDRESS.

"Am I behind time, Mr. Massingbred?" said Kate Henderson, as she entered the Library, about a week after the events we have last recorded—"am I behind time?" said she, approaching a table where the young man sat, surrounded with a mass of letters and papers.

"Not very much," said he, rising, and placing a chair for her; "and I take it for granted you came as soon as you could."

"Yes; I have finished my morning's reading for her Ladyship—noted her letters—answered the official portion of her correspondence—talked the newspaper for Mr. Martin—hummed a singing lesson for Miss Mary—listened to a Grand Jury story of Mr. Repton—and now, that they are all off to their several destinations, here I am, very much at the service of Mr. Massingbred."

"Who never needed counsel more than at this moment!" said Jack, running his hands distractedly through his hair. "That's from my father!" added he, handing her a letter with a portentious-looking seal attached to it.

"What a fine bold hand—and how easy to read," said she, perusing it. Jack watched her narrowly while she read; but on her calm impassive face not a line nor a lineament betrayed emotion.

"It is, then, an English borough he recommends," said she, laying it down; "and I suppose, looking to an official career, he is quite right. The 'No Irish need apply' might be inscribed over Downing-street; but is that altogether your view?"

"I scarcely know what I project as yet," said he. "I have no career!"

"Well, let us plan one," replied she, crossing her arms on the table, and speaking with increased earnestness. "The Martins have offered you Oughterard——" He nodded, and she went on: "And, as I understand it, very much on *your* own conditions?"

"That is to say, I'm not to damage the Tories more than I can help, nor to help the Radicals more than I must."

"Is there any designation for the party you will thus belong to?" asked she.

"I'm not exactly sure that there is; perhaps they'd call me a Moderate Whig."

"That sounds very nice and commonplace, but I don't like it. These are not times for moderation, nor would the part suit *you!*"

"You think so?"

"I'm certain of it. You haven't got habits of discipline to serve with a regular corps; to do anything, or be anything, you must command a partisan legion——"

"You're right there—I know that," broke he in.

"I don't mean it as flattery, but rather something a little bordering on the reverse," said she, fixing her eyes steadfastly on him; "for, after all, there is no great success—I mean, no towering success—to be achieved by such a line; but as I feel that you'll not work——"

"No; of that be assured!"

"Then there are only secondary rewards to be won."

"You certainly do not over-estimate me!" said Jack, trying to seem perfectly indifferent.

"I have no desire to underrate your abilities," said she, calmly; "they are very good ones. You have great fluency—great 'variety,' as Grattan would call it—an excellent memory—and a most amiable self-possession."

"By Jove!" said he, reddening slightly, "you enumerate my little gifts with all the accuracy of an appraiser!"

"Then," resumed she, not heeding his interruption, "you have abundance of what is vulgarly styled 'pluck,' and which is to courage what esprit is to actual wit; and lastly, you are a proficient in that readiness which the world always accepts for frankness."

"You were right to say that you intended no flattery!" said he, with an effort to laugh.

"I want to be truthful," rejoined she, calmly. "No praise of mine—however high it soared, or however lavishly it was squandered—could possibly raise you in your own esteem. The

Governess may perform the part of the slave in the triumphal chariot, but could not aspire to put the crown on the conqueror!"

"But I have not conquered!" said Jack.

"You may, whenever you enter the lists; you must, indeed, if you only care to do so. Go in for an Irish borough," said she, with renewed animation; "arm yourself with all the popular grievances—there is just faction enough left to last *your* time; discuss them in your own way, and my word for it but you'll succeed. It will be such a boon to the House to hear a gentlemanlike tone on questions which have always been treated in coarser guise. For a while you'll have no imitators, and can sneer at the gentry and extol the 'people,' without a competitor. Now and then, too, you can assail the Treasury benches, where your father is sitting; and nothing will so redound to your character for independence."

"Why, where in Heaven's name," cried Jack, "have you got up all this? What and how do you know anything of party and politics?"

"Have I not been studying 'Hansard' and the files of the *Times* for the last week by your directions? Have I not read lives of all the illustrious prosers you gave me to look through? And is it very wonderful if I have learned some of the secrets of this success, or that I should 'get up' 'my politics' as rapidly as you can 'your principles?'"

"I wish I was even sure that I had done so," said Jack, laughing, "for this same address is puzzling me sadly! Now here, for instance," and he read aloud, "'While steadfastly upholding the rights of property, determined to maintain in all their integrity the more sacred rights of conscience——.' Now just tell me, what do you understand by that?"

"That rents must be paid—occasionally, at least; but that you hope to pull down the Established Church!"

"Well—come," said he, "the thing will perhaps do!"

"I don't much like all this about 'the Palladium of the British Constitution, and the unbroken bulwark of our dearest liberties.' We are in Ireland, remember, where we care no more for your Palladium—if we ever knew what it meant—than we do for 'Grand Lama.' A slight dash of what is called 'nationality' would be better—very vague—very shadowy, of course. Bear in mind what Lady Dorothea told us last night about the charm of the King's bow. Everybody thought it specially meant for himself; it strikes me that something of this sort should pervade an election address."

"I wish to Heaven you'd write it, then," said Jack, placing a pen in her fingers.

"Something in this fashion," said she, while her hands traced the lines rapidly on the paper:

"'Finding that a new era is about to dawn in the political state of Ireland, when the consequences of late legislation will engender new conditions and relations, I present myself before you to solicit the honour of your suffrages, a perfect stranger to your town, but no stranger to the wants and necessities of that nationality which now, for the first time for centuries, is about to receive its due development.'

"Or this, if you prefer it," said she, writing away rapidly as before:

"'The presumption of aspiring to your representation will, perhaps, be compensated when I come before you deeply impressed with the wrongs which centuries of legislation have enacted, and which, stranger as I am in Ireland, have arrested my attention and engaged my sympathies, impelling me to enter upon a public career, and, if favoured by your approval, to devote whatever energy and capacity I may possess, to your great and good cause.'"

"I like the first best," said Jack. "The new era and the results of the Relief Bill will be such appetising suggestions. There must be an allusion to the Martins and their support."

"Rather, however, as though *you* had brought over Martin to *your* views, than that *he* had selected you to represent his. In this wise:" and again she wrote—

"'It is with a just pride that I announce to you that in these professions I am strengthened by the cordial approval and support of one who, in his rank and station, and natural influence, is second to none in this great county; and, who, whatever misconceptions have hitherto prevailed as to his views, is, heart and soul, a true patriot and an Irishman!'

"It will puzzle him sorely to guess what line he should adopt to realize all this, and he'll have to come to *you* for his politics!"

"You have caught up the cant of this peculiar literature perfectly," said Massingbred, as he pored over the papers she had just penned.

"Dear me!" cried she, in a weary tone, "my great difficulty will be to discard its evil influence, and even write a common note like a reasonable being again."

"But come, confess frankly: you think that a political career is the only one worth embracing, and that any other life offers no reward worthy the name?"

"I think you mistake me," said she. "It is the social position consequent upon success in a political life that I value—the eminence it confers in the very highest and greatest circles. If I regarded the matter otherwise, I'd not be indifferent as to the line to follow—I'd have great convictions, and hold them—I mean, if I were *you*."

"Then of course you consider me as one who has none such?"

"To be sure I do. Men of your measures of ability can no more burden themselves with principles than a thorough-bred hackney can carry extra weight—they've quite enough to do to make their running without."

"Well, I shall certainly not be spoiled by flattery, at least from you," said Jack, laughing.

"They who know you less will make up for it all, depend upon it," said she, quietly. "Don't fancy, Mr. Massingbred," added she, with more earnestness of manner—"don't fancy that I'm insensible to the impertinences I have dared to address to you, or that I venture upon them without pain: but when I perceived that you would admit me to the liberty of criticising your conduct, character, and manners, I thought that I might render you good service by saying what better taste and better breeding would shrink from, and the only cost be the dislike of myself."

"You took a very bad way to accomplish the latter," said Jack, fervently.

"I didn't give it much consideration," said she, haughtily. "It was very little matter what opinion you entertained of 'the governess.'"

"I should like to convince you that you were wrong," said he, looking fixedly at her.

"You'd find your task harder than you suspect, sir," said she, coldly. "There is a sense of pride about the humbleness of a station such as mine, as all the elevation of one in yours, could never fathom. And," added she, in a still more determined tone, "there is but one condition on which this intercourse of ours can continue, which is, that this topic be never resumed between us. The gulf that separates your position in life from mine is the security for mutual frankness; to attempt to span it over by deception would be to build a bridge that must break down the first moment of its trial. Enough of this! I'll take these," said she, gathering up the papers, "and copy them out clearly. They ought to be with the printer to-morrow; and, indeed, you should not defer your canvass."

Massingbred made no answer, but sat with his head buried between his hands.

"I'd have you to visit the 'dear constituency' at once, Mr. Massingbred," said she, with a slight touch of scorn in her voice. "They are not well-bred enough to bear a slight!" And with this she left the room.

"I should like excessively to know the secret of this interest in my behalf," said Jack, as he arose and slowly walked the room. "It is not, unquestionably, from any high estimate of my capacity; as little is it anything bordering on regard; and yet," added he, after a pause, "there are moments when I half fancy she could care for me, at least I know well that *I* could for *her*. Confound it!" cried he, passionately, "what a terrible barrier social station throws up! If she were even some country squire's daughter—portionless as she is—the notion would not be so absurd; but 'the governess!' and 'the steward!' what frightful figures to conjure up. No, no; that's impossible. One might do such a folly by retiring from the world for ever, but that would be exactly to defeat the whole object of such a match. She is essentially intended for 'the world'—every gift and grace she possesses are such as only have their fitting exercise—where the game of life is played by the highest, and for the heaviest stakes! But it is not to be thought of!"

"Have I found you at last?" cried Repton, entering the room. "They say the writ will be here on Monday, so that we've not an hour to lose. Let us drive over to Oughterard at once, see the editor of the *Intelligence*, call on priest Rafferty, and that other fellow—the father of our young friend here."

"Mr. Nelligan," said Jack. "But I can't well visit *him*—there have been some rather unpleasant passages between us."

"Ah! you told me something about it. He wanted you to fill a bail-bond, or do something or other, rather than shoot *me*. An unreasonable old rascal! Never mind; we shall come before him now in another character, and you'll see that he'll be more tractable."

"The matter is graver than this," said Jack, musingly; "and our difference is serious enough to make intercourse impossible."

"You shall tell me all about it as we drive along—that is, if it be brief and easy to follow, for my head is so full of election matters I don't desire a new element of complication. Step in now, and let us away." And with this he hurried Massingbred to the door, where a pony-phaeton was in waiting for them.

Once on the road, Repton changed the conversation from the domain of politics, and talked entirely of the host and his family. There was a sort of constitutional frankness and familiarity about the old lawyer which all the astute habits and instincts of his profession had never mastered. Like a great many acute men, his passion for shrewd observation and keen remark overbore the prudent reserve that belongs to less animated talkers, and so, he now scrupled not to discuss Martin and his affairs to one who but a few days back had been a complete stranger amongst them.

At first Jack heard him without much interest, but, as he continued, the subject attracted all his attention, full as it was of views of life and the world, perfectly new and strange to him.

To Massingbred's great astonishment, he learned that vast as the estates, and large as was the fortune of the Martins, that they were deeply encumbered with bond-debts and mortgages. The wasteful habits of the gentry generally, combined with great facilities for obtaining money at any emergency, had led to this universal indebtedness; and, in fact, as the lawyer expressed it, an old estate was supposed to be the victim of debt, as an elderly gentleman was liable to gout; nobody presuming to think that the tenure, in either case, was a whit the more precarious on account of the casualty.

"Now," said Repton, as they reached a point of the road from which a view of the country could be obtained for miles on every side—"now, as far as you can see belongs to Martin. Beyond that mountain yonder, too, there is a large tract—not very productive it is true—extending to the sea. The fine waving surface to your left is all tillage land; and the islands in the bay are his. It is really a princely estate, with even greater hidden resources than those palpable and open to view. But, were I to show it to you on a map, and point out at the same time every spot on which some money-lender has a claim—how much has been advanced upon this—what sums have been lent upon that—you'd be more amazed at the careless ease of the proprietor than you now are at the extent of his fortune."

"But he is spending immensely in improving and developing the property," said Jack.

"Of course he is, sir. That new-fangled notion of 'gentleman-farming'—which has come to us from countries where there are no gentlemen—won't suit Ireland, at least in the present generation. What *we* want here is, not to make more money, but to learn how to spend less; and although the first very often teaches the last, it is a hard way for an Irishman to acquire his knowledge. There's your borough, sir—that little spot in the valley yonder is Oughterard. Do you feel, as you behold it, as though it were to be the mainspring of a great career? Is there an instinctive throb within that says, 'The Honourable Member for Oughterard will be a great name in the "Collective Wisdom?"'"

"I can scarcely say yes to that appeal," said Jack, smiling; "though if what you have just told me of the mediocrity of public men be true ——"

"Can you doubt it? You have them all before you—their lives, their sayings, and their doings. Show me one in the whole mass who has originated a new idea in politics, or developed a new resource in the nation. Do they exhibit the common inventiveness displayed in almost every other walk of life, or do they even dress up their common platitudes in any other garb than the cast-off clothes of their predecessors? Mediocrity is a flattery when applied to them. But what's this coming along behind us, with such clattering of hoofs?"

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"Yours, in haste,
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"I'll stroll on and stretch my legs a bit," said Jack, springing out of the pony phaeton, and seeing that the others had some private matter of discussion; and Scanlan now drew nigh, while Repton informed him what the note contained.

"It's a little too late for this now," said Scanlan, gravely.

"How do you mean too late?" asked Repton.

"Why, that Massingbred stands well with the people in the borough. They think that he'll be more their man than Martin's, and indeed, they're so confident of it, I half suspect he has told them so."

"But there has been no canvass as yet—his address isn't even printed."

"There has been a correspondence, however," said Scanlan, with a knowing wink. "Take my word for it, Mr. Repton, he's a deep fellow."

"Are you quite sure of this?—can you pledge yourself to its truth?"

"I only know that Father Rafferty said the night before last he was satisfied with him, and the one difficulty was about old Nelligan, who somehow is greatly incensed against Massingbred."

"He'd have no chance in the borough without us," said Repton, confidently.

"If old Dan would consent to spend the money, he'd be the Member in spite of us," rejoined Scanlan.

"I'll not dispute local knowledge with you, sir," said Repton, peevishly. "Let us turn back at once. Where's Mr. Massingbred? I saw him standing on the hill yonder a few minutes ago; maybe, he's strolling along the road in front." Repton moved forward to a rising spot of ground, from whence a wide view extended for a distance on every side, but no trace of Massingbred could be discovered. "What can have

"Do you like this country?" asked Massingbred, with an imitation of her own abrupt manner.

"No," said she, shortly.

"Nor the people?"

"Nor the people!" was the answer.

"And is your life to be passed amongst them?"

"Perhaps," said she, with a slight gesture of her shoulders. "Don't you know, Mr. Massingbred," added she, with more energy, "that a woman has no more power to shape her destiny than a leaf has to choose where it will fall? If I were a man—you, for instance—I would think and act differently."

"I should like to hear what you would do if in my place," said Jack, with a degree of deep interest in the remark.

"To begin, I'll tell you what I would not do," said she, firmly. "I'd not waste very good abilities on very small objects; I'd neither have small ambitions, nor small animosities. You have both."

"As how?" asked he, frankly, and with no touch of irritation.

"Am I to be candid?"

"Certainly."

"Even to rudeness?"

"Cut as deeply as you like," said he, smiling.

"Then here goes:—For the 'small ambition' I speak of, it was displayed yesterday at dinner, when, in rivalry with that old lawyer, you condescended to play agreeable, to out-talk him, out-quote, and out-anecdote him. It is true you succeeded, but what a poor success it was; how inadequate to the forces that were mustered to effect it!"

"And now for the other count of the indictment," said he, with a half smile.

"First, do you plead guilty to this one?" asked she.

"Yes; with an 'attenuating circumstance.'"

"What is that?"

"Why, that *you* were present," said Jack, with a glance of more than mere passing gallantry.

"Well," said she, after a pause, "I *did* take some of the display to my own share. I saw that you didn't care to captivate the young lady of the house, and that 'my lady' bored you."

"Insufferably!" exclaimed Jack, with energy.

"Your manner showed it," said she, "even more than such polish ought to have betrayed."

"But I'm sure I never exhibited any signs of my martyrdom," said he; "I stood my torture well."

"Not half so heroically as you fancied. I noticed your weariness before the dinner was half over, as I detected your splenetic dislike to young Mr. Nelligan——"

"To young Nelligan?—then he has told you——"

"Stop—be cautious," broke she in hurriedly; "don't turn evidence against yourself. *He* has told me nothing."

"Then what do you know?"

"Nothing; I only surmise."

"And what is your surmise?"

"That he and you had met before—that you had even been intimate—and now, from some misunderstanding, you had ceased to be friends. Mind, I don't want confessions—I don't seek to learn your secrets."

"But you shall hear this from me," said Massingbred, with earnestness, "and perhaps you, so ready to blame me for some things, may see reason to think well of me in this." He then related, briefly but simply, the history of his acquaintance with Nelligan; he dwelt, not without feeling, upon the passages of their student-life, and at last spoke of his chance visit to Oughterard, and the accident by which he became old Nelligan's guest. "What can you make of Joseph's conduct," cried he, "or how explain his refusal to meet me at his father's table? One of two reasons there must be. He either discredits me in the character of his friend, or shrinks, with an ignoble shame, from appearing there in his real position—the son of the country shopkeeper! I scarcely know if I'd not prefer he should have been actuated by the former motive; though more offensive to *me*, in *him* it were more manly."

"Why not have asked him which alternative he accepted?" asked Kate.

"Because the opportunity to wound him deeply—incurably—first presented itself. I knew well that nothing would hurt him like the cool assumption of not recognizing him, and I determined not to lose my vengeance."

"I'm a woman," said Kate, "and I'd not have stooped to *that!*"

It was rarely that Massingbred's emotions gave any evidence of their working, but now his cheek grew crimson, as he said, "A man can only measure a man's indignation."

"You are angry without cause," said she, calmly; "you wish me to pronounce a verdict on an act, and are displeased because I think differently from you. How right I was in my guess that small animosities were amongst your failings! You want now to quarrel with *me!*"

Massingbred walked along for some moments without speaking, and then said, "You knew Nelligan formerly?"

"Yes, we were playfellows together as children; lovers, I believe, a little later on ——"

"And now?" broke he in.

"And now very good friends, as the world uses that phrase. At all events," added she, after a brief pause, "enough his friend to be able to say that you have wronged him by your suspicions. Joe Nelligan—or I'm much mistaken—may feel the inequality of his position as a something to overcome, a barrier to be surmounted—not as a disability to contest the prizes of life even with such as Mr. Massingbred."

"It is *you* now would quarrel with *me*," said Jack, retorting her own words upon her. "And yet," he added, in a lower tone, "I would wish to have you my friend."

"So you can, upon one condition," replied she, promptly.

"I accept, whatever it be. Name it."

"That you be your own friend, that you address yourself to the business of life seriously and steadily; resolving to employ your abilities as a means of advancement, not as a mere instrument for amusement; determine, in fact, to be something besides a *dilettante* and an idler."

"Is it a bargain, then, if I do this?" asked he, eagerly.

"Yes; I promise you the high and mighty boon of *my* friendship," replied she, with mock solemnity.

"And so we seal our contract," said he, pressing her hand to his lips, but with an air of such respectful gallantry, that the action implied nothing bordering on a liberty.

"And now I leave you," said she, as she opened the wicket-gate of a small flower-garden; "such conferences as ours must not be repeated, or they might be remarked upon. Good-by." And without waiting for his reply, she passed on into the garden, while Massingbred stood gazing after her silently and thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XX.

AN ELECTION ADDRESS.

"AM I behind time, Mr. Massingbred?" said Kate Henderson, as she entered the Library, about a week after the events we have last recorded—"am I behind time?" said she, approaching a table where the young man sat, surrounded with a mass of letters and papers.

"Not very much," said he, rising, and placing a chair for her; "and I take it for granted you came as soon as you could."

"Yes; I have finished my morning's reading for her Ladyship—noted her letters—answered the official portion of her correspondence—talked the newspaper for Mr. Martin—hummed a singing lesson for Miss Mary—listened to a Grand Jury story of Mr. Repton—and now, that they are all off to their several destinations, here I am, very much at the service of Mr. Massingbred."

"Who never needed counsel more than at this moment!" said Jack, running his hands distractedly through his hair. "That's from my father!" added he, handing her a letter with a portentious-looking seal attached to it.

"What a fine bold hand—and how easy to read," said she, perusing it. Jack watched her narrowly while she read; but on her calm impassive face not a line nor a lineament betrayed emotion.

"It is, then, an English borough he recommends," said she, laying it down; "and I suppose, looking to an official career, he is quite right. The 'No Irish need apply' might be inscribed over Downing-street; but is that altogether your view?"

"I scarcely know what I project as yet," said he. "I have no career!"

"Well, let us plan one," replied she, crossing her arms on the table, and speaking with increased earnestness. "The Martins have offered you Oughterard——" He nodded, and she went on: "And, as I understand it, very much on *your* own conditions?"

"That is to say, I'm not to damage the Tories more than I can help, nor to help the Radicals more than I must."

"Is there any designation for the party you will thus belong to?" asked she.

"I'm not exactly sure that there is; perhaps they'd call me a Moderate Whig."

"That sounds very nice and commonplace, but I don't like it. These are not times for moderation, nor would the part suit *you!*"

"You think so?"

"I'm certain of it. You haven't got habits of discipline to serve with a regular corps; to do anything, or be anything, you must command a partisan legion——"

"You're right there—I know that," broke he in.

"I don't mean it as flattery, but rather something a little bordering on the reverse," said she, fixing her eyes steadfastly on him; "for, after all, there is no great success—I mean, no towering success—to be achieved by such a line; but as I feel that you'll not work——"

"No; of that be assured!"

"Then there are only secondary rewards to be won."

"You certainly do not over-estimate me!" said Jack, trying to seem perfectly indifferent.

"I have no desire to underrate your abilities," said she, calmly; "they are very good ones. You have great fluency—great 'variety,' as Grattan would call it—an excellent memory—and a most amiable self-possession."

"By Jove!" said he, reddening slightly, "you enumerate my little gifts with all the accuracy of an appraiser!"

"Then," resumed she, not heeding his interruption, "you have abundance of what is vulgarly styled 'pluck,' and which is to courage what esprit is to actual wit; and lastly, you are a proficient in that readiness which the world always accepts for frankness."

"You were right to say that you intended no flattery!" said he, with an effort to laugh.

"I want to be truthful," rejoined she, calmly. "No praise of mine—however high it soared, or however lavishly it was squandered—could possibly raise you in your own esteem. The

Governess may perform the part of the slave in the triumphal chariot, but could not aspire to put the crown on the conqueror!"

"But I have not conquered!" said Jack.

"You may, whenever you enter the lists; you must, indeed, if you only care to do so. Go in for an Irish borough," said she, with renewed animation; "arm yourself with all the popular grievances—there is just faction enough left to last *your* time; discuss them in your own way, and my word for it but you'll succeed. It will be such a boon to the House to hear a gentlemanlike tone on questions which have always been treated in coarser guise. For a while you'll have no imitators, and can sneer at the gentry and extol the 'people,' without a competitor. Now and then, too, you can assail the Treasury benches, where your father is sitting; and nothing will so redound to your character for independence."

"Why, where in Heaven's name," cried Jack, "have you got up all this? What and how do you know anything of party and politics?"

"Have I not been studying 'Hansard' and the files of the *Times* for the last week by your directions? Have I not read lives of all the illustrious prosers you gave me to look through? And is it very wonderful if I have learned some of the secrets of this success, or that I should 'get up' 'my politics' as rapidly as you can 'your principles?'"

"I wish I was even sure that I had done so," said Jack, laughing, "for this same address is puzzling me sadly! Now here, for instance," and he read aloud, "'While steadfastly upholding the rights of property, determined to maintain in all their integrity the more sacred rights of conscience——.' Now just tell me, what do you understand by that?"

"That rents must be paid—occasionally, at least; but that you hope to pull down the Established Church!"

"Well—come," said he, "the thing will perhaps do!"

"I don't much like all this about 'the Palladium of the British Constitution, and the unbroken bulwark of our dearest liberties.' We are in Ireland, remember, where we care no more for your Palladium—if we ever knew what it meant—than we do for 'Grand Lama.' A slight dash of what is called 'nationality' would be better—very vague—very shadowy, of course. Bear in mind what Lady Dorothea told us last night about the charm of the King's bow. Everybody thought it specially meant for himself; it strikes me that something of this sort should pervade an election address."

"I wish to Heaven you'd write it, then," said Jack, placing a pen in her fingers.

"Something in this fashion," said she, while her hands traced the lines rapidly on the paper:

"'Finding that a new era is about to dawn in the political state of Ireland, when the consequences of late legislation will engender new conditions and relations, I present myself before you to solicit the honour of your suffrages, a perfect stranger to your town, but no stranger to the wants and necessities of that nationality which now, for the first time for centuries, is about to receive its due development.'

"Or this, if you prefer it," said she, writing away rapidly as before:

"'The presumption of aspiring to your representation will, perhaps, be compensated when I come before you deeply impressed with the wrongs which centuries of legislation have enacted, and which, stranger as I am in Ireland, have arrested my attention and engaged my sympathies, impelling me to enter upon a public career, and, if favoured by your approval, to devote whatever energy and capacity I may possess, to your great and good cause.'"

"I like the first best," said Jack. "The new era and the results of the Relief Bill will be such appetising suggestions. There must be an allusion to the Martins and their support."

"Rather, however, as though *you* had brought over Martin to *your* views, than that *he* had selected you to represent his. In this wise:" and again she wrote—

"'It is with a just pride that I announce to you that in these professions I am strengthened by the cordial approval and support of one who, in his rank and station, and natural influence, is second to none in this great county; and, who, whatever misconceptions have hitherto prevailed as to his views, is, heart and soul, a true patriot and an Irishman!'

"It will puzzle him sorely to guess what line he should adopt to realize all this, and he'll have to come to *you* for his politics!"

"You have caught up the cant of this peculiar literature perfectly," said Massingbred, as he pored over the papers she had just penned.

"Dear me!" cried she, in a weary tone, "my great difficulty will be to discard its evil influence, and even write a common note like a reasonable being again."

"But come, confess frankly: you think that a political career is the only one worth embracing, and that any other life offers no reward worthy the name?"

"I think you mistake me," said she. "It is the social position consequent upon success in a political life that I value—the eminence it confers in the very highest and greatest circles. If I regarded the matter otherwise, I'd not be indifferent as to the line to follow—I'd have great convictions, and hold them—I mean, if I were *you*."

"Then of course you consider me as one who has none such?"

"To be sure I do. Men of your measures of ability can no more burden themselves with principles than a thorough-bred hackney can carry extra weight—they've quite enough to do to make their running without."

"Well, I shall certainly not be spoiled by flattery, at least from you," said Jack, laughing.

"They who know you less will make up for it all, depend upon it," said she, quietly. "Don't fancy, Mr. Massingbred," added she, with more earnestness of manner—"don't fancy that I'm insensible to the impertinences I have dared to address to you, or that I venture upon them without pain: but when I perceived that you would admit me to the liberty of criticising your conduct, character, and manners, I thought that I might render you good service by saying what better taste and better breeding would shrink from, and the only cost be the dislike of myself."

"You took a very bad way to accomplish the latter," said Jack, fervently.

"I didn't give it much consideration," said she, haughtily. "It was very little matter what opinion you entertained of 'the governess.'"

"I should like to convince you that you were wrong," said he, looking fixedly at her.

"You'd find your task harder than you suspect, sir," said she, coldly. "There is a sense of pride about the humbleness of a station such as mine, as all the elevation of one in yours, could never fathom. And," added she, in a still more determined tone, "there is but one condition on which this intercourse of ours can continue, which is, that this topic be never resumed between us. The gulf that separates your position in life from mine is the security for mutual frankness; to attempt to span it over by deception would be to build a bridge that must break down the first moment of its trial. Enough of this! I'll take these," said she, gathering up the papers, "and copy them out clearly. They ought to be with the printer to-morrow; and, indeed, you should not defer your canvass."

Massingbred made no answer, but sat with his head buried between his hands.

"I'd have you to visit the 'dear constituency' at once, Mr. Massingbred," said she, with a slight touch of scorn in her voice. "They are not well-bred enough to bear a slight!" And with this she left the room.

"I should like excessively to know the secret of this interest in my behalf," said Jack, as he arose and slowly walked the room. "It is not, unquestionably, from any high estimate of my capacity; as little is it anything bordering on regard; and yet," added he, after a pause, "there are moments when I half fancy she could care for me, at least I know well that *I* could for *her*. Confound it!" cried he, passionately, "what a terrible barrier social station throws up! If she were even some country squire's daughter—portionless as she is—the notion would not be so absurd; but 'the governess!' and 'the steward!' what frightful figures to conjure up. No, no; that's impossible. One might do such a folly by retiring from the world for ever, but that would be exactly to defeat the whole object of such a match. She is essentially intended for 'the world'—every gift and grace she possesses are such as only have their fitting exercise—where the game of life is played by the highest, and for the heaviest stakes! But it is not to be thought of!"

"Have I found you at last?" cried Repton, entering the room. "They say the writ will be here on Monday, so that we've not an hour to lose. Let us drive over to Oughterard at once, see the editor of the *Intelligence*, call on priest Rafferty, and that other fellow—the father of our young friend here."

"Mr. Nelligan," said Jack. "But I can't well visit *him*—there have been some rather unpleasant passages between us."

"Ah! you told me something about it. He wanted you to fill a bail-bond, or do something or other, rather than shoot *me*. An unreasonable old rascal! Never mind; we shall come before him now in another character, and you'll see that he'll be more tractable."

"The matter is graver than this," said Jack, musingly; "and our difference is serious enough to make intercourse impossible."

"You shall tell me all about it as we drive along—that is, if it be brief and easy to follow, for my head is so full of election matters I don't desire a new element of complication. Step in now, and let us away." And with this he hurried Massingbred to the door, where a pony-phaeton was in waiting for them.

Once on the road, Repton changed the conversation from the domain of politics, and talked entirely of the host and his family. There was a sort of constitutional frankness and familiarity about the old lawyer which all the astute habits and instincts of his profession had never mastered. Like a great many acute men, his passion for shrewd observation and keen remark overbore the prudent reserve that belongs to less animated talkers, and so, he now scrupled not to discuss Martin and his affairs to one who but a few days back had been a complete stranger amongst them.

At first Jack heard him without much interest, but, as he continued, the subject attracted all his attention, full as it was of views of life and the world, perfectly new and strange to him.

To Massingbred's great astonishment, he learned that vast as the estates, and large as was the fortune of the Martins, that they were deeply encumbered with bond-debts and mortgages. The wasteful habits of the gentry generally, combined with great facilities for obtaining money at any emergency, had led to this universal indebtedness; and, in fact, as the lawyer expressed it, an old estate was supposed to be the victim of debt, as an elderly gentleman was liable to gout; nobody presuming to think that the tenure, in either case, was a whit the more precarious on account of the casualty.

"Now," said Repton, as they reached a point of the road from which a view of the country could be obtained for miles on every side—"now, as far as you can see belongs to Martin. Beyond that mountain yonder, too, there is a large tract—not very productive it is true—extending to the sea. The fine waving surface to your left is all tillage land; and the islands in the bay are his. It is really a princely estate, with even greater hidden resources than those palpable and open to view. But, were I to show it to you on a map, and point out at the same time every spot on which some money-lender has a claim—how much has been advanced upon this—what sums have been lent upon that—you'd be more amazed at the careless ease of the proprietor than you now are at the extent of his fortune."

"But he is spending immensely in improving and developing the property," said Jack.

"Of course he is, sir. That new-fangled notion of 'gentleman-farming'—which has come to us from countries where there are no gentlemen—won't suit Ireland, at least in the present generation. What *we* want here is, not to make more money, but to learn how to spend less; and although the first very often teaches the last, it is a hard way for an Irishman to acquire his knowledge. There's your borough, sir—that little spot in the valley yonder is Oughterard. Do you feel, as you behold it, as though it were to be the mainspring of a great career? Is there an instinctive throb within that says, 'The Honourable Member for Oughterard will be a great name in the "Collective Wisdom?"'"

"I can scarcely say yes to that appeal," said Jack, smiling; "though if what you have just told me of the mediocrity of public men be true ——"

"Can you doubt it? You have them all before you—their lives, their sayings, and their doings. Show me one in the whole mass who has originated a new idea in politics, or developed a new resource in the nation. Do they exhibit the common inventiveness displayed in almost every other walk of life, or do they even dress up their common platitudes in any other garb than the cast-off clothes of their predecessors? Mediocrity is a flattery when applied to them. But what's this coming along behind us, with such clattering of hoofs?"

"A tandem, I think," said Jack, looking backward, "and very well handled, too."

"Oh, that illustrious attorney, Mr. Scanlan, I've no doubt. Let us draw up till he passes." And so saying, Repton moved to one side of the road, giving a wide space for the other to proceed on his way. Mr. Scanlan, however, had subdued his nags, by a low, soft whistle, to a half trot, when, giving the reins to his servant, he descended and advanced to the carriage. "I've been in pursuit of you, gentlemen," said he, touching his hat courteously, "for the last four miles, and I assure you you've given me a breathing heat of it. Mr. Martin requested me to hand you this note, sir," added he, addressing Repton, "which demands immediate attention."

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"How do you mean too late?" asked Repton.

"Why, that Massingbred stands well with the people in the borough. They think that he'll be more their man than Martin's, and indeed, they're so confident of it, I half suspect he has told them so."

"But there has been no canvass as yet—his address isn't even printed."

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"Are you quite sure of this?—can you pledge yourself to its truth?"

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"He'd have no chance in the borough without us," said Repton, confidently.

"If old Dan would consent to spend the money, he'd be the Member in spite of us," rejoined Scanlan.

"I'll not dispute local knowledge with you, sir," said Repton, peevishly. "Let us turn back at once. Where's Mr. Massingbred? I saw him standing on the hill yonder a few minutes ago; maybe, he's strolling along the road in front." Repton moved forward to a rising spot of ground, from whence a wide view extended for a distance on every side, but no trace of Massingbred could be discovered. "What can have become of him?—has he turned towards Cro' Martin?" asked Repton.

"There he is," cried Scanlan, suddenly; "there he is, walking with Magennis. They're taking the short cut over the hills to Oughterard—that's unfortunate, too!"

"How so?"

"Why, before they're in the town they'll be as thick as two pickpockets—see how they're talking! I think, if I was to drive on, I'd catch them before they entered the town."

"Do so, then, Scanlan. Say that a sudden message from Mr. Martin recalled me, but that you'll drive him back with you to Cro' Martin."

"Am I to allude to the contents of the note, sir?"

"I think not; I opine it's best not to speak of it. Say, however, that something of importance has occurred at Cro' Martin, and suggest to him that the sooner he returns thither the better."

There was an amount of vacillation and uncertainty about Repton's manner as he uttered these few words that showed not only how gravely he regarded the crisis, but how totally unprepared he found himself for the emergency. Not so Scanlan, who took his seat once more on his lofty "buggy," and was soon spinning along the road at a pace of full twelve miles the hour.

As Repton drove back to Cro' Martin, he thought once, and not without humiliation, of his late lessons in statecraft to young Massingbred. "To fancy that I was instilling all these precepts at the very moment that he was countermining us. The young villain is a worthy son of his father! And how he will laugh at me, and make others laugh too. It will never do to drive him into opposition to us. Martin must consent to make the best of it, now, and accept him as his Member—for the present, at least. With time and good opportunity we can manage to trip up his heels, but, for the moment, there's no help for it." And with these not very consoling reflections he entered once more the grounds of Cro' Martin Castle.

Let us now turn to Massingbred, as, accompanied by Magennis, he walked at a rapid pace towards Oughterard. It needed but a glance at the figures, and the rate at which they moved, to see that these two men were bent upon an object.

"Don't you see the town now before you?" said Magennis. "It's not much above two miles, and by the road it is every step of six, or six and a half; and if we walk as we're doing now, we'll be there at least twenty minutes before them."

"But what will Repton think of my leaving him in this fashion?"

"That it was a bit of your usual eccentricity—no more," said the other, laughing.

"You are quite certain of what you've just told me?" asked Jack, after a pause.

"I tell you that you shall have it from Hosey's own lips. He showed the post-mark on the back of the letter to Father Rafferty, and it was 'Cape Town, August 24.' Now, as Hosey knows young Martin's writing as well as any man, what doubt can there be about it?"

"By that calculation," said Jack, thoughtfully, "he might be here within the present month!"

"Exactly what Father Neal said."

"A shrewd fellow that same Hosey must be to put things together in this fashion," said Jack. "Such a head as he has on his shoulders mightn't be a bad counsellor at this moment."

"Just come and talk to him, a bit," rejoined Magennis; "say you want to be trimmed about the whiskers, and he'll be a proud man to have you under his hand."

"And the committee are satisfied with my letter?" asked Jack.

"They are, and they are not; but, on the whole, they think it's a step in the right direction to get anything out of the Martins, and, as Father Neal remarks, 'where we can pass with our head, we can put our whole body through.'"

"But what's to be done about Nelligan? the breach with him is, I suspect, irreparable."

"Why, it was Nelligan himself moved the first resolution in the committee, that your address be accepted as embodying the views—he said the present views—of the liberal electors."

"You amaze me!" cried Massingbred; "and Joe, where was he?"

"Joe is off to Dublin; there's some examination or other he must attend. But old Dan is your friend, rely upon that."

"This is inexplicable," muttered Jack to himself.

"We'll go there, straight, the moment we get into the town. He'll take it as a great compliment; and you can talk to him frankly and openly, for old Dan is a man to be trusted."

"I wish I could guess at how this reconciliation has been effected," muttered Jack.

"It was your letter did it I think."

"But I never wrote one."

"Well, somebody else did, perhaps; at all events, Dan had an open letter in his hand when he addressed the committee, and said: 'After reading this, gentlemen,' said he, 'I can only say that I'll not oppose Mr. Massingbred; and if the free and independent men of Oughterard ask me who is the man to represent them, I'll answer, he's your man! And what's more, there's my name down for two hundred pounds for the election, if it ever comes to be a contest!'"

"This is all very good, but very strange news," cried Jack.

"Well, I can explain nothing of the mystery, if there be one. I only know what I heard and saw myself."

"Let us go to his house, at all events," said Massingbred, who now suffered his companion to rattle on about the state of parties and politics in Oughterard, little heeding his remarks, and only bent on following out his own thoughts. "Give whom the slip?" asked he, suddenly catching at the last words of some observation of Magennis.

"The Martins, of course," resumed the other; "for, as Father Neal says, 'if we can secure the borough for you, you can well afford to stand by *us;* but if you were only Martin's Member, he'd drop you whenever it suited him.'"

"As to-morrow, for instance, if his son should make his appearance!"

"Just so; and that's the very reason for not losing a minute about getting the Martins in for the cost. What can they say, after choosing you and putting you forward?"

"They might make a personal appeal to me—a distinct request to give place to the son."

"And wouldn't you pay great attention to it?" said Magennis, in mockery.

"I'm not so very sure I'd refuse," said Massingbred, slowly.

"Faith, then, you'd better be candid enough to tell the electors so 'at once.' Look now, Mr. Massingbred," said he, coming to a dead halt, and standing directly in front of him, "we don't go the same road, not one step, till I hear from you, distinctly and plainly, what you mean to do."

"This is somewhat of a peremptory proceeding," replied Jack. "I think it would not be very unreasonable to allow a man in my situation a little time for reflection."

"Reflect upon what?" cried Magennis. "Is it what politics you'd be? If that's what you mean, I think you'd better say nothing about it."

"Come, come, Mac, you are not quite fair in this business; there *are* difficulties—there *are* embarrassments very often in the way of doing things which we have made up our minds to do. Now, if I were perfectly certain that the liberal interest here could succeed in spite of Martin ——"

"So it will."

"You're sure of that?"

"I'll show it to you on paper. We'd rather have Martin with us and no contest, because it's cheaper; but if it must come to money, we'll do it."

"Satisfy me on that point, and I'm with you; there's my hand on't!"

And Magennis grasped him in his own strong fingers to ratify the contract.

"While "Mac" went on to give some insight into the views and wishes of his party, they reached the town and entered the main street, and held their way towards old Nelligan's shop.

"That's Father Neal's pony at the door," said Mac, as they approached the shop; "so we'll find them both together."

"I scarcely think I can enter here," said Massingbred, "after what passed last between us. We surely did not part as friends."

"How little you know about us at all," said Mac. "Old Dan bears you no malice, I'd lay fifty pounds on it! But, if you like, I'll just step in and take soundings."

"Do so, then," said Massingbred, not sorry to have even a few moments to himself for quiet thought and consideration. He was still standing and deeply engrossed by his reflections, when he was aroused by hearing his name called aloud, and, on looking up, perceived Magennis beckoning to him from a window overhead.

In obedience to the signal, Jack turned and entered the shop, where his friend quickly joined him. "Old Dan is in his bed, with a heavy cold and a rheumatism, but he'll see you; and Father Neal's with him, and Hayes besides." And with this information, he hurried Jack up the stairs, and led him into a darkened room, where the figures of the priest and old Hayes were dimly discernible. Before Massingbred had well crossed the door-sill, Nelligan called out, "Your servant, Mr. Massingbred. I'm more than pleased with your explanation. Let me shake your hand once more."

"I'm not quite sure that I understand you," said Jack, in a low voice; but before he could continue, the priest advanced to greet him, followed by old Peter.

"Wasn't I in luck to catch him on the road this morning?" said Magennis; "he was coming in with the old counsellor, and just got out to walk up a hill ——"

"Remember," said Jack, "that I have few minutes to spare, for I must be in waiting about the market-place when he drives in."

"We must have a conference, though," said Father Neal; "there's much to be settled. First of all, are we to coalesce for the representation?"

"No, no, no!" cried Nelligan. "We'll have it our own way. If Mr. Massingbred will be our Member, we want no help from the Martins."

"There's five pounds, and I'll make it guineas if you like," said old Hayes, putting a note upon the table; "but the devil a Whig or Tory will ever get more out of Peter Hayes!"

A very good-natured laugh from the others showed how little umbrage the frank avowal excited.

"We'll not want for money, Peter, make your mind easy about that," said Dan. "When can you meet the committee, Mr. Massingbred? Could you say to-night?"

"Better to-morrow morning. I must return to Cro' Martin this evening."

"Certainly—of course," said Father Neal, blandly. "You'll have to come to an understanding with Mr. Martin about the borough, declare what your principles are, and how, upon very mature consideration, you find you can't agree with the opinions of himself and his party."

Magennis winked significantly at Jack, as though to say, "Listen to *him*—*he's* the man to instruct and direct you," and the priest resumed:

"Go on to explain that your only utility in the House could arise from your being the exponent of what you feel to be the truth about Ireland, the crying evils of the Established Church, and the present tenure of land! When you throw these two shells in, sir, the town will be on fire. He'll reply that under these circumstances there's no more question about your standing for the borough; you'll say nothing—not a word, not a syllable—you'll only smile. If Repton's by—and he's likely to be—he'll get hot, and ask you what you mean by that ——"

"There's Scanlan just driving round the corner," said Magennis, in a whisper, and Massingbred arose at once and drew nigh to the bedside.

"Could I say one word to you alone, Mr. Nelligan?" said he, in a low voice.

"Of course," said he. And whispering the priest to take the others into an adjoining room, old Nelligan montioned Jack to sit down beside him.

"You said as I came in," said Jack, "that you were satisfied with my explanation ——"

"To be sure I was," broke in Dan. "All I wanted to know was, that you acted under a misconception. That being once explained, there was no offence on either side. Now, Catty Henderson's letter to my wife put the thing straight at once; she showed that *your* conduct at Cro' Martin arose out of a notion that Joe had slighted you."

"Have you got this letter?" asked Jack, eagerly.

"Indeed, then, I have not; his mother forwarded it to Joe by the same post; but, as I tell you I'm satisfied, there's an end of it."

"Scanlan's asking for you below stairs," said Magennis, putting in his head, "and I hear them saying that they didn't see you in town."

"All right," said Jack; "so I'll just slip out by the garden gate and meet him in the market-square." And with a hurried leave-taking Jack withdrew, his mind very far from that state of tranquil composure in which it was his pride to affect that he invariably revelled.

"There they go!" cried Father Neal, shortly after, as Scanlan drove rapidly by, with Massingbred beside him. "Maybe Master Maurice won't abuse us all round before he turns in at the gate of Cro' Martin."

"Massingbred is too 'cute to mind him," said Magennis.

"Ah, Tom, there's one appeal men of his stamp are never deaf to. You may say fifty things that won't shock them in religion, or morals, or good taste, but only utter the one word 'vulgar,' and their indignation rises at once. That's what Scanlan will do, take my word for it. He'll call us a low set of fellows, that have no position in society—no acceptance anywhere.'"

"But Massingbred is a gentleman born, and he won't be led astray by such a consideration."

"It is exactly for that very reason that he will," said the priest, stoutly. "It's a strange fact, but there's no manner of man rates social advantages so high as he that has them by right, and without any struggle for them."

"Well," said old Hayes, slowly, "if I once thought that of him, the devil a vote of mine he'd get, no matter what his principles were."

"And there you're wrong, Peter," said Nelligan. "Matters of good manners and breeding need never be discussed between us. Mr. Massingbred will have *his* station—*we'll* have *ours*. There's a long and weary road before us ere we come to think of our social condition. There's many a cruel statute to be abolished—many a hard grievance to be redressed."

"And, besides that," said Father Neal, with a shrewd twinkle in his eye, "while we're doing the one we'll be helping on the other. Political influence always did, and always will, include rank and station in the world. When English Ministers find their best ally in the Irish Priest, there will be no more sneers at his brogue nor his boots. Men of family and fortune won't shrink from their contact, and maybe you'll see the day yet when coaches and chariots will drive up to the chapel, and ladies in satin and velvet step out to hear mass."

A prophetic view of the Millennium itself could not have astonished old Peter Hayes more completely than did this marvellous suggestion of Father Neal, and he moved away muttering a "Heaven grant it!" between his teeth.

"Where's the next meeting of the committee to be?" asked Nelligan.

"In the Chapel House, to-morrow, at eleven. And that reminds me I've not sent out the summonses." And so saying, Father Neal hastily took leave of his friends and left the room.

Let us take a glance at Mr. Maurice Scanlan, as with an extra box-coat ingeniously wrapped around his lower man, he discoursed pleasantly to his companion while he "tooled" along towards Cro' Martin. Not a word of politics, not a syllable on the subject of party, escaped him as he talked. His conversation was entirely of sporting matters: the odds against Leander, the last bettings on "Firebrand," whether Spicy Bill was really in bad training, as the knowing ones said, and if the course wouldn't "puzzle the young ones" if the wet weather were to continue.

Massingbred was sufficiently well versed in these classic themes to be an amusing and even instructive companion, and communicated many a sly piece of intelligence that would have been deemed priceless in *Bell's Life;* and Scanlan quickly conceived a high estimate for one who had graduated at Newmarket, and taken honours at Goodwood.

"After the kind of life you've led in England, I wonder how you endure this country at all," said Maurice, with real sincerity of voice and manner.

"I like it," said Jack; "the whole thing is new to me, and vastly amusing. I don't mean to say I'd willingly pass a lifetime in this fashion, but for a few weeks——"

"Just so; to give you a better relish for the real thing when you go back again," said Maurice.

"What a neat stepper that leader is!" said Jack, to change the topic from himself and his own affairs. "She's a well-bred one, that's clear."

"Nearly full-bred; the least bit of cocktail in the world. She's out of Crescent, that ran a very good third for the Oaks."

"A strong horse, and a very honest one," said Jack.

"Well, I bought that little mare from young Mr. Martin—the captain—when he was ordered out to India; I put her in training, and ran her at the Curragh in three weeks, and won, too, the St. Lawrence Handicap."

"Is Captain Martin a sporting character?" asked Jack, carelessly.

"He is and he is not," said Scanlan, half querulously. "He likes a safe thing—do you understand?" and he gave a most significant wink as he spoke.

"Oh, then he's close about money matters?" said Massingbred.

"Not exactly that. He's wasteful and spendthrift, but he'd go to the world's end to do a knowing thing—you've seen men of that kind?"

"Scores of them," replied Jack; and they were always the easiest fellows to be duped!"

"Exactly my own experience," said Scanlan, delighted to find his opinions confirmed in such a quarter. "Now, young Martin would give five hundred pounds for a horse to win a fifty pound cup. Don't you know what I mean?"

"Perfectly," said Massingbred, with an approving smile.

"Nobody knows the sums he has drawn since he went away," exclaimed Scanlan, who was momentarily growing more and more confidential.

"There's a deal of high play in India—perhaps he gambles," said Jack, carelessly.

A significant wink and nod gave the answer.

"Well, well," added he, after a pause, "he'll not mend matters by coming back again."

"And is he about to visit England?" asked Massingbred in the same easy tone.

"So they say," replied Scanlan, with an effort at the easy indifference of the other.

"On leave, perhaps?" said Jack, indolently.

"That's more than I know," replied he, and relapsed into a thoughtful silence, during which Massingbred continued to scan his features with a sly, downcast glance peculiar to himself.

"You've never been in Leicestershire, Mr. Scanlan?" said he, when he had fully satisfied himself with his examination. "Well, then, come over there in the spring—say about March next—and pay me a visit. I've got a sort of hunting-box there, with a neat stable, and by that time I hope to raise funds for a couple of nags."

"Trust *me* for the horseflesh, sir. I know where to mount you this very minute. You're not much above eleven stone?"

"Eleven-eight—at least, so I used to be. Is it a bargain? Will you come?"

"There's my hand on't," said the attorney, overjoyed at the prospect.

"Mackworth, and Lord Harry Coverdale, and Sir Wentworth Danby, and a few more, are all my neighbous. Capital fellows, whom you'll be delighted with. Just the sort of men to suit you—up to everything that means sport."

"Exactly what I like!" cried Maurice, in ecstasy.

"We'll arrange it all this evening, then," said Jack. "Just drop into my room after they're all gone to bed, and we'll have a talk over it. "You don't know my father, do you?"

"I haven't that honour," said Scanlan, with an accent of real deference in his voice.

"Another kind of person from these I've mentioned," said Jack, slowly.

"So I should suppose, sir," said Scanlan, a tone of respect involuntarily attaching itself to him as he addressed the son of a Secretary of State.

"Not that he doesn't like field sports, and all the enjoyments of a country life. But, you know, he's an old official—a Downing-street veteran—who really relishes public business, just as you and I would a coursing match, or a heavy pool at Crocky's."

Scanlan nodded as if in perfect assent.

"While I say this, it's only fair to add that he has most excellent qualities, and is a staunch friend when he takes any one up. I suspect *you*'d like him. I know he'd like *you*."

"I'm greatly flattered. I don't deserve——"

"You see," said Jack, not heeding the interruption, and assuming the low accents of a confidential communication—"you see, he and I have not been on the very best of terms for some time back; I've done some silly things—spent a little more money than he liked—and, what was still worse in his eyes, refused a first-rate Government appointment — a really good thing, and such as one doesn't meet with every day—and now, the only road back to his favour will be for me to come out strongly in some shape, either as a college prizeman, or in public life. I despise the former. It's all very well for fellows like Nelligan—it's their natural 'beat,'—but for a man like *me*, one who has seen the world—the real world—these are nothing more than schoolboy distinctions—the silver medal he brings home of a Saturday, and makes him the wonder of his sisters for twenty-four hours. I'll have to strike out a line of my own!"

"No fear of you, sir—devil a bit!" said Maurice, with a sententious shake of the head. "Here we are now at Cro' Martin, and there's the first dinner-bell ringing."

"We shall be late, perhaps," said Jack.

"You'll be in good time. As for me, I haven't been asked to dinner, so that when I drop you I'll go down to the village."

"Well, then, I'll walk over and see you in the evening," said Massingbred. "It seems to me—I don't know whether you are of the same opinion, though—but it seems strongly to me that you and I ought to be allies."

"If I thought I was worthy——"

"Come, come, Scanlan, no modesty, old boy. You know you're a devilish clever fellow, and you no more intend to pass your life cruising after petty-session practice in Galway, than I do to settle down here as under-gardener."

"They're all looking at us, sir, from the drawing-room windows," said Scanlan, in a cautious voice; "don't let us appear too confidential." And at the same instant he extended his whip as though to point attention to some distant object, and seem as if he were describing the scenery.

"Shrewd dog it is," muttered Massingbred in soliloquy, but taking good care to be overheard. "I'll beat up your quarters, Scanlan, in a couple of hours or so," said Massingbred, as he descended from the lofty "drag."

Somewhat, but not very much, later than the time appointed, Jack Massingbred appeared in the small chamber of the "Crueskeen"—the humble hostel on the roadside adjoining the demesne of Cro' Martin. Maurice Scanlan had made every preparation which the fluid resources of the house admitted to receive his guest, but they were not destined to be put in requisition.

"I have only come lest you should accuse me of forgetting you, Scanlan," said Massingbred, as he stood in the doorway without removing his hat. "I'm off to Oughterard, having made my adieux at Cro' Martin.

"Left Cro' Martin, and for good!" exclaimed Scanlan.

"If that means for ever, I suspect you're right," replied Jack; "but you'll have the whole story in the morning when you go up there, and doubtless more impartially than I should tell it. And now, good-by for a brief face. We shall meet soon." And, without waiting for answer, he nodded familiarly, stepped briskly to the door, where a post-chaise awaited him, and was gone, before Scanlan had even half recovered from his astonishment and surprise.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN AWKWARD VISITOR.

It is a singularly impressive sensation, and one, too, of which even frequency will scarcely diminish the effect, to pass from the busy streets and moving population of Dublin and enter the quiet courts of the University. The suddenness of the change is most striking, and you pass at once from all the bustling interests of life—its cares and ambitions, its pursuits of wealth and pleasure—into the stillness of a cloister. Scarcely within the massive gates, and the noise of the great capital is hushed and subdued, its sounds seem to come from afar, and in their place is an unbroken calm, or the more solemn echoes of its vaulted roofs.

In a corner of the Old Square, and in a building almost entirely occupied by the University authorities, and whose stairs had seldom echoed beneath less reverend footsteps than those of deans and bursars, were the chambers of Joe Nelligan. He had obtained them in this peculiar locality as a special favour from "the Board," as eminently suited to his habits of study and seclusion, for his was indeed a life of labour—labour, hard, unremitting, and unbroken! Dreary as was the aspect of this spot, it was one dear to the heart of him who occupied it. If it had been the cell wherein he had passed nights of severest toil and days of intense effort, so had it been the calm retreat into which he had retired as a sanctuary, and at times the scene of the hallowed joy he felt when success had crowned all his labours. Thither had he bent his steps at nightfall as to a home; thence had he written the few lines which more than once announced his triumph to his father.

Within those halls had he experienced all that he had ever tasted of successful ambition, and in the depths of that old chair had he dreamed away all the visions of a glorious future. The room in which he sat was a large and lofty one, lighted by two windows deeply set in the wall. Its sides were lined with book-shelves, and books littered the tables and even the floor—for it was one of his caprices to read as he lay at full length, either on the ground or a sofa—and the paper and pens were scattered about in different quarters, as accident suggested. The only thing like ornament to be seen was a lithographic print of Cro' Martin Castle over the fireplace; a strange exception would it seem, but traceable, perhaps, to some remote sense of boyish admiration for what had first awakened in him a feeling of awe and admiration; and there it now remained, timeworn and discoloured, perhaps unnoticed, or looked on with very different emotions. Aye! these pictures are terrible landmarks of our thoughts! I speak not of such as appeal to our hearts by the features we loved, the eyes into whose depths we have gazed, the lips on whose accents we have hung entranced, but even when they trace the outlines of some spot well known to us in boyhood—some scene of long, long years ago. It is not alone that the "Then" and "Now" stand out in strongest contrast, that what we were, and what we are, are in juxtaposition, but that whole memories of what we had once hoped to be come rushing over us, and all the spirit-stirring emotions of early ambitions mingle themselves with the stern realities of the present. And, after all, what success in life, however great and seemingly unexpected it may be, ever equals one of the glorious day-dreams of our boyish ambition, in which there comes no alloy of broken health, wasted energies, and exhausted spirits? or, far worse again, the envious jealousy of those we once deemed friends, and who, had we lived obscurely, still might be such? Student-life is essentially imaginative. The very division of time, the objects which have value to a student's eyes, the seclusion in which he lives, the tranquil frame of mind coexistent with highly-strained faculties, all tend to make his intervals of repose periods of day-dream and reverie. It is not improbable that these periods are the fitting form of relaxation for over-taxed minds, and that the Imagination is the soothing influence that repairs the wear and tear of Reason.

The peculiar circumstances of young Nelligan's position in life had almost totally estranged him from others. The constraint that attaches to a very bashful temperament had suggested to him a certain cold and reserved manner that some took for pride, and many were repelled from his intimacy by this seeming haughtiness. The unhappy course of what had been his first friendship—for such was it with Massingbred—had rendered him more distrustful than ever of himself, and more firmly convinced that to men born as he had been the world imposes a barrier that only is passable by the highest and greatest success. It is true, his father's letter of explanation assuaged the poignancy of his sorrow; he saw that Massingbred had proceeded under a misconception, and had believed himself the aggrieved individual; but all these considerations could not obliterate the fact, that an insult to his social station was the vengeance adopted by him, and that Massingbred saw no more galling outrage in his power than to reflect upon his rank in life.

There are men who have a rugged pride in contrasting what they were with what they are. Their self-love finds an intense pleasure in contemplating difficulties overcome, obstacles surmounted, and a goal won, all by their own unaided efforts, and to such the very obscurity of their origin is a source of boastful exaltation. Such men, are, however, always found in the ranks of those whose success is wealth; wherever the triumphs are those rewarded by station, or the distinctions conferred on intellectual superiority, this vain-glorious sentiment is unknown. An inborn refinement rejects such coarse pleasure, just as their very habits of life derive no enjoyment from the display and splendour reflected by riches.

Joe Nelligan felt his lowly station most acutely, because he saw in it a disqualification for that assured and steady temperament which can make most of success. He would have given half of all he might possess in the world for even so much of birth as might exempt him from a sneer. The painful sensitiveness that never rested nor slept—that made him eternally on the watch lest some covert allusion might be made to him—was a severe suffering; and far from decreasing, it seemed to grow with him as he became older, and helped mainly to withdraw him further from the world.

No error is more common than for bashful men to believe that they are unpopular in society, and that the world "will none of them!" They interpret their own sense of difficulty as a feeling of dislike in others, and retire to their solitudes convinced that these are their fitting dwelling-places. To this unpalatable conviction was Joseph Nelligan now come; and as he entered his chambers, and closed the heavy door behind him, came the thought: "Here at least no mortifications can reach me. These old books are my truest and best of friends, and in their intercourse there is neither present pain nor future humiliation!"

It was on a dark and dreary day in winter, and in that cheerless hour, before the closing in of night, that Joseph sat thus in his solitary home. The sound of carriage-wheels, and the sharp tramp of horses' feet—a rare event in these silent courts—slightly aroused him from a reverie; but, too indolent to go to the window, he merely raised his head to listen; and now a loud knock shook the outer door of his chambers. With a strange sense of pertubation at this unwonted summons, he arose and opened it.

"The Chief Secretary begs to know if Mr. Nelligan is at home?" said a well-powdered footman, in a plain but handsome livery.

"Yes; I am the person," said Joseph, with a diffidence strongly in contrast with the composure of the other; and while he yet stood door in hand, the steps of the carriage were let down, and a tall, venerable-looking man, somewhat past the prime of life, descended and approached him.

"I must be my own introducer, Mr. Nelligan," said he; "my name is Massingbred."

With considerable confusion of manner, and in all that hurry in which bashful men seek to hide their awkwardness, Joseph ushered his visitor into his dimly-lighted chamber.

Colonel Massingbred, with all the staid composure of a very quiet demeanour, had quite sufficient tact to see that he was in the company of one little versed in the world, and, as soon as he took his seat, proceeded to explain the reason of his visit.

"My son has told me of the great pleasure and profit he has derived from knowing you, sir," said he; "he has also informed me that a slight and purely casual event interrupted the friendship that existed between you; and, although unable himself to tender personally to you at this moment all his regrets on the subject, he has charged me to be his interpreter, and express his deep sorrow for what has occurred, and his hope that, after this avowal, it may never be again thought of by either of you."

"There was a misunderstanding—a fault on both sides—I was wrong in the first instance," said Nelligan, faltering and stammering at every word.

"Mr. Nelligan is in a position to be generous," said the colonel, blandly, "and he cannot better show the quality than by accepting a frank and full apology for a mere mistake. May I trust," continued he—but with that slight change of tone that denoted a change of topic—"that you have somewhat abated those habits of severe study you have hitherto pursued? Jack is really uneasy on that score; and wisely remarks, that great talents should be spared the penalty of great labour."

"I am not reading now. I have read very little of late," said Joseph, diffidently.

"I can imagine what that means," said the colonel, smiling. "Mr. Nelligan's relaxation would be the hard labour of less zealous students; but I will also say, that upon other grounds, this must be done with more consideration. The public interests, Mr. Nelligan—the country, to whose service you will one day be called on to contribute those high abilities—will not be satisfied to learn that their exercise should have been impared by over-effort in youth."

"You overrate me much, sir. I fear that you have been misled both as to my capacity and my objects."

"Your capacity is matter of notoriety, Mr. Nelligan; your objects may be as high as any ambition can desire. But perhaps it is obtrusive in one so new to your acquaintance to venture on these topics; if so, pray forgive me, and set it down to the error I have fallen into of fancying that I know you as well personally as I do by reputation and character."

Before Nelligan could summon words to reply to this complimentary speech, the door of his room was flung suddenly open, and a short, thick-set figure, shrouded in a coarse shawl and a great-coat, rushed towards him, exclaiming in a rich brogue,—

"Here I am, body and bones—just off the coach, and straight to your quarters."

"What! Mr. Crow; is it possible?" cried Nelligan, in some confusion.

"Just himself, and no other," replied the artist, disengaging himself from his extra coverings. "When you said to me, 'Come and see me when you visit Dublin,' I said to myself, 'There's a trump, and I'll do it;' and so here I am."

"You left the country yesterday. Did you bring me any letters?" asked Nelligan, but in the uncertain tone of a man who talked merely to say something.

"Not a line—not a word. Your father was over head and ears at work this week back about the election, and it was only the night before last it was over."

"And is it over?" asked Nelligan, eagerly.

"To be sure it is. Young Massingbred is in, and a nice business it is."

"Let me inform you, Mr. Crow, before you proceed further ——" broke in Nelligan; but, as he got so far, Colonel Massingbred laid his hand on his arm, and said, in a bland but steady voice, "Pray allow the gentleman to continue; his account promises to be most interesting."

"Indeed, then, that's what it is not," said Crow, "for I think it's all bad from beginning to end." Another effort to interrupt by Nelligan being repressed by the colonel, Crow resumed:—"Everybody trying to cheat somebody else. The Martins wanting to cheat the borough, the borough wanting to jockey the Martins, and then young Massingbred humbugging them both! And there he is now, Member for Oughterard, and much he cares for them both."

"Was there a contest, sir?" asked the colonel, while by a gesture he enforced silence on Nelligan.

"As bitter a one as ever you saw in your life," continued Simmy, quite flattered at the attention vouchsafed him; "for though the Martins put young Massingbred forward at first, they quarrelled with him before the day for the nomination—something or other about the franchise, or Maynooth, or the Church Establishment—sorra one o' me know much about these matters—but it was a serious difference, and they split about it! And, after all their planning and conniving together, what do they do but propose Martin's son, the man in the dragoons, for the borough! Massingbred bids them do their worst, packs up, sets out for the town, and makes a speech exposing them all! The next morning he comes to the poll, with Joe's father there, and Peter Hayes to propose and second him. Martin drives in with three elegant coaches and four, and tries to do the thing 'grand.' 'It's too late, sir; the people know their power,' as Father Neal told them; and, upon my conscience, I believe it's a most dangerous kind of knowledge; at all events, at it they go; and such fighting and murdering nobody ever saw before. There's not a whole pane of glass in the town, and many a skull cracked as well! One of the wickedest of the set was young Massingbred himself; he'd assault the cars as they drove in, and tear out the chaps he thought were his own voters in spite of themselves. He has the spirit of the devil in him! And then to hear how he harangued the people and abused the aristocracy. Maybe he didn't lay it on well!

To be sure, the Martins drove him to it very hard. They called him a 'renegade' and a 'spy.' They ransacked everything they could get against his character, and at last declared that he had no qualification, and wasn't worth sixpence."

"And how did he answer that?" cried the colonel, who, fixing his eyes on the other, entirely engaged his attention.

"I'll tell you how he did. Just producing the title deeds of an estate that old Nelligan settled on him eight days before—ay, and so well and securely, that Counsellor Repton himself, with all his 'cuteness, couldn't find a flaw in it. Repton said, in my own hearing, 'That's the cleverest blackguard in Ireland!'"

"Mr. Crow—Crow, I say," broke in young Nelligan.

"Pray don't interrupt him," said the colonel, in a tone that seemed to demand obedience. "I want to learn by what majority he gained the day."

"Thirty-eight of thirty-nine; and there's only two hundred and odd in the borough. There may be, perhaps, a dozen of these to strike off on a petition, but he's all safe after that."

"And will they petition against his return?"

"They say so, but nobody believes them. His father,"—and here he made a gesture towards Nelligan—"his father has a strong purse, and will see him well through it all."

"This is very interesting news to me, sir," said the colonel, with another sign to Joseph not to betray him; "for although I could well imagine Jack Massingbred equal to such an occasion as you describe, I was scarcely prepared to hear of the generous confidence reposed in him, nor the prompt and able able co-operation of the Liberal party."

"Ah, I perceive," said Crow, with a significant motion of his eyebrows. "You thought that his name would be against him, and that people would say, 'Isn't he the son of old Moore Massingbred, that took his bribe for the Union?'"

"This is intolerable," cried Nelligan, starting up from his seat and speaking with all the vehemence of outraged feelings. "It is to Colonel Massingbred himself you have dared to address this impertinence.

"What—how—what's this!" exclaimed Crow, in a perfect horror of shame.

"The fault, if there be any, is all mine, sir," said the colonel, pressing him down into his seat. "I would not have lost the animated description you have just given me, uttered as it was in such perfect frankness, for any consideration, least of all at the small price of hearing a public expression on a public man's conduct. Pray, now, continue to use the same frankness, and tell me anything more that occurs to you about this remarkable contest."

This appeal, uttered in all the ease of a well-bred manner, was quite unsuccessful. Mr. Crow sat perfectly horrified with himself, endeavouring to remember what possible extent of offence he might have been betrayed into by his narrative. As for Nelligan, his shame and confusion were even greater still, and he sat gazing ruefully and reproachfully at the unlucky painter.

Colonel Massingbred made one or two more efforts to relieve the awkwardness of the incident, but so palpably fruitless were the attempts, that he desisted, and arose to take his leave. As Joe accompanied him to the door, he tried to blunder out some words of excuse. "My dear Mr. Nelligan," broke in the other with a quiet laugh, "don't imagine for a moment that I am offended. In the first place, your friend was the bearer of very pleasant tidings, for Jack has not condescended to write to me about his success; and secondly, public life is such a stern schoolmaster, that men like myself, get accustomed to rather rough usage, particularly at the hands of those who do not know us. And now, as I am very unwilling to include you in this category, when will you come and see me? What day will you dine with me?"

Nelligan blushed and faltered, just as many another awkward man has done in a similar circumstance; for however an easy matter for you, my dear sir, with all your tact and social readiness to fix the day it will suit you to accept of an almost stranger's hospitality, Joseph had no such self-possession, and only stammered and grew crimson.

"Shall it be on Saturday? for to-morrow I am engaged to the Chancellor, and on Friday I dine with his Excellency. Will Saturday suit you?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir, perfectly; with much pleasure," answered Nelligan.

"Then Saturday be it, and at seven o'clock," said Massingbred, shaking his hand most cordially; while Joe, with sorrowful step, returned to his chamber.

"Well, I think I did it there, at all events!" cried Simmy, as the other entered. "But what in the name of all that's barefaced prevented your stopping me? Why didn't you pull me up short before I made a beast of myself?"

"How could I? You rushed along like a swollen river.

You were so full of your blessed subject, that you wouldn't heed an interruption; and as to signs and gestures, I made twenty without being able to catch your eye."

"I believe I'm the only man living ever does these things," said Simmy, ruefully. "I lost the two or three people that used to say they were my friends by some such blundering folly as this. I only hope it won't do *you* any mischief. I trust he'll see that you are not responsible for my delinquencies!"

There was a hearty sincerity in poor Simmy's sorrow that at once conciliated Nelligan, and he did his best to obliterate every trace of the unhappy incident.

"I scarcely supposed my father would have forgiven Massingbred so easily," said Joe, in his desire to change the topic.

"Blarney—all blarney!" muttered Crow, with an expressive movement of his eyebrows.

"Father Neal himself is rather a difficult subject to treat with," added Joe.

"Blarney again!"

"Nor do I think," continued Nelligan, "that the constituency of the borough, as a body, are remarkable for any special liability to be imposed on!"

"Nor would they, had it been an Irishman was trying to humbug them," said Crow, emphatically. "Take my word for it—and I've seen a great deal of the world, and perhaps not the best of it either—but take *my* word for it, English blarney goes further with us here than all else. It's not that it's clever, or insinuating, or delicate—far from it: but you see that nobody suspects it. The very blunders and mistakes of it have an air of sincerity, and we are, besides, so accustomed always to be humbugged with a brogue, that we fancy ourselves safe when we hear an English accent."

"There's some ingenuity in your theory," said Joe, smiling.

"There's fact in it, that's what there is," said Crow, rising from his seat. "I'll be going now, for I'm to dine with Tom Magennis at six."

"Is he here, too?"

"Yes; and wasn't it a piece of good luck that I didn't say anything about him before Colonel Massingbred?

"Why so?"

"Just for this, then, that it was young Massingbred gave him a letter to his father, recommending him for some place or other. Half of the borough expects to be in the Treasury, or *the Post Office, or the Board of Trade,* and I was just on the *tip of saying* what a set of rapscallions they were. I'm sure I don't know what saved me from it."

"Your natural discretion, doubtless," said Joe, smiling.

"Just so; it must have been that!" replied he, with a sigh.

"You'll breakfast with me to-morrow, Crow, at eight," said Nelligan, as he parted with him at the door. And Simmy, having pledged himself to be punctual, hurried off to keep his dinner appointment.

CHAPTER XXII

A DAY "AFTER."

THE reaction that succeeds to a period of festivity has always an air of peculiar sadness and gloom about it. The day after a ball—the withered flowers, the faded decorations, the disordered furniture, all tell the tale of departed pleasure and past enjoyment. The afternoon of that morning which has witnessed a wedding-breakfast—the April landscape of joy and grief, the bridal beauty, and the high-beating hope of the happy lover, have all fled, and in the still and silent chambers there seems to brood a sense of sorrow and mourning. Still with these thoughts happier memories are mingled, the bright pageant of the past rises again before the mind, and smiles, and music, and laughter, and graceful forms come back, and people space with their images. But how different from all this was the day after the election at Cro' Martin.

For a week had the Martins condescended to derogate from their proud station and "play popular" to the electors of Oughterard. They had opened their most sumptuous apartments to vulgar company, and made guests of those they deemed inferior to their own domestics. They had given dinners, and suppers, and balls, and pic-nics. They had lavished all the flatteries of attentions on their rude neighbours. They had admitted them to all the privileges of a mock equality—"so like the real article as not to be detected." They had stored their minds with all the lives and adventures of these ignoble intimates, so as to impart a false colour of friendship to their conversation with them; in a word, and to use one by which her ladyship summed up all the miseries of the occasion, they had "demoralised" more in a week than she believed it possible could have been effected in ten years. Let us be just, and add that my lady had taken the phrase bodily out of her French vocabulary, and in her ardour applied it with its native signification: that is, she alluded to the sad consequences of association with underbred company, and not by any means to any inroads made upon her sense of honour and high principle.

Still, whatever pangs the sacrifice was costing within, it must be owned that no signs of them displayed themselves on the outside. Even Repton, stern critic as he was, said that "they did the thing well." And now it was all over, the guests gone, the festivities ended, the election lost, and nothing in prospect save to settle the heavy outlay of the contest, and pay the high price for that excessively dear article which combines contamination with disappointment.

In her capacity of head of the administration, Lady Dorothea had assumed the whole guidance of this contest. With Miss Henderson as her private secretary, she had corresponded, and plotted, and bribed, and intrigued to any extent; and although Repton was frequently summoned to a council, his advice was very rarely, if ever, adopted. Her ladyship's happy phrase—"one ought to know their own borough people better than a stranger"—usually decided every vexed question in favour of her judgment.

It is a strange characteristic of human nature, that at no time do people inveigh so loudly against bad faith, treachery, and so on, as when themselves deeply engaged in some very questionable enterprise. Now her ladyship had so fully made up her mind to win in this contest, that she had silenced all scruples as to the means. She had set out with some comfortable self-assurance that she knew what was good for those "poor creatures" infinitely better than they did. That it was her duty—a very onerous and disagreeable one, too—to rescue them from the evil influence of demagogues and such like, and that when represented by a member of *her* family, they would be invested with a pledge that everything which proper legislation could do for them would be theirs. So far had she the approval of her own conscience; and for all that was to follow after, she never consulted that tribunal. It is not at all improbable that there was little opportunity of doing so in a week of such bustle and excitement. Every day brought with it fresh cares and troubles; and although Kate Henderson proved herself invaluable in her various functions, her ladyship's fatigues and exertions were of the greatest.

The day after the election, Lady Dorothea kept her bed; the second day, too, she never made her appearance; and it was late in the afternoon of the third that she stole languidly into her library, and ordered her maid to send Miss Henderson to her.

As Kate entered the room she could not help feeling struck by the alteration that had taken place in her ladyship's appearance, and who, as she lay back in a deep chair, with closed eyes and folded hands, looked like one risen from a long sick-bed.

As she started and opened her eyes, however, at Kate's approach, the features assumed much of their wonted expression, and their haughty character was only tinged, but not subdued, by the look of sorrow they wore. With the low and pleasant voice which Kate possessed in perfection, she had begun to utter some words of pleasure at seeing her ladyship again, when the other interrupted her hastily, saying,—

"I want you to read to me, child. There, take that volume of Madame de Sévigné, and begin where you see the mark. You appear weak to-day—tired perhaps?"

"Oh, a mere passing sense of fatigue, my lady," said Kate, assuming her place, and preparing her book.

"Chagrin, annoyance—disgust I would call it—are far more wearing than mere labour. For my own part, I think nothing of exertion. But let us not speak of it. Begin."

And Kate now commenced one of those charming letters, wherein the thought is so embellished by the grace of expression, that there is a perpetual semblance of originality, without that strain upon the comprehension that real novelty exacts. She read, too, with consummate skill. To all the natural gifts of voice and utterance she added a most perfect taste, and that nicely subdued dramatic feeling which lends to reading its great fascination. Nearly an hour had thus passed, and not a word nor a gesture from Lady Dorothea interrupted the reader. With slightly drooped eyelids, she sat calm and tranquil; and as Kate, at moments, stole a passing glance towards her, she could not guess whether she was listening to her or not.

"You'd have succeeded on the stage, Miss Henderson," said she at length, raising her eyes slowly. "Did it never occur to you to think of that career?"

"Once I had some notion of it, my lady," said Kate, quietly. "I played in a little private theatre of the Duchess's, and they thought that I had some dramatic ability."

"People of condition have turned actors latterly—men, of course, I mean; for women the ordeal is too severe—the coarse familiarity of a very coarse class—the close association with most inferior natures—— By the way, what a week of it we have had! I'd not have believed any one who told me that the whole globe contained as much unredeemed vulgarity as this little neighbourhood. What was the name of the odious little woman that always lifted the skirt of her dress before sitting down?"

"Mrs. Creevy, my lady."

"To be sure—Mrs. Creevy. And her friend, who always came with her?"

"Miss Busk——"

"Yes, of course—Miss Busk, of the Emporium. If I don't mistake, I've given her an order for something—bonnets, or caps—what is it?"

"A head-dress. Your ladyship told her——"

"You'll make me ill, child—positively ill—if you remind me of such horrors. I told you to come and read for me, and you begin to inflict me with what—I declare solemnly—is the most humiliating incident of my life."

Kate resumed her book, and read on. Lady Dorothea was now, however, unmistakably inattentive, and the changing colour of her cheek betrayed the various emotions which moved her.

"I really fancy that Miss Martin liked the atrocious creatures we have received here the past week; she certainly showed them a species of attention quite distinct from mere acceptance; and then they all addressed her like old acquaintance. Did you observe that?"

"I thought that they assumed a degree of familiarity with Miss Martin which was scarcely consistent with their station."

"Say highly ridiculous, child—perfectly preposterous—for, although she will persist in a style of living very opposite to the requirements of her position, she is Miss Martin, and *my* niece!"

There was now a dead pause of some seconds. At length her ladyship spoke:

"To have been beaten in one's own town, where we own every stick and stone in the place, really requires some explanation; and the more I reflect upon it, the more mysterious does it seem. Repton, indeed, had much to say to it. He is so indiscreet—eh, don't you think so?"

"He is very vain of his conversational powers, my lady, and, like all clever talkers, says too much."

"Just so. But I don't think him even agreeable. I deem him a bore," said my lady, snappishly. "That taste for story-telling—that anecdotic habit is quite vulgar—nobody does it now."

Kate listened, as though too eager for instruction to dare to lose a word, and her ladyship went on:

"In the first place, everybody—in society, I mean—knows every story that can or ought to be told; and, secondly, a narrative always interrupts conversation, which is a game to be played by several."

Kate nodded slightly, as though to accord as much acquiescence as consorted with great deference.

"It is possible, therefore," resumed her ladyship, "that he may have divulged many things in that careless way he talked; and my niece, too, may have been equally silly. In fact, one thing is clear, the enemy acquired a full knowledge of our tactics, and met every move we made by another. I was prepared for all the violence, all the insult, all the licentious impertinence and ribaldry of such a contest, but certainly I reckoned on success." Another long and dreary pause ensued, and Lady Dorothea's countenance grew sadder and more clouded as she sat in moody silence. At length a faint tinge of colour marked her cheek, her eyes sparkled, and it was in a voice of more than ordinary energy she said, "If they fancy, however, that we shall accept defeat with submission, they are much mistaken. They have declared the war, and it shall not be for them to proclaim peace on the day they've gained a victory. And Miss Martin also must learn that her Universal Benevolence scheme must give way to the demands of a just and necessary retribution. Have you made out the list I spoke of?"

"Yes, my lady, in part; some details are wanting, but there are eighteen cases here quite perfect."

"These are all cottiers—pauper tenants," said Lady Dorothea, scanning the paper superciliously through her eye-glass.

"Not all, my lady; here, for instance, is Dick Sheehan, the blacksmith, who has worked for the Castle twenty-eight years, and who holds a farm called Mullanahogue on a terminable lease."

"And he voted against us?" broke she in.

"Yes; and made a very violent speech, too"

"Well, turn him out, then," said Lady Dorothea, interrupting her. Now, where's your father? Send for Henderson at once; I'll have no delay with this matter."

"I have sent for him, my lady; he'll be here within half an hour."

"And Scanlan also. We shall want him."

"Mr. Scanlan will be here at the same time."

"This case here, with two crosses before it, what does this refer to?" said her ladyship, pointing to a part of the paper.

"That's Mr. Magennis, my lady, of Barnagheela, who has been making incessant appeals for a renewal of his tenure——"

"And how did he behave?"

"He seconded Mr. Massingbred's nomination, and made a very outrageous speech on the occasion."

"To be sure, I remember him; and he had the insolence—the unparalleled insolence—afterwards to address Miss Martin, as she sat beside me in the carriage, and to tell her that if the rest of the family had been like her, the scene that had been that day enacted would never have occurred! Who is this Hosey Lynch? His name is so familiar to me."

"He is a postmaster of Oughterard, and a kind of factotum in the town."

"Then make a note of him. He must be dismissed at once."

"He is not a freeholder, my lady, but only mentioned as an active agent of the Liberal party."

"Don't adopt that vulgar cant, Miss Henderson—at least, when speaking to *me*. They are not—they have no pretensions to be called the Liberal party. It is bad taste as well as bad policy to apply a flattering epithet to a faction."

"What shall I call them in future, my lady?" asked Kate, with a most admirably assumed air of innocence.

"Call them Papists, Radicals, Insurgents—anything, in fact, which may designate the vile principles they advocate. You mentioned Mr. Nelligan, and I own to you I felt ill—positively ill—at the sound of his name. Just to think of that man's ingratitude—base ingratitude. It is but the other day his son was our guest here—actually dined at the table with us! You were here. *You* saw him yourself!"

"Yes, my lady," was the quiet reply.

"I'm sure nothing could be more civil, nothing more polite, than our reception of him. I talked to him myself, and asked him something—I forget what—about his future prospects, and see if this man, or his father—for it matters not which—is not the ringleader of this same movement! I tell you, child, and I really do not say so to hurt your feelings, or to aggravate your natural regrets at your condition in life, but I say it as a great moral lesson—that low people are invariably deceitful. Perhaps they do not always intend it; perhaps—and very probably, indeed—their standard of honourable dealing is a low one; but of the fact itself you may rest assured. They are treacherous, and they are vindictive!"

"Ennis Cafferty, my lady, who lives at Broguestown," said Kate, reading from the list, "sends a petition to your ladyship, entreating forgiveness if he should have done anything to cause displeasure to the family."

"What *did* he do? that is the question."

"He carried a banner inscribed 'Down with Monopoly!'"

"Mark him for eviction. I'll have no half measures. Miss Martin has brought the estate to such a pass, that we may draw the rents, but never aspire to the influence of our property. These people shall now know their real masters. Who is that knocking at the door?—Come in."

And at this summons, uttered in a voice not peculiar for suavity, Mr. Henderson entered, bowing profoundly, and smoothing the few glossy hairs that streaked rather than covered his bald head. A momentary glance passed between the father and daughter; so fleeting, however, was it, that the most sharp-eyed observer could not have detected its meaning. Lady Dorothea was too deeply occupied with her own thoughts to waste a second's consideration on either of them, and promptly said,

"I want you, Henderson, to inform me who are the chief persons who have distinguished themselves in this outrageous insult to us in the borough."

Mr. Henderson moved from one foot to the other, once more stroked down his hair, and seemed like a man suddenly called upon to enter on a very unpleasant and somewhat difficult task.

"Perhaps you don't like the office, sir?" said she, hastily. "Perhaps your own principles are opposed to it?"

"Na, my leddy," said he deferentially, "I ha' nae principles but such as the family sanctions. It's nae business o' mine to profess poleetical opinions."

"Very true, sir—very just; you comprehend your station," replied she, proudly. "And now to my demand. Who are the heads of this revolt?—for it is a revolt!"

"It's nae sa much a revolt, my leddy," rejoined he, slowly and respectfully, "as the sure and certain consequence of what has been going on for years on the property. I did my best, by warning, and indeed by thwarting, so far as I could, these same changes. But I was not listened to. I foretold what it would all end in, this amelearating the condition of the small farmer—this raising the moral standard o' the people, and a' that. I foresaw, that if they grew richer they'd grow sturdier; and if they learned to read, they'd begin to reflact. Ah, my leddy, a vara dangerous practice this same habit of reflaction is, to folk who wear ragged clothes and dine on potatoes!"

"I apprehend that the peril is not felt so acutely in your own country, sir!"

"Vara true, my leddy; your remark is vara just; but there's this difference to be remembered: the Scotch are canny folk, and we do many a thing that mightn't be safe for others, but we take care never to do them ower much."

"I don't want your philosophising, sir, about national characteristics. I conclude that you know—it is your duty to know—whence this spirit took its rise. I desire to be informed on this head, and also what measures you have to advise for its suppression."

Another pause, longer and more embarrassing than the first, followed on this speech, and Mr. Henderson really seemed balancing within himself whether he would or would not give evidence.

"Your reluctance has only to go a step further, Henderson, to impress me with the worst suspicions of yourself!" said Lady Dorothea, sternly.

"I'm vara sorry for it, my leddy; I don't deserve them," was the calm reply.

Had Lady Dorothea been quick-sighted she might have detected a glance which the daughter directed towards her father; but she had been more than quick-minded if she could have read its meaning, so strange was the expression it bore,

"In plain words, sir, do you know the offenders? and if so, how can we punish them?"

"Your ledyship has them all there," said he, pointing to the list on the table; "but there's nae sa much to be done wi' them, as the chief o' the lot are men o' mark and means, wi' plenty o' siller, and the sperit to spend it."

"I hear of nothing but defaulters till a moment like this arrives, sir," said her ladyship, passionately. "The burden of every song is arrears of rent; and now I am told that the tenantry are so prosperous, that they can afford to defy their landlord. Explain this, sir!"

Before Mr. Henderson had completed that hesitating process which with him was the prelude to an answer, the door opened, and Mary Martin entered. She was in a riding-dress, and bore the traces of the road on her splashed costume; but her features were paler than usual, and her lip quivered as she spoke.

"My dear aunt," cried she, not seeming to notice that others were present, "I have come back at speed from Kyle's Wood to learn if it be true—but it cannot be true—however the poor creatures there believe it—that they are to be discharged from work, and no more employment given at the quarries. You haven't seen them, dear aunt—you haven't beheld them, as I did this morning—standing panic-stricken around the scene of their once labour, not speaking, scarcely looking at each other, more like a shipwrecked crew upon an unknown shore than fathers and mothers beside their own homesteads!"

"It was I gave the order, Miss Martin," said Lady Dorothea, proudly. "If these people prefer political agitation to an honest subsistence, let them pay the price of it."

"But who says that they have done so?" replied Mary. "These poor creatures have not a single privilege to exercise; they haven't a vote amongst them. The laws have forgotten them just as completely as human charity has."

"If they have no votes to record, they have voices to outrage and insult their natural protectors. Henderson knows that the worst mobs in the borough were from this very district."

"Let him give the names of those he alludes to. Let him tell me ten—five—ay, three, if he can, of Kyle's Wood men who took any share in the disturbances. I am well aware that it is a locality where he enjoys little popularity himself; but at least he need not calumniate its people. Come, sir, who are these you speak of?"

Kate Henderson, who sat with bent-down head during this speech, contrived to steal a glance at the speaker so meaningful and so supplicating, that Mary faltered, and as a deep blush covered her cheek, she hastily added, "But this is really not the question. This miserable contest has done us all harm; but let us not perpetuate its bitterness! We have been beaten in an election, but I don't think we ought to be worsted in a struggle of generosity and good feeling. Come over, dear aunt, and see these poor creatures."

"I shall certainly do no such thing, Miss Martin. In the first place, the fever never leaves that village."

"Very true, aunt; and it will be worse company if our kindness should desert them. But if you will not come, take *my* word for the state of their destitution. We have nothing so poor on the whole estate."

"It is but a moment back I was told that the spirit of resistance to our influence here arose from the wealthy independence of the people; now, I am informed it is their want and destitution suggest the opposition. I wish I could ascertain which of you is right."

"It's little matter, if our theory does not lead us to injustice," said Mary, boldly. "Let me only ride back to the quarries, aunt, and tell these poor people that they've nothing to fear—that there is no thought of withdrawing from them their labour nor its hire. Their lives are, God knows, not overlaid with worldly blessings; let us not add one drop that we can spare to their cup of sorrow."

"The young leddy says na mare than the fact; they're vara poor, and they're vara dangerous!"

"How do you mean dangerous, sir?" asked Lady Dorothea, hastily.

"There's more out o' that barony at the assizes, my leddy, than from any other on the property."

"Starvation and crime are near relatives all the world over," said Mary; "nor do I see that the way to cure the one, is to increase the other."

"Then let us get rid of both," said Lady Dorothea. "I don't see why we are to nurse pauperism either into fever or rebellion. To feed people that they may live to infect you, or, perhaps, shoot you, is sorry policy. You showed me a plan for getting rid of them, Henderson—something about throwing down their filthy hovels, or unroofing them, or something of that kind, and then they were to emigrate—I forget where—to America, I believe—and become excellent people, hard-working and quiet. I know it all sounded plausible and nice; tell Miss Martin your scheme, and if it does not fulfil all you calculated, it will at least serve for an example on the estate."

"An example!" cried Mary. "Take care, my lady! It's a dangerous precept you are about to inculcate, and admits of a terrible imitation!"

"Now you have decided me, Miss Martin," said Lady Dorothea, haughtily.

"And, good Heavens! is it for a rash word of mine—for a burst of temper that I could not control—you will turn out upon the wide world a whole village—the old that have grown grey there—the infant that clings to its mother in her misery, and makes a home for her by its very dependence——"

"Every one of them, sir," said Lady Dorothea, addressing herself to Henderson, who had asked some question in a low whisper. "They're cottiers all; they require no delays of law, and I insist upon it peremptorily."

"Not till my uncle hears of it!" exclaimed Mary, passionately. "A cruel wrong like this shall not be done in mad haste." And with these words, uttered in all the vehemence of great excitement, she rushed from the room in search of Martin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A CHARACTERISTIC LETTER.

It may save the reader some time, and relieve him from the weary task of twice listening to the same story, if we steal some passages from a letter which, about this time, Jack Massingbred addressed to his former correspondent. He wrote from the inn at Oughterard, and, although still under the influence of the excitement of the late contest, expressed himself with much of his constitutional calm and frankness. We shall not recapitulate his narrative of the election, but proceed at once to what followed on that description.

"I see, Harry, the dubious projection of your nether lip, I appreciate the slow nod of your head, and I fancy I can hear the little half sigh of deprecation with which you hear all this. Worse again, I don't seek to defend myself. I think my case a bad one; but still I feel there is something to be said in mitigation. You need not trouble yourself to draw up an indictment: I plead guilty—entirely guilty to all you can say. I *have* broken with 'the gentlemen' to cast my lot with the 'canaille.'—Why haven't we a good wholesome word of our own for a home-made article?—I *have* deserted the ranks where, whatever fortune befel, it was honour to fight; I have given up association with the well-bred and the well-mannered, to rub shoulders with the coarse-minded, the rough-hearted, and the vulgar. There is not a reproach you can make me on this score that I haven't already addressed to myself. I feel all the indignity of my situation—I experience all the insult of their companionship; but, as the lady detected in possession of her lover's picture pleaded in her defence that it was not like him, so I hope to arrest judgment against me by the honest avowal that I detest and despise my party. I don't talk to *you* about their principles—still less do I say anything of my own—but merely advert here to the miserable compromise a gentleman is driven to make with every sentiment of his nature who once enlists under their flag. As Travers told us one evening—you were of the party, and must remember it—he was speaking of the Peninsular compaign, in which he served as a volunteer—'So long as you were fighting,' said he, 'it was all very well; the fellows were stout-hearted and full of spirit, and you felt that you couldn't ask for better comrades; but when the struggle was over—when it came to associating, living with them, hearing their sentiments, sharing their opinions, hopes, fears, wishes, and so on—then it became downright degradation!' Not, as he remarked, that they were one jot more vicious or more corrupt than their betters, but that every vice and every corruption amongst them seemed doubly offensive by the contact with their coarse natures. Now, my friends, the Liberals, are somewhat in the same category. They do their work right well on the field of battle; they fight, swear, slander, and perjure themselves just like gentlemen; or rather better of the two. They even come down handsomely with their cash—the last best evidence any man can tender of his honesty in a cause; but then, Harry, the struggle over, it is sorry work to become their companion and their friend! Oh! if you had but seen the dinners I have eaten, and the women I have handed down to them!—if you could have but heard the sentiments I have cheered—ay, and even uttered—only listened to the projects we have discussed, and the plans matured as we sat over our whisky-punch—you'd say, 'Jack must have the ambition of the Evil One himself in his heart, since he pays this price for the mere glimpse of the goal before him!'

"Throughout the whole of your last letter I can detect a sense of apprehension lest, 'with all my tact,' as you phrase it, these people are not really duping *me*—using me for a present purpose, with the foregone resolve to get rid of me when it be accomplished. To be sure they are, Harry. I never doubted it for a moment. The only question is, which of us shall trip up the other! They desire to show the world that the operation of the Relief Bill will not be of that exclusive character its opponents proclaimed—that a Catholic constituency would choose a Protestant—even prefer one—as Mr. O'Connell said. The opportunity was a good one to display this sentiment, and so they took me! Now, *my* notion is, that every great measure can have only one real importance, by throwing weight into the scale of one or other of the two great Parliamentary parties. Do what you will—agitate, write, speak, pamphleteer, and libel—but all resolves itself to some question of a harm to one side and good to the other, the country, the while, being wonderfully little the better or the worse for all the legislation. We used to have a Constitution in England: we have now only got a Parliament, and to be anything in the nation a man must make himself felt there! This, 'if I have the stuff in me,' as old Sherry said, I mean to do—*et nous verrons!*

"The fatigues of this new life are very great. I'm up before it is well day, writing and revising newspaper articles, answering letters, and replying to 'queries.' I have my whole mornings taken up in audiences of my constituents, swallowing pledges, and recording promises; and later on I go to dinner, 'with what appetite I may,' to some one of my faithful supporters—some corn-chandler who spouts 'foreign politics,' or a grocer who ought to be Colonial Secretary! But still I'm thankful for all this bustle and occupation: it averts reflection, it raises a barrier against thought, and muffles the clapper of that small hand-bell in the human heart men call their conscience! They say few men would have courage for either a battle or a wedding if it were not for the din of the trumpets and the joy-bells; and I'm convinced that noise—mere noise—has no small share in determining the actions of mankind!

"And now, Harry, for a confession. I'm heartily sorry for the whole of this business, and were it to be done again, nothing would tempt me to play the same part in it. I was leading the jolliest life imaginable at Cro' Martin. I had made the place and the people my own. It was a kind of existence that suited me—sufficient of occupation, and enough of leisure. There were oddities to laugh at, eccentricities to quiz, an old lawyer to sharpen one's wits upon, and a governess—such a governess to flirt with! Don't mistake me, Harry; it was not one of those hand-pressing, downcast-gazing, low-speaking cases in which you are such a proficient. It was far more like the approaches one might be supposed to make to a young tigress in a cage—a creature with whom a mistake would be your ruin, and whom you always caressed with a sense of impending peril.

"I told you how ably she aided me in this contest—how she laboured to obtain information—secret information—for me as to every voter in the borough. What prompted her to this course I cannot fathom. She does not appear to bear any grudge against the Martins—she had been but a few weeks amongst them—and is, all things considered, well treated and well received. As little was it any special favour towards myself. Indeed, on that head she will not permit me to fall into any error. I cannot suppose that with her foreign education and foreign habits she cares a jot for the small schemes and intriguings of home politics—so, what can it possibly mean? Help me to the solution of this riddle, and I'll be more deeply your debtor than I can well say. Brought up as she has been—and as I have told you in my last letter—nothing would be more natural than her adoption of every prejudice of the class by whom she has been so singularly distinguished; and in this light I have always viewed her. Under the calm reserve of a most polished manner you can still detect a shrinking horror of all the vulgar association of the rank she came from. Her quiet deference—haughtier by far than the domination of those above her—the humility that no flatteries ever breached—a self-possession that never seemed so strong as when resisting the blandishments of praise,—these are strange gifts in a young girl with beauty enough to turn half the heads of half the fools we know of, and more than enough to make crazy that of him who writes this.

"I tried twenty things to resist this tendency on my part. I laughed at myself for the absurdity it would lead to. I ridiculed to my own heart all the extravagance of such a project. I even wrote a paragraph for the *Times*, announcing the marriage of Jack Massingbred with Kate Henderson, the only daughter of Paul Henderson, the Land Steward, and pasted it above my chimney to shock and outrage me. I did more. I made love to Miss Martin—as an alterative, as the doctors would call it—but I fell at a stone wall, got laughed at, and cured of my passion; and lastly, I climbed that lofty tree of my family, and sat high among the branches of defunct barons and baronets, to get a bird's-eye view of the small mushrooms that grow on the earth beneath, but hang me, Harry, if the agarics didn't seem better company, and I was glad to get down amongst them again, meaning thereby to sit beside that one dear specimen of the class I allude to!

"I see that you are curious to know how all these late events have modified my relations with my father, and really I cannot answer your inquiry. It is more than likely that my obtaining a seat in Parliament will embarrass rather than serve him with his party, since he will be expected to control a vote over which he can exert no influence.

"As yet, nothing has occurred to draw us any closer, and my only communications to him have been certain recommendatory letters, which my constituents here have somewhat peremptorily demanded at my hands. I gave them freely, for, after all, application is an easier task than refusing, and besides, Harry, it is very difficult to persuade your election friends that you cannot be a patriot and a patron at the same time, and that, in the luxurious pastime of badgering a government, a man surrenders some of the pretensions to place. I gave them, therefore, all the letters they asked for; and if the Chief Secretary but answer one-half of my appeals, Galway—or at least that small portion of it called Oughterard—will have no cause of complaint on the score of its claims to office.

"You are, I perceive astonished that I continue to remain here. So am I, Harry. The place is detestable in almost every way. I am beset with entreaties, persecuted with vulgar attentions, bored to death by the insolent familiarity of people I cannot—do all that I will—grow intimate with; and yet I stay on, pretexting this, that, and t'other to myself, and shrinking even to my own heart to avow the real reason of my delay!

"I want once again, if only for a few moments, to see her. I want to try if by any ingenuity I could discover the mystery of her conduct with regard to myself; and I want also, if there should be the need to do so, to justify to her eyes many things which I have been forced by circumstances to do in this contest.

"I have not the slightest suspicion as to how she views all that has occurred here. Two notes which I addressed to her, very respectful, business-like epistles, have not been answered, though I entreated for a few words to acknowledge their receipt. The Martins, since the election, seem to have quarantined the whole town and neighbourhood. They suffer none of their people to enter here. They have sent eight miles further off to market, and even changed the post-town for their letters. Their policy is, so far, short-sighted, as it has called into an exaggerated importance all that small fry—like the Nelligans—who have hitherto been crushed under the greater wealth of the rich proprietor. But I am again drifting into that tiresome tideway of politics which I have sworn to myself to avoid, if only for a few days; in pursuance of which wise resolve I shall betake myself to the mountains, under the pretext of shooting. A gun is an idler's passport, and a game-bag and a shot-pouch are sufficient to throw a dignity over vagabondism. You will therefore divine that I am not bent on snipe slaughter, but simply a good excuse to be alone!

"I mean to go to-morrow, and shall first turn my steps towards the coast, which, so far as I have seen, is singularly bold and picturesque. If nothing occurs to alter my determination, I'll leave this unclosed till I can tell you that I have come back here, which in all probability will be by the end of the week.

* * * * * * *

"Once more here, my dear Harry, I sit down to add a few lines to this already over lengthy epistle. Wishing to give you some notion of the scenery, I set out with all the appliances of a sketcher, and have really contrived to jot down some spots which, for general wildness and grandeur, it would be difficult to surpass within the bounds of our country. Nor is it alone the forms that are so striking, although I could show you outlines here perfectly Alpine in their fantastic extravagance; but the colours are finer than anything I have seen north of the Alps—heaths and lichens grouped over rugged masses of rock, with shades of purple and gold such as no diadem ever equalled. The sunsets, too, were gorgeous! You remember how struck we both were at the moment when the dome and aisle of St. Peter's burst into light, and from the darkness of midnight every column and every statue became illuminated in a second, but a thousand times beyond this in grandeur of effect was the moment of the sun's decline below the horizon. The instant before, the great sullen sea was rolling and heaving with its leaden blue surface, slightly traced here and there with foam, but no sooner had the sun touched the horizon, than a flood of purple glory spread over the whole ocean, so that it became like a sea of molten gold and amber. The dark cliffs and rugged crags, the wave-beaten rocks, and the rude wild islands, darksome and dismal but a moment back, were now all glittering and glowing, every pinnacle and every peak in deep carbuncle red. How suggestive to him who would describe an enchanted land or region of magic splendour! and what a hint for your scene-painter, who, with all his devices of Bengal and blue light, with every trick that chemistry and optics could aid in, never fancied anything so splendid or so gorgeous.

"I have half-filled a sketch-book for you, and more than half-filled my game-bag with mosses and ferns, and such like gear, which, knowing your weakness, I have gathered, but, not understanding their virtues, may, for aught I know, be the commonest things in creation. I can only vouch for their being very beautiful, and very unlike anything else I ever saw before; fragments of marble, too, and specimens of Irish jasper and onyx, are amidst my rubbish, or my treasures, whichever you shall pronounce them to be.

"I got through—don't fancy that the phrase denotes weariness or *ennui*—I got through four days in these pursuits, and then I took boat, and for three more I paddled about the coast, dipping in amongst the cliffs, and creeks, and caves of this wonderful coast, gathering shells and seaweed, and shooting curlews and eating lobsters, and, in fact, to all intents and purposes, suffering a 'sea change' over myself and my spirit as unearthlike as well may be imagined; and at last I bethought me of my new opening career, and all that I ought to be doing in preparation of St. Stephen's, and so I turned my steps landward, and towards 'my borough.' I like to say 'my borough,' it sounds feudal, and insolent, and old Tory-like; it smacks of the day when people received their representative thankfully, as an alms, and your great proprietor created his nominee as the consul ennobled his horse!

"Revolving very high thoughts, reciting Edmund Burke's grandest perorations, and picturing very vividly before me the stunning triumphs of my own eloquence in the House, I plodded along, this time at least wonderfully indifferent to the scenery, and totally oblivious of where I was, when suddenly I perceived the great trees of Cro' Martin demesne shadowing the road I travelled, and saw that I was actually within a mile or so of the Castle! You, Harry, have contrived, some way or other, to have had a very rose-coloured existence. I never heard that you had been jilted by a mistress, 'cut' by a once friend, or coldly received by the rich relative from whom you derived all your expectations. I am not even aware that the horse you backed ever went wrong, or that the bill you endorsed for another ever came back protested. In fact, you are what the world loves best, cherishes most, and lavishes all its blandishments on—a devilish lucky fellow! Lucky in a capital fortune, abundance of good gifts, good looks, and an iron constitution—one of those natures that can defy duns, blue-devils, and dyspepsia! Being, therefore, all this, well received everywhere good company where pheasants are to be shot, Burgundy to be drunk, or young ladies to be married—for you are a good shot, a good wine-taster, and a good 'parti'—with such gifts, I say, it will be very difficult to evoke your sympathy on the score of a misfortune which no effort of your imagination could compass. In fact, to ask you to feel what I did, as I found myself walking along *outside* of those grounds, *within* which, but a few days back, I was the cherished visitor, and in sight of that smoke which denoted a hearth beside which I was never to sit again, and from which I was banished with something not very unlike disgrace! No sophistry I could summon was sufficient to assuage the poignancy of this sentiment. I feel certain that I could stand any amount of open public abuse, any known or unknown quantity of what is genteely called 'slanging,' but I own to you that the bare thought of how my name might at that moment be mentioned beneath that roof, or even the very reserve that saved it from mention, caused me unutterable bitterness, and it was in a state of deep humiliation of spirit that I took the very first path that led across the fields and away from Cro' Martin.

"They tell me that a light heart makes easy work of a day's journey. Take my word for it, that to get over the ground without a thought of the road, there's nothing like a regular knock-down affliction. I walked eight hours, and at a good pace, too, without so much as a few minutes' halt, so overwhelmed was I with sensations that would not admit of my remembering anything else. My first moment of consciousness —for really it was such—came on as I found myself breasting a steep stony ascent, on the brow of which stood the bleak residence of my friend Mr. Magennis, of Barnagheela. I have already told you of my visit to his house, so that I need not inflict you with any new detail of the locality, but I confess, little as it promised to cheer or rally the spirits, I was well pleased to find myself so near a roof under which I might take refuge. I knocked vigorously at the door, but none answered my summons. I repeated my demand for admittance still more loudly, and at last went round to the back of the house, which I found as rigidly barred as the front. While still hesitating what course to take, I spied Joan Landy—you remember the girl I spoke of in a former letter—ascending the hill at a brisk pace. In a moment I was beside her. Poor thing, she seemed overjoyed at our meeting, and warmly welcomed me to her house. 'Tom is away,' said she, 'in Dublin, they tell me, but he'll be back in a day or two, and there's nobody he'd be so glad to see as yourself when he comes.' In the world, Harry—that is, in your world and mine—such a proposition as Joan's would have its share of embarrassments. Construe it how one might, there would be at least some awkwardness in accepting such hospitality. So I certainly felt it, and, as we walked along, rather turned the conversation towards herself, and whither she had been.

“ ‘I'm not more than half an hour out of the house,” said she, ‘for I only went down the boreen to show the short cut by Kell Mills to a young lady that was here.’

“ ‘A visitor, Mrs. Joan?’

“ ‘Yes. But to be sure you know her yourself, for you came with her the day she walked part of the way back with me from Cro' Martin.’

“ ‘Miss Henderson?’

“ ‘Maybe that's her name. She only told me to call her Kate.’

“ ‘Was she here alone?—did she come on foot?—which way is she gone?’ cried I, hurrying question after question. Perhaps the tone of my last was most urgent, for it was to that she replied, by pointing to a glen between two furze-clad hills, and saying, ‘That's the road she's taking, till she crosses the ford at Coomavaragh.’

“ ‘And she is alone?’

“ ‘That she is; sorra a one with her, and she has five good miles before her.’

“I never waited for more; if I did say good-by to poor Joan, I really forget; but I dashed down the mountain at speed, and hurried onward in the direction she had pointed out. In an instant all my fatigue of the day was forgotten, and as I went along I remembered nothing, thought of nothing, but the object of my pursuit.

“You who have so often bantered me on the score of my languor—that ‘elegant lassitude,’ as you used to call it, which no zeal ever warmed, nor any ardour ever could excite, would have been somewhat astonished had you seen the reckless, headlong pace at which I went, vaulting over gates, clearing fences, and dashing through swamps, without ever a moment's hesitation. Picture to yourself, then, my splashed and heated condition, as, after a two miles' chase in this fashion, I at length overtook her, just as she was in search of a safe spot to ford the river. Startled by the noise behind her, she turned suddenly round, and in an instant we stood face to face. I'd have given much to have seen some show of confusion, even embarrassment, in her looks; but there was not the slightest. No, Harry, had we met in a drawing-room her manner could not have been more composed, as she said:

"'Good morning, Mr. Massingbred. Have you had much sport?'

"'My chase was after *you*, Miss Henderson,' said I, hurriedly. 'I just reached Barnagheela as Mistress Joan returned, and having learned which road you took, followed you in all haste.'

"'Indeed!' exclaimed she, and in a voice wherein there were blended a vast variety of meanings.

"'Yes,' I resumed; 'for an opportunity of meeting you alone—of speaking with you even for a few moments—I have delayed my departure this week back. I wrote to you twice.'

"'Yes; I got your letters.'

"'But did not deign to answer them.'

"'I did not write to you, because, situated as *I* was, and regarded as *you* were at Cro' Martin, there would have been a species of treason in maintaining anything like correspondence, just as I feel there is somewhat akin to it in our intercourse at this moment.'

"'And have the events occurring lately changed *your* feeling with regard to me?' asked I, half reproachfully.

"'I don't exactly know to what former condition you refer, Mr. Massingbred,' said she, calmly. 'If to the counsels which you were gracious enough to receive at hands humble and inexperienced as mine, they were given, as you remember, when you were the chosen representative of the family at Cro' Martin, and continued only so long as you remained such.'

"'Then I have deceived myself, Miss Henderson,' broke I in. 'I had fancied that there was a personal good-will in the aid you tendered me. I even flattered myself that I owed my success entirely and solely to your efforts.'

"'You are jesting, Mr. Massingbred,' said she, with a saucy smile; 'no one better than yourself knows how to rely upon his own abilities.'

"'At least, confess that it was you who first suggested to me that they were worth cultivating; that it was *you* who pointed out a road to me in life, and even promised me your friendship as the price of my worthily adopting it!'

"'I remember the conversation you allude to. It was on this very road it occurred.'

"'Well, and have I done anything as yet to forfeit the reward you spoke of?'

"'All this is beside the real question, Mr. Massingbred,' said she, hurriedly. 'What you are really curious to learn is, why it is that I, being such as I am, should have displayed so much zeal in a cause which could not but have been opposed to the interests of those who are my patrons. That you have not divined the reason, is a proof to me that I could not make you understand it. I don't want to talk riddles—enough that I say it was a caprice.'

"'And yet you talked seriously, persuasively to me, of my future road in life; you made me think that you saw in me the qualities that win success.'

"'You have a wonderful memory for trifles, sir, since you can recal so readily what I said to you.'

"'But it was not a trifle to *me*,' said I.

"'Perhaps not, Mr. Massingbred, since it referred to yourself. I don't mean this for impertinence!'

"'I am glad that you say so!' cried I, eagerly. 'I am but too happy to catch at anything which may tend to convince me that you would not willingly hurt my feelings.'

"For several minutes neither of us uttered a word; at last I said: 'Should I be asking too much, if I begged Miss Henderson to tell me whether she is dissatisfied with anything I may have done in this contest? There may be matters in which I have been misrepresented; others, of which I could make some explanation.'

"'Are you quite satisfied with you yourself, sir?' said she, interrupting me.

"'No,' said I; "so little am I so, that were it all to do over again, I'd not embark in it. The whole affair, from beginning to end, is a false position.'

"'Ignoble associates—low companionships—very underbred acquaintances,' said she, in a tone of scorn that seemed far more directed at *me* than the others. I believe I showed how I felt it. I know that my cheek was on fire for some seconds after.

"'The Martins, I take it, are outrageous with me?' said I, at last.

"'They never speak of you!' was the reply.

"'Not my lady?'

"'No!'

"'Nor even Repton?'

"'Not once.'

"'That, at least, is more dignified; and if any accident should bring us together in county business——'

"'Which is not likely.'

"'How so?' asked I.

"'They are going away soon.'

"'Going away—to leave Cro' Martin—and for any time?'

"'My lady speaks of the continent, and that, of course, implies a long absence.'

"'And has this miserable election squabble led to this resolve? Is the neighbourhood to be deprived of its chief ornament—the people of their best friend—just for sake of a petty party triumph?'

"'It is fortunate Mr. Massingbred's constituents cannot hear him,' said she, laughing.

"'But be serious, and tell me how far am I the cause of all this?'

"'The whole cause of it—at least, so far as present events can reveal.'

"'How they must abhor me!' said I, half involuntarily.

"'Avec les circonstances atténuantes,' said she, smiling again.

"'How so?—what do you mean?'

"'Why, that my lady is thankful at heart for a good excuse to get away—such a pretext as Mr. Martin himself cannot oppose. Repton, the Grand Vizier, counsels economy, and, like all untravelled people, fancies France and Italy cheap to live in; and Miss Mary is, perhaps, not sorry, with the prospect of the uncontrolled management of the whole estate.'

"'And is she to live here alone?'

"'Yes; she is to be sole mistress of Cro' Martin, and without even a governess, since Miss Henderson is to accompany her ladyship as private secretary, minister of the household, and, in fact, any other capacity you may please in flattery to assign her. And now, Mr. Massingbred, that I have, not over-discreetly, perhaps, adventured to talk of family arrangements to a stranger, will you frankly acknowledge that your pride, or self-love, or any other quality of the same nature, is rather gratified than otherwise at all the disturbance you have caused here? Don't you really feel pleased to think that you have revolutionised a little neighbourhood, broken up a society, severed the ties that bound proprietor and peasant, and, in fact, made a very pretty chaos, out of which may come anything or everything?'

"'When you address such a question as this to me, you don't expect an answer. Indeed, the quere itself is its own reply,' said I.

"'Well said, sir, and with consummate temper, too. Certainly, Mr. Massingbred, you possess one great element of success in public life.'

"'Which is——'

"'To bear with equanimity and cool forbearance the impertinences of those you feel to be your inferiors.'

"'But it is not in this light I regard Miss Henderson, be assured,' said I, with earnestness; "and if I have not replied to her taunts, it is not because I have not felt them.'

"I thought I detected a very faint flush on her cheek as I said this, and certainly her features assumed a more serious expression than before.

"'Will you let me speak to you of what is far nearer my heart,' said I, in a low voice,—'far nearer than all this strife and war of politics? And will you deign to believe that what I say is prompted by whatever I know in myself of good or hopeful?'

"'Say on—that is, if I ought to hear it,' said she, coldly.

"Deterred a second or two by her manner, I rallied quickly, and with an ardour of which I cannot convey an impression, much less explain—one of those moments of rhapsody, *you'd* call it—poured forth a warm declaration of love. Ay, Harry, sincere, devoted love!—a passion which, in mastering all the common promptings of mere worldly advantage and self-interest, had really inspired me with noble thoughts and high aspirations.

"A judge never listened to a pleading with more dignified patience than she did to my appeal. She even waited when I had concluded, as it were to allow of my continuing, had I been so minded; when, seeing that I had closed my argument, she quietly turned about, and facing the road we had just been travelling, pointed to the bleak, bare mountain on which Barnagheela stood. 'It was yonder, then, that you caught up this lesson, sir. The admirable success of Mr. Magennis's experiment has seduced you!'

"'Good Heavens, Kate," cried I——

"'Sir,' said she, drawing herself proudly up, 'you are continuing the parallel too far.'

"'But Miss Henderson cannot for a moment believe——'

"'I can believe a great deal, sir, of what even Mr. Massingbred would class with the incredible; but, sir, there are certain situations in life which exact deference, from the very fact of their humility. Mine is one of these, and I am aware of it.'

"'Will you not understand me aright?' cried I eagerly. 'In offering to share my fortune in life with you——'

"'Pray, sir, let this stop here. Poor Joan, I have no doubt, felt all the grandeur of *her* elevation, and was grateful even in her misery. But *I* should not do so. I am one of those who think that the cruellest share in a mésalliance is that of the humbler victim. To brave such a fate, there should be all the hopeful, sanguine sense of strong affection; and, as a reserve to fall back on in reverses, there should be an intense conviction of the superiority over others of him from whom we accept our inferiority. Now, in my case, these two conditions are wanting. I know you like frankness, and I am frank.'

"'Even to cruelty,' said I.

"'We are very near Cro' Martin, sir, and I think we ought to part,' said she, calmly.

"'And is it thus you would have us separate? Have I nothing to hope from time—from the changes that may come over your opinions of me?'

"'Calculate rather on the alterations in your own sentiments, Mr. Massingbred; and perhaps the day is not very distant when you will laugh heartily at yourself for the folly of this same morning—a folly which might have cost you dearly, sir, for I might have said, Yes.'

"'Would that you had.'

"'Good-by, sir,' said she, not noticing my interruption, 'and remember that, if I should ever need it, I have a strong claim on your gratitude. Good-by!'

"She did not give me her hand at parting, but waved it coldly towards me as she went. And so she passed the little wicket, and entered the dark woods of the demesne, leaving me in a state wherein the sense of bewilderment alone prevailed over all else.

"I have given you this narrative, Harry, as nearly as I can remember, every step of it; but I do not ask you to understand it better than I do, which means, not at all! Nor will I worry you with the thousand-and-one attempts I have made to explain to myself what I still confess to be inexplicable. I mean to leave this at once. Would that I had never come here! Write to me soon; but no bantering, Harry. Not even my friendship for *you*—oldest and best of all my friends—could stand any levity on this theme. This girl knows me thoroughly, since she comprehends that there is no so certain way to engage my affections as to defy them!

"Write to me, I entreat. Address me at my father's, where I shall be, probably, within a week. Were I to read over what I have just written, the chances are I should burn the letter; and so, sans adieu.

"Yours ever,
"JACK MASSINGBRED."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THREE COACHES AND THEIR COMPANY.

THREE large and stately travelling-carriages, heavily laden, and surrounded with all the appliances for comfort possible, rolled from under the arched gateway of Cro' Martin. One eager and anxious face turned hastily to catch a last look at the place he was leaving, and then as hastily concealing his emotion with his handkerchief, Mr. Martin sat back in the carriage in silence.

"Twenty minutes after eight," exclaimed Lady Dorothea, looking at her watch. "It is always the case; one never can get away in time."

Roused by the speech, Martin started, and turned again to the window.

"How handsome those larches are," cried he; "it seems but yesterday that I planted them, and they are magnificent trees now."

Her ladyship made no reply, and he went on, half as though speaking to himself; "The place is in great beauty just now. I don't think I ever saw it looking so well. Shall I ever see it again?" muttered he, in a still lower tone.

"I really cannot think it ought to break your heart Mr Martin, if I were to say 'No' to that question," said she, testily.

"No—no!" exclaimed he, repeating the word after her; "not come back here!"

"There is nothing to prevent us if we should feel disposed to do so," replied she, calmly. "I only observed that one could face the alternative with a good courage. The twenty years we have passed in this spot are represented to *your* mind by more leafy trees and better timber. To *me* they are written in the dreary memory of a joyless weary existence. I detest the place," cried she, passionately, "and for nothing more, that even on leaving it my spirits are too jaded and broken to feel the happiness that they ought."

Martin sighed heavily, but did not utter a word.

"So it is," resumed she, "one ever takes these resolutions too late. What we are doing now should have been done sixteen or eighteen years ago."

"Or not at all," muttered Martin, but in a voice not meant to be overheard.

"I don't think so, sir," cried she, catching up his words, "if only as our protest against the insolence and ingratitude of this neighbourhood—of these creatures, who have actually been maintained by us! It was high time to show them their real condition, and to what they will be reduced when the influence of our position is withdrawn."

"If it were only for *that* we are going away——" And he stopped himself as he got thus far.

"In itself a good and sufficient reason, sir, but I trust there are others also. I should hope that we have paid our debt to patriotism, and that a family who have endured twenty years of banishment, may return, if only to take a passing glance at the world of civilization and refinement."

"And poor Mary!" exclaimed Martin, with deep feeling.

"Your niece might have come with us if she pleased, Mr. Martin. To remain here was entirely her own choice; not that I am at all disposed to think that her resolution was not a wise one. Miss Mary Martin feels very naturally her utter deficiency in all the graces and accomplishments which should pertain to her condition. She appreciates her unfitness for society, and selects—as I think with commendable discretion—a sphere much better adapted to her habits."

Martin again sighed heavily.

"To leave any other girl under such circumstances would have been highly improper," resumed her ladyship; "but she is really suited to this kind of life, and perfectly unfit for any other, and I have no doubt she and Catty Broon will be excellent company for each other."

"Catty loves her with all her heart," muttered Martin. And her ladyship's lip curled in silent derision at the thought of such affection. "And, after all," said he, half involuntarily, "our absence will be less felt so long as Molly stays behind."

"If you mean by that, Mr. Martin, that the same system of wasteful expenditure is still to continue—this universal employment scheme—I can only say I distinctly and flatly declare against it. Even Repton—and I'm sure he's no ally of mine—agrees with me in pronouncing it perfectly ruinous."

"There's no doubt of the cost of it," said Martin, gravely.

"Well, sir, and what other consideration should weigh with us?—I mean," added she, hastily, "what should have the same weight? The immaculate authority I have just quoted has limited our personal expenditure for next year to five thousand pounds, and threatens us with even less in future if the establishment at Cro' Martin cannot be reduced below its present standard; but I would be curious to know why there is such a thing as an establishment at Cro' Martin?"

"Properly speaking there is none," said Martin. "Repton alludes only to the workpeople—to those employed on the grounds and the gardens. We cannot let the place go to ruin."

"There is certainly no necessity for pineries and forcing-houses. Your niece is not likely to want grapes in January, or camelias in the early autumn. As little does she need sixteen carriage-horses and a stable full of hunters."

"They are to be sold off next week. Mary herself said that she only wanted two saddle-horses and the pony for the phaeton."

"Quite sufficient, I should say, for a young lady."

"I'm sure she'd have liked to have kept the harriers——"

"A pack of hounds! I really never heard the like!"

"Poor Molly! It was her greatest pleasure—I may say her only amusement in life. But she wouldn't hear of keeping them; and when Repton tried to persuade her——"

"Repton's an old fool—he's worse, he's downright dishonest—for he actually proposed my paying my maids out of my miserable pittance of eight hundred a year, and at the same moment suggests your niece retaining a pack of foxhounds!"

"Harriers, my lady."

"I don't care what they're called. It is too insolent."

"You may rely upon one thing," said Martin, with more firmness than he had hitherto used, "there will be nothing of extravagance in Mary's personal expenditure. If ever there was a girl indifferent to all the claims of self, she is that one."

"If we continue this discussion, sir, at our present rate, I opine that by the time we reach Dublin your niece will have become an angel."

Martin dropped his head, and was silent; and although her ladyship made two or three other efforts to revive the argument, he seemed resolved to decline the challenge, and so they rolled along the road sullen and uncommunicative.

In the second carriage were Repton and Kate Henderson—an arrangement which the old lawyer flatteringly believed he owed to his cunning and address, but which in reality was ordained by Lady Dorothea, whose notions of rank and precedence were rigid. Although Repton's greatest tact lay in his detection of character, he felt that he could not satisfactorily affirm he had mastered the difficulty in the present case. She was not exactly like anything he had met before; her mode of thought, and even some of her expressions were so different, that the old lawyer owned to himself, "It was like examining a witness through an interpreter."

A clever talker—your man of conversational success—is rarely patient under the failure of his powers, and, not very unreasonably perhaps, very ready to ascribe the ill-success to the defects of his hearer. They had not proceeded more than half of the first post ere Repton began to feel the incipient symptoms of this discontent.

She evidently had no appreciation for Bar anecdote and judicial wit; she took little interest in political events, and knew nothing of the country or its people. He tried the subject of foreign travel, but his own solitary trip to Paris and Brussels afforded but a meagre experience of continental life, and he was shrewd enough not to swim a yard out of his depth. "She must have her weak point, if I could but discover it," said he to himself. "It is not personal vanity, that I see. She does not want to be thought clever, nor even eccentric,—which is the governess failing *par excellence*;—what then can it be?" With all his ingenuity he could not discover! She would talk, and talk well, on any theme he started, but always like one who maintained conversation through politeness and not interest, and this very feature it was which piqued the old man's vanity, and irritated his self-love.

When he spoke, she replied, and always with a sufficient semblance of interest, but if he were silent, she never opened her lips.

"And so," said he, after a longer pause than usual, "you tell me that you really care little or nothing whither Fortune may be now conducting you."

"To one in my station it really matters very little," said she, calmly. "I don't suppose that the post-horses there have any strong preference for one road above another, if they be both equally level and smooth."

"There lies the very question," said he; "for you now admit that there may be a difference."

"I have never found in reality," said she, "that these differences were appreciable."

"How is it that one so young should be so——so philosophic?" said he, after a hesitation.

"Had you asked me that question in French, Mr. Repton, the language would have come so pleasantly to your aid, and spared you the awkwardness of employing a grand phrase for a small quality; but my 'philosophy' is simply this: that, to fill a station whose casualties range from courtesies in the drawing-room to slights from the servants' hall, one must arm themselves with very defensive armour, as much, nay more, against flattery than against sarcasm. If, in the course of time, this habit render one ungenial and uncompanionable, pray be lenient enough to ascribe the fault to the condition as much as to the individual."

"But, to be candid, I only recognise in you qualities the very opposite of all these; and, if I am to confess a smart at this moment, it is in feeling that I am not the man to elicit them."

"There you do me wrong. I should be very proud to captivate Mr. Repton."

"Now we are on the good road at last!" said he, gaily, "for Mr. Repton is dying to be captivated."

"The fortress that is only anxious to surrender offers no great glory to the conqueror," replied she.

"By Jove! I'm glad you're not at the Bar."

"If I had been, I could never have shown the same forbearance as Mr. Repton."

"How so? What do you mean?"

"I never could have refused a silk gown, sir; and they tell me you have done so!"

"Ah! they told you that," said he, colouring with pleasurable pride. "Well, it's quite true. The fact is correct, but I don't know what explanation they have given of it!"

"There was none, sir—or at least none that deserved the name."

"Then what was your own reading of it?" asked he.

"Simply this, sir: that a proud man may very well serve in the ranks, but spurn the grade of a petty officer."

"By Jove; it is strange to find that a young lady should understand one's motives better than an old Minister," said he, with an evident satisfaction.

"It would be unjust, sir, were I to arrogate any credit to my own perspicuity in this case," said she, hastily, "for I was aided in my judgment by what, very probably, never came under the Minister's eyes."

"And what was that?"

"A little volume which I discovered one day in the library, entitled 'Days of the Historical Society of Trinity College,' wherein I found Mr. Repton's name not only one of the first in debate, but the very first in enunciating the great truths of political liberty. In fact, I might go further and say, the only one who had the courage to proclaim the great principles of the French Revolution."

"Ah—yes. I was a boy—a mere boy—very rash—full of hope—full of enthusiasm," said Repton, with an embarrassment that increased at every word. "We all took fire from the great blaze beside us just then; but, my dear young lady, the flame has died out—very fortunately too—for if it hadn't it would have burned us up with it. We were wrong—wrong with Burke, to be sure—'Errare Platone,' as one may say—but still wrong."

"You were wrong, sir, in confounding casualties with true consequences—wrong as a physician would be who abandoned his treatment from mistaking the symptoms of disease for the effects of medicine. You set out by declaring there was a terrible malady to be treated, and you shrink back affrighted at the first results of your remedies; you did worse, you accommodated your change of principles to party, and from the great champions of liberty you descended to be—modern Whigs!"

"Why, what have we here? A Girondist, I verily believe!" said Repton, looking in her face, with a smile of mingled surprise and amazement.

"I don't much care for the name you may give me, but I am one who thinks that the work of the French Revolution is sure of its accomplishment. We shall very probably not do the thing in the same way, but it will be done, nevertheless; for an act of Parliament, though not so speedy, will be as effectual as a 'Noyade,' and a Reforming Administration will work as cleanly as a Constituent!"

"But see; look at France at this moment. Is not society reconstituted pretty near to the old models? What evidence is there that the prestige of rank has suffered from the shock of revolution?"

"The best evidence. Nobody believes in it—not one. Society is reconstituted just as a child constructs a card-house to see how high he can carry the frail edifice before it tumbles. The people—the true people of the Continent—look at the pageantry of a Court and a Nobility just as they do on a stage procession; and criticise it in the same spirit. They endure it so long as their indolence or their caprice permit, and then, some fine morning, they'll dash down the whole edifice; and be assured that the fragments of the broken toy will never suggest the sentiment to repair it."

"You are a Democrat of the first water!" exclaimed Repton, in half amazement.

"I am simply for the assertion of the truth everywhere and in everything—in religion and in politics, as in art and literature. If the people be the source of power, don't divert the stream into another channel; and, above all, don't insist that it should run up-hill! Come abroad, Mr. Repton—just come over with us to Paris—and see if what I am telling you be so far from the fact. You'll find, too, that it is not merely the low-born, the ignoble, and the poor who profess these opinions, but the great, the titled, and the wealthy men of fourteen quarterings and ancient lineage; and who, sick to death of a contest with a rich bourgeoisie, would rather start fair in the race again, and win whatever place their prowess or their capacity might give them. You'll hear very good socialism from the lips of Dukes and Princesses who swear by Fourrier."

Repton stared at her in silence, not more amazed at the words he heard than at the manner and air of her who spoke them; for she had gradually assumed a degree of earnestness and energy which imparted to her features a character of boldness and determination, such as he had not seen in them before.

"Yes," resumed she, as though following out her own thoughts, "it is your new creations, your ennobled banker, your starred and cordoned agitator of the Bourse, who now defends his order, and stands up for the divine right of misrule! The truly noble have other sentiments!"

"There's nothing surprises me so much," said Repton, at last, "as to hear these sentiments from one who has lived surrounded by all the blandishments of a condition that owes its existence to an aristocracy, and never could have arisen without one—who has lived that delightful life of refined leisure and elevating enjoyment, such as forms the atmosphere of only one class throughout the whole world. How would you bear to exchange this for the chaotic struggle that you point at?"

"As for me, sir, I only saw the procession from the window. I may, perhaps, walk in it when I descend to the street; but really," added she, laughing, "this is wandering very far out of the record. I had promised myself to captivate Mr. Repton, and here I am, striving to array every feeling of his heart and every prejudice of his mind against me."

"It is something like five-and-fifty years since I last heard such sentiments as you have just uttered," said Repton, gravely. "I was young and ardent—full of that hopefulness in mankind which is, after all, the life-blood of Republicanism—and here I am now, an old, time-hardened lawyer, with very little faith in any one. How do you suppose that such opinions can chime in with all I have witnessed in the interval?"

"Come over to Paris, sir," was her reply.

"And I would ask nothing better," rejoined he. "Did I ever tell you of what Harry Parsons said to Macnatty when he purposed visiting France, after the peace of '15? 'Now is the time to see the French capital,' said Mac. 'I'll put a guinea in one pocket and a shirt in the other, and start to-morrow.'—'Ay, sir,' said Parsons, 'and never change either till you come back again!'"

Once back in his accustomed field, the old lawyer went along recounting story after story, every name seeming to suggest its own anecdote. Nor was Kate, now, an ungenerous listener; on the contrary, she relished his stores of wit and repartee. Thus they, too, went on their journey!

The third carriage contained Madame Hortense, Lady Dorothea's French maid; Mrs. Runt, an inferior dignitary of the toilet; and Mark Peddar, Mr. Martin's "Gentleman"—a party which, we are forced to own, seemed to combine more elements of sociality than were gathered together in the vehicles that preceded them. To *their* share there were no regrets for leaving home—no sorrow at quitting a spot endeared to them by long association. The sentiment was one of unalloyed satisfaction. They were escaping from the gloom of a long exile, and about to issue forth into that world which they longed for as eagerly as their betters. And why should they not? Are not all its pleasures, all its associations, more essentially adapted to such natures; and has solitude one single compensation for all its depression to such as these?

"Our noble selves," said Mr. Peddar, filling the ladies' glasses, and then his own, for a very appetising luncheon was there spread out before them, and four bottles of long-necked gracefulness rose from amidst the crystal ruins of a well-filled ice-pail. "Mam'selle, it is your favourite tipple, and deliciously cool."

"Perfection," replied mademoiselle, with a foreign accent, for she had been long in England, "and I never enjoyed it more. Au revoir," added she, waving her hand towards the tall towers of Cro' Martin, just visible above the trees—"au revoir!"

"Just so—till I see you again," said Mrs. Runt; "and I'm sure I'll take good care that day won't come soon. It seems like a terrible nightmare when I think of the eight long years I passed there."

"Et moi, twelve! Miladi engage me, so to say, provisoirement, to come to Ireland, but with a promise of travel abroad; that we live in Paris, Rome, Naples—que sais-je? I accept—I arrive—et me voici!" And mademoiselle threw back her veil, the better to direct attention to the ravages time and exile had made upon her charms.

"Hard lines, ma'am," said Peddar, whose sympathy must not be accused of an "équivoque," "and here am I, that left the best single-handed situation in all England, Sir Augustus Hawleigh's, a young fellow just of age, and that never knew what money was, to come down here at a salary positively little better than a country curate's, and live the life of—of—what shall I say?——"

"No—the leg, if you please, Mr. Peddar; no more wine. Well, just one glass, to drink a hearty farewell to the old house."

"I'm sure I wish Mary joy of her residence there," said Peddar, adjusting his cravat; she is a devilish fine girl, and might do better, though."

"She has no ambitions—no what you call them?—no aspirations for 'le grand monde;' so perhaps she has reason to stay where she is."

"But with a young fellow of ton and fashion, mam'selle—a fellow who has seen life—to guide and bring her out, trust me there are excellent capabilities in that girl." And as Mr. Peddar enunciated the sentiment, his hands ran carelessly through his hair, and performed a kind of impromptu toilet.

"She do dress herself bien mal."

"Disgracefully so," chimed in Mrs. Runt. "I believe, when ever she bought a gown, her first thought was what it should turn into when she'd done with it."

"I thought that la Henderson might have taught her something," said Peddar affectedly.

"Au contraire—she like to make the contrast more strong; she always seek to make say—'Regardez, mademoiselle, see what a tournure is there!'"

"Do you think her handsome, Mr. Peddar?" asked Mrs. Runt.

"Handsome, yes; but not *my* style—not one of what *I* call *my* women; too much of this kind of thing, eh?" And he drew his head back, and threw into his features an expression of exaggerated scorn.

"Just so. Downright impudent, I'd call it."

"Not even that," said Mr. Peddar, pondering; "haughty, rather—a kind of don't-think-to-come-it-on-me style of look, eh?"

"Not at all amiable—point de cela," exclaimed mam'selle; "but still, I will say, très bon genre. You see at a glance that she has seen la bonne société."

"Which, after all, is the same all the world over," said Peddar, dogmatically. "At Vienna we just saw the same people we used to have with us in London; at Rome, the same; so, too, at Naples. I assure you that the last time I dined at Dolgorouki's, I proposed going in the evening to the Haymarket. I quite forgot we were on the Neva. And when Prince Gladuatoffski's gentleman said, 'Where shall I set you down?' I answered, carelessly, 'At my chambers in the Albany, or anywhere your Highness likes near that.'. Such is life!" exclaimed he, draining the last of the champagne into his glass.

"The place will be pretty dull without us, I fancy," said Mrs. Runt, looking out at the distant landscape.

"That horrid old Mother Broon won't say so," said Peddar, laughing. "By Jove! if it was only to escape that detestable hag, it's worth while getting away."

"I offer her my hand when I descend the steps, but she refuse 'froidement,' and say, 'I wish you as much pleasure as you leave behind you.' Pas mal for such a 'créature.'"

"I didn't even notice her," said Mrs. Runt.

"Ma foi, I was good with all the world; I was in such joy—such spirits—that I forgave all and everything. I felt 'nous sommes en route,' and Paris—dear Paris—before us."

"My own sentiments to a T," said Mr. Peddar. "Let me live on the Boulevards, have my cab, my stall at the Opera, two Naps. per diem for my dinner, and I'd not accept Mary Martin's hand if she owned Cro' Martin, and obliged me to live in it."

The speech was fully and warmly acknowledged, other subjects were started, and so they travelled the same road as their betters, and perhaps with lighter hearts.

CHAPTER XXV.

A COUNTRY AUCTION.

With feelings akin to those with which the populace of a revolted city invade the once sacred edifice of the deposed prince, the whole town and neighbourhood of Oughterard now poured into the demesne of Cro' Martin, wandered through the grounds, explored the gardens, and filled the house. An immense advertisement in the local papers had announced a general sale of horses and carriages, farming stock, and agricultural implements; cattle of choice breeding, sheep of fabulous facilities for fat, and cows of every imaginable productiveness, were there, with draft-horses, like dwarf elephants, and bulls that would have puzzled a Matador.

The haughty state in which the Martins habitually lived, the wide distance by which they separated themselves from the neighbourhood around, had imparted to Cro' Martin a kind of dreamy splendour in the country, exalting even its well-merited claims to admiration. Some had seen the grounds, a few had by rare accident visited the gardens, but the house and the stables were still unexplored territories, of whose magnificence each spoke without a fear of contradiction.

Country neighbourhoods are rarely rich in events, and of these, few can rival a great auction. It is not alone in the interests of barter and gain thus suggested, but in the thousand new channels for thought thus suddenly opened—the altered fortunes of him whose effects have come to the hammer; his death, or his banishment—both so much alike. The visitor wanders amidst objects which have occupied years in collection: some, the results of considerable research and difficulty; some, the long-coveted acquisitions of half a lifetime; and some—we have known such—the fond gifts of friendship. There they are now side by side in the catalogue, their private histories no more suspected than those of them who lie grass-covered in the churchyard. You admire that highly-bred hunter in all the beauty of his symmetry and his strength, but you never think of the "little Shelty" in the next stable with shaggy mane and flowing tail; and yet it was on *him* the young heir used to ride; *he* was the cherished animal of all the stud, led in beside the breakfast-table to be caressed and petted, fed with sugar from fair fingers, and patted by hands a Prince might have knelt to kiss! His rider now sleeps beneath the marble slab in the old aisle, and they who once brightened in smiles at the sound of his tiny trot would burst into tears did they behold that pony!

So, amidst the triumphs of colour and design that grace the walls, you have no eyes for a little sketch in water-colour—a mill, a shealing beside a glassy brook, a few trees, and a moss-clad rock; and yet that little drawing reveals a sad story. It is all that remains of her who went abroad to die. You throw yourself in listless lassitude upon a couch: it was the work of one who beguiled over it the last hours of a broken heart! You turn your steps to the conservatory, but never notice the little flower-garden, whose narrow walks, designed for tiny feet, need not the little spade to tell of the child-gardener who tilled it.

Ay, this selling-off is a sad process! It bespeaks the disruption of a home; the scattering of those who once sat around the same hearth, with all the dear familiar things about them!

It was a bright spring morning—one of those breezy, cloud-flitting days, with flashes of gay sunlight alternating with broad shadows, and giving in the tamest landscape every effect the painter's art could summon—that a long procession, consisting of all imaginable vehicles, with many on horseback intermixed, wound their way beneath the grand entrance and through the park of Cro' Martin. Such an opportunity of gratifying long pent-up curiosity had never before offered; since, even when death itself visited the mansion, the habits of exclusion were not relaxed, but the Martins went to their graves in the solemn state of their households alone, and were buried in a little chapel within the grounds, the faint tolling of the bell alone announcing to the world without that one of a proud house had departed.

The pace of the carriages was slow as they moved along, their occupants preferring to linger in a scene from which they had been hitherto excluded, struck by the unexpected beauty of the spot, and wondering at all the devices by which it was adorned. A few—a very few—had seen the place in boyhood, and were puzzling themselves to recal this and that memory; but all agreed in pronouncing that the demesne was far finer, the timber better grown, and the fields more highly cultivated than anything they had ever before seen.

"I call this the finest place in Ireland, Dan!" said Captain Bodkin, as he rode beside Nelligan's car, halting every now and then to look around him. "There's everything can make a demesne beautiful—wood, water, and mountain!"

"And, better than all, a fine system of farming," broke in Nelligan; "that's the best field of 'swedes' I ever beheld!"

"And to think that a man would leave this to go live abroad in a dirty town in France!" exclaimed Mrs. Clinch, from the opposite side of the car. "That's perverseness indeed!"

"Them there is all Swiss cows!" said Mr. Clinch, in an humble tone.

"Not one of them, Clinch! they're Alderneys. The Swiss farm, as they call it, is all on the other side, with the ornamented cottage."

"Dear! dear! there was no end to their waste and extravagance!" muttered Mrs. Nelligan.

"Wait till you see the house, ma'am, and you'll say so, indeed," said the captain.

"I don't think we're likely!" observed Nelligan, drily.

"Why so?"

"Just that Scanlan told Father Mather the auction would be held in the stables, for as there was none of the furniture to be sold the house wouldn't be opened."

"That's a great disappointment!" exclaimed Bodkin. A sentiment fully concurred in by the ladies, who both declared that they'd never have come so far only to look at pigs and "short horns."

"Maybe we'll get a peep at the gardens," said Bodkin, endeavouring to console them.

"And the sow!" broke in Peter Hayes, who had joined the party some time before. "They tell me she's a beauty. She's Lord Somebody's breed, and beats the world for fat!"

"Here's Scanlan, now, and he'll tell us everything," said Bodkin. But the sporting attorney, mounted on a splendid little horse, in top condition, passed them at speed, the few words he uttered being lost as he dashed by.

"What was it he said?" cried Bodkin.

"I didn't catch the words," replied Nelligan; "and I suppose it was no great loss."

"He's an impudent upstart!" exclaimed Mrs. Clinch.

"I think he said something about a breakfast," meekly interposed Mr. Clinch.

"And of course he said nothing of the kind," retorted his spouse. "You never happened to be right in your life!"

"Faix! I made sure of mine before I started," said old Hayes. "I ate a cowld goose!"

"Well, to be sure, they couldn't be expected to entertain all that's coming!" said Mrs. Nelligan, who now began a mental calculation of the numbers on the road.

"There will be a thousand people here to-day," said Bodkin.

"Five times that," said Nelligan. "I know it by the number of small bills that I gave cash for the last week. There's not a farmer in the county doesn't expect to bring back with him a prize beast of one kind or other."

"I'll buy that sow if she goes 'reasonable,'" said Peter Hayes, whose whole thoughts seemed centered on the animal in question.

"What do they mean to do when they sell off the stock?" asked the captain.

"I hear that the place will be let," said Nelligan, in a half whisper, "if they can find a tenant for it. Henderson told Father Maher, that come what might, her ladyship would never come back here."

"Faix! the only one of them worth a groat was Miss Mary, and I suppose they didn't leave her the means to do much, now."

"'Tis she must have the heavy heart to-day," sighed Mrs. Nelligan.

"And it is only fair and reasonable she should have her share of troubles, like the rest of us," replied Mrs. Clinch. "When Clinch was removed from Macroon we had to sell off every stick and stone we had; and as the neighbours knew we must go, we didn't get five shillings in the pound by the sale."

"That's mighty grand—that is really a fine place!" exclaimed Bodkin, as by a sudden turn of the road they came directly in front of the house; and the whole party sat in silent admiration of the magnificent edifice before them.

"It is a Royal Palace—no less," said Nelligan, at last; "and that's exactly what no country gentleman wants. Sure we know well there's no fortune equal to such a residence. To keep up that house, as it ought to be, a man should have thirty thousand a year."

"Give me fifteen, Dan, and you'll see if I don't make it comfortable," said Bodkin.

"What's this barrier here—can't we go any further?" exclaimed Nelligan, as he perceived a strong paling across the avenue.

"We're to go round by the stables, it seems," said Bodkin; "the Hall entrance is not to be invaded by such vulgar visitors. This is our road, here."

"Well, if I ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Clinch, whose feelings really overpowered utterance.

"I don't see any great hardship in this after all, ma'am," said Nelligan, "for we know if the family were at home we couldn't even be here. Drive on, Tim."

A short circuit through a very thickly-wooded tract brought them at length to a large and massive gateway, over which the Martins' arms were sculptured in stone; passing through which they entered a great court-yard, three sides of which were occupied by stables, the fourth presenting a range of coach-houses filled with carriages of every description.

A large tent was erected in the midst of the court for the convenience of the sale, in front of which were pens for the cattle, and a space railed off, wherein the horses were to be viewed and examined.

"This is all mighty well arranged," said Bodkin, as he gave his horse to a groom, who, in the undress livery of Cro' Martin, came respectfully to his aid as he got down.

"The sale will begin in about an hour, sir," said the man, in answer to a question. "Mr. Scanlan is now in the house with Mr. Gibbs, the auctioneer."

Vast crowds of people of every class, from the small Squire to the Oughterard shopkeeper and country farmer, now came pouring in, all eager in their curiosity, but somehow all subdued into a kind of reverence for a spot from which they had been so rigidly excluded, and the very aspect of which so far transcended expectations. Everything, indeed, was an object of wonderment. The ornamental tanks for watering the horses, supplied by beautifully-designed fountains; the sculptured medallions along the walls, emblematising the chase, or the road; the bright mahogany partitions of the stalls, even to the little channels, lined with shining copper, all demanded notice and comment; and many were the wise reflections uttered with regard to those who thus squandered away their wealth. The sight of the cattle, however, which occupied this luxurious abode, went far to disarm this criticism, since certainly none ever seemed more worthy of the state and splendour that surrounded them. For these the admiration was hearty and sincere, and the farmers went along the stalls amazed and wonderstruck at the size and symmetry of the noble animals that filled them.

"To be sold at Tattersall's, sir, on the 4th of next month," said a groom, whose English accent imparted an almost sneer to the supposition that such a stud should meet purchasers in Ireland. "They're all advertised in *Bell's Life*."

"What becomes of the hounds?" asked Bodkin.

"Lord Cromore takes them, sir; they're to hunt in Dorsetshire."

"And the sow?" asked old Hayes, with eagerness; "she isn't to go to England, is she?"

"Can't say, sir. We don't look arter no sows here," replied the fellow, as he turned away in evident disgust at his questioner.

A certain stir and bustle in the court without gave token that the sale was about to begin, and Scanlan's voice, in its most authoritative tone, was heard issuing orders and directions on all sides, while servants went hither and thither distributing catalogues, and securing accommodation for the visitors with a degree of deference and attention most remarkable.

"I suppose we're to pass the day in the stables, or the cow-houses, ma'am?" said Mrs. Clinch, as with a look of indignation she gazed at the range of seats now being hastily occupied by a miscellaneous company.

"If we could only get into the gardens," said Mrs. Nelligan, timidly. "I'm sure if I saw Barnes he'd let us in." And she slipped rapidly from her friends arm, and hastily crossing the court, went in search of her only acquaintance in the household. "Did you see Barnes? Where could I find Barnes? asked she of almost every one she met. And following the complicated directions she received, she wandered onward, through a kitchen-garden, and into a small nursery beyond it. Bewildered as she receded beyond the sounds of the multitude, she turned into a little path which, traversing a shrubbery, opened upon a beautifully-cultivated "parterre," whose close-shaven sward and flowery beds flanked a long range of windows opening to the ground, and which, to her no small horror, she perceived to form one wing of the mansion. While in her distraction to think what course was best to take, she saw a groom standing at the head of a small pony, harnessed to a diminutive carriage, and hastily approached him. Before, however, she had attained within speaking distance, the man motioned to her, by a gesture, to retire. Her embarrassment gave her, if not courage, something of resolution, and she advanced.

"Go back!" cried he, in a smothered voice; "there's no one admitted here."

"But I've lost my way. I was looking for Barnes——"

"He's not here. Go back, I say," reiterated the man, in the same stealthy voice.

But poor Mrs. Nelligan came on, confusion rendering her indifferent to all reproof, and in spite of gestures and admonitions to retire, steadily advanced towards the door. As she passed one of the open windows, her glance caught something within; she stopped suddenly, and, in seeming shame at her intrusion, turned to go back. A muttered malediction from the servant increased her terror, and she uttered a faint cry. In an instant, the object at which she had been gazing arose, and Mary Martin, her face traced with recent tears, started up and approached her. Mrs. Nelligan felt a sense of sickly faintness come over her, and had to grasp the window for support.

"Oh, my dear young lady!" she muttered, "I didn't mean to do this—I strayed here by accident—I didn't know where I was going——"

"My dear Mrs. Nelligan, there is no need of these excuses," said Mary, taking her hand cordially, and leading her to a seat. "It is a great pleasure to me to see a friendly face, and I am grateful for the chance that sent you here."

Mrs. Nelligan, once relieved of her first embarrassment, poured forth with volubility the explanation of her presence; and Mary heard her to the end with patient politeness.

"And you were going away somewhere," resumed she, "when I stopped you. I see your pony-chaise there at the door waiting for you, and you're off to the quarries, or Kilkieran, I'll be bound; or maybe it's only going away you are, to be out of this for a day or two. God knows, I don't wonder at it! It is a trying scene for you, and a great shock to your feelings, to see the place dismantled, and everything sold off!"

"It is sad enough," said Mary, smiling through her tears.

"Not to say that you're left here all alone, just as if you weren't one of the family at all; that's what I think most of. And where were you going, dear?"

"I was going to pass a few days at the Cottage—the Swiss Cottage. Catty Broon, my old nurse, has gone over there to get it in readiness for me, and I shall probably stay there till all this confusion be over."

"To be sure, dear. What's more natural than that you'd like to spare your feelings, seeing all carried away just as if it was bankrupts you were. Indeed, Dan said to me the things wouldn't bring more than at a sheriff's sale, because of the hurry you were in to sell them off."

"My uncles orders were positive on that subject," said Mary calmly.

"Yes, dear, of course he knows best," said she, with a shake of the head not exactly corroborating her own speech. "And how are you to live here by yourself, dear?" resumed she; "sure you'll die of the loneliness!"

"I don't think so: I shall have plenty to occupy me—more, indeed, than I shall be equal to."

"Ay, in the daytime; but the long evenings—think of the long evenings, dear! God knows, I find them very often dreary enough, even though I have a home and Dan."

"I'm not afraid of the long evenings, my dear Mrs. Nelligan. It is the only time I can spare for reading; they will be my hours of recreation and amusement."

"Well, well, I hope so, with all my heart," said she, doubtingly. "You know yourself best, and maybe you'd be happier that way, than if you had somebody to talk to and keep you company."

"I didn't say that," said Mary, smiling. "I never implied that a visit from some kind friend—Mrs. Nelligan, for instance—would not be a very pleasant event in my solitude."

"To come and see you—to come to Cro' Martin!" exclaimed Mrs. Nelligan, as though trying to reconcile her mind to the bare possibility of such a circumstance.

"If you would not think it too far, or too much trouble——"

"Oh dear, oh dear, but it's too much honour it would be; and Dan—no matter what he'd say to the contrary—would feel it so in his own heart. Sure I know well how he felt about Joe being asked here to dinner; and he'd never have taken a part against your uncle in the election, if it wasn't that he thought Joe was slighted some way——"

"But nothing of the kind ever occurred. Mr. Joseph Nelligan met from us all the respect that his character and his talents entitled him to."

"Don't get warm about it, or I'll forget everything that's in my head!" exclaimed Mrs. Nelligan, in terror at the eagerness of Mary's manner. "Maybe it was Joe's fault—maybe it was young Massingbred's—maybe it was——"

"But what was it?" cried Mary—"what was alleged? what was laid to our charge?"

"There, now, I don't remember anything; you frightened me so, that it's gone clean out of my mind."

"My dear friend," said Mary, caressingly, "I never meant to alarm you, and let us talk of something else. You say that you'll come to see me sometimes——is it a promise?"

"Indeed it is, my dear, whenever Dan give sme the car and horse——"

"But I'll drive in for you, and bring you safely back again. You've only to say when you'll spend the day with me—and there's so much to show you here that you'd like to see. The gardens are really handsome, and the hothouses. And Catty will show us her dairy, and I am very proud of my lambs."

"It is all like a dream to me—just like a dream," said Mrs. Nelligan, closing her eyes, and folding her arms, "to think that I'm sitting here, at Cro' Martin, talking to Miss Mary just as if I were her equal."

"My dear, dear friend, it shall be a reality whenever you like to make it so; and you'll tell me all the news of Oughterard—all about every one there, for I know them, at least by name, and will be charmed to hear about them."

"Mr. Scanlan wants an answer, miss, immediately," said a servant, presenting Mary with a few lines written in pencil."

She opened the paper and read the following: "Nelligan offers seventy pounds for the two black horses. Is he to have them? Sir Peter shows an incipient spavin on the off leg, and I think he'd be well sold."

"Tell Mr. Scanlan I'll send him an answer by-and-by," said she, dismissing the servant. Then ringing the bell, she whispered a few words to the man who answered it. "I have just sent a message to tell Mr. Nelligan I wish to speak to him," said she, resuming her place on the sofa. "It is a mere business matter," added she, seeing that Mrs. Nelligan waited for some explanation. "And now, when have you heard from your son? Is he learning to spare himself anything of those great efforts he imposes upon his faculties?"

This was to touch the most sensitive chord in all her heart, and so she burst forth into a description of Joseph's daily life of toil and study; his labours, his self-denial, his solitary, joyless existence, all calling up in turn her praises and her sympathy.

"And I," cried she, "am always saying, what is it all for?—what's the use of it?—who is to be the better of it? Sure there's only himself to get whatever his father leaves behind him; and a pretty penny it is! Not that *you* would think so; but for the like of *us*, and in *our* station, it's a snug fortune. He'll have upwards of two thousand a year, so that there's no need to be slaving like a Turk."

"Your son's ambitions take, very probably, a higher range than mere money-making," said Mary. "He has a good right to suppose that his abilities may win him the highest of rewards! But here's Mr. Nelligan." And she advanced courteously to meet him at the door.

Flushed and heated by the scene he had just quitted, and evidently embarrassed by the situation in which he stood, Nelligan bowed repeatedly in reply to Miss Martin's greeting, starting with amazement as he perceived Mrs. Nelligan, who maintained an air of unbroken dignity on the sofa.

"Well you may stare, Dan!" said she. "I'm sure you never expected to see me here!"

"It was a most agreeable surprise for *me*, at least," said Mary, motioning to a seat; then, turning to Nelligan, added, "This little note was the occasion of my asking you to step over here. Will you please to read it?"

"How handsome—how candid, Miss Martin!" said Nelligan, as he restored it, after perusing it. "Ah, my dear young lady, why wouldn't your family deal always with us in this fashion and in everything! I beg your forgiveness but I forgot myself. I'll stick to my offer, Miss—I wouldn't take fifty pounds for my bargain!"

"This, of course, is in confidence between us, sir," said Mary, as she tore up the note and threw the fragments on the ground.

"I wish I knew how to acknowledge this, Miss Martin. I wish I could show how sensible one in *my* station could be of generosity from one in *yours*."

"You remind me very opportunely that I have a favour to ask, Mr. Nelligan. It is this: My kind friend here, Mrs. Nelligan, has just promised to take pity on my solitude, and occasionally to come and see me. Will you kindly strengthen her in this benevolent intention, and aid her to turn her steps very often towards Cro' Martin?"

Nelligan's face grew deeply red, and an expression of the greatest embarrassment settled down on his features, and it was with much difficulty, and in a voice labouring for utterance, that he said:

"I don't see how this can be. Your friends would not approve—your family, I mean, Miss Martin—would, very naturally, resent the thought of such an intimacy! They look upon *me* as an enemy—an open and declared enemy—and so I am, where politics is concerned—but——" He hesitated, and after a struggle went on: "No matter, it *is* war between us, and must be till one crushes the other. What I mean is this, young lady, that to encourage such acquaintanceship as you speak of would look like an undue condescension on *your* part, or something even worse on *ours*."

"I'll not listen to such subtleties!" cried Mary, hastily. "Neither you nor I, my dear Mrs. Nelligan, care for party triumphs or defeats. There are a thousand themes wherein our hearts can feel alike—and these we'll discuss together. We're of the same country—have passed our lives amidst the same scenes, the same events, and the same people—and it will be hard if we cannot as easily discover topics for mutual esteem, as subjects of difference and disagreement."

"But will it not be hinted, Miss Martin, that we took the opportunity of your solitude here to impose an acquaintanceship which had been impossible under other circumstances?"

"If you are too proud, sir, to know me—lest an ungenerous sneer should damage your self-esteem——"

"Indeed, indeed we're not," broke in Mrs. Nelligan. "You don't know Dan at all. He wouldn't exchange the honour of sitting there, opposite you, to be High Sheriff."

A servant fortunately presented himself at this awkward moment with a whispered message for Miss Martin; to which she replied aloud:

"Of course. Tell Mr. Scanlan it is my wish—*my* orders," added she, more firmly. "The house is open to any one who desires to see it. And now, before I go, Mr. Nelligan, tell me that I have convinced you—tell me that my reasons have prevailed, and that you acknowledge we ought to be friends. And, as she said the last words, she held out her hand to him with a grace so perfect, and an air of such winning fascination, that old Nelligan could only stammer out:

"It shall be how you please. I never bargained to dispute against such odds as this. We are, indeed, your friends; dispose of us how you like." And, so saying, he conducted her to the little carriage, and, assisting her to her seat, took his leave with all the respect he could have shown a Queen.

"It's more than a prejudice, after all," muttered he, as he looked after her as she drove away. "There's something deeper and stronger in it than that, or else a few words, spoken by a young girl, couldn't so suddenly rout all the sentiments of a lifetime! Ay, ay," added he, still to himself, "we may pull them down—we may humble them—but we'll never fill their places!"

"And we're to see the house, it seems!" exclaimed Mrs. Nelligan, gathering her shawl around her.

"I don't care to look at it till she herself is here!" said old Nelligan, taking his wife's arm, and leading her away across the lawn, and in the direction of the stables. There was that in his moody preoccupation which did not encourage her to venture on a word, and so, she went along at his side in silence.

"You're to have the black horses, Mr. Nelligan," said Scanlan, overtaking him. Nelligan nodded. "You've got a cheap pair of nags, and as good as gold," continued he. A dry half smile was all the reply. "Mr. Martin bred them himself," Scanlan went on, "and no price would have bought them three weeks ago; but everything is going for a song to-day! I don't know how I'll muster courage to tell them the results of the sale!"

"You'll have courage for more than that," said Nelligan. And, although only a chance shot, it fell into a magazine, for Scanlan grew crimson and then pale, and seemed ready to faint.

Nelligan stared with amazement at the effect his few words had produced, and then passed on, while the attorney muttered between his teeth: "Can he suspect me? Is it possible that I have betrayed myself?"

No, Maurice Scanlan. Be of good cheer; your secret is safe. No one has as much as the very barest suspicion that the petty-fogging practitioner aspires to the hand of Mary Martin; nor even in the darkest dreams of that house's downfal has such a humiliation obtruded itself anywhere!

CHAPTER XXVI.

OURS is a very practical age, and no matter how skilfully a man play the game of life, there is but one test of his ability—did he win? If this condition attend him, his actions meet charitable construction—his doings are all favourably regarded; and while his capacity is extolled, even his short-comings are extenuated. We dread an unlucky man! There is a kind of contagion in calamity, and we shun him as though he were plague-stricken! But with what flatteries we greet the successful one! That he reached the goal is the sure guarantee of his merits, and woe to him who would canvass the rectitude of his progress! Defeat is such a leveller! Genius and dulness, courage and pusillanimity, high-hearted hope and wasting energy, are all confounded together by failure, and the world would only smile at any effort to discriminate between them. Perhaps in the main the system works well—perhaps mankind, incapable of judging motives—too impatient to investigate causes—is wise in adopting a short cut for its decisions. Certain it is, the rule is absolute that proclaims Success to be Desert!

Lady Dorothea was now about to experience this severe lesson, and not the less heavily that she never anticipated it. After a wearisome journey the Martins arrived in Dublin. The apartments secured to them, by a previous letter, at Bilton's, were all in readiness for their reception. The "Saunders" of the day duly chronicled their arrival; but there the great event seemed to terminate. No message from her ladyship's noble kinsman greeted their coming—no kind note of welcome—not even a visit from Mr. Lawrence Belcour, the aide-de-camp in waiting. The greatest of all moralists warns us against putting confidence in Princes; and how doubly truthful is the adage when extended to Viceroys! Small as was the borough of Oughterard, and insignificant as seemed the fact who should be its representative, the result of the election was made a great matter at the "Castle." His excellency was told that the Martins had mismanaged everything—they had gone to work in the old Tory cut-and-thrust fashion of former days—conciliated no interest, won over no antagonism. They had acted "precisely as if there had been no Relief Bill"—we steal Colonel Massingbred's words—and they were beaten—beaten in their own town—in the person of one of their own family, and by a stranger! The Viceroy was vexed. They had misconstrued every word of his letter—a letter that, as he said, any child might have understood—and there was a vote lost to his party. It was in vain that the Chief Secretary assured his excellency, "Jack was a clever fellow, who'd put all to rights;" that with a little time and a little dexterity he'd be able to vote with the Ministry on every important division; the great fact remained unatoned for—his family, his own connexions, "had done nothing for him."

The first day in town dragged its length slowly over. Martin was fatigued, and did not go abroad, and no one came to visit him. To do him justice, he was patient under the neglect; to say more, he was grateful for it. It was so pleasant "to be let alone;" not even to be obliged to see Henderson, nor to be consulted about "Road Sessions" or "Police Reports," but to have one's day in total unbroken listlessness; to have simply to say, "We'll dine at seven," and "I'm out for every one." Far otherwise fared it in my "lady's chamber." All her plans had been based upon the attentions she was so certain of receiving, but of which, none, not a sign gave token. She passed the day in a state of almost feverish excitement, the more painful from her effort to conceal and control it. Repton dined with them. He came that day, "because, of course, he could not expect to catch them disengaged on any future occasion." Her ladyship was furious at the speech, but smiled concurrence to it, while Martin carelessly remarked, "From all that I see, we may enjoy the same pleasure very often." Never was the old lawyer so disagreeable when exerting himself to be the opposite. He had come stored with all the doings of the capital—its dinners and evening parties, its "mots," and its gossip. From the political rumours and the chit-chat of society, he went on to speak of the viceregal court and its festivities.

"If there be anything I detest," said her ladyship, at last, "it is the small circle of a very small metropolis. So long as you look at it carelessly, it is not so offensive; but when you stoop to consider and examine it with attention, it reminds you of the hideous spectacle of a glass of water as seen through a magnifier—you detect a miniature world of monsters and deformities, all warring and worrying each other." And with this flattering exposition of her opinion she arose speedily after dinner, and, followed by Miss Henderson, retired.

"I perceive that we had not the ear of the Court for our argument," said Repton, as he resumed his place after conducting her to the door. Martin sipped his wine in silence. I never expected she'd like Dublin. It only suits those who pass their lives in it; but I fancied, that what with Castle civilities——"

"There's the rub," broke in Martin, but in a voice subdued almost to a whisper. "They've taken no notice of us. For my own part, I'm heartily obliged to them; and if they'd condescend to feel offended with us, I'd only be more grateful; but my lady——"

" A long, low whistle from Repton implied that he had fully appreciated the " situation."

"Ah, I see it," cried he; and this explains the meaning of an article I read this morning in the *Evening Post*—the Government organ—wherein it is suggested that country gentlemen would be more efficient supporters of the Administration if they lent themselves heartily to comprehend the requirements of recent legislation, than by exacting heavy reprisals on their tenants in moments of defeat and disappointment."

"Well, it is rather hard," said Martin, with more of energy than he usually spoke in —"it *is* hard! They first hounded us on to contest the borough for them, and they now abuse us that we did not make a compromise with the opposite party. And as to measures of severity, you know well I never concurred in them—I never permitted them."

"But they are mistaken, nevertheless. There are writs in preparation, and executions about to issue over fourteen townlands. There will be a general clearance of the population at Kyle-a-Noe. You'll not know a face there when you go back, Martin!"

"Who can say that I'll ever go back?" said he, mournfully.

"Come, come, I trust you will. I hope to pass some pleasant days with you there ere I die," said Repton, cheeringly. "Indeed, until you are there again, I'll never go farther west than Athlone on my circuit. "I'd not like to look at the old place without you!"

Martin nodded as he raised his glass, as if to thank him, and then dropped his head mournfully, and sat without speaking.

"Poor dear Mary!" said he, at last, with a heavy sigh. "Our desertion of her is too bad! It's not keeping the pledge I made to Barry!"

"Well, well, there's nothing easier than the remedy. A week or so will see you settled in some city abroad—Paris, or Brussels, perhaps. Let her join you; I'll be her escort. Egad! I'd like the excuse for the excursion," replied Repton, gaily.

"Ay, Repton," said the other, pursuing his own thoughts and not heeding the interruption, "and *you* know what a brother he was. By Jove!" cried he, aloud, "were Barry just to see what we've done—how we've treated the place—the people—his daughter!—were he only to know how I've kept my word with him—— Look, Repton," added he, grasping the other's arm as he spoke, "there's not as generous a fellow breathing as Barry—this world has not his equal for an act of noble self-devotion and sacrifice. His life!—he'd not think twice of it if I asked him to give it for me; but if he felt—if he could just awaken to the conviction that he was unfairly dealt with—that when believing he was sacrificing to affection and brotherly love he was made a dupe and a fool of——"

"Be cautious, Martin; speak lower—remember where you are," said Repton, guardedly.

"I tell you this," resumed the other, in a tone less loud but not less forcible, "the very warmth of his nature—that same noble, generous source that feeds every impulse of his life—would supply the force of a torrent to his passion; he'd be a tiger if you aroused him!"

"Don't you perceive, my dear friend," said Repton, calmly, "how you are exaggerating everything—not alone *your own* culpability, but his resentment! Grant that you ought not to have left Mary behind you—I'm sure I said everything I could against it—what more easy than to repair the wrong?"

"No, no, Repton, you're quite mistaken. Take my word for it, you don't know that girl. She has taught herself to believe that her place is there—that it is her duty to live amongst the people. She may exaggerate to her own mind the good she does—she may fancy a thousand things as to the benefit she bestows—but she cannot, by any self-deception, over-estimate the results upon her own heart, which she has educated to feel as only they do who live amongst the poor! To take her away from this would be a cruel sacrifice, and for what?—a world she wouldn't care for, couldn't comprehend."

"Then what was to have been done?"

"I'll tell you, Repton; if it was *her* duty to stay there, it was doubly *ours* to have remained also. When she married," added he, after a pause—"when she had got a home of her own—then, of course, it would have been quite different! Heaven knows," said he, sighing, "we have little left to tie us to anything or anywhere; and as to myself, it is a matter of the most perfect indifference whether I drag out the year or two that may remain to me on the shores of Galway or beside the Adriatic!"

"I can't bear this," cried Repton, angrily. "If ever there was a man well treated by fortune you are he."

"I'm not complaining."

"Not complaining! but, hang it, sir, that is not enough! You should be overflowing with gratitude; your life ought to be active with benevolence; you should be up and doing, wherever ample means and handsome encouragement could assist merit or cheer despondency. I like your notion that you don't complain! Why, if you did, what should be done by those who really do travel the shady side of existence?—who are weighted with debt, bowed down with daily difficulties, crippled with that penury that eats into a man's nature till his very affections grow sordid, and his very dreams are tormented with his duns! Think of the poor fellows with ailing wives and sickly children, toiling daily, not to give them luxuries—not to supply them with what may alleviate weariness or distract suffering, but bare sustenance—coarse diet and coarser dress! Ah, my dear Martin, that Romanist plan of fasting one day in the week wouldn't be a bad institution were we to introduce it into our social code. If you and I could have, every now and then, our feelings of privation, just to teach us what others experience all the week through, we'd have, if not more sympathy with narrow fortune, at least more thankfulness for its opposite."

"Her ladyship begs you will read this note, sir," said a servant, presenting an open letter to Martin. He took it, and having perused it, handed it to Repton, who slowly read the following lines:—

"'The Lodge, Tuesday.

"'MADAM,—I have his Excellency's commands to inquire on what day it will suit Mr. Martin and your ladyship to favour him with your company at dinner? His Excellency would himself say Saturday, but any intermediate day more convenient to yourself will be equally agreeable to him.

"'I have the honour to remain, madam,
"'With every consideration, yours,
"'LAWRENCE BELCOUR, A.D.C.'

"'With every consideration!'," repeated Repton. "Confound the puppy, and his Frenchified phraseology. Why is he not, as he ought to be, your obedient servant?"

"It is a somewhat cold and formal invitation," said Martin, slowly. "I'll just see what she thinks of it;" and he arose and left the room. His absence was fully of twenty minutes' duration, and when he did return his face betokened agitation.

"Here's more of it, Repton," said he, filling and drinking off his glass. "It's all *my* fault, it seems. I ought to have gone out to the 'Lodge' this morning, or called on somebody, or done something; in fact, I have been remiss, neglectful, deficient in proper respect——"

"So that you decline the invitation?" broke in Repton.

"Not a bit of it; we're to accept it, man. That's what I cannot comprehend. We are offended, almost outraged, but still we're to submit. Ah, Repton, I'll be really rejoiced when we leave this—get away from all these petty annoyances and small intriguings, and live amongst strangers!"

"Most patriotically spoken; but I'm not surprised at what you say. Have you made any resolve as to whither you mean to go?"

"No; we have so many plans, that the chances are we take none of them. I'm told—I know nothing of it myself—but I'm told that we shall easily find—and in any part of the Continent—the few requirements we want; which are, an admirable climate, great cheapness, and excellent society."

There was a slight twinkle in Martin's eye as he spoke, as if he were in reality relishing the absurdity of these expectations.

"Was it Kate Henderson who encouraged you to credit this flattering picture?"

"No; these are my lady's own experiencies, derived from a residence there 'when George the Third was King.' As to

Kate, the girl is by no means deficient in common sense; she has the frivolity of a Frenchwoman, and that light, superficial tone foreign education imparts; but take my word for it, Repton, she has very fine faculties!"

"I will take your word for it, Martin. I think you do her no more than justice," said the old lawyer, sententiously.

"And I'll tell you another quality she possesses," said Martin, in a lower and more cautious tone, as though dreading to be overheard—"she understands my lady to perfection—when to yield, and when to oppose her. The girl has an instinct about it, and does it admirably; and there was poor dear Mary, with all her abilities, and she never could succeed in this! How strange, for nobody would think of comparing the two girls!"

"Nobody!" drily re-echoed Repton.

"I mean, of course, that nobody who knew the world could, for in all the glitter and show off of fashionable acquirement poor Molly is the inferior."

Repton looked steadfastly at him for several seconds; he seemed as if deliberating within himself whether or not he'd undeceive him at once, or suffer him to dwell on an illusion so pleasant to believe. The latter feeling prevailed, and he merely nodded slowly, and passed the decanter across the table.

"Molly," continued Martin, with all the fluency of a weak man when he fancies he has got the better of an argument—"Molly is her father all over. The same resolution—the same warmth of heart—and that readiness at an expedient which never failed poor Barry! What a clever fellow he was! If he *had* a fault, it was just being too clever."

"Too speculative—too sanguine," interposed Repton.

"That, if you like to call it so; the weakness of genius."

Repton gave a long sigh, and crossing his arms, fell into a fit of musing, and so they both sat for a considerable time.

"Harry is coming home, you said?" broke in Repton at last.

"Yes; he is tired of India—tired of soldiering, I believe. If he can't manage an exchange into some regiment at home, I think he'll sell out."

"By Jove!" said the old lawyer, speaking to himself, but still aloud, "the world has taken a strange turn of late. The men that used to have dash and energy have become loungers and idlers, and the energy—the real energy of the nation—has centered in the women—the women and the priests! It's n not much mistaken, we shall see some rare specimens of enthusiasm ere long. Such elements as these will not slumber nor sleep!"

While Martin was pondering over this speech, a servant entered to say that Mr. Crow was without, and begged to know if he might pay his respects. "Ay, by all means. Tell him to come in," said Martin. And the words were scarcely uttered when the artist made his appearance, in full dinner costume, and with a certain unsteadiness in his gait, and a restless look in his eyes, that indicated his having indulged freely, without, however, having passed the barrier of sobriety.

"You heard of our arrival, then?" said Martin, after the other had paid his respects, and assumed a seat.

"Yes, sir. It was mentioned to-day at dinner, and so I resolved that, when I could manage to step away, I'd just drop in and ask how her ladyship and yourself were."

"Where did you dine, Crow?"

"At the Chief Secretary's, sir, in the Park," replied Crow, with a mixture of pride and bashfulness.

"Ah, indeed. Was your party a large one?"

"There were fourteen of us, sir, but I only knew three or four of the number."

"And who were they, Crow?" said Repton, whose curiosity on all such topics was extreme.

"Young Nelligan was one. Indeed, it was through him I was asked myself. Colonel Massingbred was good enough to come over and have a look at my Moses—a favour I humbly hope you'll do me, gentlemen, any spare morning, for it's a new conception altogether, and I make the light come out of the bulrushes, just as Caravaggio did with his Lazarus."

"Never mind Lazarus, Crow, but tell us of this dinner. Who were the others?"

"Well, sir, there was Nelligan and me—that's one; and Tom Magennis—two——"

"Our neighbour of Barnagheela?" exclaimed Martin, in amazement.

"The same, sir. I left him there at the port wine, and my word for it but they'll not get him away easily, though Father Rafferty will do his best——"

"And was the priest also of the party?"

"He was, sir; and sat at the colonel's left, and was treated with every honour and distinction."

"Eh, Martin, am I a true prophet?—answer me that. Has

Val Repton foretold the course of events we are entering upon, or has he not?"

"But this is a regular outrage—an open insult to us!" cried Martin. "Here is a leading member of the Government entertaining the very men who opposed and defeated us—actually caressing the very party which they enlisted us to crush!"

"This game is within every child's comprehension!" said Repton. "If *you*, and men of your stamp and fortune, could have secured them a parliamentary majority, they'd have preferred you. You'd be pleasanter to deal with, less exacting, more gentlemanly in fact; but, as you failed to do this—as it was plain and clear you had not the people with you—why, they've thrown you over without a scruple, and taken into their favour the men who can and will serve them. I don't mean to say that the bargain is a good one—nay, I believe the price of such aid will be very costly; but what do they care? It is one of the blessings of a representative government that Tories have to pay Whig debts, and Whigs are heirs to Tory defalcations."

"Were politics discussed at table?" asked Martin, half impatiently.

"All manner of subjects. We had law, and the assizes, and the grand jury lists, and who ought to be high sheriffs, and who not. And young Massingbred made a kind of a speech——"

"Was he there also?"

"That he was; and did the honours of the foot of the table, and made it the pleasantest place too! The way he introduced a toast to the independent and enlightened electors of Oughterard was as neat a thing as ever I heard."

"The devil take the whole batch of them!" cried Martin. "To think that I've spent nearly three thousand pounds for such a set of scoundrels is past endurance. I'll never set foot amongst them again; as long as I live I'll never enter that town."

"Father Neal's own words," cried Crow. "'We done with Martin for ever,' said he. 'This election was his Waterloo. He may abdicate now!'"

"And that sentiment was listened to by the Chief Secretary?" exclaimed Martin.

"If he wasn't deaf he couldn't help hearing it, for we all did; and when I ventured to observe that a country was never the better for losing the patrons of art, and the great families that could encourage a genius, young Massingbred said, 'Give up Moses, Mr. Crow—give up Moses, and paint Daniel O'Connell, and you'll never want admirers and supporters!' And they drowned me in a roar of laughter."

"I wish my lady could only hear all this," said Repton, in a whisper to Martin.

"Always provided that I were somewhere else!" answered Martin. "But to be serious, Repton, I'll hold no intercourse with men who treat us in this fashion. It is absurd to suppose that the Secretary could receive at his table this rabble—this herd of low, vulgar——"

"Eh—what!" broke in Crow, with an expression of such truly comic misery as made Repton shake with laughter.

"I didn't mean *you*, Crow—I never thought of including you in such company—but if these be Colonel Massingbred's guests, I'll swear that Godfrey Martin shall not be my Lord Reckington's!" And with this bold resolve, uttered in a voice and manner of very unusual firmness, Martin arose and left the room.

"On the whole, then, your party was a pleasant one?" said Repton, anxious to lead Crow into some further details of the late dinner.

"Well, indeed it was, and it was not," said the artist, hesitatingly. "It was like a picture with some fine bits in it—a dash of rich colour here and there—but no keeping!—no general effect! You understand? I myself took no share in the talk. I never understood it; but I could see that they who did were somehow at cross-purposes—all standing in adverse lights—if I may use the expression. Whenever the colonel himself, or one of the 'swells' of the company, came out with a fine sentiment about regenerated Ireland, happy and prosperous, and so forth, Magennis was sure to break in with some violent denunciation of the infernal miscreants, as he called the landlords, or the greatest curse of the land—the Law Church!"

"And how did Father Neal behave?"

"With great decorum—the very greatest. He moderated all Tom's violence, and repeatedly said that he accepted no participation in such illiberal opinions. 'We have grievances, it is true,' said he, 'but we live under a Government able and willing to redress them. It shall never be said of us that we were either impatient or intolerant.' 'With such support, no Government was ever weak!' said the colonel, and they took wine together."

"That was very pleasant to see!" said Repton.

"So it was, sir," rejoined Crow, innocently; "and I thought to myself, if there was only an end of all their squabbling and fighting, they'd have time to cultivate the arts and cherish men of genius—if they had them!" added he, after a pause.

"Father Neal, then, made a favourable impression, you'd say?" asked Repton, half carelessly.

"I'd say, very favourable—very favourable indeed. I remarked that he always spoke so freely, so liberally. Twice or thrice, too, he said, 'If the Papists do this, that, or t'other;' and when the colonel asked whether the Catholics of Ireland submitted implicitly to Rome in all things, he laughed heartily, and said, 'About as much as we do to the Cham of Tartary!'

"'I'd like to examine our friend there before the Committee,' whispered an old gentleman at the colonel's right hand.

"'It was the very thing was passing through my own mind at the minute,' said the colonel.

"'That's exactly the kind of thing we want,' said the old gentleman again—'a bold, straightforward denial—something that would tell admirably with the House!'

"'Present me to your friend Massingbred!' And then the Chief Secretary said, 'The Member for Strudeham—Mr. Crutchley—is very desirous of being known to you, Mr. Rafferty.' And there was great smiling, and bowing, and drinking wine together after that."

Martin now re-entered the room, and taking his place at the table, sat for some minutes in moody silence.

"Well," said Repton, "what does my lady think of your tidings?"

"She says she doesn't believe it!"

"Doesn't believe that these people dined with Massingbred—that Crow saw them—heard them—dined with them?"

"No, no—not that," said Martin, gently, and laying his hand familiarly on Crow's arm. "Don't mistake me, nor don't let Repton play the lawyer with us and pervert the evidence. Lady Dorothea can't believe that her distinguished relative, the Viceroy, would ever countenance this game; that—that—in fact, we're to dine there, Repton, and see for ourselves! Though," added he, after a brief pause, "what we are to see, or what we are to do when we've seen it, I wish anybody would tell me!"

"Then I'll be that man!" said Repton, with a mock solemnity, and imitating the tone and manner of a judge delivering sentence. "You'll go from this place to the Lodge, where you'll be fed 'to the neck,' feasted and flattered, and all your good resolves and high purposes will be cut down, and your noble indignation buried within the precincts of your own hearts!"

And, so saying, he arose from the table and extended his hand to take leave, with all the gravity of a solemn farewell.

"If you could say a word to his excellency about Moses," muttered Crow, as he was leaving the room, "it would be the making of me!" But Martin never heeded the appeal—perhaps he never heard it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DARKENING FORTUNES.

The Martins had always lived a life of haughty estrangement from their neighbours; there were none of exactly their own rank and pretensions within miles of them, and they were too proud to acknowledge the acquaintance of a small squirearchy, which was all that the country around could boast. Notwithstanding all the isolation of the their existence, their departure created a great void in the county, and their absence was sensibly felt by every class around. The very requirements of a large fortune suggest a species of life and vitality—the movement of servants—the passing and repassing of carriages—the necessary intercourse with market and post—all impart a degree of bustle and movement, terribly contrasted by the unbroken stillness of a deserted mansion.

Lady Dorothea had determined that there should be no ambiguity as to the cause of their departure; she had given the most positive orders on this head to every department of the household. To teach an ungrateful people the sore consequences of their own ingratitude, the lesson should be read in everything: in the little villages thrown out of work—in the silent quarries—the closed school-houses—the model farm converted into grass-land—even to the grand entrance, now built up by a wall of coarse masonry—the haughty displeasure of the proud mistress revealed itself, all proclaiming the sentiment of a deep, unforgiving vengeance. She had tortured her ingenuity for details which should indicate her anger; nor was she satisfied if her displeasure should not find its way into every cabin and at every hearth. The small hamlet of Cro' Martin had possessed a dispensary; a hard-working, patient, and skilful man had passed many years of life there as he doctor, eking out the poor subsistence of that unfavoured lot, and supporting a family by a life of dreary toil. From this her ladyship's subscription—the half of all his salary—was now to be withdrawn. She thought "Cloves was grown negligent; it might be age—if so, a younger man would be better; besides, if he could afford to dress his three daughters in the manner he did, he surely could not require her thirty pounds per annum." The servants, too, complained that he constantly mistook their complaints. In fact, judgment was recorded against Cloves, and there was none to recommend him to mercy!

We have said that there was a little chapel within the bounds of the demesne; it occupied a corner of a ruin which once had formed Cro' Martin Abbey, and now served for the village church. It was very small, but still large enough for its little congregation. The vicar of this humble benefice was a very old man, a widower, and childless, though once the father of a numerous family. Doctor Leslie had, some eighteen years back been unfortunate enough to incur her ladyship's displeasure, and was consequently never invited to the Castle, nor recognised in any way, save by the haughty salute that met him as he left the church. To save him, however, a long and tedious walk on Sundays, he was permitted to make use of a little private path to the church, which led through one of the shrubberies adjoining his own house—a concession of the more consequence as he was too poor to keep a carriage of the humblest kind. This was now ordered to be closed up, the gate removed, and a wall to replace it. "The poor had got the habit of coming that way; it was never intended for their use, but they had usurped it. To-morrow or next day we should hear of its being claimed at law as a public right of passage. It was better to do the thing in time. In short, it must be 'closed.'" By some such reasoning as this, Lady Dorothea persuaded herself to this course, and who should gainsay her? Oh, if men would employ but one-tenth of all that casuistry by which they minister to their selfishness, in acts of benevolence and good feeling—if they would only use a little sophistry, to induce them to do right—what a world this might be!"

Mary Martin knew nothing of these decisions; overwhelmed by the vast changes on every side, almost crushed beneath the difficulties that surrounded her, her first few weeks passed over like a disturbed dream. Groups of idle, unemployed people saluted her in mournful silence as she passed the roads. Interrupted works, half-executed plans met her eye at every turn, and at every moment the same words rang in her ears, "Her ladyship's orders," as the explanation of all.

Hitherto her life had been one of unceasing exertion and toil; from early dawn to late night she had been employed; her fatigues, however, great as they were, had been always allied with power. What she willed she could execute. Means never failed her, no matter how costly the experiment, to carry out her plans, and difficulty gave only zest to every undertaking. There is nothing more captivating than this sense of uncontrolled ability for action, especially when exercised by one of a warm and enthusiastic nature. To feel herself the life and spring of every enterprise, to know that she suggested and carried out each plan, that her ingenuity devised and her energy accomplished all the changes around her, was in itself a great fascination, and now suddenly she was to awake from all this, and find herself unoccupied and powerless. Willingly, without a regret, could she abdicate from all the pomp and splendour of a great household; she saw troops of servants depart, equipage sold, great apartments closed up without a pang! To come down to the small conditions of narrow fortune in her daily life cost her nothing, beyond a smile. It was odd, it was strange, but it was no more! Far, otherwise, however, did she feel the circumstances of her impaired power. That hundreds of workmen were no longer at her bidding, that whole families no longer looked up to her for aid and comfort, these were astounding facts, and came upon her with an actual shock.

"For what am I left here?" cried she, passionately, to Henderson, as he met each suggestion she made by the one cold word "impossible." "Is it to see destitution that I cannot relieve? Witness want that I am powerless to alleviate? To what end, or with what object, do I remain?"

"I canna say, miss," was the dry response.

"If it be to humiliate me by the spectacle of my own inefficiency, a day or a week will suffice for that—years could not teach me more."

Henderson bowed what possibly might mean an acquiescence.

"I don't speak of the estate," cried she, earnestly; "but what's to become of the people?"

"Many o' them will emigrate, miss, I've no doubt," said he, "when they see there's nothing to bide for."

"You take it easily, sir. You see little hardships in men having to leave home and country; but I tell you, that home may be poor, and country cruel, and yet both very hard to part with."

"That's vara true, miss," was the dry response.

"For anything there is now to be done here, you, sir, are to the full as competent as I am. I ask again—To what end am I here?"

Giving to her question a very different significance from what she intended, Henderson calmly said, "I thought, miss, it was just yer ain wish, and for no other reason."

Mary's cheek became crimson, and her eyes flashed with angry indignation; but, repressing the passion that was bursting within her, she walked hastily up and down the room in silence. At length, opening a large coloured map of the estate which lay on the table, she stood attentively considering it for some time. "The works at Carrigalone are stopped?" said she, hastily.

"Yes, miss."

"And the planting at Kyle's Wood?"

"Yes, miss."

"And even the thinning there—is that stopped?"

"Yes, miss; the bark is to be sold, and a' the produce of the wood for ten years, to a contractor, a certain Mister——"

"I don't want his name, sir. What of the marble quarries?"

"My lady thinks they're nae worth a' they cost, and won't hear o' their being worked again."

"And is the harbour at Kilkieran to be given up?"

"Yes, miss, and the Osprey's Nest will be let. I think they'll mak' an inn or a public o' it."

"And if the harbour is abandoned, what is to become of the fishermen? The old quay is useless."

"Vara true, miss; but there's a company goin' to take the Royalties o' the coast the whole way to Belmullet."

"A Scotch company, Mr. Henderson?" said Mary, with a sly malice in her look.

"Yes, miss," said he, colouring slightly. "The house of M'Grotty and Co. is at the head o' it."

"And are they the same enterprising people who have proposed to take the demesne on lease, provided the gardens be measured in as arable land?"

"They are, miss; they've signed the rough draft o' the lease this morning."

"Indeed!" cried she, growing suddenly pale as death. "Are there any other changes you can mention to me, since in the few days I have been ill so much has occurred?"

"There's nae muckle more to speak o', miss. James M'Grotty—he's the younger brother—was here yesterday, to try and see you about the school. He wants the house for his steward, but if you object, he'll just take the doctor's."

"Why—where is Doctor Cloves to go?"

"He does na ken exactly, Miss. He thinks he'll try Auckland, or some of these new places in New Zealand."

"But the dispensary must be continued—the people cannot be left without medical advice."

"Mr. James says he he'll think aboot it when he comes over in summer. "He's a vara spirited young man, and when there's a meetin' house built in the village——"

"Enough of this, Henderson. Come over here to-morrow, for I'm not strong enough to hear more to-day, and let Mr. Scanlan know that I wish to see him this evening."

And Mary motioned with her hand that he should withdraw. Scarcely was the door closed behind him than she burst into a torrent of tears; her long pent up agony utterly overpowered her, and she cried with all the vehemence of a child's grief. Her heart once opened to sorrow, by a hundred channels came tributaries to her affliction. Up to that moment her uncle's departure had never seemed a cruelty; now, it took all the form of desertion; the bitterness of her forlorn condition had never struck her till it came associated with all the sorrows of others. It is not impossible that wounded self-love entered, into her feelings. It is by no means unlikely that the sense of her own impared importance added poignancy to her misery. Who shall anatomise motives, or who shall be skilful enough to trace the springs of one human emotion? There was assuredly enough outside of and above all personal consideration to ennoble her grief and dignify her affliction.

Her first impulses led her to regard herself as utterly useless, her occupation gone, and her whole career of duty annihilated. A second and a better resolve whispered to her, that she was more than ever needful to those who without her would be left without a friend. "If I desert them, who is to remain?" asked she. "It is true, I am no more able to set in motion the schemes by which their indigence was alleviated. I am powerless, but not all worthless. I can still be their nurse—their comforter—their schoolmistress. My very example may teach them how altered fortune can be borne with fortitude and patience. They shall see me reduced to a thousand privations, and perhaps even this may bear its lesson." Drying her tears, she began to feel within her some of the courage she hoped to inspire in others, and anxious not to let old Catty detect the trace of sorrow in her features, issued forth into the wood for a walk.

As the deep shadows thickened around her, she grew calmer and more meditative; the solemn stillness of the place, the deep, unbroken quietude, imparted its own soothing influence to her thoughts, and as she went her heart beat freer, and her elastic temperament again arose to cheer and sustain her. To confront the future boldly and well, it was necessary that she should utterly forget the past. She could no longer play the great part to which wealth and high station had raised her; she must now descend to that humbler one—all whose influence should be derived from acts of kindness and words of comfort, unaided by the greater benefits she had once dispensed.

The means placed at her disposal for her own expenditure had been exceedingly limited. It was her own desire they should be so, and Lady Dorothea had made no opposition to her wishes. Beyond this she had nothing, save a sum of five thousand pounds, payable at her uncle's death. By strictest economy—privation, indeed—she thought that she could save about a hundred pounds a year of this small income; but to do so would require the sale of both her horses, retaining only the pony and the little carriage, while her dress should be of the very simplest and plainest. In what way she should best employ this sum was to be for after consideration. The first thought was how to effect the saving without giving to the act any unnecessary notoriety. She felt that her greatest difficulty would be old Catty Broon. The venerable housekeeper had all her life regarded her with an affection that was little short of worship. It was not alone the winning graces of Mary's manner, nor the attractive charms of her appearance, that had so captivated old Catty, but that the young girl, to her eyes, represented the great family whose name she bore, and represented them so worthily. The title of the Princess, by which the country people knew her, seemed her just and rightful designation. Mary realised to her the proud scion of a proud stock, who had ruled over a territory rather than a mere estate; how, then, could she bear to behold her in all the straits and difficulties of a reduced condition? There seemed but one way to effect this, which was to give her new mode of life the character of a caprice. "I must make old Catty believe it is one of my wild and wilful fancies—a sudden whim—out of which a little time will doubtless rally me. She is the last in the world to limit me in the indulgence of a momentary notion; she will, therefore, concede everything to my humour, patiently awaiting the time when it shall assume a course the very opposite."

Some one should, however, be entrusted with her secret—without some assistance it could not be carried into execution—and who should that be? Alas, her choice was a very narrow one. It lay between Scanlan and Henderson. The crafty attorney was not, indeed, much to Mary's liking; his flippant vulgarity and pretension were qualities she could ill brook, but she had known him do kind things; she had seen him on more than one occasion temper the sharpness of some of her ladyship's ukases, little suspecting, indeed, how far the possible impression upon herself was the motive that so guided him; she had, therefore, no difficulty in preferring him to the steward, whose very accent and manner were enough to render him hateful to her. Scanlan, besides, would necessarily have a great deal in his power; he would be able to make many a concession to the poor people on the estate, retard the cruel progress of the law, or give them time to provide against its demands. Mary felt that she was in a position to exercise a certain influence over him; and, conscious of the goodness of the cause she would promote, never hesitated as to the means of employing it.

Who shall say, too, that she had not noticed the deferential admiration by which he always distinguished her? for there is a species of coquetry that takes pleasure in a conquest where the profits of victory would be thoroughly despised. We are not bold enough to say that such feelings found their place in Mary's heart. We must leave its analysis to wiser and more cunning anatomists.

Straying onwards ever in deep thought, and not remarking whither, she was suddenly struck by the noise of masonry—strange sounds in a spot thus lonely and remote—and now walking quickly onward, she found herself on the path by which the vicar on Sundays approached the church, and here, at a little distance, descried workmen employed in walling up the little gateway of the passage.

"By whose orders is this done?" cried Mary, to whose quick intelligence the act revealed its whole meaning and motive.

"Mr. Henderson, miss," replied one of the men. "He said we were to work all night at it, if we couldn't be sure of getting it done before Sunday."

A burst of passionate indignation rose to her lips, but she turned away without a word, and re-entered the wood in silence.

"Yes," cried she, to herself, "it is, indeed, a new existence is opening before me; let me strive so to control my temper, that I may view it calmly and dispassionately, so that others may not suffer from the changes in *my* fortune."

She no sooner reached the house than she despatched a note to Mr. Scanlan, requesting to see him as early as possible on the following morning. This done, she set herself to devise her plans for the future—speculations it must be owned, to which her own hopeful temperament gave a colouring that a colder spirit and more calculating mind had never bestowed on them.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW MR. SCANLAN GIVES SCOPE TO A GENEROUS IMPULSE.

It is a remark of Wieland's, that although the life of man is measured by the term of fourscore years and ten, yet that his ideal existence, or, as he calls it, his "unacted life," meaning thereby his period of dreamy, projective, and forecasting existence, would occupy a far wider space. And he goes on to say that it is in this same imaginative longevity men differ the most from each other, the Poet standing to the ungifted Peasant in the ratio of centuries to years.

Mr. Maurice Scanlan would not appear a favourable subject by which to test this theory. If not endowed with any of the higher and greater qualities of intellect, he was equally removed from any deficiency on that score. The world called him "a clever fellow," and the world is rarely in fault in such judgments. Where there is a question of the creative faculties, where it is the divine essence itself is the matter of decision, the world will occasionally be betrayed into mistakes, as fashion and a passing enthusiasm may mislead it; but, where it is the practical and the real, the exercise of gifts by which men make themselves rich and powerful, then the world makes no blunders. She knows them as a mother knows her children. They are indeed the "World's own."

We have come to these speculations by contemplating Mr. Scanlan as he sat with Mary Martin's open letter before him. The note was couched in polite terms, requesting Mr. Scanlan to favour the writer with a visit at his earliest convenience—if possible early on the following morning. Had it been a document of suspected authenticity—a forged acceptance—an interpolated article in a deed—a newly-discovered codicil to a will—he could not have canvassed every syllable, scrutinised every letter with more searching zeal. It was hurriedly written: there was, therefore, some emergency. It began, "Dear sir," a style she had never employed before. The letter "D" was blotted, and seemed to have been originally destined for an "M," as though she had commenced Miss Martin requests, &c., and then suddenly adopted the more familiar address. The tone of command by which he was habitually summoned to Oro' Martin was assuredly not there, and Maurice was not the man to undervalue the smallest particle of evidence.

"She has need of me," cried he, to himself; "she sees everything in a state of subversion and chaos around her, and looks to me as the man to restore order. The people are entreating her to stay law proceedings—to give them time—to employ them—the poorest are all importuning her with stories of their sufferings. She is powerless, and, what's worse, she does not know what it is to be powerless to help them. She'll struggle, and fret, and scheme, and plan fifty things, and when she has failed in them all, fall back upon Maurice Scanlan for advice and counsel."

It was a grave question with Scanlan how far he would suffer her persecutions to proceed before he would come to her aid. "If I bring my succour too early, she may never believe the emergency was critical; if I delay it too long, she may abandon the field in despair, and set off to join her uncle." These were the two propositions which he placed before himself for consideration. It was a case for very delicate management, great skill, and great patience, but it was well worth all the cost. "If I succeed," said he, to himself, "I'm a made man. Mary Martin Mrs. Scanlan, I'm the agent for the whole estate, with Oro' Martin to live in, and all the property at my discretion. If I fail—that is, if I fail without blundering—I'm just where I was. Well," thought he, as he drove into the demesne, "I never thought I'd have such a chance as this. All gone, and she alone here by herself: none to advise, not one even to keep her company! I'd have given a thousand pounds down just for this opportunity, without counting all the advantages I have in my power from my present position, for I can do what I like with the estate—give leases or break them. It will be four months at least before old Repton comes down here, and in that time I'll have finished whatever I want to do. And now to begin the game." And with this he turned into the stable-yard, and descended from his gig. Many men would have been struck by the changed aspect of the place—silence and desolation where before there were movement and bustle; but Scanlan only read in the altered appearances around, the encouragement of his own ambitious hopes. The easy swagger in which the attorney indulged while moving about the stable-yard declined into a more becoming gait as he traversed the long corridors, and finally became actually respectful as he drew nigh the library, where he was informed Miss Martin awaited him, so powerful was the influence of old habit over the more vulgar instincts of his nature. He had intended to be very familiar and at his ease, and ere he turned the handle of the door his courage failed him.

"This is very kind of you, Mr. Scanlan," said she, advancing a few steps towards him as he entered. "You must have started early from home."

"At five, miss," said he, bowing deferentially.

"And of course you have not breakfasted?"

"Indeed, then, I only took a cup of coffee. I was anxious to be early. I thought from your note that there might be something urgent."

Mary half smiled at the mingled air of bashfulness and gallantry in which he uttered these broken sentences; for without knowing it himself, while he began in some confusion, he attained a kind of confidence as he went on.

"Nor have I breakfasted either," said she; "and I beg, therefore, you will join me."

Scanlan's face actually glowed with pleasure.

"I have many things to consult you upon with regard to the estate, and I am fully aware that there is nobody more competent to advise me."

"Nor more ready and willing, miss," said Maurice, bowing.

"I'm perfectly certain of that, Mr. Scanlan. The confidence my uncle has always reposed in you assures me on that head."

"Wasn't I right about the borough, Miss Mary?" broke he in. "I told you how it would be, and that if you didn't make some sort of a compromise with the Liberal party——"

"Let me interrupt you, Mr. Scanlan, and once for all assure you that there is not one subject of all those which pertain to this county and its people which has so little interest for me as the local squabbles of party; and I'm sure no success on either side is worth the broken friendships and estranged affections it leaves behind it."

"A beautiful sentiment, to which I respond with all my heart," rejoined Scanlan, with an energy that made her blush deeply.

"I only meant to say, sir," added she, hastily, "that the borough and its politics need never be discussed between us."

"Just so, miss. We'll call on the next case," said Scanlan.

"My uncle's sudden departure, and a slight indisposition under which I have laboured for a week or so, have thrown me so far in arrear of all knowledge of what has been done here, that I must first of all ask you, not how the estate is to be managed in future, but does it any longer belong to us?"

"What, miss?" cried Scanlan, in amazement.

"I mean, sir, is it my uncle's determination to lease out everything—even to the demesne around the Castle; to sell the timber and dispose of the royalties? If so, a mere residence here could have no object for *me*. It seems strange, Mr. Scanlan, that I should have to ask such a question. I own to you—it is not without some sense of humiliation that I do so—I believed, I fancied I had understood my uncle's intentions. Some of them he had even committed to writing, at my request; you shall see them yourself. The excitement and confusion of his departure—the anxieties of leave-taking—one thing or another, in short, gave me little time to seek his counsel as to many points I wished to know; and, in fact, I found myself suddenly alone before I was quite prepared for it, and then I fell ill—a mere passing attack, but enough to unfit me for occupation."

"Breakfast is served, miss," said a maid-servant, at this conjuncture, opening a door into a small room, where the table was spread.

"I'm quite ready, and so I hope is Mr. Scanlan," said Mary, leading the way.

No sooner seated at table than she proceeded to do the honours with an ease that plainly told that all the subject of her late discourse was to be left for the present in abeyance. In fact, the very tone of her voice was changed, as she chatted away carelessly about the borough people and their doings, what strangers had lately passed through the town, and the prospects of the coming season at Kilkieran.

No theme could more readily have put Mr. Scanlan at his ease. He felt, or fancied he felt, himself at that degree of social elevation above the Oughterard people, which enabled him to talk with a species of compassionate jocularity of their little dinners and evening parties. He criticised toilet, and manners, and cookery, therefore, with much self-complacency—far more than had he suspected that Mary Martin's amusement was more derived from the pretension of the speaker than the matter which he discussed.

"That's what I think you'll find hardest of all, Miss Martin," said he, at the close of a florid description of the borough customs. "You can have no society here."

"And yet I mean to try," said she, smiling; "at least, I have gone so far as to ask Mrs. Nelligan to come and dine with me on Monday or Tuesday next."

"Mrs. Nelligan dine at Cro' Martin!" exclaimed he.

"If she will be good enough to come so far for so little!"

"She'd go fifty miles on the same errand; and if I know old Dan himself, he'll be a prouder man that day than when his son gained the gold medal."

"Then I'm sure *I*, at least, am perfectly requited," said Mary.

"But are you certain, miss, that such people will suit you?" said Scanlan, half timidly. "They live in a very different style, and have other ways than yours. I say nothing against Mrs. Nelligan; indeed, she comes of a very respectable family; but sure she hasn't a thought nor an idea in common with Miss Martin."

"I suspect you are wrong there, Mr. Scanlan. My impression is, that Mrs. Nelligan and I will find many topics to agree upon, and that we shall understand each other perfectly; and if, as you suppose, there may be certain things new and strange to me in *her* modes of thinking, I'm equally sure she'll have to conquer many prejudices with regard to *me*."

"I'm afraid you'll be disappointed, miss!" was the sententious reply of Scanlan.

"Then there's our vicar!" broke in Mary. "Mr. Leslie will, I hope, take pity on my solitude."

"Indeed, I forgot him entirely. I don't think I ever saw him at Cro' Martin."

"Nor I either," said Mary; "but he may concede from a sense of kindness what he would decline to a mere point of etiquette. In a word, Mr. Scanlan," said she, after a pause, "all the troubles and misfortunes which we have lately gone through—even to the destitution of the old house here—have in a great measure had their origin in the studious ignorance in which we have lived of our neighbours. I don't wish to enter upon political topics, but I am sure, that had we known the borough people, and they us—had we been in the habit of mingling and associating together, however little—had we interchanged the little civilities, that are the charities of social life, we'd have paused, either of us, ere we gave pain to the other; we'd at least have made concessions on each side, and so softened down the asperities of party. More than half the enmities of the world are mere misconceptions."

"That's true!" said Scanlan, gravely. But his thoughts had gone on a very different errand from the theme in question, and were busily inquiring what effect all these changes might have upon his own prospects.

"And now for a matter of business," said Mary, rising and taking her place at another table. "I shall want your assistance, Mr. Scanlan. There is a small sum settled upon me, but not payable during my uncle's life. I wish to raise a certain amount of this, by way of loan—say a thousand pounds. Will this be easily accomplished?"

"What's the amount of the settlement, miss?" said Scanlan, with more eagerness than was quite disinterested.

"Five thousand pounds. There is the deed." And she pushed a parchment towards him.

Scanlan ran his practised eye rapidly over the document, and with the quick craft of his calling saw it was all correct. "One or even two thousand can be had upon this at once, miss. It's charged upon Kelly's farm and the mills——"

"All I want to know is, that I can have this sum at my disposal, and very soon; at once, indeed."

"Will next week suit you?"

"Perfectly. And now to another point. These are the few memoranda my uncle left with me as to his wishes respecting the management of the estate. You will see that, although he desires a considerable diminution of the sum to be spent in wages, and a strict economy in all outlay, that he still never contemplated throwing the people out of employment. The quarries were to be worked as before—the planting was to be continued—the gardens and ornamental grounds, indeed, were to be conducted with less expense; but the harbour at Kilkieran and the new school-house at Temnagh were to be completed; and, if money could be spared for it, he gave me leave to build a little hospital at the cross-roads, allowing forty pounds additional salary to Doctor Cloves for his attendance. These are the chief points; but you shall have the papers to read over at your leisure. We talked over many other matters; indeed, we chatted away till long after two o'clock the last night he was here, and I thought I understood perfectly all he wished. Almost his last words to me at parting were, 'As little change as possible, Molly. Let the poor people believe that I am still, where my heart is, under the roof of Cro' Martin!' "

The recollection of the moment brought the tears to her eyes, and she turned away her head in silence.

"Now," said she, rallying, and speaking with renewed energy, "if what Henderson says be correct, something later must have been issued than all this; some directions which I have never seen—not so much as heard of. He tells me of works to be stopped, people discharged, school-houses closed, tenants ejected; in fact, a whole catalogue of such changes as I never could have courage to see, much less carry through. I know my dear uncle well; he never would have imposed such a task upon me, nor have I the resources within me for such an undertaking."

"And have you received no letter from Mr. Martin, from Dublin?" asked Scanlan.

"None—not a line; a note from my aunt—indeed, not from my aunt, but by her orders, written by Kate Henderson—has reached me, in which, however, there is no allusion to the property, or the place."

"And yet her ladyship said that Mr. Martin would write to you himself, in the course of the week, fully and explicitly."

"To whom was this said, sir?"

"To myself, miss; there is the letter." And Scanlan drew from his pocket-book a very voluminous epistle, in Kate Henderson's hand. "This contains the whole of her ladyship's instructions. How all the works are to be stopped—roads, woods, and quarries; the townlands of Carrigalone and Killybogue to be distrained; Kyle-a-Noe the same. If a tenant can be got for the demesne, it is to be let, with the shooting over the seven mountains, and the coast-fishing too. There's to be no more charges for schools, hospital, or dispensary after next November; everything is to be on the new plan, what they call 'Self-supporting.' I'd like to know what that means. In fact, miss, by the time one half the orders given in that same letter is carried out, there won't be such another scene of misery and confusion in all Ireland as the estate of Cro' Martin."

"And this is sanctioned by my uncle?"

"I suppose we must conclude it is, for he says nothing to the contrary; and Mr. Repton writes me what he calls 'my instructions,' in a way that shows his own feeling of indignation about the whole business."

Mary was silent; there was not a sentiment which could give pain that had not then its place in her heart. Commiseration, deep pity for the sorrows she was to witness unavailingly, wounded pride, insulted self-esteem—all were there! And she turned away to hide the emotions which overcame her. For a moment the sense of self had the mastery, and she thought but of how she was to endure all this humiliation. "Am I," said she to her own heart—"am I to be insulted by the rivalry of Scotch stewards and gardeners, to be thrust from my place of power by some low-born creature, not even of the soil, but an alien?—to live here bereft of influence, representing nothing save the decay of our fortunes?" The torrent of her passion ran full and deep, and her bosom heaved in the agony of the moment. And then as suddenly came the reaction. "How small a share is mine in all this suffering—and how miserably selfish are even my sorrows. It is of others I should think!—of those who must leave hearth and home to seek out a new resting-place—of the poor, who are to be friendless—of the suffering, to whom no comfort is to come—of the old, who are to die in distant lands—and the young, whose hearts are never to warm to the affections of a native country!"

While affecting to arrange the papers in his pocket-book, Scanlan watched every passing shade of emotion in her face. Nor was it a study in which he was ignorant; the habits of his calling had made him a very subtle observer. Many a time had he framed his question to a witness by some passing expression of the features. More than once had he penetrated the heart through the eye! The elevation of sentiment had given its own character to her handsome face; and as she stood proudly erect, with arms folded on her breast, there was in her look and attitude all the calm dignity of an antique statue.

Scanlan interpreted truthfully what passed within her; and rightly judged that no small sentiment of condolence or sympathy would be appropriate to the occasion. Nor was he altogether unprovided for the emergency. He had seen a king's counsel warm up a jury to the boiling point, and heard him pour forth, with all the seeming vehemence of an honest conviction, the wildest rhapsodies about desecrated hearths and blackened roof-trees—talk of the spoiler and the seducer—and even shed a tear "over the widow and the orphan!'

"What say you to all this sir?" cried she. "Have you any counsel to give me—any advice?"

"It is just what I have not, miss," said he, despondingly; and, indeed, it was uppermost in my heart this morning when I was writing my letter, What's all I'm suffering compared to what Miss Martin must feel?"

"What letter do you allude to?" asked she, suddenly.

"A letter I wrote to Mr. Repton, miss," said he, with a deep sigh. "I told him plainly my mind about everything, and I said, 'If it's for exterminating you are—if you're going to turn out families that were on the land for centuries, and drive away over the seas—God knows where—the poor people that thought the name of Martin a shield against all the hardships of life, all I have to say is, you must look elsewhere for help, since it is not Maurice Scanlan will aid you.'"

"You said all this, sir?" broke she in, eagerly.

"I did, miss. I told him I'd hold the under-agency till he named some one to succeed me; but that I'd not put my hand to one act or deed to distress the tenants. It's giving up," said I, "the best part of my means of support—it's surrendering what I reckoned on to make me independent; but a good conscience is better than money, miss; and if I must seek out a new country, I'll go at least without the weight of a cruel wrong over me, and if I see one of our poor Western people beyond seas, I'll not be ashamed to meet him!"

"Oh, that was noble—that was truly noble conduct!" cried she, grasping his hand in both her own. How I thank you from my very heart for this magnanimity."

"If I ever suspected you'd have said the half of this, Miss Mary, the sacrifice would have been a cheap one indeed. But in truth I never meant to tell it. I intended to have kept my own secret; for I knew if any one only imagined why it was I threw up the agency, matters would only be worse on the estate."

"Yes, you are right," said she, thoughtfully. "This was most considerate. Such a censure would augment every difficulty."

"I felt that, miss. What I said to myself was, 'My successor will neither know the place nor the people; he'll be cruel where he ought to have mercy, and spare those that he ought to keep to their duty.' It isn't in a day nor a week that a man learns the habits of a large tenantry, nor was it without labour and pains that I acquired my present influence amongst them."

"Quite true," said she; but more as though following out her own reflections than hearing his.

"They'll have *you*, however," said Scanlan. "*You*, that are better to them than all the agents that ever breathed; and the very sight of you riding down amongst them will cheer their hearts in the darkest moments of life. I turned back the whole townland of Terry Valley. They were packing up to be off to America; but I told them, 'She's not going—she'll stay here, and never desert you.'"

"Nor will *you* either, sir," cried Mary. "You will not desert them, nor desert *me*. Recall your letter!"

"It's not gone off to the post yet. I was waiting to see you——"

"Better still. Oh! Mr. Scanlan, bethink you how much yet may be done for these poor people, if we will but forget ourselves and what we think we owe to self-esteem. If *you* will have sacrifices to make, believe me *I* shall not escape them also. It is nobler, too, and finer to remain here bereft of influence, stripped of all power, to share their sufferings and take part in their afflictions. Neither you nor I shall be to them what we have been; but still, let us not abandon them. Tell me this—say that you will stay to counsel and advise me—to guide me where I need guidance, and give me all the benefit of your experience and your knowledge. Let it be a compact between us then—neither shall go while the other remains!"

It was with difficulty Scanlan could restrain his delight at these words. How flattering to his present vanity—how suggestive were they of the future! With all the solemnity of a vow he bound himself to stay; and Mary thanked him with the fervour of true gratitude.

If there be few emotions so pleasurable as to be the object of acknowledged gratitude for real services, it may well be doubted whether the consciousness of not having merited this reward does not seriously detract from this enjoyment. There are men, however, so constituted, that a successful scheme—no matter how unscrupulously achieved—is always a triumph, and who cherish their self-love even in degradation! Maurice Scanlan is before our reader, and whether he was one of this number it is not for us to say; enough if we record that when he cantered homeward on that day he sang many a snatch of a stray ballad, and none of them were sad ones.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SUNDAY MORNING AT CRO' MARTIN.

NOTHING is further from our intention than to enter upon the long-vexed question as to the benefits of an Established Church for Ireland. Wiser heads than ours have discussed it polemically, politically, socially, and arithmetically; and there it is still, left to the judgment of each, as his religion, his party, or his prejudices sway him. There is one view of the subject, however, which no traveller in the country has ever failed to be struck by, which is, that these settlements of Protestantism, dotted through the land, are so many types of an advanced civilization, suggesting, even to those of a different faith, respect and veneration for the decorous observance of this Church, and the calm peacefulness with which they keep the Sabbath.

Priests may denounce and politicians declaim, but the Irish peasant, nurtured with all the prejudices of race and religion, never throws off his veneration for the little flock, who, like a brave garrison in a besieged land, hold manfully together round the banner of their Faith! How striking is this in remote parts of the country, where the reformed religion has made little progress, and its followers are few in number.

It was Sunday: the gates of Cro' Martin Park were open to admit all who might repair to the church. When the Martins were at home Lady Dorothea used to give to these occasions somewhat of the state of a procession. The servants wore their dress liveries; two carriages were in waiting. She herself appeared in a toilet that might have graced a Court chapel; and a formal ceremoniousness of speech and demeanour were ordained as the becoming recognition of the holy day. Trained to these observances by many a year, Mary could scarcely comprehend the strange sensation she felt as she walked along to church, unattended and alone. It was a bright day of early summer, with a soft wind stirring the leaves above, and rippling pleasantly the waters of the lake; the perfume of the new hay floated through the thin air, with the odour of the white thorn and the meadow-sweet; the birds were singing merrily; and through this gay carol came the mellow sound of the little bell that summoned to prayer. There was a delicious sense of repose in the stillness around, telling how, amid the cares and contentions of life, its wealth seekings, and its petty schemes there came moments when the better instincts were the victors, and men, in all the diversities of their rank and station, could meet together to kneel at one altar, and unite in one supplication. As she went, little glimpses were caught by her of the distant country beyond the demesne; and over all there reigned the same tranquility; the sound of voices, far away, adding to the effect, and making the silence more palpable. "How peaceful it is," thought she, "and how happy it might be! Could we but bridle our own passions, restrain our mean jealousies, and curb the evil promptings of our own hearts, what blessings might grow up amongst us! But for objects not worth the attaining—ambitions of no value when won—and my uncle might still be here, strolling along, perhaps, with me at this very moment, and with me drinking in this calm repose and soothing quietness."

Before her, at some little distance on the path, went the three daughters of the village doctor; and, though well and becomingly attired, there was nothing in their appearance to warrant the reproach Lady Dorothea had cast upon their style of dress. It was, indeed, scrupulously neat, but simple. The eldest was a girl of about sixteen, with all the gravity of manner and staid expression that belongs to those who stand in the light of mothers to younger sisters. The housekeeper of her father's little home, the manager of all within its humble household, his secretary, his companion, Ellen Cloves had acquired, while little more than a child, the patient and submissive temper that long worldly trial confers. They lived perfectly to themselves: between the society of the Castle and that of the farmers around there was no intermediate territory, and thus they passed their lives in a little circle of home duties and affections, which made up all their world.

Mary Martin had often wished it in her power to show them some attentions; she was attracted by their gentle faces and their calm and happy demeanour. Had her aunt permitted, she would have frequently invited them to the castle; lent them books and music, and sought companionship in their intercourse. But Lady Dorothea would not have heard of such a project; her theory was that familiarity with the peasant was so far safe that his station was a safeguard against any undue intimacy; while your half-gentry were truly perilous, for if you condescended to civility with them, they invariably mistook it for a friendship. Doctor Cloves dined every Christmas day at the great house; but so did Mr. Scanlan and all the other heads of departments. It was a very grand and solemn festival, where neither host nor guest was happy; each felt that it was but the acquaintance of an hour, and that with the moment of leave-taking came back all the cold reserve of the day before.

"Good morning, Miss Cloves; good day, Jane, and little Bessy," said Mary, as she overtook them.

"Good morning to you, Miss Martin," said Ellen, blushing with surprise at seeing her alone and on foot.

"I trust the doctor is not ill? I don't see him with you," said Mary, anxious to relieve her momentary embarrassment.

"Papa has been sent for to Knocktiernan, Miss Martin. They're afraid that a case of cholera has occurred there."

"May God forbid!" ejaculated Mary, with deep emotion; "we have great distress and poverty around us. I hope we may be spared this scourge."

"It is what papa feared always," rejoined Ellen, gravely, "that want and destitution would bring on the malady."

"Have you heard who it is is ill?"

"Simon Hanley, the carpenter, Miss Martin; he worked at the Castle once——"

"Yes, yes, I remember him; he made me my first little garden-rake. Poor fellow! And he has a large family. Your father will, I trust, have seen him in time. Knocktiernan is but four miles of a good road."

"Papa went by the Mills, Miss Martin, for shortness, for he was on foot."

"Why did he not ride?"

"He has sold Bluebell—the pony, I mean, Miss Martin."

"Mary's face became crimson with a blush that seemed to burn through the forehead into her very brain, and she could only mutter,—

"I'm sorry I didn't know; my carriage and pony were in the stable. If I had but heard of this——" and was silent.

They had now reached the entrance to the little churchyard, where the few members of the small flock lingered, awaiting the arrival of the clergyman. Amidst many a respectful salutation and gaze of affectionate interest, Mary walked to the end of the aisle, where, shrouded in heavy curtains, soft-cushioned and high-pannelled, stood the Castle pew.

It must be indeed hard for the rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The very appliances of his piety are the offshoots of his voluptuous habits; and that his heart should feel humble, his hassock must be of down! It was not often that the words of the pastor were heard within that solemn, small enclosure with the same reverend devotion. Mary was now alone there: her mind no longer distracted by the petty incidents of their coming, her proud station seemed to have vanished, and she felt herself but as one of an humble flock, supplicating and in sorrow!

Dr. Leslie had heard of the terrible visitation which menaced them, and made it the subject of his sermon. The fact of his own great age and fast declining strength gave a deeper meaning to all he said, and imparted to the faltering words of his benediction the solemnity of a farewell.

"You are a little fatigued to-day, doctor," said Mary, as he came out of church. "Will you allow me to offer you my arm?"

"Willingly, my dear Miss Mary. But this is not our road."

"Why so?—this is the path to the Vicarage."

"They've made some change, my dear; they've altered the approach."

"And you came round by the avenue—a distance of two miles?" cried she, deep crimson with shame.

"And kept you all waiting; but not very long, I trust," said he, smiling benevolently. "But come, talk to me of yourself, and when I am to come and see you."

"Oh, my dear Doctor Leslie, you must not think that I—that my uncle——" She stopped, and he pressed her hand gently, and said,—

"Do not speak of it—do not give importance to things which are trifles, if we have but good temper to leave them so. Is to-morrow a free day with you; or when shall I hope to find you at leisure?"

"My dear doctor, every day will be so in future—all my functions have ceased here. I am to be nothing in future."

"I had heard something of that, and I said to myself, 'Now will Mary Martin display her real character. No longer carried away by the mere enthusiasm of her great power and her high station—not exalted to herself by the flatteries around her—we shall see whether the sterling qualities of her nature will not supply higher and greater resourses than all the credit at a banker's!' I never undervalued all you did here, Mary Martin; I saw your noble purpose, even in failures; but I always felt, that to make these efforts react favourably on yourself, there should be something of sacrifice. To do good was a luxury to you; and it was a luxury very easy to purchase. You were rich—you were powerful—none controlled you; your benefits were acknowledged with all the enthusiasm of peasant gratitude. Why should you not be beneficent?—what other course of conduct could bring you one half the pleasure? For the future, it is from another source you must dispense wealth; but happily it is one which there is no exhausting—for the heart exercised to charity has boundless stores. Let these be your riches now. Go amongst the people; learn to know them—rather their friend than their benefactor—and, believe me, that all the gold you have scattered so generously, will not have sown such seeds of goodness as the meek example of your own noble submission to altered fortune. There, my dear," said he, smiling, "I'll say no more, lest you should tell me that I have preached half an hour already. And I may come to-morrow, you say?"

"What a happiness it will be for me to speak to you," said Mary, ardently. "There are so many things I want to say—so much on which I need advice."

"I'm but little practised in the ways of the world," said he, with a gentle sigh, "but I have ever found great wisdom in an honest purpose; and then," added he, more warmly, "it is a fine philosophy, that secures us against humiliation, even in defeat!"

They now walked along for some time without speaking; when a sudden angle of the path brought them directly in front of the Castle. They both halted suddenly, struck as it were by the aspect of the spacious and splendid structure, all silent and deserted. The doors were closed, the windows shuttered—not a living creature moved about the precincts—and the lone flagstaff on the tower unfurled no "banner to the breeze." Even the trimly-kept parterres were beginning to show signs of neglect, and tangled flowers fell across the gravel.

"What a lonely home for *her!*" muttered the old doctor, to himself; then suddenly exclaimed, "Here comes some one in search of you, Miss Martin."

And a servant approached and whispered a few words in her ear.

"Yes, immediately," said she, in reply.

She entreated the old man to rest himself for a while ere he continued his walk homeward; but he declined, and with an affectionate farewell they parted, he towards the Vicarage, and she to re-enter the Castle.

There is no need to practise mystery with our reader; and he who had just arrived, and was eager to see Miss Martin, was only Maurice Scanlan! As little use is there also in denying the fact that Mary was much annoyed at his inopportune coming. She was in no mood of mind to meet either him or such topics as he would certainly discuss. However, she had, so to say, given him a permission to be admitted at all times, and there was no help for it!

These same people that one "must see," are very terrible inflictions sometimes. They are ever present at the wrong time and the wrong place. They come in moments when their presence is a discord to all our thoughts; and what is to the full as bad, they don't know it—or they will not know it. They have an awful amount of self-esteem, and fancy that they never can be but welcome. A type of this class was Maurice Scanlan. Thrust forward by the accidents of life into situations for which nothing in his own humble beginnings seemed to adapt him, he had, like all the other Maurice Scanlans of the world, taken to suppose that he was really a very necessary and important ingredient in all affairs. He found, too, that his small cunning served to guide him, where really able men's wisdom failed them—for so it is, people won't take soundings when they think they can see the bottom—and finally, he conceived a very high opinion of his faculties, and thought them equal to much higher purposes than they had ever been engaged in.

Since his last interview with Mary Martin, he had never ceased to congratulate himself on the glorious turn of his affairs. Though not over-sanguine about others, Maurice was always hopeful of himself. It is one of the characteristics of such men, and one of the greatest aids to their activity, this ever-present belief in themselves. To secure the good opinion he had already excited in his favour, was now his great endeavour; and nothing could so effectually contribute to this, as to show an ardent zeal and devotion to her wishes. He had read somewhere of a certain envoy who had accomplished his mission ere it was believed he had set out—and he resolved to profit by the example. It was, then, in the full confidence of success, that he presented himself on this occasion.

Mary received him calmly—almost coldly: his presence was not in harmony with any thought that occupied her, and she deemed the task of admitting him something like an infliction.

"I drove over, Miss Mary," said he, rather disconcerted by her reserve—"I drove over, to-day, though I know you don't like business on a Sunday, just to say that I had completed that little matter you spoke of—the money affair. I didn't sleep on it, but went to work at once, and though the papers won't be ready for some days, the cash is ready for you, whenever you like to draw it."

"You have been very kind, and very prompt, sir," said she, thankfully, but with a languor that showed she was not thinking of the subject.

"He said five per cent.," continued Scanlan, "and I made no objection, for, to tell you the truth, I expected he'd have asked us six—he's generally a hard hand to deal with."

It was evident that he hoped her curiosity might have inquired the name of him thus alluded to; but she never did so, but heard the fact with a calm indifference.

Scanlan was uneasy—his heaviest artillery had opened no breach. What should be his next manœuvre?

"The money-market is tight just now," said he, speaking only to gain time for further observation, "and there's worse times, even, before us."

If Mary heard, she did not notice this gloomy speculation.

"I'm sure it will be no easy job to get the last November rent paid up. It was a bad crop; and now there's sickness coming amongst them," said he, half as though to himself.

"You'll have to excuse me to-day, Mr. Scanlan," said she, at last. "I find I can think of nothing—I am in one of my idle moods."

"To be sure, why not, Miss Mary?" said he, evidently piqued at the ill-success of all his zeal. "It was *I* made a mistake. I fancied, somehow, you were anxious about this little matter; but another day will do us well—whenever it's your own convenience."

"You are always considerate, always good-natured, Mr. Scanlan," said she, with a vagueness that showed she was scarcely conscious of what she uttered.

"If *you* think so, Miss Mary, I'm well repaid," said he, with a dash of gallantry in the tone; "nor is it by a trifle like this I'd like to show my—my—my devotion." And the last word came out with an effort that made his face crimson.

"Yes!" muttered she, not hearing one word of his speech.

"So that I'll come over to-morrow, Miss Mary," broke he in.

"Very well—to-morrow!" replied she, as still musing she turned to the window, no more thinking of the luckless attorney than if he had been miles away; and when at length she did look around, he was gone! It was some minutes ere Mary could perfectly reconcile herself to the fact that he had been there at all; but as to how, and when, and why he took his leave, were mysteries of which she could make nothing. And yet Mr. Scanlan had gone through a very ceremonious farewell: he had bowed, and sidled, and simpered, and smirked, and sighed—had thrown himself into attitudes pictorially devoted and despairing—looked unutterable things in various styles—and finally made an exit, covered with as much shame and discomfiture as so confident a spirit could well experience, muttering, as he paced the corridor, certain prospective reprisals for this haughty indifference, when a certain time should arrive, and a certain fair lady—— But we have no right to push his speculations further than he himself indulged them, and on the present occasion Maurice was less sanguine than his wont.

"I fed the mare, sir," said Barnes, as he held the stirrup for Scanlan to mount.

"And gave her water, too," said the attorney, doggedly.

"Devil a drop, then," resumed the other. "I just sprinkled the oats, no more; that's Miss Mary's orders always."

"She understands a stable well," said Scanlan, half questioning.

"Doesn't she?" said the other, with a sententious smack of the lip. "To bit a horse or to back him—to tache him his paces and cure him of bad tricks—to train him for harness, double and single—to show him the way over a wall, or a wide ditch—to make him rise light and come down easy, she hasn't a match on this island; and as for training," added he, with fresh breath, "did you see Sir Lucius?"

"No," said Scanlan, with awakened interest.

"Wait till I bring him out, then. I'll show you a picture!"

And Barnes disappeared into the stable. In five minutes after, he returned, leading a dark brown horse, who, even shrouded in all the covering of hood and body-clothes, displayed in his long step and lounging gait the attributes of a racer.

In a few minutes Barnes had unbuckled strap and surcingle, and sweeping back the blankets dexterously over the croup, so as not to ruffle a hair of the glossy coat, exhibited an animal of surpassing symmetry, in all the pride of high condition.

"There's a beast!" said he, proudly, "without speck or spot, brand or blemish about him! You're a good judge of a horse, Mr. Scanlan, and tell me when did you see his equal?"

"He's a nice horse!" said Scanlan, slowly, giving to each word a slow and solemn significance. Then, casting a keen glance all around and over him, added, "There's a splint on the off-leg!"

"So there is, the least taste in life," said Barnes, passing his hand lightly over it; "and was there ever a horse—worth the name of a horse—that hadn't a splint? Sure, they're foaled with them! I wanted Miss Mary to let me take that off with an ointment I have, but she wouldn't. 'It's not in the way of the tendon,' says she. 'It will never spoil his action, and we'll not blemish him with a mark.' Them's her very words."

"He's a nice horse," said Scanlan, once more, as if the very parsimony of the praise was the highest testimony of the utterer; "and in rare condition, too," added he.

"In the very highest," said Barnes. "He was as sure of that cup as I am that my name's Tim."

"What cup?" asked Scanlan.

"Kil-timmon—the June race—he's entered and all—and now he's to be sold—them's the orders I got yesterday—he's to be auctioned at Dycer's on Saturday for whatever he'll bring!"

"And now, what do you expect for him, Barnes?" said Maurice, confidentially.

"Sorrow one o' me knows. He might go for fifty—he might go for two hundred and fifty! and cheap he'd be of it. He has racing speed over a flat course, and steeple-chase action for his fences. With eleven stone on his back—one that can ride, I mean, of course—he'd challenge all Ireland."

"I wouldn't mind making a bid for him myself!" said Scanlan, hesitating between his jockeyism and the far deeper game which he was playing.

"Do then, sir, and don't draw him for the race, for he'll win it as sure as I'm here. 'Tis Jemmy was to ride him; and Miss

Mary wouldn't object to give you the boy, jacket and all, her own colours—blue, with white sleeves."

"Do you think so, Barnes? Do you think she'd let me run him in the Martin colours?" cried Scanlan, to whom the project now had suddenly assumed a most fascinating aspect.

"What would you give for him?" asked Barnes, in a business-like voice.

"A hundred—a hundred and fifty—two hundred, if I was sure of what you say."

"Leave it to me, sir—leave it all to *me*," said Barnes, with the gravity of a diplomatist who understood his mission. "Where can I see you to-morrow?"

"I'll be here about ten o'clock!"

"That will do—enough said!" And Barnes, replacing the horse-sheet, slowly re-entered the stable; while Scanlan, putting spurs to his nag, dashed hurriedly away, his thoughts outstripping in their speed the pace he went, and traversing space with a rapidity that neither "blood" nor training ever vied with!

END OF VOL. I.

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