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SIR BROOK FOSSBROOKE

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SIR BROOK FOSSBROOKE

BY

CHARLES LEVER

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## SIR BROOK FOSSBROOKE.



### CHAPTER LI.

#### HOW CHANGED!

WE are once more at the Priory—but how changed is it all! Billy Haire himself scarcely recognises the old spot, and, indeed, comes now but seldom to visit it; for the Chief has launched out into the gay world, and entertains largely at dinner, and even gives *déjeûners dansants*—foreign innovations at which he was wont to inveigh with vehemence.

The old elm under whose shade Avonmore and the wits used to sit of an evening, beneath whose leafy canopy Curran had jested and Moore had sung, was cut down, and a large tent of gaudy blue and white spread its vulgar wings over innumerable breakfast-tables, set forth with what the newspapers call every delicacy of the season.

The Horatian garden, and the Roman house—conceits of an old Lord Chancellor in former times, and once objects of almost veneration in Sir William's eyes—have been swept away, with all their attendant details of good or bad taste, and in their place a fountain has been erected, for whose aquatic displays, be it noted in parenthesis, two horses and as many men are kept in full employ. Of the wild old woodland walks—shady and cool, redolent of sweet-briar and honeysuckle—not a trace remains; driving-roads, wide enough for a pony-carriage, have been substituted for these, and ruthless gaps in the dense wood open long vistas to the eye, in a spot where once it was the sense of enclosure and seclusion that imparted the chief charm. For so is it, coming out of the din and bustle of a great city, there is no attraction which can vie with whatever breathes of tranquillity, and seems to impart peace by an air of unbroken quiet. It was for this very quality the Priory had gained its fame. Within doors the change was as great as without. New, and, be it admitted, more comfortable furniture had replaced the old ponderous objects which, in every form of ugliness, had made the former decorations of the rooms. All was now light, tasteful, elegant. All invited to ease of intercourse, and suggested that pleasant union of social enjoyment with self-indulgence which our age seems to cultivate. But of all the changes and muta-

tions which a short time had effected, none could compete with that in the old Chief himself. Through life he had been studiously attentive to neatness and care in his dress; it was with something of pride that he exhibited little traits of costume that revived bygone memories; and his long white hair, brushed rigidly back, and worn as a queue behind, and his lace ruffles, recalled a time when these were distinctive signs of class and condition.

His sharply-cut and handsome features were well served by the well-marked temples and lofty head that surmounted them, and which the drawn-back hair displayed to full advantage; and what a terrible contrast did the expression present when a light-brown wig covered his head, and a lock of childlike innocence graced his forehead! The large massive eyebrows, so impressive in their venerable whiteness, were now dyed of a dark hue; and to prevent the semblance of ghastliness which this strong colour might impart to the rest of the face, a faint tinge of rouge was given to the cheek, thus lending to the whole features an expression of mingled smirk and severity as little like the former look of dignified intelligence as might be.

A tightly-fitting frock-coat and a coloured cravat, fastened with a massive jewelled pin, completed a travestie which, strange to say, imparted its character to his gait, and made itself evident in his carriage.

His manner, too—that admirable courtesy of a by-gone day, of which, when unprovoked by a personal encounter, he was a master—was now replaced by an assumed softness—an ill-put-on submission that seemed to require all his watchfulness never to forget.

If his friends deplored and his enemies exulted over this unbecoming change in one who, whatever his defects, had ever displayed the force and power of a commanding intellect, the secret was known to few. A violent and unseemly attack had been made in the “House” against him by some political partisan, who alleged that his advanced age and failing faculties urgently demanded his retirement from the Bench, and calling loudly on the Government to enforce a step which nothing but the tenacity and obstinacy of age would have refused to accept voluntarily and even gratefully.

In the discussion—it was not debate—that the subject gave rise to, the year of his birth was quoted, the time he had been first called, and the long period he had served on the Bench; and if his friends were strong in their evidences of his unfailling powers and unclouded faculties, his assailants adduced instances in which he had mistaken the suitors and misstated the case. His temper, too, imperious even to insult, had, it was said, driven many barristers from his court, where few liked to plead except such as were his abject and devoted followers.



When the attack appeared in the morning papers, Beattie drove out in all haste to the Priory to entreat that the newspapers should be withheld from him, and all mention of the offensive subject be carefully avoided. The Doctor was shown into the room where the Sewells were at breakfast, and at once eagerly announced the reason for his early visit.

“You are too late, Doctor,” said Sewell; “he had read every line of it before we came down-stairs. He made me listen to it, too, before I could go to breakfast.”

“And how did he bear it?”

“On the whole, I think well. He said they were incorrect about the year he was called, and also as to the time he entered Parliament. With regard to the man who made the attack, he said, ‘It is my turn to be biographer now; let us see if the honourable member will call the victory his.’”

“He must do nothing of the kind. I will not answer for his life if he gives way to these bursts of temper.”

“I declare I think I’d not interfere with him,” drawled out Sewell, as he broke an egg. “I suspect it’s better to let those high-pressure people blow off their steam.”

“I’m sure Dr Beattie is right,” interposed Mrs Sewell, who saw in the Doctor’s face an unmistakable look of disgust at the Colonel’s speech.

“I repeat, sir,” said Beattie, gravely, “that it is a question of Sir William’s life; he cannot survive another attack like his last one.”

“It has always been a matter of wonder to me how he has lived so long. To go on existing, and be so sensitive to public opinion, is something quite beyond my comprehension.”

“You would not mind such attacks, then?” said Beattie, with a very slight sneer.

“I should think not! A man must be a fool if he doesn’t know there are scores of fellows who don’t like him; and he must be an unlucky dog if there are not others who envy him for something or other, though it only be his horse or his dog, his waistcoat or his wife.”

In the look of malevolence he threw across the table as he spoke this, might be read the concentrated hate of one who loved to insult his victim. The Doctor saw it, and rose to leave, disgusted and angry. “I suppose Sir William knows I am here?” said he, coldly.

“I suspect not,” said Sewell. “If you’ll talk to my wife, or look over the ‘Times,’ I’ll go and tell him.”

The Chief Baron was seated at his writing-table when Sewell entered, and angrily cried out, “Who is there?”

“Sewell, my lord. May I come in?”

“ Sir, you have taken that liberty in anticipation of the request. What do you want ? ”

“ I came to say, my lord, that Dr Beattie is here.”

“ Who sent for him, sir ? ”

“ Not I, my lord, certainly.”

“ I repeat my question, sir, and expect a direct answer.”

“ I can only repeat my answer, my lord. He was not sent for by me or with my knowledge.”

“ So that I am to understand that his presence here is not the result of any active solicitude of my family for the consequences of this new outrage upon my feelings,” and he clutched the newspaper as he spoke, and shook it with passion.

“ I assure you, my lord, Beattie has come here of his own accord.”

“ But on account of this ! ” and the words came from him with a hissing sound that denoted intense anger. Sewell made a gesture to imply that it might be so, but that he himself knew nothing of it. “ Tell him, then, sir, that the Chief Baron regrets he cannot see him ; that he is at this moment engaged with the reply to a late attack in the House of Commons, which he desires to finish before post hour ; and add, sir, that he is in the best of health and in excellent spirits—facts which will afford him increased enjoyment, if Dr Beattie will only be kind enough to mention them widely in the course of his visits.”

“I’m delighted, my lord, to be charged with such a message,” said Sewell, with a well-assumed joy.

“I am glad, sir, to have pleased you, at the same time that I have gained your approbation.”

There was a haughty tone in the way these words were delivered that for an instant made Sewell doubt whether they meant approval or reprimand, but he thought he saw a look of self-satisfied vanity in the old man’s face, and he merely bowed his thanks for the speech.

“What do you think, sir, they have had the hardihood to say in the House of Commons?” cried the Chief, while his cheek grew crimson and his eye flashed fire. “They say that, looking to the perilous condition of Ireland, with a widespread conspiracy through the land, and rebellion in most daring form bearding the authorities of the Crown, it is no time to see one of the chief seats of justice occupied by one whose achievements in crown prosecutions date from the state trials of ’98! In which capacity, sir, am I assailed?—is it as Patriarch or Patriot? Am I held up to obloquy because I came into the world at a certain year, or because I was one of the counsel for Wolfe Tone? From whom, too, come these slanderous assaults? do these puny slanderers not yet know that it is with men as with plants, and that though the dockweed is rotten within a few weeks, the oak takes centuries to reach maturity?”

“There were men in the Administration once, sir, in whom I had that confidence I could have placed my office in their hands with the full conviction it would have been worthily conferred—men above the passions of party, and who saw in public life other ambitions than the struggles for place. I see these men no longer. They who now compose the Cabinet inspire no trust; with them I will not treat.”

Exhausted by this outburst of passion he lay back in his chair, breathing heavily, and to all seeming overcome.

“Shall I get you anything, my lord?” whispered Sewell.

The old man smiled faintly, and whispered, “Nothing.”

“I wish, my lord,” said Sewell, as he bent over his chair—“I wish I could dare to speak what is passing in my mind; and that I had that place in your lordship’s esteem which might give my words any weight.”

“Speak—say on,” said he, faintly.

“What I would say is this, my lord,” said Sewell, with increased force, “that these attacks on your lordship are in a great measure provoked by yourself.”

“Provoked by me! and how, sir?” cried the Chief, angrily.

“In this wise, my lord. You have always held your libellers so cheap that you actually encourage their assaults. You, in the full vigour of your faculties, alive to the latest events, interested in all that science discovers or invention develops, persist in maintaining, both in your mode of living and your companionship, a continued reference to the past. With a wit that could keep pace with the brightest, and an imagination more alive than the youngest men can boast, you vote yourself old, and live with the old. Why, my lord, is it any wonder that they try you on the indictment you have yourself drawn up? I have only to ask you to look across the Channel and see the men—your own contemporaries, your colleagues too—who escape these slanders, simply because they keep up with the modes and habits of the day. Their equipages, their retinues, their dress, are all such as fashion sanctions. Nothing in their appearance reminds the world that they lived with the grandfathers of those around them; and I say, my lord, if these men can do this, how much easier would it be for you to do it? You, whose quick intellect the youngest in vain try to cope with; you who are readier in repartee—  
younger, in fact, in all the freshness of originality and in all the play of fancy, than the smartest wits of the day.

“My lord, it has not been without a great effort of



courage I have dared to speak thus boldly; but I have so often talked the subject over with my wife, and she, with a woman's wit, has so thoroughly entered into the theme, that I felt, even at the hazard of your displeasure, I ought to risk the telling you." After a pause he added, "It was but yesterday my wife said, 'If papa'—you know, my lord, it is so she calls you in secret—'If papa will only cease to dress like a church dignitary, he will not look above fifty—fifty-four or five at most.'"

"I own," said the Judge, slowly, "it has often struck me as strange how little animadversion the Press bestowed upon my English colleagues for their advanced years, and how persistently they commented on mine; and yet the history of Ireland does not point to the early decline of intellectual power. They are fond of showing the characteristics that separate us, but they have never adduced this one."

"I hope I have your lordship's forgiveness for my boldness," said Sewell, with humility.

"You have more, sir; you have my gratitude for an affectionate solicitude. I will think over what you have said when I am alone."

"It will make me a very proud man if I find that my words have had weight with you. I am to tell Beattie, my lord, that you are engaged, and cannot see him?" said he, moving towards the door.

“ Yes. Say that I am occupied with my reply to this slander. Tell him if he likes to dine with me at six——”

“ I beg pardon, my lord—but my wife hoped you would dine with us to-day. We have a few young soldiers, and two or three pretty women coming to us——”

“ Make my compliments to Mrs Sewell, and say I am charmed to accept her invitation.”

Sewell took his leave with every token of respectful gratitude. But no sooner had he reached the stairs than he burst into a fit of laughter. “ Would any one have believed that the old fool would have swallowed the bait? I was so terrified at my own temerity, I'd have given the world to be out of the scrape! I declare, if my mother could be got rid of, we'd have him leading something of sixteen to the altar. Well, if this acute attack of youth doesn't finish him, he must have the constitution of an elephant.”



## CHAPTER LII.

### HOW TO MEET A SCANDAL.

WHEN the Government of the day had found that all their efforts to induce the Chief Baron to retire from the Bench were failures—when they saw him firmly decided to accept nothing less than that price which they would not pay—with a littleness which, it is but fair to own, took its origin from Mr Cholmondely Balfour, they determined to pass upon him a slight which he could not but feel most painfully.

It happened in this wise. At the time I speak of Ireland was suffering from one of those spasmodic attacks of rebellion which every now and then occur through the chronic disaffection of the country, just as certain eruptions are thrown out over the body to relieve, as is supposed, some feverish tendencies of the system.

Now, although the native thinks no more of these passing troubles than would an old Indian of an attack of the “prickly heat,” to the English mind

they always suggest danger, tend to increase the military force of the kingdom, and bring on in Parliament one of those Irish debates—a political sham-fight—where, though there is a good deal of smoke, bustle, and confusion, nobody is hurt, nor, if the truth be told, is any one the better when it is over.

Through such a paroxysm was Ireland now passing. It matters little to our purpose to give it a specific name, for the Whiteboy or the Rockite, the Terry-Alt, the Ribbonman, or the Fenian are the same; there being only one character in this dreary drama, however acute Viceroy and energetic Secretaries may affect to think they are “assisting” at the representation of a perfectly new piece, with new scenery, dresses, and decorations.

In ordinary disturbances in Ireland, whenever they rose above the dignity of local mischief, the assistance and sympathy of France was always used as a sort of menace to England. It was a threat very certain to irritate, if it did no more. As, however, by course of time, we grew to form closer relations with France—to believe, or affect to believe—I am not very sure which—that we had outlived old grudges, and had become rather ashamed of old rivalries, France could not be employed as the bugbear it had once been. Fortunately for Irish rebellion, America was quite prepared to take the vacant post, and with this immense additional gain, that

the use of our own language enabled our disaffected in the States to revile us with a freedom and a vigour which, if there be that benefit which is said to exist in "seeing ourselves as others see us," ought unquestionably to redound to our future good.

The present movement had gone so far as to fill the public mind with terror, and our jails with suspected traitors. To try these men, a special commission had been named by the Government, from which, contrary to custom, the Chief Baron had been omitted. Nor was this all. The various newspapers supposed to be organs, or at least advocates, of the Ministry, kept up a continuous stream of comment on the grave injury to a country, at a crisis like that then present, to have one of its chief judicial seats occupied by one whose age and infirmities totally disabled him from rendering those services which the crown and the nation alike had a right to expect from him.

Stories, for the most part untrue, of the Chief Baron's mistakes on the Bench appeared daily. Imaginary suitors, angry solicitors, and suchlike—the Bar was too dignified to join in the cry—wrote letters averring this, that, or the other cruel wrong inflicted upon them through the "senile incapacity of this obstructive and vain old man."

Never was there a less adroit tactic. Every insult they hurled at him only suggested a fresh resolve to

hold his ground. To attack such a man was to evoke every spark of vigorous resistance in his nature, to stimulate energies which nothing short of outrage could awaken, and to call into activity powers which, in the ordinary course of events, would have fallen into decline and decay. As he expressed it, "In trying to extinguish the lamp they have only trimmed the wick." When, through Sewell's pernicious counsels, the old Judge determined to convince the world of his judicial fitness by coming out a young man, dressed in the latest fashion, and affecting in his gait and manner the last fopperies of the day, all the reserve which respect for his great abilities had imposed was thrown aside, and the papers now assailed him with a ridicule that was downright indecent. The print-shops, too, took up the theme, and the windows were filled with caricatures of every imaginable degree of absurdity.

There was one man to whom these offensive attacks gave pain only inferior to what they inflicted on the Chief himself—this was his friend Haire. To have lived to see the great object of all his homage thus treated by an ungrateful country seemed to him the direst of all calamities. Over and over did he ponder with himself whether such depravity of public feeling portended the coming decline of the nation, and whether such gross forgetfulness of great

services was not to be taken as a sign of approaching dissolution.

It was true that since the Sewells had taken up their residence at the Priory he had seen but little of his distinguished friend. All the habits, the hours, and the associations of the house had been changed. The old butler, who used to receive Haire when he arrived on terms of humble friendship, telling him in confidence, before he went in, the temper in which he should find the Judge, what crosses or worries had recently befallen him, and what themes it might be discreet to avoid—he was pensioned off, and in his place a smart Englishman, Mr Cheetor, now figured—a gentleman whose very accent, not to speak of his dress, would have awed poor Haire into downright subjection. The large back hall, through which you passed into the garden—a favourite stroll of Haire's in olden times—was now a billiard-room, and generally filled with fine ladies and gentlemen engaged in playing; the very sight of a lady with a billiard-cue, and not impossibly a cigarette, being shocks to the old man's notions only short of seeing the fair delinquent led off to the watchhouse. The drowsy quietude of the place, so grateful after the crush and tumult of a city, was gone; and there was the clang of a pianoforte, the rattle of the billiard-balls, the loud talk and loud laughter of morning visitors, in its stead. The quaint, old, grey liveries were chang-

ed for coats of brilliant claret-colour. Even to the time-honoured glass of brandy-and-water which welcomed Haire as he walked out from town there was revolution; and the measure of the old man's discomfiture was complete as the silvery-tongued butler offered him his choice of hock and seltzer or claret-cup!

“Does the Chief like all this? is it possible that at his age these changes can please him?” muttered Haire, as he sauntered one day homeward, sad and dispirited; and it would not have been easy to resolve the question.

There was so much that flattered the old Judge's vanity—so much that addressed itself to that consciousness that his years were no barrier to his sentiments, that into all that went on in life, whatever of new that men introduced into their ways or habits, he was just as capable of entering as the youngest amongst them; and this avidity to be behind in nothing showed itself in the way he would read the sporting papers, and make himself up in the odds at Newmarket and the last news of the Cambridge Eleven. It is true, never was there a more ready-money payment than the admiration he reaped from all this; and enthusiastic cornets went so far as to lament how the genius that might have done great things at Doncaster had been buried in a Court of Exchequer. “I wish he'd tell us who'll win the



Rigglesworth"—"I'd give a fifty to know what he thinks of Polly Perkins for the cup," were the dropping utterances of mustachioed youths who would have turned away inattentive on any mention of his triumphs in the Senate or at the Bar.

"I declare, mother," said Sewell, in one of those morning calls at Merrion Square in which he kept her alive to the events of the Priory—"I declare, mother, if we could get *you* out of the way, I think he'd marry again. He's uncommonly tender towards one of those Lascelles girls, nieces of the Viceroy, and I am certain he would propose for her."

"I'm sure I'm very sorry I should be an obstacle to him, especially as it prevents him from crowning the whole folly of his life."

"She's a great horsewoman, and he has given me a commission to get him a saddle-horse to ride with her."

"Which of course you will not."

"Which of course I will, though. I'm going about it now. He has been very intractable about stable matters hitherto; the utmost we could do was to exchange the old long-tailed coach-horses, and get rid of that vile old chariot; but if we get him once launched into riding hacks, we'll have something to mount us."

"And when his granddaughter returns, will not all go back to the former state?"

“First of all, she’s not coming. There’s a split in that quarter, and in all likelihood an irremediable one.”

“How so? What has she done?”

“She has fallen in love with a young fellow as poor as herself; and her brother Tom has written to the Chief to know if he sees any reason why they should not marry. The very idea of an act of such insubordination as falling in love of course outraged him. He took my wife into his counsels besides, and she, it would appear, gave a most unfavourable character of the suitor,—said he was a gambler—and we all know what a hopeless thing that is!—that his family had thrown him off; that he had gone through the whole of his patrimony, and was, in short, just as bad ‘a lot’ as could well be found.”

“She was quite right to say so,” burst in Lady Lendrick. “I really do not see how she could have done otherwise.”

“Perhaps not; the only possible objection was, that there was no truth in it all.”

“Not true!”

“Not a word of it, except what relates to his quarrel with his family. As for the rest, he is pretty much like other fellows of his age and time of life. He has done the sort of things they all do, and hitherto has come fairly enough out of them.”

“But what motive could she have had for blackening him?”



“Ask her, mother,” said he, with a grin of devilish spitefulness—“just ask her; and even if she won’t tell you, your woman’s wit will find out the reason without her aid.”

“I declare, Dudley, you are too bad—too bad,” said she, colouring with anger as she spoke.

“I should say,—Too good—too good by half, mother; at least, if endurance be any virtue. The world is beautifully generous towards us husbands. We are either monsters of cruelty, or we come into that category the French call ‘complaisant.’ I can’t say I have any fancy for either class; but if I am driven to a choice, I accept the part which meets the natural easiness of my disposition, the general kindness of my character.”

For an instant Lady Lendrick’s eyes flashed with a fiery indignation, and she seemed about to reply with anger; but with an effort she controlled her passion, and took a turn or two in the room without speaking. At last, having recovered her calm, she said, “Is the marriage project then broken off?”

“So far as the Chief is concerned, it is. He has written a furious letter to his granddaughter—dwelt forcibly on the ingratitude of her conduct. There is nothing old people so constantly refer to ingratitude as young folks falling in love. It is strange what a close tie would seem to connect this sin of ingratitude with the tender passion. He has reminded her

of all the good precepts and wise examples that were placed before her at the Priory, and how shamefully she would seem to have forgotten them. He asks her, Did she ever see him fall in love? did she ever see any weakness of this kind in Mrs Beales the housekeeper, or Joe the gardener?"

"What stuff and nonsense!" said Lady Lendrick, turning angrily away from him. "Sir William is not an angel, but as certainly he is not a fool."

"There I differ from you altogether. He may be the craftiest lawyer, the wisest judge, the neatest scholar, and the best talker of his day—these are all claims I cannot adjudicate on—they are far and away above me. But I *do* pretend to know something about life and the world we live in, and I tell you that your all-accomplished Chief Baron is, in whatever relates to these, as consummate an ass as ever I met with. It is not that he is sometimes wrong. It is that he is never right."

"I can imagine he is not very clever at billiards, and it is possible that there may be persons more conversant than he with the odds at Tattersall's," said she, with a sneer.

"Not bad things to know something about, either of them," said he, quietly; "but not exactly what I was alluding to. It is, however, somewhat amusing, mother, to see you come out as his defender. I assure you, honestly, when I counselled him on that new wig,

and advised him to the choice of that dark velvet paletot, I never contemplated his making a conquest of *you*."

"He *has* done some unwise things in life," said she, with a fierce energy; "but I do not know if he has ever done so foolish a one as inviting you to come to live under his roof."

"No, mother; the mistake was his not having done it earlier—done it when he might have fallen in more readily with the wise changes I have introduced into his household, and when—most important element—he had a better balance at his banker's. You can't imagine what sums of money he has gone through."

"I know nothing—I do not desire to know anything—of Sir William's money matters."

Not heeding in the slightest degree the tone of reproof she spoke in, he went on, in the train of his own thoughts—"Yes! It would have made a considerable difference to each of us had we met somewhat earlier. It was the sort of backing I always wanted in life."

"There was something else that you needed far more," said she, with a sarcastic sternness.

"I know what you mean, mother—I know what it is. Your politeness will not permit you to mention it. You would hint that I might not have been the worse of a little honesty—isn't that it? I was certain of it. Well, do you know, mother, there's

nothing in it—positively nothing. I've met fellows who have tried it—clever fellows too, some of them—and they have universally admitted it was as great a sham as the other thing. As St John said, Honesty is a sort of balloon jib, that will bowl you along splendidly with fair weather; but when it comes on to blow you'll soon find it better to shift your canvass and bend a very different sail. Now, men like myself are out in all kinds of weather; we want a handy rig and light tackle."

"Is Lucy coming to luncheon?" said Lady Lendrick, most unmistakably showing how little palatable to her was his discourse.

"Not she. She's performing devoted mother up at the Priory, teaching Regy his catechism, or Cary her scales, or, what has an infinitely finer effect on the surrounders, dining with the children. Only dine with the children, and you may run a-muck through the Decalogue all the evening after."

And with this profound piece of morality he adjusted his hat before the glass, trimmed his whiskers, gave himself a friendly nod, and walked away.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### TWO MEN WELL MET.

SEWELL had long coveted the suite of rooms known at the Priory as "Miss Lucy's." They were on the ground floor; they opened on a small enclosed garden of their own; they had a delicious aspect; and it was a thousand pities they should be consigned to darkness and spiders while he wanted so much a snugger of his own—a little territory which could be approached without coming through the great entrance; and where he could receive his familiars, and a variety of other creatures whose externals alone would have denied them admittance to any decent household.

Now, although Sir William's letter to Lucy was the sort of document which, admitting no species of reply, usually closes a correspondence, Sewell had not courage to ask the Chief for the rooms in question. It would be too like peremptory action to be prudent. It might lead the old man to reconsider his judgment. Who knows what tender memories

the thought might call up? Indeed, as Sewell himself remembered, he had seen fellows in India show great emotion at the sale of a comrade's kit, though they had read the news of his death with comparative composure. "If the old fellow were to toddle in here, and see her chair, and her writing-table, and her easel, it might undo everything," said he; so that he wisely resolved it would be better to occupy the premises without a title than endeavour to obtain them legitimately.

By a slight effort of diplomacy with Mrs Beales, he obtained possession of the key, and as speedily installed himself in occupancy. Indeed, when the venerable housekeeper came round to see what the Colonel could possibly want to do with the rooms, she scarcely recognised them. A pipe-rack covered one wall, furnished with every imaginable engine for smoke; a stand for rifles and fowling-pieces occupied a corner; some select prints of Derby winners and ballet celebrities were scattered about; while a small African monkey, of that colour they call green, sat in a small arm-chair of his own, near the window, apparently sunk in deep reflection. This creature, whom his master called Dundas—I am unable to say after what other representative of the name—was gifted with an instinctive appreciation of duns, and flew at the man who presented a bill as unerringly as ever a bull rushed at the bearer of a red rag.



How he learned to know tailors, shoemakers, and tobacconists, and distinguish them from the rest of mankind, and how he recognised them as natural enemies, I cannot say. As for Sewell, he always spoke of the gift as the very strongest evidence in favour of the Darwinian theory, and declared it was the prospective sense of troubles to come that suggested the instinct. The chalk head, the portrait Lucy had made of Sir Brook, still hung over the fire-place. It would be a curious subject of inquiry to know why Sewell suffered it still to hold its place there. If there was a man in the world whom he thoroughly hated, it was Fossbrooke. If there was one to injure whom he would have bartered fortune and benefit to himself, it was he. And how came it that he could bear to have this reminder of him so perpetually before his eyes?—that the stern features should be ever bent upon him—darkly, reproachfully lowering, as he had often seen them in life? If it were simply that his tenure of the place was insecure, what so easy as to replace the picture, and why should he endure the insult of its presence there? No, there was some other reason—some sentiment stronger than a reason—some sense of danger in meddling with that man in any shape. Over and over again he vowed to himself he would hang it against a tree, and make a pistol-mark of it. Again and again he swore that he would destroy it; he even drew out

his penknife to sever the head from the neck, significant sign of how he would like to treat the original ; but yet he had replaced his knife, and repressed his resolve, and sat down again to brood over his anger inoperative.

To frown at the "old rascal," as he loved to call him—to menace him with his fist as he passed—to scowl at him as he sat before the fire, were, after all, the limits of his wrath ; but still the picture exerted a certain influence over him, and actually inspired a sense of fear as well as a sense of hatred.

Am I imposing too much on my reader's memory by asking him to recall a certain Mr O'Reardon, in whose humble dwelling at Cullen's Wood Sir Brook Fossbrooke was at one time a lodger? Mr O'Reardon, though an official of one of the law courts, and a patriot by profession, may not have made that amount of impression necessary to retain a place in the reader's recollection, nor indeed is it my desire to be exacting on this head. He is not the very best of company, and we shall not see much of him.

When Sewell succeeded to the office of Registrar, which the old Judge carried against the Castle with a high hand, he found Mr O'Reardon there ; he had just been promoted to the rank of keeper of the waiting-room. In the same quick glance with which the shrewd Colonel was wont to single out a horse, and knew the exact sort of quality he possessed, he read



this man, and saw, with rapid intelligence, the stuff he was made of, and the sort of service he could render.

He called him into his office, and, closing the door, asked him a few questions about his former life. O'Reardon, long accustomed to regard the man who spoke with an English accent as an easy dupe, launched out on his devoted loyalty, the perils it had cost him, the hate to which his English attachment exposed him from his countrymen, and the little reward all his long-proved fidelity had ever won him; but Sewell cut him suddenly short with—"Don't try any of this sort of balderdash upon *me*, old fellow—it's only lost time; I've been dealing with blackguards of your stamp all my life, and I read them like print."

"Oh! your honour, them's hard words—blackguard, blackguard! to a decent man that always had a good name and a good character."

"What I want you to understand is this," said Sewell, scanning him keenly while he spoke, "and to understand it well: that if you intend to serve me, and make yourself useful in whatever way I see fit to employ you, there must be no humbug about it. The first lesson you have to learn is, never to imagine you can take me in. As I have just told you, I have had my education amongst fellows more than your masters in craft—so don't lose your time in trying to outrogue me."

“Your honour’s practical—I always like to serve a gentleman that’s practical,” said the fellow, with a totally changed voice.

“That will do—speak that way—drop your infernal whine—turn out your patriotic sentiments to grass, and we’ll get on comfortably.”

“Be gorra! that’s practical—practical, every word of it.”

“Now the first thing I want is to know who are the people who come here. I shall require to be able to distinguish those who are accustomed to frequent the office from strangers; I suppose you know the attorneys and solicitors, all of them?”

“Every man of them, sir; there’s not a man in Dublin with a pair of black trousers that I couldn’t give you the history of.”

“That’s practical, certainly,” said Sewell, adopting his phrase; and the other laughed pleasantly at the employment of it. “Whenever you have to announce persons that are strangers to you, and whose business you can’t find out, mention that I am most busily engaged—that persons of consequence are with me—delay them, in short, and put them off for another day——”

“Till I can find out all about them?” broke in O’Reardon.

“Exactly.”

“And that’s what I can do as well as any man in

Ireland," said the fellow, overjoyed at the thought of such congenial labour.

"I suppose you know a dun by the look of him?" asked Sewell, with a low, quiet laugh.

"Don't I then?" was the reply.

"I'll have none of them hanging about here—mind that; you may tell them what you please, but take care that my orders are obeyed."

"I will, sir."

"I shall probably not come down every day to the office; it may chance that I may be absent a week at a time; but remember, I am always here—you understand—I am here, or I am at the Chief Baron's chambers—somewhere, in short, about the Court."

"Up in one of the arbitration rooms, maybe," added O'Reardon, to show he perfectly comprehended his instructions.

"But whether I come to the office or not, I shall expect you every morning at the Priory, to report to me whatever I ought to know—who has called—what rumours are afloat; and mind you tell everything as it reaches you. If you put on any embroidery of your own I'll detect it at once, and out you go, Master O'Reardon, notwithstanding all your long services and all your loyalty."

"Practical, upon my conscience—always practical," said the fellow, with a grin of keen approval.

"One caution more; I'm a tolerably good friend

to the man who serves me faithfully. When things go well I reward liberally; but if a fellow doubles on me, if he plays me false, I'll back myself to be the worst enemy he ever met with. That's practical, isn't it?"

"It is indeed, sir—nothing more so."

"I'll expect you to begin your visits on Thursday, then. Don't come to the hall door, but pass round by the end of the house, and into the little garden. I'll leave the gate open, and you'll find my room easily. It opens on the garden. Be with me by eleven."

Colonel Sewell was not more than just to himself when he affirmed that he read men very quickly. As the practised cashier never hesitates about the genuineness of a note, but detects the forgery at a glance, this man had an instinctive appreciation of a scoundrel. Who knows if there be not some magnetic affinity between such natures, that saves them the process of thought and reason? He was right in the present case. O'Reardon was the very man he wanted. The fellow liked the life of a spy and an informer. To track, trace, connect this with that, and seek out the missing link which gave connection to the chain, had for him the fascination of a game, and until now his qualities had never been fairly appreciated. It was with pride too that he showed his patron that his gifts could be more widely exercised

than within the narrow limits of an antechamber; for he brought him the name of the man who wrote in 'The Starlight' the last abusive article on the Chief Baron, and had date and place for the visit of the same man to the under-secretary, Mr Cholmondely Balfour. He gave him the latest news of the Curragh, and how Faunus had cut his frog in a training gallop, and that it was totally impossible he could be "placed" for his race. There were various delicate little scandals in the life of society too, which, however piquant to Sewell's ears, could have no interest for us; while of the sums lost at play, and the costly devices to raise the payments, even Sewell himself was amazed at the accuracy and extent of his information.

Mr O'Reardon was one of a small knot of choice spirits who met every night and exchanged notes. Doubtless each had certain "reserves" which he kept strictly to himself; but otherwise they dealt very frankly and loyally with each other, well aware that it was only on such a foundation their system could be built; and the training groom, and the butler, and the club waiter, the office messenger, and the penny-postman, became very active and potent agents in that strange drama we call life.

Now, though Mr O'Reardon had presented himself each morning with due punctuality at the little garden, in which he was wont to make his report while

Sewell smoked his morning cigar, for some days back the Colonel had not appeared. He had gone down to the country to a pigeon match, from which he returned vexed and disappointed. He had shot badly, lost his money, lost his time, and lost his temper—even to the extent of quarrelling with a young fellow whom he had long been speculating on “rook-ing,” and from whom he had now parted on terms that excluded further acquaintance.

Although it was a lovely morning, and the garden looking its very brightest and best—the birds singing sweetly on the trees, and the air balmy with the jasmine and the sweetbriar—Sewell strolled out upon the velvety sward in anything but a mood of kindred enjoyment. His bills were flying about on all sides, renewals upon renewals swelling up to formidable sums, for which he had not made any provision. Though his residence at the Priory, and his confident assurance to his creditors that the old Judge had made him his heir, obtained a certain credit for him, there were “small-minded scoundrels,” as he called them, who wouldn’t wait for their fifty per cent. In his desperation to stave off the demands he could not satisfy, he had been driven to very ruinous expedients. He sold timber off the lawn without the old Judge’s knowledge, and only hesitated about forging Sir William’s name through the conviction that the document to which he would have to append it would



itself suggest suspicion of the fraud. His increasing necessities had so far impaired his temper that men began to decline to play with him. Nobody was sure of him, and this cause augmented the difficulties of his position. Formerly his two or three hours at the club before dinner, or his evening at mess, were certain to keep him in current cash. He could hold out his handful of sovereigns, and offer to bet them in that reckless carelessness which, amongst very young men, is accepted as something akin to generosity. Now his supply was almost stopped, not to say that he found, what many have found, the rising generation endowed with an amount of acuteness that formerly none attained to without sore experiences and sharp lessons.

“Confound them,” he would say, “there are curs without fluff on their chins that know the odds at Newmarket as well as John Day! What chance has a man with youngsters that understand the ‘call for trumps’?”

It was thus moralising over a world in decline that he strolled through the garden, his unlit cigar held firm between his teeth, and his hands deep sunk in his trousers pockets. As he turned an angle of a walk, he was arrested by a very silky voice saying, “Your honour’s welcome home. I hope your honour’s well, and enjoyed yourself when you were away.”



“Ah, O’Reardon, that you! pretty well, thank you; quite well, I believe; at least, as well as any man can be who is in want of money, and does not know where to find it.”

Mr O’Reardon grinned, as if *that*, at least, was one of the contingencies his affluent chief could never have had any experience of. “Moses is to run after all, sir,” said he, after a pause; “the bandages was all a sham—he never broke down.”

“So much the worse for me. I took the heavy odds against him on your fine information,” said Sewell, savagely.

“You’ll not be hurt this time. He’ll have a tongue as big as three on the day of the race; and there will be no putting a bridle on him.”

“I don’t believe in that trick, O’Reardon.”

“I do, sir; and I’m laying the only ten-pound note I have on it,” said the other, calmly.

“What about Mary Draper? is she coughing still?”

“She is, sir, and won’t feed besides; but Mr Harman is in such trouble about his wife going off with Captain Peters, that he never thinks of the mare. Any one goes into the stable that likes.”

“Confounded fool he must be. He stood heavily on that mare. When did Lady Jane bolt?”

“On Tuesday night, sir. She was here at the Priory at luncheon with Captain Peters that morn-

ing. She and Mrs Sewell were walking more than an hour together in the back garden."

"Did you overhear anything they said?"

"Only once, sir, for they spoke low; but one time your lady said aloud, 'If any one blames you, dear, it won't be me.' I think the other was crying when she said it."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Sewell, angrily.

"She's gone away at all events, sir; and Mr Harman's out of his mind about it. Cross told me this morning that he wouldn't be surprised if his master cut his throat or went to live on the Continent."

"Do you happen to know anybody would lend me a thousand pounds on no particular security, O'Reardon?"

"Not just at the minute—perhaps if I had a day or two to think of it."

"I could give you a week—a fortnight if it was any use, but it is not; and you know it's not, Master O'Reardon, as well as any man breathing."

There was a silence of some minutes now between them; and while Sewell brooded over his hard fortune, O'Reardon seemed to be reviewing in his mind the state of the share market, and taking a sweeping view of the course of the exchanges.

"Well, indeed, sir, money is tight—mighty tight, at this time. Old M'Cabe of the lottery office

wouldn't advance three hundred to Lord Arthur St Aubin without the family plate, and I saw the covered dishes going in myself."

"I wish *I* had family plate," sighed Sewell.

"So you will yet, please God," said the other, piously. "His lordship can't live for ever! But jewels is as good," resumed he, after a slight pause.

"I have just as much of the one as the other, O'Reardon. They were a sort of scrip I never invested in."

"It isn't a bad thing to do, after all. I remember poor Mr Giles Morony saying one day—'I dined yesterday, Tom,' says he, 'off one of my wife's earrings, and I never ate a better dinner in my life; and with the blessing of Providence I'll go drunk to bed off the other to-night.'"

"Wasn't he hanged afterwards for a murder?"

"No, sir—sentenced, but never hanged. Mr Wallace got him off on a writ of error. He was a most agreeable man. Has Mrs Sewell any trinkets of value, sir?"

"I believe not—I don't know—I don't care," said he, angrily; for the subject, as an *apropos*, was scarcely pleasant. "Any one at the office since I left?" asked he, with a twang of irritation still in his tone.

"That ould man I tould your honour about called three times."

"You told me nothing of any old man."

“ I wrote it twice to your honour since I saw you, and left the letters here myself.”

“ You don't think I break open letters in such handwriting as yours, do you ? Why, man, my table is covered with them. Who is the old man you speak of ?”

“ Well, sir, that's more than I know yet ; but I'll be well acquainted with all about him before a week ends, for I knew him before, and he puzzled me too.”

“ What's his business with me ?”

“ He would not tell. Indeed he's not much given to talk. He just says, 'Is Colonel Sewell here?' and when I answer, 'No, sir,' he goes on, 'Can you tell the day or the hour when I may find him here?' Of course I say that your honour might come at any moment—that your time is uncertain, and such-like—that you're greatly occupied with the Chief Baron.”

“ What is he like ? is he a gentleman ?”

“ I think he is—at least he was once ; for though his clothes is not new and his boots are patched, there's a look about him that common people never have.”

“ Is he short or tall ? What is he like ?” Just as Sewell had put this question they had gained the door of the little sitting-room which lay wide open, admitting a full view of the interior. “ Give me some notion of his appearance, if you can.”

“There he is, then,” cried O’Reardon, pointing to the chalk head over the chimney. “That’s himself, and as like as life.”

“What? that!” exclaimed Sewell, clutching the man’s arm, and actually shaking him in his eagerness. “Do you mean that he is the same man you see here?”

“I do indeed, sir. There’s no mistaking him. His beard’s a little longer than the picture, and he’s thinner, perhaps; but that’s the man.”

Sewell sat down on the chair nearest him, sick and faint; a cold clammy sweat broke over his face and temples, and he felt the horrible nausea of intense weakness. “Tell me,” said he at last, with a great effort to seem calm, “just the words he said, as nearly as you can recall them.”

“It was what I told your honour. ‘Is Colonel Sewell here? Is there no means of knowing when he may be found here?’ And then when I’d say, ‘What name am I to give? who is it I’m to say called?’ his answer would be, ‘That is no concern of yours. It is for me to leave my name or not, as it pleases me.’ I was going to remind him that he once lodged in my house at Cullen’s Wood, but I thought better of it, and said nothing.”

“Did he speak of calling again?”

“No, but he came yesterday; and whether he thought I was denying your honour or not I don’t

know, but he sat down in the waiting-room and smoked a cigar there, and heard two or three come in and ask for you and get the same answer."

Sewell groaned heavily, and covered his face with his hands.

"I think," said O'Reardon, with a half-hesitating, timid manner, as though it was a case where any blunder would be very awkward, "that if it was how that this man was any trouble—I mean any sort of an inconvenience to your honour—and that it was displeasing to your honour to have any dealings with him, I think I could find a way to make him cut his stick and leave the country; or if he wouldn't do that, come to worse luck here."

"What do you mean—have you anything against him?" cried Sewell, with a wild eagerness.

"If I'm not much mistaken, I can soon have against him as much as his life's worth."

"If you could," said Sewell, clutching both his arms, and staring him fixedly in the face—"if you could! I mean if you could rid me of him, now and for ever—I don't care how, and I'll not ask how—only do it; and I'll swear to you there's nothing in my power to serve you I'll refuse doing—nothing!"

"What's between your honour and him?" said O'Reardon, with an assurance that his present power suggested.

"How dare you ask me, sir? Do you imagine



that when I take such a fellow as you into my service, I make him my confidant and my friend?"

"That's true, sir," said the other, whose face only grew paler under this insult, while his manner regained all its former subserviency—"that's true, sir. My interest about your honour made me forget myself; and I was thinking how I could be most use to you. But, as your honour says, it's no business of mine at all."

"None whatever," said Sewell, sternly; for a sudden suspicion had crossed him of what such a fellow as this might become if once intrusted with the power of a secret.

"Then it's better, your honour," said he, with a slavish whine, "that I'd keep to what I'm fit for—sweeping out the office, and taking the messages, and the like, and not try things that's above me."

"You'll just do whatever my service requires, and whenever *I* find that you do it ill, do it unfaithfully, or even unwillingly, we part company, Master O'Reardon. Is that intelligible?"

"Then, sir, the sooner you fill up my place the better. I'll give notice now, and your honour has fifteen days to get one that will suit him better."

Sewell turned on him a look of savage hatred. He read, through all the assumed humility of the fellow's manner, the determined insolence of his stand.

"Go now, and go to the devil, if you like, so that



I never see your hang-dog face again; that's all I bargain for."

"Good morning, sir; there's the key of the office, and that's the key of the small safe; Mr Simmes has the other. There's a little account I have—it's only a few shillings is coming to me. I'll leave it here to-morrow; and if your honour would like me to tell the new man about the people that come after your honour—who's to be let in and who's not——"

Sewell made a haughty gesture with his arm as though to say that he need not trouble himself on that head.

"Here's them cigars your honour gave me last week. I suppose I ought to hand them back, now that I'm discharged and turned away."

"You have discharged yourself, my good friend. With a civil tongue in your head, and ordinary prudence, you might have held on to your place till it was time to pension you out of it."

"Then I crave your honour's pardon, and you'll never have to find the same fault with me again. It was just breaking my heart it was—the thought of leaving your honour."

"That's enough about it—go back to your duty. Mind *your* business; and take good care you never meddle with mine."

"Has your honour any orders?" said O'Reardon, with his ordinary tone of respectful attention.

“Find out if Hughes is well enough to ride; they tell me he was worse yesterday. Don't bother me any more about that fellow that writes the attacks on the Chief Baron. They do the thing better now in the English papers, and ask nothing for it. Look out for some one who will advance me a little money—even a couple of hundreds; and above all, track the old fellow who called at the office; find out what he's in Ireland for, and how long he stays. I intend to go to the country this evening, so that you'll have to write your report—the post-town is Killaloe.”

“And if the ould man presses me hard,” said O'Reardon, with one eye knowingly closed, “your honour's gone over to England, and won't be back till the cock-shooting.”

Sewell nodded, and with a gesture dismissed the fellow, half ashamed at the familiarity that not only seemed to read his thoughts, but to follow them out to their conclusions.

## CHAPTER LIV.

### A SURPRISE.

IN a little cabin, standing on the extreme point of the promontory of Howth, which its fisherman owner usually let to lodgers in the bathing season, Sir Brook Fossbrooke had taken up his abode. The view was glorious from the window where he generally sat, and took in the whole sweep of the bay, from Killiney, with the background of the Wicklow mountains, to the very cliffs at his feet; and when the weather was favourable—an event, I grieve to say, not of everyday occurrence—leading him often to doubt, whether in its graceful outline and varied colour he did not prefer it to Cagliari, with its waving orange groves and vine-clad slopes.

He made a little water-colour drawing to enclose in a letter to Lucy; and now, as he sat gazing on the scene, he saw some effect of light on the landscape which made him half-disposed to destroy his sketch and begin another. “Tell your sister, Tom,”

wrote he, "that if my letter to her goes without the picture I promised her, it is because the sun has just got behind a sort of tattered broken cloud, and is streaming down long slips of light over the Wicklow hills and the woods at their feet, which are driving me crazy with envy; but if I look on it any longer, I shall only lose another post, so now to my task:

"Although I remained a day in the neighbourhood, I was not received at Holt. Sir Hugh was ill, and most probably never heard of my vicinity. Lady Trafford sent me a polite—a very polite note of regrets, &c., for not being able to ask me to the house, which she called a veritable hospital, the younger son having just returned from Madeira dangerously ill. She expressed a hope, more courteous possibly than sincere, that my stay in England would allow my returning and passing some days there, to which I sent a civil answer and went my way. The young fellow, I hear, cannot recover, so that Lionel will be the heir after all; that is, if Sir Hugh's temper should not carry him to the extent of disinheriting his son for a stranger. I was spared my trip to Cornwall; spared it by meeting in London with a knot of mining people, 'Craig, Pears, and Denk,' who examined our ore, and pronounced it the finest ever brought to England. As the material for the white lead of commerce, they say it is unrivalled; and when I told them that our supply might be called inex-

haustible, they began to regard me as a sort of Cræsus. I dined with them at a City club, called, I think, the Gresham, a very grand entertainment—turtle and blackcock in abundance, and a deal of talk—very bumptious talk of all the money we were all going to make, and how our shares, for we are to be a company, must run up within a week to eight or ten premium. They are, I doubt not, very honest fine fellows, but they are vulgar dogs, Tom, I may say it to you in confidence, and use freedoms with each other in intercourse that are scarcely pleasing. To myself personally there was no lack of courtesy, nor can I complain that there was any forgetfulness of due respect. I could not accept their invitation to a second dinner at Greenwich, but deferred it till my return from Ireland.

“I came on here on Wednesday last, and if you ask me what I have done, my answer is, Nothing—absolutely nothing. I have been four several times at the office where Sewell presides, but always to meet the same reply, ‘Not in town to-day ;’ and now I learn that he is hunting somewhere in Cheshire. I am averse to going after him to the Chief Baron’s house, where he resides, and am yet uncertain how to act. It is just possible he may have learned that I am in Ireland, and is keeping out of my way, though I have neglected no precaution of secrecy, have taken a humble lodging some miles from town,

and have my letters addressed to the post-office to be called for. Up to this I have not met one who knows me. The Viceroy is away in England, and in broken health, indeed so ill that his return to Ireland is more than doubtful; and Balfour, who might have recognised me, is happily so much occupied with the 'Celts,' as the latest rebels call themselves, that he has no time to go much abroad.

"The papers which I have sent you regularly since my arrival will inform you about this absurd movement. You will also see the debate on your grandfather. He will not retire, do all that they may; and now, as a measure of insult, they have named a special commission and omitted his name.

"They went so far as to accuse him of senile weakness and incapacity; but a letter which has been published with his name is one of the most terrific pieces of invective I ever read: I will try and get a copy to send you.

"I am anxious to call and see Beattie; but until I have met Sewell, and got this troublesome task off my mind, I have no heart for anything. From chance travellers in the train, as I go up to town, I hear that the Chief Baron is living at a most expensive rate—large dinners every week, and costly morning parties, of a style Dublin has not seen before. They say, too, that he dresses now like a man of five-and-thirty, rides a blood horse, and is seen



joining in all the festivities of the capital. Of myself, of course, I can confirm none of these stories. There comes the rain again! It is now dashing like hail against the windows; and of the beautiful bay, and the rocky islands, the leafy shore, and the indented coast-line, I can see nothing—nothing but the dense downpour that, thickening at every moment, shuts out all view, so that even the spars of the little pinnace in the bay beneath are now lost to me. A few minutes ago I was ready to declare that Europe had nothing to compare with this island, and now I'd rather take rocky Ischia, with its scraggy cliffs, sunlit and scorching, than live here watery and bloated, like a slug on a garden-wall. Perhaps my temper is not improved by the reflection that I'll have to walk to the post, about two miles off, with this letter, and then come back to my own sad company for the rest of the evening.

“I had half a mind to run down and look at the Nest, but I am told I should not know it again, it has been so changed in every way. I have spared myself therefore the pain the sight would have given me, and kept my memory of it as I saw it on my first visit, when Lucy met me at the door. Tell her from me, that when——”

The letter broke off here, and was continued lower down the page in a more hurried hand, thus:—



“In their ardour to suppress the insurrection here, some one has denounced *me*; and my pistols, and my packet of lead, and my bullet-mould, have so far confirmed suspicion against me, that I am to go forthwith before a magistrate. It is so far provoking that my name will probably figure in the newspapers, and I have no fancy to furnish a laugh to the town on such grounds. The chief of the party (there are three of them, and evidently came prepared to expect resistance) is very polite, and permits me to add these few lines to explain my abrupt conclusion. Tell Lucy I shall keep back my letter to her, and finish it to-morrow. I do not know well whether to laugh or be angry at this incident. If a mere mistake, it is of course absurd, but the warrant seems correct in every respect. The officer assures me that any respectable bail will be at once accepted by the magistrate; and I have not the courage to tell him that I do not possess a single friend or acquaintance in this city whom I could ask to be my surety.

“After all, I take it, the best way is to laugh at the incident. It was only last night, as I walked home here in the dark, I was thinking I had grown too old for adventures, and here comes one—at least it may prove so—to contradict me.

“The car to convey me to town has arrived; and

with loves to dear Lu and yourself, I am, as ever,  
yours,

“BK. FOSSBROOKE.

“It is a great relief to me—it will be also to you  
—to learn that the magistrate can, if he please, ex-  
amine me in private.”

U. OF ILL. LIB.

## CHAPTER LV.

### THE CHIEF AND HIS FRIEND.

A FEW days after the conversation just related in the chapter before the last, while the Chief Baron was undergoing the somewhat protracted process of a morning toilet—for it needed a nice hand and a critical eye to give the curls of that wig their fitting wave, and not to “charge” those shrunken cheeks with any redundant colour—Mr Haire was announced.

“Say I shall be down immediately—I am in my bath,” said the Chief, who had hitherto admitted his old friend at all times and seasons.

While Haire was pacing the long dinner-room with solemn steps, wondering at the change from those days when the Chief would never have thought of making him wait for an interview, Sir William, attired in a long dark-blue silk dressing-gown, and with a gold-tasselled cap to match, entered the room, bringing with him a perfumed atmosphere, so loaded with *bergamot* that his old friend almost sneezed at

it. "I hurried my dressing, Haire, when they told me you were here. It is a rare event to have a visit from you of late," said the old man, as he sat down and disposed with graceful care the folds of his rich drapery.

"No," muttered the other in some confusion. "I have grown lazy—getting old, I suppose, and the walk is not so easy as it used to be five-and-twenty years ago."

"Then drive, sir, and don't walk. The querulous tone men employ about their age is the measure of their obstinate refusal to accommodate themselves to inevitable change. As for me, I accept the altered condition, but I defy it to crush me."

"Every one has not your pluck and your stamina," said Haire, with a half-suppressed sigh.

"My example, sir, might encourage many who are weaker."

"Any news of Lucy lately?" asked Haire, after a pause.

"Miss Lendrick, sir, has, through her brother, communicated to me her attachment to a young fellow in some marching regiment, and asked my permission to marry him. No, I am incorrect. Had she done this, there had been deference and respect; she asks me to forward a letter to her father, with this prayer, and to support it by my influence."

“And why not, if he’s a good fellow, and likely to be worthy of her?”

“A good fellow! Why, sir, you are a good fellow—an excellent fellow; but it would never occur to me to recommend you for a position of high responsibility or commanding power.”

“Heaven forbid!—or, if you should, Heaven forbid I might be fool enough to accept it. But what has all this to do with marriage?”

“Explain yourself more fully, sir; you have assumed to call in question the parallelism I would establish between the tie of marriage and the obligation of a solemn trust; state your plea.”

“I’ll do nothing of the kind. I came here this morning to—to—— I’ll be shot if I remember what I came about; but I know I had something to tell you; let me try and collect myself.”

“Do, sir, if that be the name you give the painful process.”

“There, there; you’ll not make me better by ridiculing me. What could it have been that I wanted to tell you?”

“Not impossibly some recent impertinence of the press towards myself.”

“I think not—I think not,” said the other, musingly. “I suppose you’ve seen that squib in the ‘Banner.’”

“It is a paper, sir, I would not condescend to touch.”

“The fellow says that a Chief Baron without a court—he means this in allusion to the Crown not bringing those cases of treason-felony into the Exchequer—a Chief without a Court is like one of those bishops *in partibus*, and that it wouldn't be an unwise thing to make the resemblance complete and stop the salary. And then another observes——”

“Sir, I do not know which most to deplore—your forgetfulness or your memory; try to guide your conversation without any demand upon either.”

“And it was about those Celts, as they call these rascals, that I wanted to say something. What could it have been?”

“Perhaps you may have joined them. Are you a head-centre, or only empowered to administer oaths and affirmations?”

“Oh! I have it now,” cried Haire, triumphantly. “You remember, one day we were in the shrubbery after breakfast, you remarked that this insurrection was especially characterised by the fact, that no man of education, nor indeed of any rank above the lowest, had joined it. You said something about the French Revolution, too; and how, in the Reign of Terror, the principles of the Girondists had filtered down, and were to be seen glittering like——”

“Spare me, Haire—spare me, and do not ask me to recognise the bruised and battered coinage, without effigy or legend, as the medal of my own mint.”

“At all events, you remember what I’m referring to.”

“With all your efforts to efface my handwriting I can detect something of my signature—go on.”

“Well, they have at last caught a man of some mark and station. I saw Spencer, of the head office, this morning, and he told me that he had just committed to Newgate a man of title and consideration. He would not mention his name ; indeed, the investigation was as private as possible, as it was felt that the importance of such a person being involved in the project would give a very dangerous impulse to the movement.”

“They are wrong, sir. The insurrection that is guided by men of condition will, however dangerous, be a game with recognised rules and laws. The rebellion of the ignorant masses will be a chaos to defy calculation. You may discuss measures, but there is no arguing with murder!”

“That’s not the way Spencer regarded it. He says the whole thing must be kept dark ; and as they have refused to accept his bail, it’s clear enough they think the case a very important one.”

“If I was not on the bench, I would defend these men! Ay, sir, defend them! They have not the shadow of a case to show for this rebellion. It is the most causeless attempt to subvert a country that ever was conceived ; but there is that amount



of stupidity—of ignorance, not alone of statecraft, but of actual human nature, on the part of those who rule us, that it would have been the triumph of my life to assail and expose them. Why, sir, it was the very plebeian character of this insurrection that should have warned them against their plan of nursing and encouraging it. Had the movement been guided by gentlemen, it might have been politic to have affected ignorance of their intentions till they had committed themselves beyond retreat; but with this rabble—this rebellion in rags—to tamper was to foster. You had no need to dig pitfalls for such people; they never emerged from the depths of their own ignominious condition. You should have suppressed them at once—stopped them before the rebel press had disseminated a catechism of treason, and instilled the notion through the land that the first duty of patriotism was assassination.”

“And you would have defended these men?”

“I would have arraigned their accusers, and charged them as accomplices. I would have told those Castle officials to come down and stand in the dock with their confederates. What, sir! will you tell me that it was just or moral, or even politic, to treat these unlettered men as though they were crafty lawyers, skilled in all the arts to evade the provisions of a statute? This policy was not unfitted towards *him* who boasted he could drive a coach-

and-six through any Act of Parliament ; but how could it apply to creatures more ready to commit themselves than even you were to entrap them? who wanted no seduction to sedition, and who were far more eager to play traitor than you yourself to play prosecutor? I say again, I wish I had my youth and my stuff-gown, and they should have a defender."

"I am just as well pleased it is as we see it," muttered Haire.

"Of course you are, sir. There are men who imagine it to be loyal to be always on the side that is to be strongest." He took a few turns up and down the room, his nostrils dilated, and his lips trembling with excitement. "Do me a favour, Haire," said he at last, as he approached and laid his hand on the other's arm. "Go and learn who this gentleman they have just arrested is. Ascertain whatever you can of the charge against him—the refusal of bail implies it is a grave case ; and inquire if you might be permitted to see and speak with him."

"But I don't want to speak with him. I'd infinitely rather not meet him at all."

"Sir, if you go, you go as an emissary from *me*," said the Chief, haughtily, and by a look recalling Haire to all his habitual deference.

"But only imagine if it got abroad—if the papers got a hold of it ; think of what a scandal it would

be, that the Chief Baron of the Exchequer was actually in direct communication with a man charged with treason-felony. I wouldn't take a thousand pounds, and be accessory to such an allegation."

"You shall do it for less, sir. Yes, I repeat it, Haire, for less. Five shillings' car-hire will amply cover the cost. You shall drive over to the head-office and ask Mr Spencer if—of course with the prisoner's permission—you may be admitted to see him. When I have the reply I will give you your instructions."

"I protest I don't see—I mean, I cannot imagine—it's not possible—in fact, I know that, when you reflect a little over it, you will be satisfied that this would be a most improper thing to do."

"And what is this improper thing I am about to do? Let us hear, sir, what you condemn so decidedly! I declare my libellers must have more reason than I ever conceded to them. I am growing very, very old! There must be the blight of age upon my faculties, or you would not have ventured to administer this lesson to me! this lesson on discretion and propriety. I would, however, warn you to be cautious. The wounded tiger is dangerous, though the ball should have penetrated his vitals. I would counsel you to keep out of reach of his spring, even in his dying moments."

He actually shook with passion as he said this, and

his hands closed and opened with a convulsive movement that showed the anger that possessed him.

“I have never lectured any one, least of all would it occur to me to lecture you,” said Haire, with much dignity. “In all our intercourse I have never forgotten the difference between us—I mean intellectually; for I hope, as to birth and condition, there is no inequality.”

Though he spoke this slowly and impressively, the Chief Baron heard nothing of it. He was so overwhelmed by the strong passions of his own mind that he could not attend to another. “I shall soon be called incorrigible as well as incompetent,” muttered he, “if the wise counsels of my ablest friends are powerless to admonish me.”

“I must be moving,” said Haire, rising and taking his hat. “I promised to dine with Beattie at the Rock.”

“Say nothing of what has taken place here today; or if you mention me at all, say you found me in my usual health.” Haire nodded.

“My usual health and spirits,” continued the Chief. “I was going to say temper, but it would seem an epigram. Tell Beattie to look in here as he goes home—there’s one of the children slightly ailing. And so, Haire,” cried he, suddenly, in a louder voice, “you would insinuate that my power of judgment is impaired, and that, neither in the case of my

granddaughter, nor in that larger field of opinion—the state of Ireland—am I displaying that wisdom or that acuteness on which it was one time the habit to compliment me.”

“You may be quite right. I won’t presume to say you’re not. I only declare that I don’t agree with you.”

“In either case?”

“No; not in either case.”

“I think I shall ride to-day,” said the Chief; for they had now reached the hall-door, and were looking out over the grassy lawn and the swelling woods that enclosed it. “You lose much, Haire, in not being a horseman. What would my critics say if they saw me following the hounds, eh?”

“I’ll be shot if it would surprise me to see it,” muttered Haire to himself. “Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, Haire. Come out and see me soon again. I’ll be better tempered when you come next. You’re not angry with me, I know.”

Haire grasped the hand that was held out to him, and shook it cordially. “Of course I’m not. I know well you have scores of things to vex and irritate you that never touch fellows like myself. I shall never feel annoyed at anything you may *say* to *me*. What would really distress me, would be that you should do anything to lower your own reputation.”

The old Judge stood on the door-step pondering

over these last words of his friend long after his departure. "A good creature—a true-hearted fellow," muttered he to himself; "but how limited in intelligence! It is the law of compensation carried out. Where nature gives integrity she often grudges intellect. The finer, subtler minds play with right and wrong till they detect their affinities. Who are you, my good fellow? What brings you here?" cried he to a fellow who was lounging in the copse at the end of the house.

"I'm a carman, your honour. I'm going to drive the Colonel to the railway at Stoneybatter."

"I never heard that he was about to leave town," muttered the old Judge. "I thought he had been confined to bed with a cold these days back. Cheeter, go and tell Colonel Sewell that I should be much obliged if he would come over to my study at his earliest convenience."

"The Colonel will be with you, my lord, in five minutes," was the prompt reply.



## CHAPTER LVI.

### A LEAP IN THE DARK.

COLONEL SEWELL received the Chief Baron's message with a smothered expression of no benevolent meaning.

"Who said I was here? How did he know I had arrived?" cried he, angrily.

"He saw the carman, sir, and asked for whom he was waiting."

Another and not less energetic benediction was invoked on the rascally car-driver, whom he had enjoined to avoid venturing in front of the house.

"Say I'm coming—I'll be with him in an instant," said he, as he hurriedly pitched some clothes into his portmanteau.

Now it is but fair to own that this demand upon his time came at an inconvenient moment: he had run up to town by an early train, and was bent on going back by the next departure. During his absence, no letter of any kind from his agent O'Rear-



don had reached him, and, growing uneasy and impatient at this silence, he had come up to learn the reason. At the office he heard that O'Reardon had not been there for the last few days. It was supposed he was ill, but there was no means of ascertaining the fact, none knew his address, as, they said, "he was seldom in the same place for more than a week or two." Sewell had a profound distrust of his friend; indeed, the only reason for confiding in him at all was, that it was less O'Reardon's interest to be false than true. Since Fossbrooke's arrival, however, matters might have changed. They might have met and talked together. Had Sir Brook seduced the fellow to take service under him? Had he wormed out of him certain secrets of his, Sewell's, life, and thus shown how useful he might be in running him to earth? This was far from unlikely. It seemed the easiest and most natural way of explaining the fellow's absence. At the same time, if such were the case, would he not have taken care to write to him? Would not his letters, calling for some sort of reply, some answer to this or that query, have given him a better standing-ground with his new master, showing how far he possessed Sewell's confidence, and how able he was to make his treason to him effective? Harassed by these doubts, and fearing he knew not what of fresh troubles, he had passed a miserable week in the country. Debt and all its

wretched consequences were familiar enough to him. His whole life had been one long struggle with narrow means, and with the expedients to meet expenses he should never have indulged in. He had acquired, together with a recklessness, a sort of self-reliance in these emergencies which positively seemed to afford him a species of pleasure, and made him a hero to himself by his successes; but there were graver troubles than these on his heart, and with the memory of these Fossbrooke was so interwoven that to recall them was to bring him up before him.

Besides these terrors, he had learned during his short stay at the Nest a most unwelcome piece of intelligence. The Vicar, Mr Mills, had shown him a letter from Dr Lendrick, in which he said that the climate disagreed with him, and his isolation and loneliness preyed upon him so heavily that he had all but determined to resign his place and return home. He added that he had given no intimation of this to his children, lest by any change of plan he might inflict disappointment upon them; nor had he spoken of it to his father, in the fear that if the Chief Baron should offer any strenuous objection, he might be unable to carry out his project; while to his old friend the Vicar he owned that his heart yearned after a home, and if it could only be that home where he had lived so contentedly, the Nest! "If I could promise myself to get back there again," he wrote,

“nothing would keep me here a month longer.” Now, as Sewell had advertised the place to be let, Mills at once showed him this letter, believing that the arrangement was such as would suit each of them.

It needed all Sewell’s habitual self-command not to show the uneasiness these tidings occasioned him. Lendrick’s return to Ireland might undo—it was almost certain to undo—all the influence he had obtained over the Chief Baron. The old Judge was never to be relied upon from one day to the next. Now it was some impulse of vindictive passion, now of benevolence. Who was to say when some parental paroxysm might not seize him, and he might begin to care for his son?

Here was a new peril—one he had never so much as imagined might befall him. “I’ll have to consult my wife,” said he, hastily, in reply to Mills’s question. “She is not at all pleased at the notion of giving up the place; the children were healthier here; in fact,” added he, in some confusion, “I suspect we shall be back here one of these days.”

“I told him I’d have to consult *you*,” said Sewell, with an insolent sneer, as he told his wife this piece of news. “I said you were so fond of the country, so domestic, and so devoted to your children, that I scarcely thought you’d like to give up a place so suited to all your tastes;—wasn’t I right?”

She continued to look steadily at the book she had been reading, and made no reply.

“ I didn’t say, though I might, that the spot was endeared to you by a softer, more tender reminiscence; because, being a parson, there’s no saying how he’d have taken it.”

She raised her book higher so as to conceal her face, but still said nothing.

“ At all events,” said he, in a more careless tone, “ we are not going to add to the inducements which attract this gentleman to return home, and we must not forget that our host here may turn us out at any moment.”

“ I think it will be our fault whenever he does so,” said she, quietly.

“ Fault and misfortune are pretty much alike to my thinking. There’s one thing, however, I have made up my mind on—I’ll bolt. When he gives notice to quit, he shall be obliged to provide for you and the brats out of sheer necessity. He cannot turn you out on the streets, he can’t send you to the Union; you have no friends to whom he can pack you off; so let him storm as he likes—something he must do.”

To this speech she seemed to give no attention whatever. Whether the threat was an oft-repeated one, or that she was inured to coarseness of this nature, or that silence was the best line to take in

these emergencies, she never appeared to notice his words.

“What about that money he promised you? has he given it?” said he suddenly, when about to leave the room.

“No; he said something about selling out some mining shares—scrip he called it. I forget exactly what he said, but the purport was that he was pressed just now.”

“I take it he is. My mother’s allowance is in arrear, and she is not one to bear the delay very patiently. So you’ve got nothing?”

“Nothing, except ten pounds he gave Cary yesterday for her birthday.”

“Where is it?”

“In that work-box—no, in the upper part. Do you want it?”

“What a question! Of course I want it, somewhat more than Cary does, I promise you. I was going off to-day with just five sovereigns in my pocket. Bye-bye. I shall be late if I don’t hurry myself.” As he reached the door he turned round—“What was it I had to tell you—some piece of news or other—what could it have been?”

“Nothing pleasant, I’m sure, so it’s as well unremembered.”

“Polite, certainly,” said he, walking slowly back while he seemed trying to recall something. “Oh,

I have it. The transport that took out the —th has been wrecked somewhere off Sardinia. Engine broken down, paddle-wheels carried away, quarter-boats smashed, and, in fact, total wreck. I have no time to tell you more;” and so saying, he hurried away, but opening the door noiselessly he peeped in and saw her with her head buried in her hands leaning on the table; and, stealing stealthily down the corridor, he hastened to his room to pack up for his journey; and it was while thus occupied the Chief’s message reached him.

When the Chief Baron asked Haire to call at the Police Office and inquire if he might not be permitted to see the person who had been arrested that morning at Howth, he had not the very vaguest idea what step he should next take, nor what proceedings institute, if his demand might be acceded to. The indignant anger he felt at the slight put upon him by the Government in passing him over on the Commission, had got such entire possession of him that he only thought of a reprisal without considering how it was to be effected. “I am not one to be insulted with impunity. Are these men such ignorant naturalists as not to know that there is one species of whale that the boldest never harpoons? Swift was a Dean, but he never suffered his cassock to impede the free use of his limbs. I am a Judge, but they shall see that the ermine embarrasses me



just as little. They have provoked the conflict, and it is not for me to decline it. They are doing scores of things every day in Ireland that, if there was one man of ability and courage opposed to them, would shake the Cabinet to its centre. I will make Pemberton's law a proverb and a by-word. The public will soon come to suspect that the reason I am not on the bench at these trials is not to be looked for in the spiteful malignity of the Castle, but in the conscientious scruples of one who warned the Crown against these prosecutions. They were not satisfied with native disaffection, and they have invented a new crime for Ireland which they call treason-felony; but they have forgotten to apprise the people, who go on blunderingly into treason as of old, too stupid to be taught by a statute! The Act is a new one. It would give me scant labour to show that it cannot be made law, that its clauses are contradictory, its provisions erroneous, its penalties evasive. What is to prevent me introducing, as a digression, into my next charge to a grand jury, my regrets or sorrows over such bungling legislation? Who is to convict me for arraigning the wisdom of Parliament, or telling the country, You are legislated for by ignorance! your statutes are made by incompetence! The public press is always open, and it will soon be bruited about that the letter signed Lycurgus was written by William Lendrick. I will take Barnewell or Perrin, or



some other promising young fellow of the junior bar, and instruct him for the defence. I will give him law enough to confute, and he shall furnish the insolence to confront, this Attorney-General. There never was a case better suited to carry the issue out of the Queen's Bench and arraign the Queen's advisers. Let them turn upon me if they dare: I was a citizen before I was a lawyer, I was an Irishman before I became a judge. There was a bishop who braved the Government in the days of the volunteers. They shall find that high station in Ireland is but another guarantee for patriotism." By such bursts of angry denunciation had he excited himself to such a degree, that when Sewell entered the room the old man's face was flushed, his eye flashing, and his lip quivering with passion.

"I was not aware of your absence, sir!" said he, sternly; "and a mere accident informed me that you were going away again."

"A sudden call required my presence at Killaloe, my lord; and I found when I had got there I had left some papers behind here."

"The explanation would be unexceptionable, sir, if this house were an inn to which a man comes and returns as he pleases; but if I err not you are my guest here, and I hope if a host has duties he has rights."

"My lord, I attached so very little importance to

my presence that I never flattered myself by thinking I should be missed."

"I seldom flatter, sir, and I never do so where I intend to censure!" Sewell bowed submissively, but the effort to control his temper cost him a sharp pang and a terrible struggle. "Enough of this, at least for the present; though I may mention, passingly, that we must take an early opportunity of placing our relations towards each other on some basis that may be easily understood by each of us. The law of contracts will guide us to the right course. My object in sending for you now is to ask a service at your hands, if your other engagements will leave you at liberty to render it."

"I am entirely at your lordship's orders."

"Well, sir, I will be very brief. I must needs be so, for I have fatigued myself by much talking already. The papers will have informed you that I am not to sit on this Commission. The Ministers who cannot persuade me by their blandishments are endeavouring to disgust me by insult. They have read the fable of the sun and the wind backwards, and inverted the moral. It had been whispered abroad that if I tried these men there would have been no convictions. They raked up some early speeches of mine—youthful triumphs they were—in defence of Wolfe Tone, and Jackson, and others; and they argued—no, I am wrong—they did not argue,

they imagined, that the enthusiasm of the advocate might have twined itself around the wisdom of the judge. They have quoted, too, in capital letters—it is there on the table—the peroration of my speech in Neilson's case, where I implored the jury to be cautious and circumspect, for so deeply had the Crown advisers compromised themselves in the pursuit of rebellion, it needed the most careful sifting not to include the law-officers of the Castle, and to avoid placing the Attorney-General side by side with his victim."

"How sarcastic! how cutting!" muttered Sewell in praise.

"It was more than sarcastic, sir. It stung the Orange jury to the quick; and though they convicted my client, they trembled at the daring of his defender.

"But I turn from the past to the present," said he, after a pause. "They have arrested this morning at Howth a man who is said to be of rank and station. The examination, conducted in secret, has concealed his name; and all that we know is that bail has not been accepted, if offered, for him. So long as these arrests concerned the vulgar fellows who take to rebellion for its robberies, no case can be made. With the creatures of rusty pikes and ruffian natures I have no sympathy. It matters little whether they be transported for treason or for theft.

With the gentleman it is otherwise. Some speculative hope, some imaginative aspiration of serving his country, some wild dream begotten of the great Revolution of France, dashed not impossibly with some personal wrong, drives men from their ordinary course in life, and makes them felons where they meant to be philanthropists. I have often thought if this movement now at work should throw up to the surface one of this stamp, what a fine occasion it might afford to test the wisdom of those who rule us, to examine the machinery by which they govern, and to consider the advantage of that system—such a favourite system in Ireland—by which rebellion is fostered as a means of subsequent concession, as though it were necessary to manure the loyalty of the land by the blood of traitors.

“I weary you, sir, and I am sorry for it. No, no, make no protestations. It is a theme cannot have the same interest for *you* as for *me*. What I would ask of you is, to go down to the head-office and see Mr Spencer, and learn from him if you might have an order to see the prisoner—your pretext being, the suspicion that he is personally known to you. If you succeed in getting the order, you will proceed to the Richmond Bridewell and have an interview with him. You are a man of the world, sir, and I need not give you any instructions how to ascertain his condition, his belongings, and his means of defence.

If he be a gentleman, in the sense we use that term when applying its best attributes to it, you will be frank and outspoken, and will tell him candidly that your object is to make his case the groundwork of an attack on the Government, and the means by which all the snares that have led men to rebellion may be thoroughly exposed, and the craft of the Crown lawyer be arraigned beside the less cold-blooded cruelty of the traitor. Do you fully comprehend me, sir?"

"I think so, my lord. Your intention is, if I take you correctly, to make the case, if it be suitable, the groundwork for an attack on the Government of Ireland."

"In which I am not to appear."

"Of course, my lord; though possibly with no objection that it should be known how far your sympathy is with a free discussion of the whole state of Ireland?"

"You apprehend me aright, sir—a free discussion of the whole state of Ireland."

"I go, therefore, without any concert with your lordship at present. I take this step entirely at my own instance?"

"You do, sir. If matters eventually should take the turn which admits of any intervention on my part—any expression of opinion—any elucidation of sentiments attributed to me—I will be free to make such in the manner I deem suitable."

“In case this person should prove one, either from his character or the degree in which he has implicated himself, unfitted for your lordship’s object, I am to drop the negotiation?”

“Rather, I should say, sir, you are not to open it.”

“I meant as much,” said Sewell, with some irritation.

“It is an occasion, sir, for careful action and precise expression. I have no doubt you will acquit yourself creditably in each of these respects. Are you already acquainted with Mr Spencer?”

“We have met at the club, my lord; he at least knows who I am.”

“That will be quite sufficient. One point more—I have no need to caution you as to secrecy—this is a matter which cannot be talked of.”

“That you may rely on, my lord; reserve is so natural to me, that I have to put no strain upon my manner to remember it.”

“I shall be curious to hear the result of your visit—that is, if you be permitted to visit the Bridewell. Will you do me the favour to come to me at once?”

Sewell promised this faithfully, and withdrew.

“If ever an old fool wanted to run his head into a noose,” muttered he, “here is one; the slightest blunder on my part, intentional or not, and this great



Baron of the Exchequer might be shown up as abetting treason. To be sure, he has given me nothing under his hand—nothing in writing—I wonder was that designedly or not; he is so crafty in the middle of all his passion.” Thus meditating, he went on his mission.



## CHAPTER LVII.

### SOME OF SEWELL'S OPINIONS.

SEWELL was well received by the magistrate, and promised that he should be admitted to see the prisoner on the next morning; having communicated which tidings to the Chief Baron, he went off to dine with his mother in Merrion Square.

“Isn't Lucy coming?” said Lady Lendrick, as he entered the drawing-room alone.

“No. I told her I wanted a long confidential talk with you; I hinted that she might find it awkward if one of the subjects discussed should happen to be herself, and advised her to stay at home, and she concurred with me.”

“You are a great fool, Dudley, to treat her in that fashion. I tell you there never was a woman in the world who could forgive it.”

“I don't want her to forgive it, mother; there's the mistake you are always making. The way she baffles me is by non-resistance. If I could once get

her to resent something—anything—I could win the game.”

“Perhaps some one might resent for her,” said she, dryly.

“I ask nothing better. I have tried to bring it to that scores of times, but men have grown very cautious latterly. In the old days of duelling a fellow knew the cost of what he was doing: now that we have got juries and damages, a man thinks twice about an entanglement, without he be a very young fellow.”

“It is no wonder that she hates you,” said she, fiercely.

“Perhaps not,” said he, languidly; “but here comes dinner.”

For a while the duties of the table occupied them, and they chatted away about indifferent matters; but when the servants left the room, Sewell took up the theme where they had left it, and said, “It’s no use to either of us, mother, to get what is called judicial separation. It’s the chain still, only that the links are a little longer—and it’s the chain we *hate!* We began to hate it before we were a month tied to each other, and time, somehow, does not smooth down these asperities. As to any other separation, the lawyers tell me it is hopeless. There’s a functionary called the ‘Queen’s’ something or other who always intervenes in the interests of morality, and compels

people who have proved their incompatibility by years of dissension to go back and quarrel more."

"I think if it were only for the children's sake——"

"For the children's sake!" broke he in. "What can it possibly matter whether they be brought up by their mother alone, or in a house where their father and mother are always quarrelling? At all events, they form no element in the question so far as *I* am concerned."

"I think your best hold on the Chief Baron is his liking for the children; he is very fond of Reginald."

"What's the use of a hold on an old man who has more caprices than he has years? He has made eight wills to my own knowledge since May last. You may fancy how far afield he strays in his testamentary dispositions when in one of them he makes *you* residuary legatee."

"*Me! Me!*"

"You; and what's more, calls you his faithful and devoted wife, 'who—for five-and-twenty years that we lived apart—contributed mainly to the happiness of my life.'"

"The parenthesis, at least, is like him," said she, smiling.

"To the children he has bequeathed I don't know what, sometimes with Lucy as their guardian, some-

times myself. The Lendrick girl was always handsomely provided for till lately, when he scratched her out completely; and in the last document which I saw there were the words, 'To my immediate family I bequeath my forgiveness for their desertion of me, and this free of all legacy duty and other charges.' I am sure, mother, he's a little mad."

"Nothing of the kind—no more than you are."

"I don't know that. I always suspect that 'the marvellous vigour' of old age gets its prime stimulus from an over-excited brain. He sat up a whole night last week—I know it to my cost, for I had to copy it out—writing a letter to the 'Times' on the Land Tenure Bill, and he nearly went out of his mind on seeing it in small type."

"He is vain, if you like; but not mad certainly."

"For a while I thought one of his fits of passion would do for him—he gets crimson, and then lividly pale, and then flushed again, and his nails are driven into his palms, and he froths at the mouth; but somehow the whole subsides at last, and his voice grows gentle, and his manner courteous—you'd think him a lamb, if you had never seen him as a tiger. In these moods he becomes actually humble, so that the other night he sat down and wrote his resignation to the Home Office, stating, amidst a good deal of bombast, that the increasing burden of years and infirmity left him no other choice than that of de-

scending from the Bench he had occupied so long and so unworthily, and begging her Majesty would graciously accord a retreat to one 'who had outlived everything but his loyalty.'"

"What became of this?"

"He asked me about it next morning, but I said I had 'burned it by his orders; but I have it this moment in my desk."

"You have no right to keep it. I insist on your destroying it."

"Pardon me, mother. I'd be a rich man to-day if I hadn't given way to that foolish habit of making away with papers supposed to be worthless. The three lines of a man's writing, that the old judge said he could hang any man on, might, it strikes me, be often used to better purpose."

"I wish you would keep your sharp practices for others and spare *him*," said she, severely.

"It's very generous of you to say so, mother, considering the way he treats you and talks of you."

"Sir William and I were ill met and ill matched, but that is not any reason that I should like to see him treacherously dealt with."

"There's no talk of treachery here. I was merely uttering an abstract truth about the value of old papers, and regretting how late I came to the knowledge. There's that bundle of letters of that fool Trafford, for instance, to Lucy. I can't get a divorce

on them, it's true ; but I hope to squeeze a thousand pounds out of him before he has them back again."

"I hope in my heart that the world does not know you!" said she, bitterly.

"Do you know, mother, I rather suspect it does? The world is aware that a great many men, some of whom it could ill spare, live by what is called their Wits—that is to say, that they play the game entitled 'Life' with what Yankees call 'the advantages;' and the world no more resents *my* living by the sharp practice long experience has taught me, than it is angry with this man for being a lawyer, and that one for being a doctor."

"You know in your heart that Trafford never thought of stealing Lucy's affections."

"Perhaps I do; but I don't know what were Lucy's intentions towards Trafford."

"Oh, fie, fie!"

"Be shocked if you like. It's very proper, perhaps, that you should be shocked; but nature has endowed me with strong nerves or coarse feelings, whichever you like to call them, and consequently I can talk of these things with as little intermixture of sentiment as I would employ in discussing a protested bill. Lucy herself is not deficient in this cool quality, and we have discussed the social contract styled Marriage with a charming unanimity of opinion. Indeed, when I have thought over the marvellous agreement of our



sentiments, I have been actually amazed why we could not live together without hating each other."

"I pity her—from the bottom of my heart I pity her."

"So do I, mother. I pity her, because I pity myself. It was a stupid bargain for each of us. I thought I was marrying an angel with sixty thousand pounds. She fancied she was getting a hero, with a peerage in the distance. Each made a 'bad book.' It is deuced hard, however," continued he, in a fiercer strain, "if one must go on backing the horse that you know will lose, staking your money where you see you cannot win. My wife and myself awoke from our illusions years ago; but to please the world, to gratify that amiable thing called Society, we must go on still, just as if we believed all that we know and have proved to be rotten falsehoods. Now I ask you, mother, is not this rather hard? Wouldn't it be hard for a good-tempered, easy-going fellow? And is it not more than hard for a hasty, peevish, irritable dog like myself? We know and see that we are bad company for each other, but you—I mean the world—you insist that we should go on quarrelling to the end, as if there was anything edifying in the spectacle of our mutual dislike."

"Too much of this. I beseech you, drop the subject, and talk of something else."

"I declare, mother, if there was any one I could be



frank and outspoken with on this theme, I believed it to be yourself. You have had 'your losses' too, and know what it is to be unhappily mated."

"Whatever I may have suffered, I have not lost self-respect," said she, haughtily.

"Heigho!" cried he, wearily, "I always find that my opinions place me in a minority, and so it must ever be while the world is the hypocritical thing we see it. Oh dear, if people could only vote by ballot, I'd like to see marriage put to the test."

"What did Sir William say about my going to the picnic?" asked she, suddenly.

"He said you were quite right to obtain as many attentions as you could from the Castle, on the same principle that the vicar's wife stipulated for the sheep in the picture—'as many as the painter would put in for nothing.'"

"So that he is firmly determined not to resign?"

"Most firmly; nor will he be warned by the example of the well-bred dog, for he sees, or he might see, all the preparations on foot for kicking him out."

"You don't think they would compel him to resign?"

"No; but they'll compel him to go, which amounts to the same. Balfour says they mean to move an address to the Queen praying her Majesty to superannuate him."

"It would kill him—he'd not survive it."

“So it is generally believed—all the more because it is a course he has ever declared to be impossible—I mean constitutionally impossible.”

“I hope he may be spared this insult.”

“He might escape it by dying first, mother; and really, under the circumstances, it would be more dignified.”

“Your morals were not, at any time, to boast of, but your manners used to be those of a gentleman,” said she, in a voice thick with passion.

“I am afraid, mother, that both morals and manners, like this hat of mine, are a little the worse for wear; but, as in the case of the hat too, use has made them pleasanter to me than spick-and-span new ones, with all the gloss on. At all events, I never dreamed of offending when I suggested the possibility of your being a widow. Indeed, I fancied it was feminine for widower, which I imagined to be no such bad thing.”

“If the Chief Baron should be compelled to leave the bench, will it affect your tenure of the Registrarship?”

“That is what nobody seems to know. Some opine one way, some another; and though all ask me what does the Chief himself say on the matter, I have never had the courage to ask the question.”

“You are quite right. It would be most indiscreet to do so.”

“Indeed, if I were rash enough to risk the step, it would redound to nothing, since I am quite persuaded that he believes that whenever he retires from public life or quits this world altogether, a general chaos will ensue, and that all sorts of ignorant and incompetent people will jostle the clever fellows out of the way, just because the one great directing mind of the age has left the scene and departed.”

“All his favours to you have certainly not bought your gratitude, Dudley.”

“I don't suspect it is a quality I ever laid up a large stock of, mother—not to say that I have always deemed it a somewhat unworthy thing to swallow the bad qualities of a man simply because he was civil to you personally.”

“His kindness might at least secure your silence.”

“Then it would be a very craven silence. But I'll join issue with you on the other counts. What is this great kindness for which I am not to speak my mind about him? He has housed and fed me: very good things in their way, but benefits which never cost him anything but his money. Now, what have I repaid him with? My society, my time, my temper, I might say my health, for he has worried me to that degree some days that I have been actually on the verge of a fever. And if his overbearing insolence was hard to endure, still harder

was it to stand his inordinate vanity without laughter. I ask you frankly, isn't he the vainest man, not that you ever met, but that you ever heard of?"

"Vain he is, but not without some reason. He has had great triumphs, great distinctions in life."

"So he has told me. I have listened for hours long to descriptions of the sensation he created in the House—it was always the Irish House, by the way—by his speech on the Regency Bill, or some other obsolete question; and how Flood had asked the House to adjourn and recover their calm and composure, after the overwhelming power of the speech they had just listened to; and how, at the Bar, Plunkett once said to a jury, 'Short of actual guilt, there is no such misfortune can befall a man as to have Sergeant Lendrick against him.' I wish I was independent—I mean, rich enough, to tell him what I think of him; that I had just five minutes—I'd not ask more—to convey my impression of his great and brilliant qualities! and to show him that, between the impulses of his temper and his vanity together, he is, in matters of the world, little better than a fool! What do you think he is going to do at this very moment? I had not intended speaking of it, but you have pushed me to it. In revenge for the Government having passed him over on the Commission, he is going to supply some of these 'Celt'

rascals with means to employ counsel, and raise certain questions of legality, which he thinks will puzzle Pemberton to meet. Of course, rash and indiscreet as he is, this is not to be done openly. It is to be accomplished in secret, and through *me*! I am to go to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock to the Richmond Jail. I have the order for my admission in my pocket. I am there to visit heaven knows whom; some scoundrel or other—just as likely a Government spy as a rebel, who will publish the whole scheme to the world. At all events, I am to see and have speech of the fellow, and ascertain on what evidence he was committed to prison, and what kind of case he can make as to his innocence. He is said to be a gentleman—the very last reason, to my thinking, for taking him up; for whenever a gentleman is found in any predicament beneath him, the presumption is that he ought to be lower still. The wise Judge, however, thinks otherwise, and says, ‘Here is the very opportunity I wanted.’”

“It is a most disagreeable mission, Dudley. I wish sincerely you could have declined it.”

“Not at all. I stand to win, no matter how it comes off; if all goes right, the Chief must make me some acknowledgment on my success; if it be a failure, I’ll take care to be so compromised that I must get away out of the country, and I leave to yourself to say what recompense will be enough to

repay a man for the loss of his home, and of his wife, and his children."

The laugh with which he concluded this speech rang out with something so devilish in its cadence, that she turned away sickened and disgusted.

"If I thought you as base as your words bespeak you, I'd never see you again," said she, rising and moving towards the door.

"I'll have one cigar, mother, before I join you in the drawing-room," said he, taking it out as he spoke. "I'd not have indulged if you had not left me. May I order a little more sherry?"

"Ring for whatever you want," said she, coldly, and quitted the room.



## CHAPTER LVIII.

### THE VISIT TO THE JAIL.

COLONEL SEWELL was well known in the city, and when he presented himself at the Jail, was received by the deputy-governor with all fitting courtesy. "Your house is pretty full, I believe, Mr Bland," said Sewell, jocularly.

"Yes, sir; I never remember to have had so many prisoners in charge; and the Mountjoy Prison has sent off two drafts this morning to England, to make room for the new committals. The order is all right sir," said he, looking at the paper Sewell extended towards him. "The governor has given him a small room in his own house. It would have been hard to put him with the others, who are so inferior to him."

"A man of station and rank, then?" asked Sewell.

"So they say, sir."

"And his name?"



“ You must excuse me, Colonel. It is a case for great caution ; and we have been strictly enjoined not to let his name get abroad at present. Mr Spencer’s note—for he wrote to us last night—said, ‘ If it should turn out that Colonel Sewell is acquainted with the prisoner, as he opines, you will repeat the caution I already impressed upon him, not to divulge his name.’ The fact is, sir,” said he, lowering his voice to a confidential tone, “ I may venture to tell you that his diary contains so many names of men in high position, that it is all-important we should proceed with great secrecy, for we find persons involved whom nobody could possibly have suspected could be engaged in such a scheme.”

“ It is not easy to believe men could be such asses,” said Sewell, contemptuously. “ Is this gentleman Irish ? ”

“ Not at liberty to say, sir. My orders are peremptory on the subject of his personality.”

“ You are a miracle of discretion, Mr Bland.”

“ Charmed to hear you say so, Colonel Sewell. There’s no one whose good word I’d be more proud of.”

“ And why isn’t he bailed ? ” said Sewell, returning to the charge. “ Had he no one to be his surety ? ”

“ That’s strange enough, sir. Mr Spencer put it to him that he’d better have some legal adviser ; and

though he wouldn't go so far as to say they'd take bail for him, he hinted that probably he would like to confer with some friend, and all the answer he got was, 'It's all a mistake from beginning to end. I'm not the man you're looking for; but if it gives the poor devil time to make his escape, perhaps he'll live to learn better; and so I'm at your orders.'"

"I suppose that pretext did not impose upon the magistrate?"

"Not for a moment, sir. Mr Spencer is an old bird, and not to be caught by such chaff. He sent him off here at once. He tried the same dodge, though, when he came in. 'If I could have a quiet room for the few days I shall be here, it would be a great comfort to me,' said he to the governor. 'I have a number of letters to write; and if you could manage to give me one with a north light, it would oblige me immensely, for I'm fond of painting.' Not bad that, sir, for a man suspected of treason-felony—a north light to paint by!"

"You need not announce me by name, Mr Bland, for it's just as likely I shall discover that this gentleman and I are strangers to each other; but simply say, a gentleman who wishes to see you."

"Take Colonel Sewell up to the governor's corridor," said he to a turnkey, "and show him to the small room next the chapel."

Musing over what Mr Bland had told him, Sewell

ascended the stairs. His mission had not been much to his taste from the beginning. If it at first seemed to offer the probability of placing the old Judge in his power by some act of indiscretion, by some rash step or other, a little reflection showed that to employ the pressure such a weakness might expose him to, would necessitate the taking of other people into confidence. "I will have no accomplices!" muttered Sewell; "no fellows to dictate the terms on which they will not betray me! If I cannot get this old man into my power by myself alone, I'll not do it by the help of another."

"I shall have to lock you in, sir," said the man, apologetically, as he proceeded to open the door.

"I suppose you will let me out again," said Sewell, laughing.

"Certainly, sir. I'll return in half an hour."

"I think you'd better wait and see if five minutes will not suffice."

"Very well, sir. You'll knock whenever you wish me to open the door."

When Sewell entered the room, the stranger was seated at the window, with his back towards the door, and apparently so absorbed in his thoughts that he had not heard his approach. The noise of the door being slammed to and locked, however, aroused him, and he turned suddenly round, and almost as suddenly sprang to his feet. "What! Sir

Brook Fossbrooke!" cried Sewell, falling back towards the door.

"Your surprise is not greater than mine, sir, at this meeting. I have no need to be told, however, that you did not come here to see *me*."

"No; it was a mistake. The man brought me to the wrong room. My visit was intended for another," muttered Sewell, hastily.

"Pray, sir, be seated," said Fossbrooke, presenting a chair. "Chance will occasionally do more for us than our best endeavours. Since I have arrived in Ireland I have made many attempts to meet you, but without success. Accident, however, has favoured me, and I rejoice to profit by my good luck."

"I have explained, Sir Brook, that I was on my way to see a gentleman to whom my visit is of great consequence. I hope you will allow me to take another opportunity of conferring with you."

"I think my condition as a prisoner ought to be the best answer to your request. No, sir. The few words we need say to each other must be said now. Sit there, if you please;" and as he placed a chair for Sewell towards the window, he took his own place with his back to the door.

"This is very like imprisonment," said Sewell, with an attempt at a laugh.

"Perhaps, sir, if each of us had his due, you have as good a right to be here as myself; but let us not

lose time in an exchange of compliments. My visit to this country was made entirely on your account."

"On mine! how upon mine?"

"On yours, Colonel Sewell. You may remember at our last conversation—it was at the Chief Baron's country-house—you made me a promise with regard to Miss Lendrick——"

"I remember," broke in Sewell hastily, for he saw in the flush of the other's cheek how the difficulty of what he had to say was already giving him a most painful emotion. "You stipulated something about keeping my wife apart from that young lady. You expressed certain fears about contamination——"

"Oh, sir, you wrong me deeply," said the old man, with broken utterance.

"I'd be happy to think I had misunderstood you," said Sewell, still pursuing his advantage. "Of course, it was very painful to me at the time. My wife, too, felt it bitterly."

Fossbrooke started at this as if stung, and his brow darkened and his eyes flashed as he said, "Enough of this, sir. It is not the first time I have been calumniated in the same quarter. Let us talk of something else. You hold in your hand certain letters of Major Trafford—Lionel Trafford—and you make them the ground of a threat against him. Is it not so?"

"I declare, Sir Brook, the interest you take in

what relates to my wife somewhat passes the bounds of delicacy.”

“I know what you mean. I know the advantage you would take of me, and which you took a while ago; but I will not suffer it. I want these letters—what’s their price?”

“They are in the hands of my solicitors, Kane & Kincaid; and I think it very unlikely they will stay the proceedings they have taken on them by any demand of yours.”

“I want them, and must have them.”

Sewell shrugged his shoulders, and made a gesture to imply that he had already given him his answer.

“And what suit would you pretend—— But why do I ask you? What is it to me by what schemes you prosecute your plans? Look here, sir; I was once on a time possessed of a document which would have subjected you to the fate of a felon; it was the forgery of my name——”

“My dear Sir Brook, if your memory were a little better you would remember that you had once to apologise for that charge, and avow it was totally unfounded.”

“It is untrue, sir; and you know it is untrue. I declared I would produce a document before three or four of your brother officers, and it was stolen from me on the night before the meeting.”

“I remember that explanation, and the painful



impression your position excited at the time; but really I have no taste for going back over a long past period. I'm not old enough, I suppose, to care for these reminiscences. Will you allow me to take my leave of you?"

"No, sir; you shall hear me out. It may possibly be to your own advantage to bestow a little time upon me. You are fond of compromises—as you ought to be, for your life has been a series of them: now I have one to propose to you. Let Trafford have back his letters, and you shall hear of this charge no more."

"Really, sir, you must form a very low estimate of my intelligence, or you would not have made such a proposition; or probably," added he, with a sneer, "you have been led away by the eminence of the position you occupy at this moment to make this demand."

Fossbrooke started at the boldness of this speech, and looked about him, and probably remembered for the first time since the interview began that he was a prisoner. "A few days—a few hours, perhaps—will see me free," said the old man, haughtily. "I know too well the difficulties that surround men in times like these to be angry or impatient at a mistake whose worst consequences are a little inconvenience."

"I own, sir, I was grieved to think you could have involved yourself in such a scheme."



“ Nothing of the kind, sir. You were only grieved to think that there could be no solid foundation for the charge against me. It would be the best tidings you could hear to learn that I was to leave this for the dock, with the convict hulk in the distance;—but I forget I had promised myself not to discuss my own affairs with you. What say you to what I have proposed ? ”

“ You have proposed nothing, Sir Brook—at least nothing serious, since I can scarcely regard as a proposition the offer not to renew a charge which broke down once before for want of evidence.”

“ What if I have that evidence? What if I am prepared to produce it? Ay, sir, you may look incredulous if you like. It is not to a man of *your* stamp I appeal to be believed on my word; but you shall see the document—you shall see it on the same day that a jury shall see it.”

“ I perceive, Sir Brook, that it is useless to prolong this conversation. Your old grudge against me is too much even for your good sense. Your dislike surmounts your reason. Yes, open the door at once. I am tired waiting for you,” cried he, impatiently, as the turnkey’s voice was heard without.

“ Once more I make you this offer,” said Fossbrooke, rising from his seat. “ Think well ere you refuse it.”

“ You have no such document as you say.”

“If I have not, the failure is mine.”

The door was now open, and the turnkey standing at it.

“They will accept bail, won’t they?” said Sewell, adroitly turning the conversation. “I think,” continued he, “this matter can be easily arranged. I will go at once to the Head Office, and return here at once.”

“We are agreed, then?” said Fossbrooke, in a low voice.

“Yes,” said Sewell, hastily, as he passed out and left him.

The turnkey closed and locked the door, and overtook Sewell as he walked along the corridor. “They are taking information this moment, sir, about the prisoner. The informer is in the room.”

“Who is he? What’s his name?”

“O’Reardon, sir; a fellow of great ’cuteness. He’s in the pay of the Castle these thirty years.”

“Might I be present at the examination? Would you ask if I might hear the case?”

The man assured him that this was impossible, and Sewell stood with his hand on the balustrade, deeply revolving what he had just heard.

“And is O’Reardon a prisoner here?”

“Not exactly, sir; but partly for his own safety, partly to be sure he’s not tampered with, we often keep the men in confinement till a case is finished.”

“How long will this morning’s examination last? At what hour will it probably be over?”

“By four, sir, or half-past, they’ll be coming out.”

“I’ll return by that time. I’d like to speak to him.”

## CHAPTER LIX.

### A GRAND DINNER AT THE PRIORY.

THE examination was still proceeding, when Sewell returned at five o'clock; and although he waited above an hour in the hope of its being concluded, the case was still under consideration; and as the Chief Baron had a large dinner-party on that day, from which the Colonel could not absent himself, he was obliged to hasten back in all speed to dress.

“His lordship has sent three times to know if you had come in, sir,” said his servant as he entered his room.

And while he was yet speaking came another messenger to say that the Chief Baron wanted to see the Colonel immediately. With a gesture of impatience Sewell put on again the coat he had just thrown off, and followed the man to the Chief's dressing-room.

“I have been expecting you since three o'clock,

sir," said the old man, after motioning to his valet to leave the room.

"I feared I was late, my lord, and was going to dress when I got your message."

"But you have been away seven hours, sir."

The tone and manner of this speech, and the words themselves, calling him to account in a way a servant would scarcely have brooked, so overcame Sewell that only by an immense effort of self-control could he restrain his temper, and avoid bursting forth with the long pent-up passion that was consuming him.

"I was detained, my lord—unavoidably detained," said he, with a voice thick and husky with anger. What added to his passion was the confusion he felt; for he had not determined, when he entered the room, whether to avow that the prisoner was Fossbrooke or not, resolving to be guided by the Chief's manner and temper as to the line he should take. Now this outburst completely routed his judgment and left him uncertain and vacillating.

"And now, sir, for your report," said the old man, seating himself and folding his arms on his chest.

"I have little to report, my lord. They affect a degree of mystery about this person, both at the Head Office and at the jail, which is perfectly absurd; and will neither give his name nor his belongings. The pretence is, of course, to enable them to

ensnare others with whom he is in correspondence. I believe, however, the truth to be, he is a very vulgar criminal—a gauger, it is said, from Loughrea, and no such prize as the Castle people fancied. His passion for notoriety, it seems, has involved him in scores of things of this kind; and his ambition is always to be his own lawyer and defend himself.”

“Enough, sir; a gauger and self-confident prating rascal combine the two things which I most heartily detest. Pemberton may take his will of him for me; he may make him illustrate every blunder of his bad law, and I’ll not say him nay. You will take Lady Ecclesfield in to dinner to-day, and place her opposite me at table. Your wife speaks French well—let her sit next Count de Lanoy, but give her arm to the Bishop of Down. Let us have no politics over our wine; I cannot trust myself with the law-officers before me, and at my own table they must not be sacrificed.”

“Is Pemberton coming, my lord?”

“He is, sir—he is coming on a tour of inspection—he wants to see from my dietary how soon he may calculate on my demise; and the Attorney-General will be here on the like errand. My hearse, sir, it is, that stops the way, and I have not ordered it up yet. Can you tell me is Lady Lendrick coming to dinner, for she has not favoured me with a reply to my invitation?”

“I am unable to say, my lord; I have not seen her; she has, however, been slightly indisposed of late.”

“I am distressed to hear it. At all events I have kept her place for her, as well as one for Mr Balfour, who is expected from England to-day. If Lady Lendrick should come, Lord Kilgobbin will take her in.”

“I think I hear an arrival. I'd better finish my dressing. I scarcely thought it was so late.”

“Take care that the topic of India be avoided, or we shall have Colonel Kimberley and his tiger stories.”

“I'll look to it,” said Sewell, moving towards the door.

“You have given orders about decanting the champagne?”

“About everything, my lord. There comes another carriage. I must make haste;” and so saying, he fled from the room before the Chief could add another question.

Sewell had but little time to think over the step he had just taken, but in that little time he satisfied himself that he had acted wisely. It was a rare thing for the Chief to return to any theme he had once dismissed. Indeed, it would have implied a doubt of his former judgment, which was the very last thing that could occur to him. “My decisions



are not reversed," was his favourite expression; so that nothing was less probable than that he would again revert to the prisoner or his case. As for Fossbrooke himself and how to deal with him, that was a weightier question, and demanded more thought than he could now give it.

As he descended to the drawing-room the last of the company had just entered, and dinner was announced. Lady Lendrick and Mr Balfour were both absent. It was a grand dinner on that day, in the fullest sense of that formidable expression. It was very tedious, very splendid, very costly, and intolerably wearisome and stupid. The guests were overlaid by the endless round of dishes and the variety of wines; and such as had not sunk into a drowsy repletion occupied themselves in criticising the taste of a banquet, which was, after all, a travesty of a foreign dinner without that perfection of cookery and graceful lightness in the detail which gives all the elegance and charm to such entertainments. The more fastidious part of the company saw all the defects; the homelier ones regretted the absence of meats that they knew, and wines they were accustomed to. None were pleased—none at their ease but the host himself. As for him, seated in the centre of the table, overshadowed almost by a towering epergne, he felt like a king on his throne. All around him breathed that air of newness that smacked

of youth; and the table spread with flowers, and an ornamental dessert, seemed to emblematised that modern civilisation which had enabled himself to throw off the old man and come out into the world crimped, curled, and carmined, be-wigged and be-waistcoated.

“Eighty-seven! my father and he were contemporaries,” said Lord Kilgobbin, as they assembled in the drawing-room; “a wonderful man—a really wonderful man for his age.”

The Bishop muttered something in concurrence, only adding, “Providence” to the clause; while Pemberton whispered the Attorney-General that it was the most painful attack of acute youth he had ever witnessed. As for Colonel Kimberley, he thought nothing of the Chief’s age, for he had shot a brown bear up at Rhumnuggher, “the natives knew to be upwards of two hundred years old, some said three hundred.”

As they took their coffee in groups or knots, Sewell drew his arm within Pemberton’s, and led him through the open sash-door into the garden. “I know you want a cigar,” said he, “and so do I. Let us take a turn here and enjoy ourselves. What a bore is a big dinner! I’d as soon assemble all my duns as I’d get together all the dreary people of my acquaintance. It’s a great mistake—don’t you think so?” said Sewell, who, for the first time in his

life, accosted Pemberton in this tone of easy familiarity.

“I fancy, however, the Chief likes it,” said the other, cautiously; “he was particularly lively and witty to-day.”

“These displays cost him dearly. You should see him after the thing was over. With the paint washed off, palpitating on a sofa steeped with sulphuric ether, and stimulated with ammonia, one wouldn’t say he’d get through the night.”

“What a constitution he must have!”

“It’s not that; at least, that’s not the way I read him. My theory is, it is his temper—that violent, irascible, fervid temper—burning like a red-hot coal within him, sustains the heat that gives life and vigour to his nature. If he has a good-humoured day—it’s not a very frequent occurrence, but it happens now and then—he grows ten years older. I made that discovery lately. It seems as though if he couldn’t spite the world, he’d have no objection to taking leave of it.”

“That sounds rather severe,” said Pemberton, cautiously; for though he liked the tone of the other’s conversation, he was not exactly sure it was quite safe to show his concurrence.

“It’s the fact, however, severe or not. There’s nothing in our relations to each other that should prevent my speaking my mind about him. My

mother had the bad luck to marry him, and being gifted with a temper not very unlike his own, they discovered the singular fact that two people who resemble each other can become perfectly incompatible. I used to think that she couldn't be matched. I recant, however, and acknowledge candidly he could 'give her a distance.'

Pemberton gave a little laugh, as it were of encouragement to go on, and the other proceeded.

"My wife understands him best of all. She gives way in everything—all he says is right, all he opines is wisdom, and it's astonishing how this yielding, compliant, submissive spirit breaks him down; he pines under it, just as a man accustomed to sharp exercise would waste and decay by a life of confinement. I declare there was one week here we had got him to a degree of gentleness that was quite edifying, but my mother came and paid a visit when we were out, and when we returned there he was! violent, flaring, and vigorous as ever, wild with vanity, and mad to match himself with the first men of the day."

While Sewell talked in this open and indiscreet way of the old Judge, his meaning was to show with what perfect confidence he treated his companion, and at the same time how fair and natural it would be to expect frankness in return. The crafty lawyer, however, trained in the school where all these feints

and false parries are the commonest tricks of fence, never ventured beyond an expression of well-got-up astonishment, or a laugh of enjoyment at some of Sewell's smartnesses.

"You want a light?" said Sewell, seeing that the other held his cigar still unlit in his fingers.

"Thanks. I was forgetting it. The fact is, you kept me so much amused, I never thought of smoking; nor am I much of a smoker at any time."

"It's the vice of the idle man, and you are not in that category. By the way, what a busy time you must have of it now, with all these commitments?"

"Not so much as one might think. The cases are numerous, but they are all the same. Indeed, the informations are identical in nearly every instance. Tim Branegan had two numbers of the 'Green Flag' newspaper, some loose powder in his waiscoat-pocket, and an American drill-book in the crown of his hat."

"And is that treason-felony?"

"With a little filling-up it becomes so. In the rank of life these men belong to, it's as easy to find a rebel as it would be in Africa to discover a man with a woolly head."

"And this present movement is entirely limited to that class?" said Sewell, carelessly.

"So we thought till a couple of days ago, but we

have now arrested one whose condition is that of a gentleman.”

“With anything like strong evidence against him?”

“I have not seen the informations myself, but Burrowes, who has read them, calls them highly important; not alone as regards the prisoner, but a number of people whose loyalty was never so much as suspected. Now the Viceroy is away, the Chief Secretary on the Continent, and even Balfour, who can always find out what the Cabinet wishes—Balfour absent, we are actually puzzled whether the publicity attending the prosecution of such a man would not serve rather than damage the rebel cause, displaying as it would that there is a sympathy for this movement in a quarter far removed from the peasant.”

“Isn't it strange that the Chief Baron should have, the other evening in the course of talk, hit upon such a possibility as this, and said, ‘I wonder would the Castle lawyers be crafty enough to see that such a case should not be brought to trial? One man of education, and whose motives might be ascribed to an exalted, however misdirected, patriotism,’ said he, ‘would lift this rabble out of the slough of their vulgar movement and give it the character of a national rising.’”

“But what would he do? did he say how he would act?”



“He said something about ‘bail,’ and he used a word I wasn’t familiar with—like estreating: is there such a word?”

“Yes, yes, there is; but I don’t see how it’s to be done. Would it be possible to have a talk with him on the matter—informally, of course?”

“That would betray *me*, and he would never forgive my having told you his opinion already,” said Sewell. “No, that is out of the question; but if you would confide to me the points you want his judgment on, I’d manage to obtain it.”

Pemberton seemed to reflect over this, and walked along some paces in silence.

“He mentioned a curious thing,” said Sewell, laughingly; “he said that in Emmett’s affair there were three or four men compromised, whom the Government were very unwilling to bring to trial, and that they actually provided the bail for them—secretly, of course—and indemnified the men for their losses on the forfeiture.”

“It couldn’t be done now,” said Pemberton.

“That’s what the Chief said. They couldn’t do it now, for they have not got M’Nally—whoever M’Nally was.”

Pemberton coloured crimson, for M’Nally was the name of the Solicitor-General of that day, and he knew well that the sarcasm was in the comparison between that clever lawyer and himself.



“What I meant was, that Crown lawyers have a very different public to account to in the present day from what they had in those lawless times,” said Pemberton, with irritation. “I’m afraid the Chief Baron, with all his learning and all his wit, likes to go back to that period for every one of his illustrations. You heard how he capped the Archbishop’s allusion to the Prodigal Son to-day?—I don’t think his Grace liked it—that it requires more tact to provide an escape for a criminal than to prosecute a guilty man to conviction.”

“That’s so like him!” said Sewell, with a bitter laugh. “Perhaps the great charm that attaches him to public life is to be able to utter his flippant impertinences *ex cathedrâ*. If you could hit upon some position from which he could fulminate his bolts of sarcasm with effect, I fancy he’d not object to resign the Bench. I heard him once say, ‘I cannot go to church without a transgression, for I envy the preacher, who has the congregation at his mercy for an hour.’”

“Ah, he’ll not resign,” sighed Pemberton, deeply.

“I don’t know that.”

“At least he’ll not do so on any terms they’ll make with him.”

“Nor am I so sure of that,” repeated the other, gravely. Sewell waited for some rejoinder to this speech, of which he hoped his companion would ask

the explanation, but the cautious lawyer said not a word.

“No man with a sensitive, irascible, and vain disposition is to be turned from his course, whatever it be, by menace or bully,” said Sewell. “The weak side of these people is their vanity, and to approach them by that you ought to know and to cultivate those who are about them. Now, I have no hesitation in saying there were moments—ay, there were hours—in which, if it had been any interest to me, I could have got him to resign. He is eminently a man of his word, and, once pledged, nothing would make him retire from his promise.”

“I declare, after all,” said Pemberton, “if he feels equal to the hard work of the Court, and likes it, I don’t see why all this pressure should be put upon him. Do *you*?”

“I am the last man probably to see it,” said Sewell, with an easy laugh. “His abdication would, of course, not suit *me*. I suppose we’d better stroll back into the house—they’ll miss us.” There was an evident coldness in the way these last words were spoken, and Sewell meant that the lawyer should see his irritation.

“Have you ever said anything to Balfour about what we have been talking of?” said Pemberton, as they moved towards the house.

“I may or I may not. I talk pretty freely on all

sorts of things, and unfortunately with an incaution, too, that is not always profitable."

"Because, if you were to show *him* as clearly as a while ago you showed *me*, the mode in which this matter might be negotiated, I have little doubt—that is, I have reason to suppose—or I might go farther and say that I know——"

"I'll tell you what *I* know, Mr Solicitor, that I wouldn't give that end of a cigar," and he pitched it from him as he spoke, "to decide the question either way." And with this they passed on and mingled with the company in the drawing-room. "I have hooked you at last, my shrewd friend; and if I know anything of mankind, I'll see you, or hear from you, before twelve hours are over."

"Where have you been, Colonel, with my friend the Solicitor-General?" said the Chief Baron."

"Cabinet-making, my lord," said Sewell, laughingly.

"Take care, sir," said the Chief, sternly—"take care of that pastime. It has led more than one man to become a Joiner and a Turner!" And a buzz went through the room as men repeated this *mot*, and people asked each other, "Is this the man we are calling on to retire as worn-out, effete, and exhausted?"

## CHAPTER LX.

### CHIEF SECRETARY BALFOUR.

MR BALFOUR returned to Ireland a greater man than he left it. He had been advanced to the post of Chief Secretary, and had taken his seat in the House as member for Muddleport. Political life was therefore dawning very graciously upon him, and his ambition was budding with every prospect of success.

The Secretary's lodge in the Phoenix Park is somewhat of a pretty residence, and with its gardens, its shrubberies, and conservatory, seen on a summer's day when broad cloud-shadows lie sleeping on the Dublin mountains, and the fragrant white thorn scents the air, must certainly be a pleasant change from the din, the crush, and the turmoil of "town" at the fag end of a season. English officials call it damp. Indeed they have a trick of ascribing this quality to all things Irish; and national energy, national common sense, and national loyalty seem

to them to be ever in a diluted form. Even our drollery is not as dry as our neighbours'.

In this official residence Mr Balfour was now installed, and while Fortune seemed to shower her favours so lavishly upon him, the *quid amarum* was still there,—his tenure was insecure. The party to which he belonged had contrived to offend some of its followers and alienate others, and, without adopting any such decided line as might imply a change of policy, had excited a general sense of distrust in those who had once followed it implicitly. In the emergencies of party life, the manœuvre known to soldiers as a “change of front” is often required. The present Cabinet were in this position. They had been for some sessions trading on their Protestantism. They had been Churchmen “*pur sang*.” Their bishops, their deans, their colonial appointments, had all been of that orthodox kind that defied slander; and as it is said that a man with a broad-brimmed hat and drab gaiters may indulge unsuspected in vices which a more smartly got-up neighbour would bring down reprobation upon his head for practising, so may a ministry under the shadow of Exeter Hall do a variety of things denied to less sacred individuals. “The Protestant ticket” had carried them safely over two sessions, but there came now a hitch in which they needed that strange section called “the Irish party,” a sort of political flying column, sufficiently

uncertain always to need watching, and if not very compact or highly disciplined, rash and bold enough to be very damaging in moments of difficulty. Now, as Private Secretary, Balfour had snubbed this party repeatedly. They had been passed over in promotion, and their claims to advancement coldly received. The amenities of the Castle—that social Paradise of all Irish men and women—had been denied them. For them were no dinners, no mornings at the Lodge, and great were the murmurs of discontent thereat. A change, however, had come; an English defection had rendered Irish support of consequence, and Balfour was sent over to, what in the slang of party is called, conciliate, but which, in less euphuistic phrase, might be termed to employ a system of general and outrageous corruption.

Some averred that the Viceroy, indignantly refusing to be a party to this policy, feigned illness and stayed away; others declared that his resignation had been tendered and accepted, but that measures of state required secrecy on the subject; while a third section of guessers suggested that, when the coarse work of corruption had been accomplished by the Secretary, his Excellency would arrive to crown the edifice.

At all events the Ministry stood in need of these “free lances,” and Cholmondely Balfour was sent over to secure them. Before all governmental changes there is a sort of “ground swell” amongst the know-



ing men of party that presages the storm; and so, now, scarcely had Balfour reached the Lodge than a rumour ran that some new turn of policy was about to be tried, and that what is called the "Irish difficulty" was going to be discounted into the English necessity.

The first arrival at the Lodge was Pemberton. He had just been defeated at his election for Mallow, and ascribed his failure to the lukewarmness of the Government, and the indifference with which they had treated his demands for some small patronage for his supporters. Nor was it mere indifference—there was actual reason to believe that favour was shown to his opponent, and that Mr Heffernan, the Catholic barrister of extreme views, had met the support of more than one of those known to be under Government influence. There was a story of a letter from the Irish Office to Father O'Hea, the parish priest. Some averred they had read it, declaring that the Cabinet only desired to know "the real sentiments of Ireland, what Irishmen actually wished and wanted," to meet them. Now, when a Government official writes to a priest, his party is always *in extremis*.

Pemberton reached the Lodge feverish, irritated, and uneasy. He had, not very willingly, surrendered a great practice at the Bar to enter life as a politician, and now what if the reward of his services should

turn out to be treachery and betrayal? Over and over again had he been told he was to have the Bench; but the Chief Baron would neither die nor retire, nor was there any vacancy amongst the other courts. Nor had he done very well in Parliament; he was hasty and irritable in reply, too discursive in statement, and, worse than these, not plodding enough nor sufficiently given to repetition to please the House; for the "assembled wisdom" is fond of its ease, and very often listens with a drowsy consciousness that if did not catch what the orator said aright, it was sure to hear him say it again later on. He had made no "hit" with the House, and he was not patient enough nor young enough to toil quietly on to gain that estimation which he had hoped to snatch at starting.

Besides all these grounds of discontent, he was vexed at the careless way in which his party defended him against the attacks of the Opposition. Nothing probably teaches a man his value to his own set so thoroughly as this test; and he who is ill defended in his absence generally knows that he may retire without cause of regret. He came out, therefore, that morning to see Balfour, and as the phrase is, "have it out with him." Balfour's instructions from the "other side," as Irishmen playfully denominate England, were to get rid of Pemberton as soon as possible,—but, at the same time, with all

the caution required not to convert an old adherent into an enemy.

Balfour was at breakfast, with an Italian greyhound on a chair beside him, and a Maltese terrier seated on the table, when Pemberton was announced. He lounged over his meal, alternating tea with the 'Times,' and now and then reading scraps of the letters which lay in heaps around him.

After inviting his guest to partake of something, and hearing that he had already breakfasted three hours before, Balfour began to give him all the political gossip of town. This, for the most part, related to changes and promotions—how Griffith was to go to the Colonial, and Haughton to the Foreign Office; that Forbes was to have the Bath, and make way for Betmore, who was to be Under-Secretary. "Chadwick, you see, gets nothing. He asked for a commissionership, and we offered him the governorship of Bermuda; hence has he gone down below the gangway, and sits on the seat of the scornful."

"Your majority was smaller than I looked for on Tuesday night. Couldn't you have made a stronger muster?" said Pemberton.

"I don't know: twenty-eight is not bad. There are so many of our people in abeyance. There are five fighting petitions against their return, and as many more seeking re-election, and a few more, like yourself, Pem, 'out in the cold.'"

“ For which gracious situation I have to thank my friends.”

“ Indeed! how is that?”

“ It is somewhat cool to ask me. Have you not seen the papers lately? have you not read the letter that Sir Gray Chadwell addressed to Father O’Hea of Mallow?”

“ Of course I have read it—an admirable letter—a capital letter. I don’t know where the case of Ireland has been treated with such masterly knowledge and discrimination.”

“ And why have my instructions been always in an opposite sense? Why have I been given to believe that the Ministry distrusted that party and feared their bad faith?”

“ Have you ever seen Grünzenhoff’s account of the battle of Leipsic?”

“ No; nor have I the slightest curiosity to hear how it applies to what we are talking of.”

“ But it does apply. It’s the very neatest apropos I could cite for you. There was a moment, he says, in that history, when Schwarzenberg was about to outflank the Saxons, and open a terrific fire of artillery upon them; and either they saw what fate impended over them, or that the hour they wished for had come, but they all deserted the ranks of the French and went over to the Allies.”

“ And you fancy that the Catholics are going

to side with you?" said Pemberton, with a sneer.

"It suits both parties to believe it, Pem."

"The credulity will be all your own, Mr Balfour. I know my countrymen better than you do."

"That's exactly what they won't credit at Downing Street, Pem; and I assure you that my heart is broken defending you in the House. They are eternally asking about what happened at such an assize, and why the Crown was not better prepared in such a prosecution; and though I *am* accounted a ready fellow in reply, it becomes a bore at last. I'm sorry to say it, Pem, but it is a bore."

"I am glad, Mr Balfour, exceedingly glad, you should put the issue between us so clearly; though I own to you that coming here this morning as the plaintiff, it is not without surprise I find myself on my defence."

"What's this, Banks?" asked Balfour hastily, as his private secretary entered with a despatch.

"From Crew, sir; it must be his Excellency sends it."

Balfour broke it open and exclaimed, "In cipher, too! Go and have it transcribed at once; you have the key here."

"Yes, sir; I am familiar with the character, too, and can do it quickly." Thus saying, he left the room.

While this brief dialogue was taking place, Pemberton walked up and down the room, pale and agitated in features, but with a compressed lip and bent brow, like one nerving himself for coming conflict.

“I hope we’re not out,” said Balfour, with a laugh of assumed indifference. “He rarely employs a cipher; and it must be something of moment, or he would not do so now.”

“It is a matter of perfect indifference to *me*,” said Pemberton. “Treated as I have been, I could scarcely say I should regret it.”

“By Jove! the ship must be in a bad way when the officers are taking to the boats,” said Balfour. “Why, Pem, you don’t really believe we are going to founder?”

“I told you, sir,” said he, haughtily, “that it was a matter of the most perfect indifference to me whether you should sink or swim.”

“You are one of the crew, I hope, an’t you?”

Pemberton made no reply, and the other went on — “To be sure, it may be said that an able seaman never has long to look for a ship; and in these political disasters, it’s only the captains that are really wrecked.”

“One thing is certainly clear,” said Pemberton, with energy, “you have not much confidence in the craft you sail in.”



“Who has, Pem? Show me the man that has, and I’ll show you a consummate ass. Parliamentary life is a roadstead with shifting sands, and there’s no going a step without the lead-line; and that’s one reason why the nation never likes to see one of your countrymen as the pilot—you won’t take soundings.”

“There are other reasons too,” said Pemberton, sternly, “but I have not come here to discuss this subject. I want to know, once for all, is it the wish of your party that I should be in the House?”

“Of course it is; how can you doubt it?”

“That being the case, what steps have you taken, or what steps can you take, to secure me a seat?”

“Why, Pem, don’t you know enough of public life to know that when a minister makes an attorney-general, it is tacitly understood that the man can secure his return to Parliament? When I order out a chaise and pair, I don’t expect the innkeeper to tell me I must buy breeches and boots for the postilion.”

“You deluge me with figures, Mr Balfour, but they only confuse me. I am neither a sailor nor a postboy; but I see Mr Banks wishes to confer with you—I will retire.”

“Take a turn in the garden, Pem, and I will be with you in a moment. Are you a smoker?”

“Not in the morning,” said the other, stiffly, and withdrew.

“Mr Heffernan is here, sir; will you see him?” asked the secretary.

“Let him wait: whenever I ring the bell, you can come and announce him. I will give my answer then. What of the despatch?”

“It is nearly all copied out, sir. It was longer than I thought.”

“Let me see it now; I will read it at once.”

The secretary left the room, and soon returned with several sheets of note-paper in his hand.

“Not all that, Banks?”

“Yes, sir. It was two hundred and eighty-eight signs—as long as the Queen’s Speech. It seems very important too.”

“Read,” said Balfour, lighting his cigar.

“To Chief Secretary Balfour, Castle, Dublin.—  
What are your people about? What new stupidity is this they have just accomplished? Are there law advisers at the Castle, or are the cases for prosecution submitted to the members of the police force? Are you aware, or is it from me you are to learn, that there is now in the Richmond Jail, under accusation of “Celtism,” a gentleman of a loyalty the equal of my own? Some blunder, if not some private personal malignity, procured his arrest,

which, out of regard for me as an old personal friend, he neither resisted nor disputed, withholding his name to avoid the publicity which could only have damaged the Government. I am too ill to leave my room, or would go over at once to rectify this gross and most painful blunder. If Pemberton is too fine a gentleman for his office, where was Hacket, or, if not Hacket, Burrowes? Should this case get abroad and reach the Opposition, there will be a storm in the House you will scarcely like to face. Take measures—immediate measures—for his release, by bail or otherwise, remembering, above all, to observe secrecy. I will send you by post to-night the letter in which F. communicates to me the story of his capture and imprisonment. Had the mischance befallen any other than a true gentleman and an old friend, it would have cost us dearly. Nothing equally painful has occurred to me in my whole official life.

“ ‘ Let the case be a warning to you in more ways than one. Your system of private information is degenerating into private persecution, and would at last establish a state of things perfectly intolerable. Beg F., as a great favour to me, to come over and see me here, and repeat that I am too ill to travel, or would not have delayed an hour in going to him. There are few men, if there be one, who would in such a predicament have postponed all consideration

of self to thoughts about his friends and their interests, and in all this we have had better luck than we deserved.

“ ‘ WILMINGTON.’ ”

“ Go over it again,” said Balfour, as he lit a cigar, and, placing a chair for his legs, gave himself up to a patient rehearing of the despatch. “ I wonder who F. can be that he is so anxious about. It *is* a confounded mess, there’s no doubt of it; and if the papers get hold of it we’re done for. Beg Pember-ton to come here, and leave us to talk together.”

“ Read that, Pem,” said Balfour, as he smoked on, now and then puffing a whiff of tobacco at his terrier’s face—“ read that, and tell me what you say to it.”

Though the lawyer made a great effort to seem calm and self-possessed, Balfour could see that the hand that held the paper shook as he read it. As he finished he laid the document on the table without uttering a word.

“ Well ? ” cried Balfour, interrogatively—“ well ? ”

“ I take it, if all be as his Excellency says, that this is not the first case in which an innocent man has been sent to jail. Such things occur now and then in the model England, and I have never heard that they formed matter to impeach a ministry.”

“ You heard of this committal, then ? ”

“No, not till now.”

“Not till now?”

“Not till now. His Excellency, and indeed yourself, Mr Balfour, seem to fall into the delusion that a Solicitor-General is a detective officer. Now, he is not,—nor any more is he a police magistrate. This arrest, I suppose—I know nothing about it, but I suppose—was made on certain sworn information. The law took its ordinary course; and the man who would neither tell his name nor give the clue to any one who would answer for him went to prison. It is unfortunate, certainly; but they who made this statute forgot to insert a clause that none of the enumerated penalties should apply to any one who knew or had acquaintance with the Viceroy for the time being.”

“Yes, as you remark, that was a stupid omission; and now, what’s to be done here?”

“I opine his Excellency gives you ample instructions. You are to repair to the jail, make your apologies to F.—whoever F. may be—induce him to let himself be bailed, and persuade him to go over and pass a fortnight at Crew Keep. Pray tell him, however, before he goes, that his being in prison was not in any way owing to the Solicitor-General’s being a fine gentleman.”

“I’ll send for the informations,” said Balfour, and rang his bell. “Mr Heffernan, sir, by appointment,”

said the private secretary, entering with a card in his hand.

“Oh, I had forgotten. It completely escaped me,” said Balfour, with a pretended confusion. “Will you once more take a turn in the garden, Pem?—five minutes will do all I want.”

“If my retirement is to facilitate Mr Heffernan’s advance, it would be ungracious to defer it; but give me till to-morrow to think of it.”

“I only spoke of going into the garden, my dear Pem.”

“I will do more—I will take my leave. Indeed, I have important business in the Rolls Court.”

“I shall want to see you about this business,” said the other, touching the despatch.

“I’ll look in on you about five at the office, and by that time you will have seen Mr F.”

“Mr Heffernan could not wait, sir—he has to open a Record case in the Queen’s Bench,” said the secretary, entering, “but he says he will write to you this evening.”

The Solicitor-General grinned. He fancied that the whole incident had been a most unfortunate *mal-apropos*, and that Balfour was sinking under shame and confusion.

“How I wish Baron Lendrick could be induced to retire!” said Balfour; “it would save us a world of trouble.”



“The matter has little interest for me personally.”

“Little interest for *you*?—how so?”

“I mean what I say; but I mean also not to be questioned upon the matter,” said he, proudly. “If, however, you are so very eager about it, there is a way I believe it might be done.”

“How is that?”

“I had a talk, a half-confidential talk, last night with Sewell on the subject, and he distinctly gave me to understand it could be negotiated through *him*.”

“And you believed him?”

“Yes, I believed him. It was the sort of tortuous, crooked transaction such a man might well move in. Had he told me of something very fine, very generous, or self-devoting he was about to do, I'd have hesitated to accord him my trustfulness.”

“What it is to be a lawyer!” said Balfour, with affected horror.

“What it must be if a Secretary of State recoils from his perfidy! Oh, Mr Balfour, for the short time our official connection may last let us play fair. I am not so cold-blooded, nor are you as crafty, as you imagine. We are both of us better than we seem.”

“Will you dine here to-day, Pem?”

“Thanks, no; I am engaged.”

“To-morrow, then?—I'll have Branley and Keppel to meet you.”

"I always get out of town on Saturday night.  
Pray excuse me."

"No tempting you, eh?"

"Not in that way, certainly. Good-bye till five  
o'clock."

## CHAPTER LXI.

### A STARLIT NIGHT.

LATE at night of the same day on which the conversation of last chapter occurred, Sewell was returning to the Priory: he was on foot, having failed to find a carriage at that late hour, and was depressed and wretched in mind, for he had lost a large sum at the club, which he had no means whatever to meet on the coming morning.

It was a rare event with him to take a retrospect of his life; and his theory was, that he owed any success he had ever won to the fact that he brought to the present—to the actual casualty before him—an amount of concentration which men who look back or look forward never can command. Now, however, the past would force itself upon him, and his whole career, with all its faults and its failures, was before him.

It was a bitter memory, the very bitterest one can imagine, not in its self-accusation or reproach, but

in the thought of all the grand opportunities he had thrown away, the reckless way in which he had treated fortune, believing that she never would fail him. All his regrets were for the occasions he had suffered to slip by him unprofitably. He did not waste a thought on those he had ruined, many of them young fellows starting hopefully, joyously in life. His mind only dwelt on such as had escaped his snares. Ay, the very fellows to whom he had lost largely that night, had once been in his power! He remembered them when they "joined;" he had met them when they landed at Calcutta, in all their raw inexperience of life, pressing their petty wagers upon him, and eagerly—almost ignominiously—courting acquaintance with the favoured aide-de-camp of the Governor-General.

And there they were now, bronzed, hard-featured, shrewd men of the world, who had paid for their experience, and knew its worth.

Nothing to be done with *them!* Indeed there was little now "to be done" anywhere. The whole machinery of life was changed. Formerly, when fellows started in life, they were trustful, uncalculating, and careless. Now, on the contrary, they were wary, cautious, and suspicious. Instead of attaching themselves to older men as safe guides and counsellors, they hung back from them as too skilful and too crafty to be dealt with. Except

Trafford he had not seen one—not one, for many a day—who could be “chaffed” into a bet, or laughed into play against his inclination. And what had he made of Trafford? A few hundred pounds in hand, and those letters which now Fossbrooke had insisted on his giving up. How invariably it was that same man who came up at every crisis of his life to thwart and defeat him. And it was a hard, a cruelly hard, thing to remember, that this very man who had been the dupe of hundreds, who had been rogued and swindled out of all he had, should still have brought all his faculties to the task of persecuting *him*!

“One might have thought,” said he, with a bitter laugh, “that he had troubles enough of his own not to have spare time to bestow upon me and my affairs. He was once, I own indeed, a rich man, with station and influence, and now he is a beggar. There was a time no society refused him *entrée*; now it is thought a very gracious thing to know him. Why will these things occupy him? And this stupid rebellion! I wonder how far he is compromised, or how far one could manage to have him compromised by it? It is doubtless some personal consideration, some liking for this or that man, that has entangled him in it. If Pemberton were not so close, he could tell this; but these lawyers are so reserved, so crafty, they will not even tell what a

few hours later the whole world will read in the public papers.

“If I were to have my choice, it would puzzle me sorely to determine whether I’d rather be left a fine estate—four or five thousand a-year—or be able to send old Fossbrooke to a penal settlement. I am afraid, sorely afraid, my disinterestedness would gain the day, and that I’d sacrifice my enjoyment to my vengeance! He has done me such a long list of wrongs, I’d like to square the account. It would be a moment worth living for—that instant when the word Guilty would drop from the jury-box, and that I could lean over the dock and exchange a look with him. I’m not so sure he’d quail, though; but the shame—the shame might unman him!”

He had reached the gate of the avenue as he thus mused, and was about to insert the key in the lock, when a man arose from a little bench beside the lodge, and said,

“A fine night, sir; I’m glad you’re come.”

“Who are you? Stand off!” cried Sewell, drawing his revolver, as he spoke, from his breast pocket.

“O’Reardon, your honour—only O’Reardon,” said the fellow, in his well-known whine.

“And where the devil have you been this fortnight? What rascally treachery have you been



hatching since I saw you? No long stories, my friend, and no lies. What have you been at?"

"I was never on any other errand than your honour's service, so help me——"

"Don't swear, old fellow, if you want me to believe you. Perjury has a sort of bird-lime attraction for scoundrels like you, so just keep away from an oath."

O'Reardon laughed. "His honour was droll—he was always droll—and though not an Irishman himself, sorrow man living knew them better;" and with this double compliment to his patron and his country, the fellow went on to show that he had been on "the tracks of the ould man" since the day they parted. He had got a "case against him"—the finest and fullest ever was seen. Mr Spencer declared that "better informations never was sworn;" and on this they arrested him, together with his diary, his traps, his drawings, his arms, and his bullet-mould. There were grave reasons for secrecy in the case, and great secrecy was observed. The examination was in private, and the prisoner was sent to the Richmond Jail, with a blank for his name.

To the very circumstantial and prolix detail which O'Reardon gave with all the "onction" of a genuine informer, Sewell listened with a forced patience. Perhaps the thought of all the indignities that were

heaped upon his enemy compensated him for the wearisomeness of the narrative. At last he stopped him in his story, and said, "And how much of this accusation do you believe?"

"All of it—every word."

"You mean to say that he is engaged in this rebellion, and a sworn member of the Celt association?"

"I do. There's more than thirty already off to transportation not so deep in it as him."

"And if it should turn out that he is a man of station, and who once had a great fortune, and that in his whole life he never meddled with politics—that he has friends amongst the first families of England, and has only to ask to have men of rank and position his sureties—what then?"

"He'll have to show what he was 'at' a year ago when he lodged in my house at Cullen's Wood, and wouldn't give his name, nor the name of the young man that was with him, nor ever went out till it was dark night, and stole away at last with all sorts of tools and combustibles. He'll have to show that I didn't give his description up at the Castle, and get Mr Balfour's orders to watch him close; and what's more, that he didn't get a private visit one night from the Lord-Lieutenant himself, warning him to be off as quick as he could. I heard their words as I listened at the door."

“So that, according to your veracious story, Mr O’Reardon, the Viceroy himself is a Celt and a rebel, eh?”

“It’s none of my business to put the things together, and say what shows this, and what disproves that; that’s for Mr Hacket and the people up at the Castle. I’m to get the facts—nothing but the facts—and them’s facts that I tell you.”

“You’re on a wrong scent this time, O’Reardon; he is no rebel. I wish he was. I’d be better pleased than yourself if we could keep him fast where he is, and never let him leave it.”

“Well, he’s out now, and it’ll not be so easy to get him ‘in,’ again.”

“How do you mean?—out!”

“I mean he’s free. Mr Balfour came himself with two other gentlemen, and they took him away in a coach.”

“Where to?”

“That’s more than I know.”

“And why was I not kept informed on these matters? My last orders to you were to write to me daily.”

“I was shut up myself the morning your honour left town. When I swore the informations they took me off, and never liberated me till this evening at eight o’clock.”

“You’ll soon find out where he is, won’t you?”

“That I will. I’ll know before your honour’s up in the morning.”

“And you’ll be able to tell what he’s after—why he is here at all; for, mind me, O’Reardon, I tell you again, it’s not rebellion he’s thinking of.”

“I’ll do that too, sir.”

“If we could only get him out of the country—persuade him that his best course was to be off. If we could manage to get rid of him, O’Reardon—to get rid of him!” and he gave a fierce energy to the last words.

“*That* would be easier than the other,” said the fellow, slyly.

“*What* would be easier?” cried Sewell, hurriedly.

“What your honour said last,” said the fellow, with a knowing leer, as though the words were better not repeated.

“I don’t think I understand you—speak out. What is it you mean?”

“Just this, then, that if it was that he was a trouble to any one, or that he’d be better out of the way, it would be the easiest thing in life to make some of the boys believe he was an informer, and they’d soon do for him.”

“Murder him, eh?”

“I wouldn’t call it murdering if a man was a traitor: nobody could call that murder.”

“We’ll not discuss that point now;” and as he

spoke they came out from the shade of the avenue into the open space before the door, at which, late as it was, a carriage was now standing. "Who can be here at this hour?" muttered Sewell.

"That's a doctor's coach, but I forget his name."

"Oh! to be sure. It is Dr Beattie's carriage. You may leave me now, O'Reardon; but come up here early to-morrow—come to my room, and be sure to bring me some news of what we were talking about." As the man moved away, Sewell stood for a moment or two to listen—he thought he heard voices in the hall, which, being large and vaulted, had a peculiar echo. Yes, he heard them now plainly enough, and had barely time to conceal himself in the copse when Dr Beattie and Mrs Sewell descended the steps, and walked out upon the gravel. They passed so close to where Sewell stood, that he could hear the very rustle of her silk dress as she walked. It was Beattie spoke, and his voice sounded stern and severe. "I knew he could not stand it. I said so over and over again. It is not at his age that men can assume new modes of life, new associates, and new hours. Instead of augmenting, the wise course would have been to have diminished the sources of excitement to him. In the society of his granddaughter, and with the few old friends whose companionship pleased him, and for whom he exerted himself to make those little harmless displays of his

personal vanity, he might have gone on for years in comparative health."

"It was not I that devised these changes, Doctor," broke she in. "I never asked for these gaieties that you are condemning."

"These new-fangled fopperies, too!" went on Beattie, as though not heeding her apology. "I declare to you that they gave me more pain, more true pain, to witness than any of his wild outbursts of passion. In the one, the man was real, and in the other, a mere mockery. And what's the consequence?" added he, fiercely: "he himself feels the unworthy part he has been playing; instead of being overjoyed at the prospect of seeing his son again, the thought of it overwhelms him with confusion. He knows well how he would appear to the honest eyes of poor simple-hearted Tom Lendrick, whose one only pride in life was his father's greatness."

"And he is certainly coming?"

"He has made an exchange for Malta, and will pass through here to see the Chief—so he says in his short letter. He expects, too, to find Lucy here, and to take her out with him. I believe you don't know Tom Lendrick?"

"I met him at the Cape. He dined with us twice, if I remember aright; but he was shy and awkward, and we thought at the time that he had not taken to us."



“First acquaintance always chilled him, and his deep humility ever prevented him making those efforts in conversation which would have established his true value. Poor fellow, how little he was always understood! Well, well! I am keeping you out in the night air all this time——”

“Oh, it is perfectly delicious, Doctor. It is like a night in the tropics, so balmy and so bright.”

“I don’t like to offer rude counsels, but my art sometimes gives a man scant choice,” said he, after a brief pause. “I’d say, take your husband away, get him down to that place on the Shannon,—you have it still? Well, get him down there; he can always amuse himself; he’s fond of field-sports, and people are sure to be attentive to him in the neighbourhood; and leave the old Judge to fall back into the well-worn groove of his former life. He’ll soon send for Tom and his daughter, and they’ll fall into his ways, or, what’s better, *he* will fall into *theirs*—without either ruining his health or his fortune: plain speaking all this, Mrs Sewell, but you asked for frankness, and told me it would not be ill taken.”

“I don’t think Colonel Sewell would consent to this plan.”

“Would *you?*” asked he, bluntly.

“My consent would not be asked; there’s no need to discuss it.”

“ I meant—do you sufficiently concur in it to advise it ? ”

“ I can advise nothing. I advance nothing. I oppose nothing. I had thought, Dr Beattie, that your visits to this house might have taught you the place I occupy, and the consideration I am held in.”

This was ground the Doctor would not enter upon, and he adroitly said, “ I think it will be the saving of Colonel Sewell himself. Club gossip says that he loses heavily every night, and though his means may be considerable——”

“ But they are not—he has nothing—not a shilling, except what this place brings in.”

“ All the more reason not to play; but I must not keep you out here all night. I'll come early in the morning, and hope to find him better. Remember how essential quiet is to him; let him not be disturbed; no talking by way of amusing him; pure rest—mind that.”

“ If he wishes to see my husband, or asks for him——”

“ I'd make some excuse; say he is out. Colonel Sewell excites him; he never fully understood Sir William; and I fear, besides, that he now and then took a humoristic pleasure in those bursts of temper which it is always only too easy to provoke.”

“ He is very fond of my little boy—might he go in ? ”

“ I think not. I'd say downright repose and isolation. You yourself can step in noiselessly from time to time, and only speak if you see that he wishes it; but on no account mention anything that could awaken interest—nothing to arouse or to excite. You saw the fearful state that letter threw him into to-night, and the paroxysm of rage with which he called for his will to erase Tom Lendrick's name. Now in all probability he will have totally forgotten the whole incident by to-morrow. Good-night.”

After he drove off she still lingered about the spot where they had been talking. Whatever interest the subject might have had for her, it was not through her affections that interest worked, for she hummed an opera air, “ Bianca Luna,” and tried to recall some lines of Alfred de Musset's to the “ timid planet,” and then sat down upon the steps and gazed at the stars.

Sewell moved out into the avenue, and, whistling carelessly to announce his approach, walked up to where she was sitting. “ Romantic, certainly!” said he. “ Whose carriage was that I met driving out?”

“ Dr Beattie's. He has been here to see Sir William.”

“ Will he die this time, or is it only another false start?”

“ He is seriously ill. Some news he received from his son gave him a severe shock, and brought on one

of his worst attacks. He has been raving since six o'clock."

"I should like to know when he has done anything else. I should like to see the man who ever heard from his lips other than the wildest, crudest nonsense. The question is, is he going to die?"

"Beattie's opinion is very unfavourable."

"Unfavourable! To whom? To *him* or to *us*?"

"His death could scarcely be favourable to us."

"That's as it might be. We stand to win on one or two of these twenty wills he has made; and if he should recover and live on, I don't think—indeed I'm full sure—I couldn't bear it much longer; so that, take it either way, I'd rather he'd die."

"Beattie wishes his granddaughter were here."

"Well, send for her. Though, if he is as ill as you say, it won't be of much use."

"He has come through so many of these attacks, and has such great power of constitution, the Doctor still thinks he might rally."

"And so he will, I'll be sworn. There's a vitality in those people who plague and torment others that ought to get insurance offices to take them at half premium. Has he asked for *me*?"

"Only in his ravings. He rang his bell violently, and inquired if you had been at the prison, and asked what tidings you had brought him; and then he went off to say that all this Celt affair was no rebellion at

all, and that he would prove it. Then he talked of quitting the Bench and putting on his stuff gown to defend these men against the Government."

"Sick or well, sane or insane, it's always the same story. His only theme is himself."

"Beattie was struck with the profound things and the witty things he said throughout all his rambling. He said that the intellect was never actually overthrown, that it only tottered."

"What rot! as if he knew anything about it! These fellows talk of a man's brain as if it was the ankle-joint. Was there any question of a will?"

"Yes. He made Beattie take a will out of his writing-desk; and he erased the name of Lendrick in every part of it. Beattie and he had some angry words together, but that was before he was raving; and I heard Sir William tell him, 'Sir, you are neither my priest nor my lawyer; and if your skill as a doctor be only on a par with your tact as a friend, my recovery is all but hopeless.'"

"That probably was one of the profound or witty things the Doctor was so delighted with."

"Dr Beattie took nothing addressed to himself in ill part."

"No; that's part of medical education. These fellows begin life as such 'cads,' they never attain to the feeling of being gentlemen."

There was not light enough for Sewell to see the

scornful curl of his wife's lip at this speech, but in the little short cough by which she suppressed her temptation to reply, he noted her indignation.

"I know he's one of your especial favourites, madam," said he, harshly; "but even *that* gives him no immunity with *me*."

"I'm sure I could never think it would."

"No; not even from being aware that one of his chief claims upon the wife was the unhandsome way he spoke of the husband."

"He seldom mentions you," said she, superciliously.

"I'm not so scrupulous about him, then; I have not forgotten his conduct when that fellow got his skull cracked at the Nest. I saw it all, madam; but I have a trick of seeing and saying nothing that might have suggested some alarm to you ere this."

"You have many tricks, but not one that alarms me," said she, coldly; "the wholesome fear of consequences will always be enough to keep you harmless."

He almost sprang at her at these words—indeed, he came so close that his hot breath brushed her face. "It is a favourite taunt of yours to sneer at my courage," said he, fiercely; "you may do it once too often."

She shrugged her shoulders contemptuously, and slowly arose from where she sat.



“Where are you going?” asked he, roughly.

“Going in.”

“I have many things to say yet; I want to hear more, too, about the old man’s illness.”

“I have told you all I know. Good-night.”

He turned away without acknowledging her salutation, and strolled into the grass.

What a web of troubles he was involved in, and how hopelessly he turned from this or that expedient to extricate himself! It was but a short time before that, as a member of the committee of his club, he had succeeded in passing a law by which all play debts should be discharged within twenty-four hours, on penalty of the defaulter being declared excluded from the club. He was a winner at the time; but now luck had changed: he had lost heavily, and had not the slightest prospect of being able to meet his losses. “How like my fate!” muttered he, in intense passion—“how like my fate! my whole life has been a game I have played against myself. And that woman, too”—it was of his wife he spoke—“who once helped me through many a strait, assumes now to be too pure and too virtuous to be my associate, and stands quietly aloof to see me ruined.”

A long thin streak of light crossed his path as he went; he looked up, and saw it came from between the shutters of the Chief’s room. “I wonder how it fares with him!” muttered he. He pondered for

some time over the old man's case, his chances of recovery, and the spirit in which convalescence would find him; and then entering the house, he slowly mounted the stairs, one by one, his heart feeling like a load almost too heavy to carry. The unbroken stillness of the house seemed to whisper caution, and he moved along the corridor with noiseless tread till he came to the door of the Judge's room. There he stopped and listened. There were the long-drawn breathings of a heavy sleeper plainly to be heard, but they sounded stronger and fuller than the respirations of a sick man. Sewell gently turned the handle of the door and entered. The suspicion was right. The breathings were those of the hospital nurse, who, seated in a deep arm-chair, slept profoundly. Sewell stood several minutes at the door before he ventured farther: at last he crept stealthily forward to the foot of the bed, and, separating the curtains cautiously, he peeped in. The old man lay with his eyes closed, and his long shrivelled arms outside the clothes. He continued to talk rapidly, and by degrees his voice grew stronger and clearer, and had all that resonance of one speaking in a large assembly. "I have now," said he, "shown the inexpediency of this course. I have pointed out where you have been impolitic; I will next explain where you are illegal. This Act was made in the 23d year of Henry VI.,

and although intended only to apply to cases of action personal, or indictment of trespass — What is the meaning of this interruption? Let there be silence in the Court. I will have the tribunal in which I preside respected. The public shall learn—the representatives of the press—and if there be, as I am told there are”—his voice grew weaker and weaker, and the last audible words that escaped him were, “judgment for the plaintiff.”

Though his lips still moved rapidly no sound came forth, but his hands were continually in motion, and his lean arms twitched with short convulsive jerks. Sewell now crept quietly round towards the side of the bed, on which several sheets of paper and writing materials lay. One of the sheets alone was written on; it was in the large bold hand of the old Judge, who even at his advanced age wrote in a vigorous and legible character. It was headed, “Directions for my funeral,” and began thus:—“As Irishmen may desire to testify their respect for one who, while he lived, maintained with equal energy the supremacy of the law and the inviolability of the man, and as my obsequies may in some sort become an act of national homage, I write these lines to convey my last wishes, legacies of which my country will be the true executors.

“First, I desire that I may be buried within the nave of St Patrick’s Cathedral. The spot I have

selected is to the right of Swift's monument, under the fifth window, and for this purpose that hideous monument to Sir Hugh Brabazon may be removed, and my interment will, in this way, confer a double benefit upon my country. Secondly, as by my will, dated this twenty-eighth day of October 18—, I have bequeathed, with exception of certain small legacies, all my estate, real and personal, to Dudley Sewell, Esq., late colonel in her Majesty's service, it is my wish that he alone should——" here the writing finished.

Three several times Sewell read over the lines, and what a thrill of delight ran through him! It was like a reprieve to a man on the very steps of the scaffold! The Judge was not rich probably, but a considerable sum of money he still might have, and it was money—cash. It was not invested in lands or houses or ships: it was all available for that life that Sewell led, and which alone he liked.

If he could but see this will—it must be close at hand somewhere—what a satisfaction it would be to read over the details by which at last—at last!—he was to be lifted above the casualties of a life of struggle! He tried three or four drawers of the large ebony cabinet in which the Chief used to throw his papers, with the negligence of a man who could generally re-write as easily as he could search for a missing document. There were bills and receipts,

notes of trials, and letters in abundance—but no will. The cumbrous old writing-desk, which Sir William rarely used, was not in its accustomed place, but stood on the table in the centre of the room, and the keys beside it. The will might possibly be there. He drew nigh the bed to assure himself that the old man was still sleeping, and then he turned towards the nurse, whose breathings were honest vouchers for insensibility; and thus fortified, he selected the key—he knew it well—and opened the desk. The very first paper he chanced upon was the will. It was a large sheet of strong post-paper, labelled—“My last Will and Testament.—W. L.” While Sewell stood examining the writing the door creaked gently, and his wife moved softly and noiselessly into the room. If the sentiment that overcame him was not shame, it was something in which shame blended with anger. It was true she knew him well: she knew all the tortuous windings of his plotting, scheming nature: she knew that no sense of honour, no scruple of any kind, could ever stand between him and his object. He had done those things which, worse than deep crimes, lower a man in the eyes of a woman, and that woman his wife, and that she thus knew and read him he was well aware; but strangely enough there is a world of space between being discovered through the results of a long inquiry and being detected *flagrante delicto!* taken in the very

act, red-handed in iniquity ; and so did this cold-hearted, callous man now feel it.

“What are you doing here ?” said she, calmly and slowly, as she came forward.

“I wanted to see this. I was curious to know how he treated us,” said he, trembling as he spoke.

She took the paper from his hand, replaced it in the desk, and locked it up, with the calm determination of one who could not be gainsaid.

“But I have not read it,” whispered he, in a hissing voice.

“Nor need you,” said she, placing the keys under the old man’s pillow. “I heard you coming here—I heard you enter the room. I am thankful it is no worse.”

“What do you mean by no worse ?” cried he, seizing her by the wrist, and staring savagely at her—“say what you mean, woman !” She made no reply ; but the scornful curl of her lip, and the steady unflinching stare of her eyes, showed that neither his words nor his gesture had terrified her.

“You shall hear more of this to-morrow,” said he, bending on her a look of intense hate ; and he stole slowly away, while she seated herself at the bedside, and hid her face in the curtain.



## CHAPTER LXII.

### AN UNGRACIOUS ADIEU.

WHEN Dr Beattie came at seven o'clock in the morning, he found his patient better. The nurse gave her account, as nurses know well how to do, of a most favourable night—told how calmly he slept, how sensibly he talked, and with what enjoyment he ate the jelly which he had never tasted.

At all events he was better; not stronger, perhaps,—there was no time for that; but calmer and more composed.

“You must not talk, nor be talked to yet a while,” said Beattie; “and I will station Haire here as a sentinel to enforce my orders.”

“Yes, I would like Haire,” whispered the old man, softly. “Let him come and sit by me.”

“Can I see Mrs Sewell? or is it too early to ask for her?” inquired the Doctor of a maid.

“She has been up all night, sir, and only just lain down.”

“Don’t disturb her, then. I will write a line to her, and you can give it when she awakes.”

He went into the library, and wrote:—“Sir William is better, but not out of danger. It is even more important now than before that he have perfect quiet. I will change the nurse, and meanwhile I desire that you alone should enter the room till I return.”

“What letter was that the Doctor gave you as he went away?” said Sewell, who during Beattie’s visit had been secretly on the watch over all that occurred.

“For my mistress, sir,” said the girl, showing the note.

Sewell snatched it impatiently, threw his eyes over it, and gave it back. “Tell your mistress I want to see her when she is dressed. It’s nothing to hurry for, but to come down to my room at her own convenience.”

“Better, but not out of danger! I should think not,” muttered he, as he strolled out into the garden.

“What is the meaning of stationing old Haire at the bedside? Does Beattie suspect? But what could he suspect? It would be a very convenient thing for me, no doubt, if he would die; but I’d scarcely risk my neck to help him on the way. These things are invariably discovered; and it would make no difference with the law whether it was the strong cord of a vigorous life were snapped, or the frail thread of a wasted exist-

ence unravelled. Just so; mere unravelling would do it here. No need of bold measures. A good vigorous contradiction—a rude denial of something he said—with a sneer at his shattered intellect, and I'd stake my life on it his passion would do the rest. The blood mounts to his head at the slightest insinuation. I'd like to see him tried with a good round insult. Give me ten minutes alone with him, and I'll let Beattie come after me with all his bottles; and certainly no law could make this murder. Bad-tempered men are not to be more carefully guarded by the state than better-natured ones. It would be a strange statute that made it penal to anger an irascible fellow. I wonder if some suspicion of this kind has crossed Beattie's mind? Is it for that Haire has been called to keep the watch on deck,—and if so, who is to replace him? He'll tire at last—he must sleep some time; and what are they to do then? My wife, perhaps. Yes; she would play their game willingly enough. If she has heard of this will, it will alarm her. She has always tried to have the children provided for. She dreads—she's not so long there—she dreads leaving everything in my power. And of late she has dared to oppose me openly. My threat of suing for a divorce, that used to keep her so submissive once, is failing now. Some one has told her that I could not succeed. I can see in her manner that her mind is reassured on this

score. She could have no difficulty in filching an opinion—this house is always full of lawyers; and certainly nothing in the habits of the place would have imposed any restraint in discussing it.” And he laughed—actually laughed—at the conceit thus evoked. “If I had but a little time before me now, I should work through all my difficulties. Only to think of it! One fortnight, less perhaps, to arrange my plans, and I might defy the world. This is Tuesday. By Thursday I shall have to meet those two acceptances for three hundred and two hundred and fifty. The last, at all events, I must pay, since Walcott’s name was not in his own handwriting. How conscientiously a man meets a bill when he has forged the endorsement!” And again he laughed at the droll thought. “These troubles swarm around me,” muttered he, impatiently. “There is Fossbrooke, too. Malevolent old fool, that will not see how needless it is to ruin me. Can’t he wait—can’t he wait? It’s his own prediction that I’m a fellow who needs no enemy—my own nature will always be Nemesis enough. Who’s that?—who is there?” cried he, as he heard a rustling in the copse at his side.

“It’s me, your honour. I came out to get sight of your honour before I went away,” said O’Reardon, in a sort of slavish cringing tone.

“Away! and where to?”

“They’re sending me out of the way, your honour, for a week or two, to prevent that ould man I arrested charging me with parjury. That’s what they pretend, sir,” said he, in a lower voice. “But the truth is, that I know more than they like, ay, and more than they think; for it was in my house at Cullen’s Wood that the Lord-Liftenant himself came down, one evening, and sat two hours with this ould man.”

“Keep these sort of tales for other people, Master O’Reardon; they have no success with me. You are a capital terrier for rat-hunting, but you cut a sorry figure when you come out as a boar-hound. Do you understand me?”

“I do, sir, right well. Your honour means that I ought to keep to informations against common people, and not try my hand against the gentlemen.”

“You’ve hit it perfectly. It’s strange enough how sharp you can be in some things, and what a cursed fool in others.”

“You never was more right in your life, sir. That’s my character in one sentence,” and he gave a little plaintive sigh, as though the thought were a painful one.

“And how do you mean to employ your leisure, Mr O’Reardon? Men of your stamp are never thoroughly idle. Will you write your memoirs?”

“Indeed no, your honour; it might hurt people’s

feelings the names I'd have to bring in; and I'm just going over to France for the present."

"To France?"

"Yes, sir; Mr Harman's tuk heart o' grace, and is going to sue for a divorce, and he's sending me over to a place called Boulogne to get up evidence against the Captain."

"You like that sort of thing?"

"I neither like it nor dislike it," said O'Reardon, while his eye kindled angrily, for he thought that he who scoffed at him should stand on higher moral ground than Sewell's.

"You once lived with Captain Peters, I think?"

"Yes, sir; I was his valet for four years. I was with him at Malta and Corfu when he was in the Rifles."

"And he treated you well?"

"No man better, that I'll say for him if he was in the dock to-morrow. He gave me a trunk of his clothes—mufti he called them—and ten pounds the day I left him."

"It's somewhat hard, isn't it, to go against a man after that? Doesn't your fine nature rather revolt at the ingratitude?"

"Well, then, to tell your honour the truth, my 'fine nature' never was rich enough to afford itself that thing your honour calls gratitude. It's a sort of thing for my betters."



“I’m sorry to hear you say so, O’Reardon. You almost shock me with such principles.”

“Well, that’s the way it is, sir. When a man’s poor he has no more right to fine feelins than to fine feeding.”

“Why, you go from bad to worse, O’Reardon. I declare you are positively corrupting this morning.”

“Am I, sir?” said the fellow, who now eyed him with a calm and steady defiance, as though he had submitted to all he meant to bear. Sewell felt this, and though he returned the stare, it was with a far less courageous spirit. “Well?” cried he at last, as though, no longer able to endure the situation, he desired to end it at any cost—“Well?”

“I suppose your honour wouldn’t have time to settle with me now?”

“To settle with you! What do you call settle, my good fellow? our reckonings are very short ones, or I’m much mistaken. What’s this settlement you talk of?”

“It’s down here in black and white,” said the other, producing a folded sheet of paper as he spoke. “I put down the payments as I made them, and the car hire and a trifle for refreshment; and if your honour objects to anything, it’s easy to take it off; though, considering I was often on the watch till daybreak, and had to come in from Howth on foot before the

trains started of a morning, a bit to eat and to drink was only reasonable."

"Make an end of this long story. What do you call the amount?"

"It's nothing to be afeard of, your honour, for the whole business—the tracking him out, the false keys I had made for his trunk and writing-case, eight journeys back and forwards; two men to swear that he asked them to take the Celt's oath, and the other expenses as set down in the account. It's only twenty-seven pound four and eightpence."

"What?"

"Twenty-seven, four, and eight; neither more nor less."

A very prolonged whistle was Sewell's sole reply. "Do you know, O'Reardon," said he at last, "it gives me a painfully low opinion of myself to see that, after so many months of close acquaintance, I should still appear to you to be little short of an idiot? It is very distressing—I give you my word it is—very distressing."

"Make your mind easy, sir; it is not *that* I think you at all;" and the fellow lent an emphasis to the "that" which gave it a most insulting significance.

"I'd like to know," cried Sewell, as his face crimsoned with anger, "if you could have dared to offer such a document as this to any man you didn't believe to be a fool."

“The devil a drop of fool’s blood is in either of us,” said O’Reardon, with an easy air and a low laugh of quiet assurance.

“I am flattered by the companionship, certainly. It almost restores me to self-esteem to hear your words. I’d like to pay you a compliment in turn if I only knew how.”

“Just pay me my little bill, your honour, and it will be all I’ll ask.”

“I’m not over much in a joking mood this morning, and I’d advise you to talk of something else. There’s a five-pound note for you,” and he flung the money contemptuously towards him. “Take it, and think yourself devilish lucky that I don’t have you up for perjury in this business.”

O’Reardon never moved, nor made any sign to show that he noticed the money at his feet; but, crossing his arms on his chest, he drew himself haughtily up, and said—“So, then, it’s defying me you’d try now? You’d have me up for perjury! Well, then, I begin to believe you *are* a fool, after all. No, sir, you needn’t put your hand in your waiscoat. If you have a pistol there I have another—and, what’s more, I have a witness in that clump of trees, that only needs the word to stand beside me. There now, Colonel, you see you’re beat, and beat at your own game too.”

“D—n you !” cried Sewell, savagely. “Can’t you see that I’ve got no money ?”

“If I haven’t money, I’ll have money’s worth. Short of twenty pound I’ll not leave this.”

“I tell you again, you might as well ask me for two hundred or two thousand. I’ll be in cash, I hope, by the end of the week——”

“Ay, but I’ll be in France,” broke in O’Reardon.

“I wish you were in——” mumbled Sewell, as he believed, to himself; but the other heard him, and dryly said, “No, sir, not yet; it’s manners to let *you* go first.”

“I lost heavily two nights ago at the club—that’s why I’m so hard up; but I know I must have money by Saturday. By Saturday’s post, I’ll send you an order for twenty pounds. Will that content you ?”

“No, sir, it will not. I had a bad bout of it last night myself, and lost every ha’penny Mr Harman gave me for the journey—that’s the reason I’m here.”

“But if I have not got it? There, so help me! is every farthing I can call my own this minute,” and he drew from his pocket some silver, in which a single gold coin or two mingled—“take it, if you like.”

“No, sir; it’s no good to me. Short of twenty pounds, I couldn’t start on the journey.”

“And if I haven’t got it? Am I to go out and rob for you?” cried Sewell, as his eyes flashed indignantly at him.

“I don’t want you to rob ; but it isn’t a house like this hasn’t twenty pounds in it.”

“You mean,” said Sewell, with a sneering laugh, “that if there’s not cash there must be plate, jewels, and suchlike, and so I’m to lay an embargo on the spoons ; but you forget there is a butler who looks after these things.”

“There might be many a loose thing on your lady’s table that would do as well—a ring or two, or a bracelet that she’s tired of.”

Sewell started—a sudden thought flashed across him ; if he were to kill the fellow as he stood there, how should he conceal the murder and hide the corpse ? It was quick as a lightning flash this thought, but the horror of the consequences so overcame him that a cold sweat broke out over his body, and he staggered back to a seat, and sank into it exhausted and almost fainting.

“Don’t take it to heart that way, sir,” said the fellow, gazing at him. “Will I get you a glass of water ?”

“Yes. No—no ; I’ll do without it. It’s passing off. Wait here for a moment ; I’ll be back presently.” He arose as he spoke, and moved slowly away. Entering the house, he ascended the stairs and made for his wife’s room. As he reached the door he stopped to listen. There was not a sound to be heard. He turned the handle gently and looked in.

One shutter was partly open, and a gleam of the breaking daylight crossed the floor and fell upon the bed on which she lay, dressed, and fast asleep—so soundly, indeed, that though the door creaked loudly as he pushed it wider, she never heard the noise. She had evidently been sitting up with the sick man, and was now overcome by fatigue. His intention had been to consult with her—at least to ask her to assist him with whatever money she had by her—and he had entered thus stealthily not to startle her; for somehow, in the revulsion of his mind from the late scene of outrage and insult, a sense of respect, if not of regard, moved him towards her, who, in his cruelest moments, had never ceased to have a certain influence over him. He looked at her as she slept—her fine features, at rest, were still beautiful, though deep traces of sorrow were seen in the darkened orbits and the lines about the mouth, while three or four glistening white hairs showed themselves in the brown braid over her temple. Sewell sat down beside the bed, and, as he looked at her, a whole life passed in review before him, from the first hour he met her to that sad moment of the present. How badly they had played their game! how recklessly misused every opportunity that might have secured their fortune! What had *he* made of all his shrewdness and ready wit? And what had *she* done with all her beauty, and a fascination as great as even her



beauty? It was an evil day that had brought them together. Each, alone, without the other, might have achieved any success. There had been no trust, no accord between them. They wanted the same things, it is true, but they never agreed upon the road that led to them. As to principles, she had no more of them than he had, but she had scruples—scruples of delicacy, scruples of womanhood—which often thwarted and worried him, and ended by making them enemies; and here was now the end of it! *Her* beauty was wasted, and *his* luck played out, and only ruin before them.

And yet it calmed him to sit there; her softly-drawn breathing soothed his ruffled spirit. He felt it as the fevered man feels the ice-cold water on his brow—a transient sense of what it would be to be well again. Is there that in the contemplation of sleep—image as it is of the great sleep of all—that subdues all rancour of heart—all that spirit of conflict and jar by which men make their lives a very hell of undying hates, undying regrets?

His heart, that a few moments ago had almost burst with passion, now felt almost at ease; and in the half-darkened room, the stillness, and the calm, there stole over him a feeling of repose that was almost peacefulness. As he bent over her to look at her, her lips moved. She was dreaming; very softly indeed came the sounds, but they seemed as

if entreating. "Yes," she said,—“yes—all—everything—I consent. I agree to all, only—Cary—let me have Cary, and I will go.”

Sewell started. His face became crimson in a moment. How was it that these words scattered all his late musings, as the hurricane tears and severs the cloud-masses, and sends them riven and shattered through the sky? He arose and walked over to the table; a gold comb and two jewelled hair-pins lay on the glass; he clutched them coarsely in his hand, and moved away. Cautiously and noiselessly he crept down the stairs, and out into the garden. “Take these, and make your money of them; they are worth more than your claim; and mind, my good fellow—mind it well, I say, or it will be worse for you—our dealings end here. This is our last transaction, and our last meeting. I’ll never harm you, if you keep only out of my way. But take care that you never claim me, nor assume to know me; for I warn you I’ll disown you, if it should bring you to the gallows. That’s plain speaking, and you understand it.”

“I do, every word of it,” said the fellow, as he buttoned up his coat and drew his hat over his eyes. “I’m taking the ‘fiver’ too, as it’s to be our last meetin’. I suppose your honour will shake hands with me and wish me luck. Well, if you won’t, there’s no harm done. It’s a quare world, where

the people that's doin' the same things can't be friends, just because one wears fine cloth and the other can only afford corduroy. Good-bye, sir; good-bye, any*how*;" and there was a strange cadence in the last words no description can well convey.

Sewell stood and looked after him for a moment, then turned into the house, and threw himself on a sofa, exhausted and worn out.

## CHAPTER LXIII.

### A PLEASANT MEETING.

No sooner did Sir Brook find himself once more at liberty than he went to the post-office for his letters, of which a goodly stock had accumulated during his absence. A telegram, too, was amongst the number, despatched by Tom in great haste eight days before. It ran thus:—"Great news!—we have struck silver in the new shaft—do not sell—do not even treat till you hear from me. I write by this post.—LENDRICK." Had Tom but seen the unmoved calm with which Fossbrooke read this astounding tidings—had he only seen the easy indifference with which the old man threw down the slip of paper after once reading it, and passed on to a letter of Lord Wilmington from Crew Keep—his patience would certainly have been sorely tried. Nor was it from any indifference to good fortune, still as little from any distrust of the tidings. It was simply because he had never doubted that the day was coming that was to

see him once more rich. It might be a little later or a little earlier. It might be that wealth should shower itself upon him in a gradually increasing measure, or come down in a very deluge of prosperity. These were things he did not, could not know; but of the fact—the great Fact itself—he had as firm a belief as he had of his own existence; and had he died before realising it, he would have bequeathed his vast fortune, with blanks for the amount, as conscientiously as though it were bank stock for which he held the vouchers.

When most men build castles in the air they know on what foundations their edifices are based, and through all their imaginative ardour there pierces the sharp pang of unreality. Not so with Fossbrooke. It was simply a question of time with him when the costly palace might become fit for habitation, and this great faith in himself rescued him from all that vacillation so common to those who keep a debtor and creditor account between their hopes and fears. Neither was he at all impatient because Destiny did not bestir herself and work quicker. The world was always pleasant, always interesting; and when tomorrow or next day Fortune might call him to a higher station and other modes of life, he almost felt he should regret the loss of that amusing existence he now enjoyed, amongst people all new and all strange to him.

At last he came to Tom Lendrick's letter—four closely-written pages, all glowing with triumph. On the day week after Sir B.'s departure, he wrote:—  
“They had come upon a vein of lead so charged with silver as to seem as though the whole mass were of the more precious metal. All Cagliari came down to see a block of ore upwards of two hundredweight, entirely crusted with silver, and containing in the mass forty per cent. We had to get a guard from the Podesta, merely to keep off the curious, for there was no outrage nor any threat of outrage. Indeed, your kind treatment of our workpeople now begins to bear its fruit, and there was nothing but goodwill and kind feeling for our lucky fortune. The two Jews, Heenwitz and Voss, of the Contrada Reale, were amongst the first visitors, and had actually gone down into the shaft before I knew of it. They at once offered me a large sum for a share in the mine; and when I told them it was with you they must treat, they proposed to open a credit of three hundred thousand francs with their house in my favour, to go on with the working till I heard from you and learned your intentions. This offer, too, I have declined, till I get your letter.

“This was on Tuesday, but on Thursday we struck pure silver without a trace of lead, the only alloy being a thin vein of cobalt, like a ribbon, running through the ore; and which Chiusani says—for he



has worked in Mexico and the Brazils—is proof of a strong vein. The news spread like wildfire at Cagliari; and I have had such levees of the money folk! all offering me millions at any, or indeed at no interest, and actually entreating me to put my hand in their pockets while they look away or close their eyes. As for the presents that pour in, we have no room for them; and you know how dangerous it would be to refuse these people. It is only a short step with them from a sworn friendship to the stiletto. The only disturbing element in all this joy is a sort of official protest from the Delegato of the province against our working what the Crown may claim as a royalty; but I am instructed that Sardinia once acquired all royal rights by a fixed payment, and Lucy thinks she read somewhere the details of the cession. At any rate, she and Contini, the lawyer, are hard at work making out the reply; and the English version, which Lucy does, will be forwarded to our minister at Turin to-morrow. You'd laugh if you saw how she has familiarised herself with not only all the legal terms, but with all our mining phraseology, and how acutely she marks the difference between intact royalties and the claims of the Crown to certain percentages on exempted mines. Contini is a bachelor, and I am fully persuaded intends to make her an offer of his legal hand and heart—that is, if he finds that we are likely to beat the

Crown lawyers. I cannot help thinking he's a lucky fellow that you are not here, nor like to be, on the day he makes his proposal.

“As much for peace's sake as for convenience, I have accepted twenty thousand francs on loan. I have taken it from the four principal bankers in Cagliari, in equal sums from each, to prevent jealousy. I hope this was not wrong. I send you herewith bills for fifteen thousand, remembering, if I be right, that you borrowed some hundred pounds on the security of the mine, which you might like now to pay off.” After some business details, given at length, and with a degree of amplification that somewhat wearied Sir Brook to read, he summed up thus:—  
“Write to me therefore at once, and say what course we ought to take regarding our rights. Could our home lawyers afford you no information of value? Shall we oppose or shall we compromise? I suspect they wish the latter.

“Are you satisfied that I accepted this loan? I have my own misgivings, not about the fact, for we wanted money to go on, but as to your concurrence.

“And when are you coming back? I cannot say how impatient I am for your return, all the more that you have only written that hurried note from Dover since you left us. Lucy is in great spirits, takes immense interest in all we are doing, and does all the Italian correspondence for me. She wears a little

silver hammer, the miner's hammer, in her hat ; and her popularity with the people is unbounded. You will be amused, on your return, to find that your sketch on the wall of the splendid palace that was to crown our successes has acquired two wings and a great tower ; and a third figure, a lady, has been added to the riding party that are cantering up the avenue. Lucy says that nothing but humility (!) could have devised such a house for people so rich as we are. It certainly was not the sentiment with which hitherto I have regarded this edifice. I have come to the end of my paper, but I will not close this till I see if the post should not bring us news of you.

“Your letter has just come. The latter part of it has given us great uneasiness. It is precisely such a time as a private enemy—if you have one—would choose to work out a personal grudge. No matter how totally you feel yourself free from implication in these Irish troubles, do nothing—positively nothing—without legal advice. It will save you a world of trouble ; not to speak of the comfort you will feel in knowing that your interests are matter of care and thought to another. Above all, keep us informed daily by telegraph how and where you are, and what doing.

“Lucy wants to go off to you to-night, but I have had a slight return of my fever, a very slight one, and she half fears to leave me. If your next gives

us good news, we shall soon forget this unpleasantness; but, I repeat, let no day pass without tidings of you.

“The evening report has just come in from the mine—one hundred and seventy-eight pounds of pure silver in the last twenty-four hours! I have taken on forty additional men, and the new smelting-house will be in full work within a week. If you only were here, I’d have nothing more to wish for.

“I suppose Trafford has written to you. In the short note I got from him yesterday there is nothing but gratitude to you. He says he owes everything to your friendship. He means to be in England in a few days, and of course will go over to you; but write, or rather telegraph.—Yours ever, T. L.

“I wrote to Colonel Cave this morning to tell him his small venture with us would not turn out so badly. Our first dividend will be at least cent per cent, so that he cannot lose by us. It’s downright jolly to be able to send off such a despatch.”

The last letter of the heap was from Lady Trafford, and served in a measure to explain that paragraph in To r’s epistle which spoke of young Trafford’s gratitude. It appeared that Lady Trafford’s youngest son, on whom Sir Hugh had fixed to make the head of the family, had gone to winter at Madeira, and while there had fallen in love with and married a Portuguese girl, the daughter of his landlady. The news

of this *mésalliance* had nearly killed his father, who was only recovering from a bad attack of gout when the tidings reached him. By good luck, however, on the very same day came a letter from Fossbrooke, declaring that no matter what treatment young Trafford might meet with from his own family, he, Sir Brook, would stand firmly by him, so long as his honourable and manly conduct and his fidelity to his word to the girl he loved entitled him to regard and affection. "In a worldly point of view," wrote he, "such friendship as mine is a poor thing. I am a man of nothing, it is true; but I have lived long enough to know that there are other successes besides wealth and station. There are such things as self-respect, contentment, and the love of friends; and I do think my experiences will help him to secure some share of these.

"There is, however, one entreaty I would prefer, and if there be in your memory any kind thought of me, you will not refuse my prayer. Your boy is eager to see you, and shake your hand. Let him come. If you cannot or will not approve, do not at least condemn what he is about to do. In his anxiety to obtain your sanction, he has shown all deference to your authority. This shows he is worthy of your esteem; and if he were to palter between the hope of all your fortune and the love of this girl, he would only deserve your contempt. Be proud of

him, then, even if you disinherit him to-morrow. If these be the sentiments of a man who has nothing, remember, Trafford, that I was not always a beggar; and if I thought that being rich would alter these opinions, I can only say I hope I may die as poor as now I write myself.

“There’s a strong prejudice, I know, against being guided by men who have made such a sorry hand of their own fortunes as I have; but many a fellow who has been shipwrecked has proved a good sailor; at all events, he knows what it is to be buffeted by the waves and torn on the rocks. Now, I have told your son not to be afraid of these, and I think he trusts me.

“Once more, then, I ask, let me tell Lionel you will receive him; and believe me faithfully your old friend,

“BK. FOSSBROOKE.”

Lady Trafford’s note was short—

“MY DEAR SIR BROOK,—I suppose there is nothing for it but what you say, and Lionel may come here. We have had nothing but disasters with our sons. I wish I could dare to hope that this was to be the end of the calamities. Sir Hugh desires much that you could be here when L. arrives. Could you conveniently arrange this? His brother’s shocking mar-



riage, the terrible disappointment to our hopes, and other worries, have almost proved too much for me.

“Is there any truth in the story that Miss L.’s grandfather was negotiating for a peerage as the condition of his retirement from the Bench? If so, and that the object could be compassed, it would go far towards removing some of our objections to the connection. Sir Hugh’s influence with ‘the Party’ would unquestionably be of use; and though a law lord does not mean much, it is something. Inform me fully on this head. It is very strange that Lionel should never have mentioned the matter, and, indeed, strongly indicates how little trouble he took, or cared to take, to obviate our natural objections to the match. I suppose her father is not a practising physician. At all events, he need not be styled Doctor. Oh dear! when I think of it all, and think what an end my ambitions have come to, I could cry my eyes out. It often strikes me that people who make most sacrifices for their children are ever repaid in this fashion. The Dean says these are mysterious dispensations, and that we must submit to them. I suppose we must, but it certainly is not without reluctance.

“I thought of asking you to write to Lionel, but I will do so myself, painful as it is. I feel I am very forgiving to write you in this strain, seeing how great was the share you took in involving us all in this

unhappy business. At one moment I positively detested—I don't suspect yet that I entirely pardon—you, though I may when you come here, especially if you bring me any good news of this peerage business, which I look to as our last refuge. Lendrick is a very odd name—are there many of them? Of course, it will be well understood that we only know the immediate relations—father and brother, I mean. We stand no cousins, still less uncles or aunts.

“Sir Hugh thinks I ought to write to the old Judge. I opine he would be flattered by the attention, but I have not yet made up my mind upon it. Give me some advice on this, and believe me sincerely yours.”

After despatching a telegram to Cagliari, to say he was well and at large, and would soon be on his way back again, Fossbrooke wrote a few lines to Lord Wilmington of regret that he could not afford time to go over and see him, and assuring him that the late incident that had befallen him was not worth a thought. “He must be a more irritable fellow than I am,” he wrote, “who would make a personal grievance of a mere accident, against which, in a time of trouble, it would be hard to provide. While I say this, I must add that I think the spy system is a mistake—that there is an over-eagerness in your officials to procure committals; and I declare to you

I have often had more difficulty to get out of a crowded evening party than I should have felt in making my escape from your jail or bridewell, whichever be its name. I don't suspect your law-officers are marvels of wisdom, and your Chief Secretary is an ass."

To Lady Trafford he wrote a very brief reply. He scarcely thought his engagements would enable him to make a visit to Holt. "I will, however, come if I can, chiefly to obtain your full and free pardon, though for what beyond rendering you an invaluable service, I am puzzled to understand; and I repeat, if your son obtain this young lady in marriage, he will be, after Sir Hugh, the luckiest man of his name and family.

"As to the peerage, I can tell you nothing. I believe there is rather a prejudice against sending Irishmen up to the Lords; and it is scarcely ever done with lawyers. In regard to writing to Baron Lendrick, I hardly know what to say. He is a man of great ability, but of even greater vanity, and it should be a cleverly-worded epistle that would not ruffle some one of his thousand sensibilities. If you feel, however, adroit enough to open the negotiation, do so by all means; but don't make me responsible for what may come of it if the rejoinder be not to your taste. For myself, I'd rather poke up a grizzly bear with my umbrella than I'd provoke such a man to an exchange of letters."

To get back to Cagliari as soon as possible, and relieve Tom of that responsibility which seemed to weigh so heavily upon him, was Fossbrooke's first resolve. He must see Sewell at once, and finish the business; and however unpleasant the step might be, he must seek him at the Priory, if he could not meet him elsewhere. He wished also to see Beattie—he wanted to repay the loan he had made him. The Doctor, too, could tell him how he could obtain an interview with Sewell without any intrusion upon the Chief Baron.

It was evening before Fossbrooke could make his visit to Beattie, and the Doctor had just sat down to dinner with a gentleman who had arrived by the mail-packet from England, giving orders that he was not to be disturbed on any score.

“Will you merely take in my name,” said Sir Brook, “and beg, with my respects, to learn at what hour to-morrow Dr Beattie would accord me a few minutes.” The butler's hesitation was mildly overcome by the persuasive touch of a sovereign, and he retired with the message.

Before a minute elapsed, Dr Beattie came out, napkin in hand, and his face beaming with delight. “If there was a man in Europe I was wishing for this moment, it was yourself, Sir Brook,” said he. “Do you know who is dining with me? Come in and see.—No, no, I'll not be denied.”

A sudden terror crossed Fossbrooke's mind that his guest might be Colonel Sewell, and he hung back, muttering some words of apology.

"I tell you," repeated the Doctor, "I'll take no refusal. It's the rarest piece of luck ever befell, to have chanced upon you. Poor Lendrick is dying for some news of his son and daughter."

"Lendrick! Dr Lendrick?"

"To be sure—who else? When your knock came to the door, I was telling him that I heard you were in Dublin, and only doubted it because you had never called on me; but come along, we can say all these things over our soup. Look whom I have brought you, Tom," cried Beattie, as he led Sir Brook into the room,—“here's Sir Brook Fossbrooke come to join us.” And the two men grasped hands in heartiest embrace, while Fossbrooke, not waiting for a word of question, said, “Both well and hearty. I had a telegram from Tom this morning.”

“How much I owe you!—how much, how much!” was all that Lendrick could say, and his eyes swam as he said it.

“It is I am the debtor, and well I know what it is worth to be so! Their loving kindness and affection have rescued me from the one terror of my life—the fear of becoming a discontented, incredulous old bachelor. Heaven bless them for it, their goodness has kept me out of that danger.”

“And how are they looking?—is Lucy——” he stopped and looked half ashamed.

“More beautiful than ever,” broke in Fossbrooke. “I think she is taller than when you last saw her, and perhaps a shade more thoughtful-looking; and Tom is a splendid fellow. I scarcely know what career he could not follow, nor where he would not seem too good for whatever he was doing.”

“Ah, if I could but tell you how happy you have made me!” muttered Lendrick. “I ought never to have left them—never broken up my home. I did it unwillingly, it is true; but I ought never to have done it.”

“Who knows if it may not turn out for the best, after all? You need never be separated henceforth. Tom’s last letter to me—I’ll bring it over to you to-morrow—tells me what I well knew must befall us sooner or later—that we are rolling in wealth, have silver enough to pave the streets, and more money than we shall be able to spend—though I once had rather a knack that way.”

“That’s glorious news!” said Beattie. “It’s *our* mine, I suppose?” added he, laughing.

“To be sure it is; and I have come prepared to buy you out, Doctor, or pay you your first dividend, cent per cent, whichever you prefer.”

“Let us hear about this mine,” said Beattie.



“I’d rather talk to you about the miners, Tom and Lucy,” said Fossbrooke.

“Yes, yes, tell us of *them*. Do they ever talk of the Nest? do they ever think of the happy days we passed there?” cried Lendrick.

“Ay, and more. We have had a project this many a day—we can realise it now—to buy it, out-and-out. And I’m to build a cabin for myself by the river-side, where the swan’s hut stood, and I’m to be asked to dinner every Sunday.”

“By Jove, I think I’ll run down by the rail for one of those dinners,” said Beattie; “but I certainly hope the company will have better appetites than my guests of to-day.”

“I am too happy to feel hungry,” said Lendrick. “If I only knew that ‘my poor dear father could live to see us all united—all together again, I’d ask for no more in life.”

“And so he may, Tom; he was better this afternoon, and, though weak and low, perfectly collected and sensible. Mrs Sewell has been his nurse to-day, and she seems to manage him cleverly.”

“I saw her at the Cape. She was nicely-mannered, and, if I remember aright, handsome,” said Lendrick, in his half-abstracted way.

“She was beautiful—perfectly beautiful—as a girl: except your own Lucy, I never saw any one so

lovely," said Fossbrooke, whose voice shook with emotion as he spoke.

"I wish she had better luck in a husband," said Beattie. "For all his graceful address and insinuating ways, I'm full sure he's a bad fellow."

Fossbrooke checked himself with a great effort, and merely nodded an assent to the other's words.

"How came it, Sir Brook," asked Beattie, suddenly, "that you should have been in Dublin so long without once coming to see me?"

"Are you very discreet? — may I be sure that neither of you will ever accidentally let drop a word of what I shall tell you?"

"You may rely upon my secrecy, and upon Tom Lendrick's ignorance, for there he is now in one of his reveries, thinking of his children in all probability, and I'll guarantee you, to any amount, that he'll not hear one word you say for the next half-hour."

"The fact is, they took me up for a rebel—some one with more zeal than discrimination fancied I looked like a 'Celt,' as these fellows call themselves; and my mode of life, and my packet of lead ore, and some other things of little value, completed the case against me, and they sent me to jail."

"To jail!"

"Yes: to a place called Richmond Bridewell, where I passed some seven or eight days, by no means unpleasantly. It was very quiet, very secure against

intrusion. I had a capital room, and very fair food. Indeed I'm not sure that I did not leave it with a certain regret; but as I had written to my old friend Lord Wilmington, to apprise him of the mistake, and to warn him against the consequences such a blunder might occasion if it befell one less well-disposed towards him than myself, I had nothing for it but to take a friendly farewell of my jailer and go."

"I declare few men would have treated the incident so temperately."

"Wilmington's father was my fag at Eton; let me see—no, I'll not see—how long ago; and Wilmington himself used to come and spend his summer vacations with me when I had that Wiltshire place; and I was very fond of the boy, and as he liked my partridge-shooting, we grew to be fast friends; but why are we talking of these old histories when it is the present that should engage us? I would only caution you once again against letting the story get abroad: there are fellows would like to make a House of Commons row out of it, and I'd not stand it. Is the Doctor sleeping?" added he, in a whisper, as Lendrick sat with closed eyes and clasped hands, mute and motionless.

"No," said Beattie; "it is his way when he is very happy. He is going over to himself all you have been telling him of his children, and he neither sees nor hears aught around him."

“I was going to tell him another piece of news that would probably please him,” said Sir Brook, in the same low tone. “I have nearly completed arrangements for the purchase of the Nest; by this day week I hope it will be Lucy’s.”

“Oh! do tell him that. I know of nothing that would delight him as much. Lendrick,” said he, touching his arm, “here is something you would like to hear.”

“No, no!” muttered he, softly. “Life is too short for these things. No more separations—no more; we must live together, come what may;” and he stretched out his hands on either side of him, as though to grasp his children.

“It is a pity to awaken him from such a dream,” said Fossbrooke, cautiously; “let us steal over to the window and not disturb him.”

They crept cautiously away to a window-bench, and talked till late into the night.

## CHAPTER LXIV.

### MAN TO MAN.

As Sewell awoke it was already evening. Fatigue and anxiety together had so overcome him that he slept like one drugged by a narcotic; nor did he very quickly recall on awakening how and wherefore he had not been to bed. His servant had left two letters on his table while he slept, and these served to remind him of some at least of the troubles that last oppressed him. One was from his law-agent, regretting that he could not obtain for him the loan he solicited on any terms whatever, and mildly suggesting that he trusted the Colonel would be prepared to meet certain acceptances which would fall due in the coming week. The other was from a friend whom he had often assisted in moments of difficulty, and ran: "DEAR S.,—I lost two hundred last night at pool, and, what's worse, can't pay it. That infernal rule of yours about prompt payment will smash us both—but it's so like you! You never had a run of

luck yet that you didn't do something that turned against you afterwards. Your clever rule about the selling-stakes cost me the best mare I ever had; and now this blessed stroke of your genius leaves me in doubt whether to blow my brains out or start for Boulogne. As Tom Beecher said, you are a 'deuced deal too 'cute to prosper.' If I have to cross the water, I suspect you might as well come with me.  
—Yours,

“DICK VAUGHAN.”

Sewell tore the note up into the smallest fragments, muttering savagely to himself the while. “I'll be bound,” said he, “the cur is half consoled for his mishap by seeing how much worse ruin has befallen *me*. What is it, Watkin? What do you want?” cried he to his servant, who came hastily into the room.

“His lordship has taken a bad turn, sir, and Mrs Sewell wants to see you immediately.”

“All right! Say I'm coming. Who knows,” muttered he, “but there's a chance for me yet?” He turned into his dressing-room and bathed his temples and his head with cold water, and, refreshed at once, he ascended the stairs.

“Another attack has come on. He was sleeping calmly,” said Mrs Sewell as she met him, “when he awoke with a start, and broke out into wild raving.



I have sent for Beattie; but what is to be done meanwhile?"

"I'm no doctor; I can't tell you."

"Haire thinks the ice ought to be applied; the nurse says a blister or mustard to the back of the neck."

"Is he really in danger?—that's the question."

"I believe so. I never saw him so ill."

"You think he's dying?" said he, fiercely, as though he would not brook any sort of equivocation; but the coarseness of his manner revolted her, and she turned away without reply. "There's no time to be lost," muttered Sewell, as he hastened down-stairs. "Tell George I want the carriage to the door immediately," said he; and then, entering his own room, he opened his writing-desk, and after some search came upon a packet, which he sealed and addressed.

"Are you going for Beattie?" asked Mrs Sewell, as she appeared at the door; "for Haire says it would be better to fetch some one—any one—at once."

"I have ordered the carriage. I'll get Lysaght or Adams if I should not find Beattie; and mind, if Beattie come while I am away, detain him, and don't let him leave this till I return. Do you mind me?"

"Yes; I'll tell him what you say."

"Ay, but you must insist upon his doing it. There will be all sorts of stories if he should die——"

“Stories? what do you mean by stories?” cried she, in alarm.

“Rumours of neglect, of want of proper care of him, and suchlike, which would be most insulting. At all events I am resolved Beattie should be here at the last; and take care that he does not leave. I’ll call at my mother’s, too; she ought to come back with me. We have to deal with a scandal-loving world, and let us leave them as little to fall foul of as may be.” All this was said hurriedly, as he bustled about the room, fussy and impatient, and with an eagerness to be off which certainly surprised her.

“You know where to find these doctors—you have their addresses?” asked she.

“George knows all about them.”

“And William does, at all events.”

“I’m not taking William. I don’t want a footman with a brougham. It is a light carriage and speedy cattle that are needed at this moment; and here they come. Now, mind that you keep Beattie till I come back; and if there be any inquiries, simply say the Chief Baron is the same as yesterday.”

“Had I not better consult Dr Beattie?”

“You will do as I tell you, madam,” said he, sternly. “You have heard my directions; take care that you follow them. To Mr Lysaght’s, George—no, first to Dr Beattie’s, Merrion Square,” cried

he, as he stepped into the carriage, "and drive fast."

"Yes, sir," said the coachman, and started at once. He had not proceeded more than half-way down the avenue, however, when Sewell, leaning out of the window, said, "Don't go into town, George; make for the Park by the shortest cut you can—the Secretary's Lodge."

"All right, sir; the beasts are fresh. We'll be there in thirty minutes." True to his word, within the half-hour the horses, white with sweat and flanking like racers, stood at the door of the Secretary's lodge. Four or five private carriages and some cabs were also at the door, signs of a dinner-party which had not yet broken up.

"Take this card in to Mr Balfour, Mr Wells," said he to the butler, who was an old acquaintance, "and say I want one minute in private with him—strictly private, mind. I'll step into the library here and wait."

"What's up, Sewell? are you in a new scrape, eh?" said Balfour, entering, slightly flushed with wine and conversation, and half put out by the interruption.

"Not much of a scrape—can you give me five minutes?"

"Wells said one minute, and that's why I came. The Castledowns, and Eyres, and the Ashes are here, and the Langrish girls, and Dick Upton."

“ A very choice company, for robbing you of which even for a moment I owe every apology, but still my excuse is a good one. Are you as anxious to promote your Solicitor-General as you were a week or two ago ? ”

“ If you mean Pemberton, I wish he was—on the Bench, or in Abraham’s bosom—I don’t much care which, for he is the most confounded bore in Christendom. Do you come to tell me that you’ll poison him ? ”

“ No ; but I can promote him.”

“ Why—how—in what way ? ”

“ I told you a few days ago that I could manage to make the old man give in his resignation—that it required some tact and address, and especially the absence of everything like menace or compulsion.”

“ Well, well, well—have you done it—is it a fact ? ”

“ It is.”

“ I mean, an indisputable, irrevocable fact—something not to be denied or escaped from ? ”

“ Just so ; a fact not to be denied or escaped from.”

“ It must come through *me*, Sewell, mind that. I took charge of the negotiation two years ago, and no one shall step in and rob me of my credit. I have had all the worry and fatigue of the transaction, and I insist, if there be any glory in success, it shall be mine.”

“ You shall have all the glory, as you call it. What I aspire to is infinitely less brilliant.”

“ You want a place—hard enough to find one—at least to find something worth having. You’ll want something as good as the Registrarship, eh ?”

“ No ; I’ll not pester you with my claims. I’m not in love with official life. I doubt if I’m well fitted for it.”

“ You want a seat in the House—is that it ?”

“ Not exactly,” said Sewell, laughing ; “ though there is a good stroke of business to be done on private bills, and railway grants. My want is the simplest of all wants—money.”

“ Money ! But how am I to give you money ? Out of what fund is it to come ? You don’t imagine we live in the old days of secret-service funds, with unlimited corruption to back us, do you ?”

“ I suspect that the source from which it is to come is a matter of perfect indifference to me. You can easily squeeze me into the estimates as a special envoy, or a Crown prosecution, or a present to the Emperor of Morocco.”

“ Nothing of the kind. You are totally in error. All these fine days are passed and gone. They go over us now like a schedule in bankruptcy ; and it would be easier to make you a colonial bishop than give you fifty pounds out of the Consolidated Fund.”

“ Well, I'd not object to the episcopate if there was some good shooting in the diocese.”

“ I've no time for chaff,” said Balfour, impatiently. “ I am leaving my company too long, besides. Just come over here to-morrow to breakfast, and we'll talk the whole thing over.”

“ No, I'll not come to breakfast; I breakfast in bed: and if we are to come to any settlement of this matter, it shall be here and now.”

“ Very peremptory all this, considering that the question is not of *your* retirement.”

“ Quite true. It is not *my* retirement we have to discuss, but it is, whether I shall choose to hand you the Chief Baron's, which I hold here”—and he produced the packet as he spoke—“ or go back and induce him to reconsider and withdraw it. Is not that a very intelligible way to put the case, Balfour? Did you expect such a business-like tone from an idle dog like *me*?”

“ And I am to believe that the document in your hand contains the Chief Baron's resignation?”

“ You are to believe it or not—that's at your option. It is the fact, at all events.”

“ And what power have you to withhold it, when he has determined to tender it?”

“ About the same power I have to do this,” said Sewell, as, taking up a sheet of note-paper from the table, he tore it into fragments, and threw them into



the fire. "I think you might see that the same influence by which I induced him to write this would serve to make him withhold it. The Judge condescends to think me a rather shrewd man of the world, and takes my advice occasionally."

"Well, but—another point," broke in Balfour, hurriedly. "What if he should recall this to-morrow or the day after? What if he were to say that on reconsideration he felt unwilling to retire? It is clear we could not well coerce him."

"You know very little of the man when you suggest such a possibility. He'd as soon think of suicide as doubt any decision he had once formally announced to the world. The last thing that would ever occur to him would be to disparage his infallibility."

"I declare I am quite ashamed of being away so long; couldn't you come down to the office to-morrow, at your own hour, and talk the whole thing over quietly?"

"Impossible. I'll be very frank with you. I lost a pot of money last night to Langton, and haven't got it to pay him. I tried twenty places during the day, and failed. I tossed over a score of so-called securities, not worth sixpence in a time of pressure, and I came upon this, which has been in my hands since Monday last, and I thought, Now Balfour wouldn't exactly give me five hundred pounds for it,

but there's no reason in life that he might not obtain that sum for me in some quarter. Do you see?"

"I see—that is, I see everything but the five hundred."

"If you don't, then you'll never see this," said Sewell, replacing it in his pocket.

"You won't comprehend that I've no fund to go to; that there's no bank to back me through such a transaction. Just be a little reasonable, and you'll see that I can't do this out of my own pocket. It is true I could press your claim on the party. I could say, what I'm quite ready to say, that we owe the whole arrangement to *you*, and that, especially as it will cost you the loss of your Registrarship, you must not be forgotten."

"There's the mistake, my dear fellow. I don't want that. I don't want to be made supervisor of mad-houses, or overlooker of light-ships. Until office hours are comprised between five and six o'clock of the afternoon, and some of the cost of sealing-wax taken out in sandwiches, I don't mean to re-enter public life. I stand out for cash payment. I hope that's intelligible."

"Oh, perfectly so; but as impossible as intelligible."

"Then, in that case, there's no more to be said. All apologies for having taken you so long from your friends. Good-night."

“Good-night,” said Balfour. “I am sorry we can’t come to some arrangement. Good-night.”

“As this document will now never see the light, and as all action in the matter will be arrested,” said Sewell, gravely, “I rely upon your never mentioning our present interview.”

“I declare I don’t see why I am precluded from speaking of it to my friends,—confidentially, of course.”

“You had better not.”

“Better not! better in what sense? As regards the public interests or my personal ones?”

“I simply repeat, you had better not.” He put on his hat as he spoke, and without a word of leave-taking moved towards the door.

“Stop one moment—a thought has just struck me. You like a sporting offer. I’ll bet you twenty pounds even, you’ll not let me read the contents of that paper; and I’ll lay you long odds—two hundred to one, in pounds—that you don’t give it to me.”

“You certainly *do* like a good thing, Balfour. In plain words, you offer me two hundred and twenty. I’ll be shot if I see why they should have higgled so long about letting the Jews into Parliament when fellows like *you* have seats there.”

“Be good enough to remember,” said Balfour, with an easy smile, “that I’m the only bidder, and if

the article be not knocked down to me, there's no auction."

"I was certain I'd hear that from you! I never yet knew a fellow do a stingy thing, that he hadn't a shabbier reason to sustain it."

"Come, come, there's no need of this. You can say No to my offer, without a rudeness to myself."

"Ay, that's all true, if one only had temper for it, but *I* haven't; and I have my doubts that even *you* would if you were to be tried as sorely as I am."

"I never do get angry; a man shows his hand when he loses his temper, and the fellow who keeps cool can always look at the other's cards."

"Wise precepts, and worth coming out here to listen to," said Sewell, whose thoughts were evidently directed elsewhere. "I take your offer; I only make one condition—you keep the negotiation a secret, or only impart it where it will be kept secret."

"I think that's all fair. I agree to that. Now for the document."

"There it is," said Sewell, as he threw the packet on the table, while he seated himself in a deep chair, and crossed his arms on his chest.

Balfour opened the paper and began to read, but soon burst forth with—"How like him—how like

him!—'Less oppressed indeed by years than sustained by the conscious sense of long services to the State.' I think I hear him declaiming it.

"This is not bad—'While at times afflicted by the thought, that to the great principles of the law, of which I had made this Court the temple and the sanctuary, there will now succeed the vague decisions and imperfect judgments of less learned expositors of justice, I am comforted by remembering that I leave behind me some records worthy of memory—traditions that will not easily die.'"

"That's the modest note—hear him when he sounds the indignant chord," said Sewell.

"Ay, here we have it—'If I have delayed, my lord, in tendering to you this my resignation, it is that I have waited till, the scurrilous tongues of slander silenced, and the smaller, but not less malevolent, whisperings of jealousy subdued, I might descend from the Bench amidst the affectionate regrets of those who regard me as the last survivor of that race which made Ireland a nation.' The liquor is genuine," cried Balfour, laughing. "There's no disputing it, you have won your money."

"I should think so," was Sewell's cool reply. "He has the same knack in that sort of thing that the girl in the well-known shop in Seville has in twisting a cigarette."

Balfour took out his keys to open his writing-desk,

and, pondering for a moment or two, at last said, "I wish any man would tell me why I am going to give you this money—do you know, Sewell?"

"Because you promised it, I suppose."

"Yes; but why should I have promised it? What can it possibly signify to me which of our lawyers presides in Her Majesty's Irish Exchequer? I'm sure you'd not give ten pounds to insure this man or that, in or out of the Cabinet."

"Not ten shillings. They're all dark horses to me, and if you offered me the choice of the lot, I'd not know which to take; but I always heard that you political fellows cared so much for your party, and took your successes and failures so much to heart, that there was no sacrifice you were not ready to make to insure your winning."

"We now and then do run a dead-heat, and one would really give something to come in first; but what's that?—I declare there's a carriage driving off—some one has gone. I'll have to swear that some alarming news has come from the south. Good-night—I must be off."

"Don't forget the cash, before you go."

"Oh, to be sure, here you are—crisp and clean, an't they? I got them this morning, and certainly never intended to part with them on such an errand."

Sewell folded up the notes with a grim smile,



and said, "I only wish I had a few more big-wigs to dispose of—you should have them cheap; as Stag and Mantle say, 'articles no longer in great vogue.'"

"There's another departure!" cried Balfour. "I shall be in great disgrace!" and hurried away without a "good-bye."

## CHAPTER LXV.

### ON THE DOOR-STEPS AT NIGHT.

IT was late at night when Sewell arrived at the Priory. He had had another disastrous night of play, and had scattered his "acknowledgments" for various sums on every side. Indeed, he had not the vaguest idea of how much he had lost. Disputes and hot discussions too, almost verging on personal quarrels, dashed with all their irritating influences the gloom of his bad-luck; and he felt, as he arose to go home, that he had not even that sorry consolation of the unfortunate gambler—the pitying sympathy of the looker-on.

Over and over, as he went, he asked himself what Fate could possibly intend by this persistent persecution of him? Other fellows had their "innings" now and then. Their fortune came checkered with its bright and dark days. He never emerged, not even passingly, from his ill-luck. "I suppose," muttered he, "the whole is meant to tempt me—"

but to what? I need very little temptation if the bait be only money. Let me but see gold enough, and my resistance will not be very formidable. I'll not risk my neck; short of that I'm ready for anything." Thus thinking, he plodded onward through the dark night, vaguely wishing at times that no morning was ever to break, and that existence might prolong itself out to one long dark autumn night, silent and starless.

As he reached the hall door he found his wife seated on the steps as on a former night. It had become a favourite spot with her to taste the cool refreshing night-air, and rally her from the feverish closeness of the sick-room.

"How is he? is it over yet?" cried he, as he came up.

"He is better; he slept calmly for some hours, and woke much refreshed."

"I could have sworn it!" burst he in vehemently. "It is the one way Fate could have rescued me, and it is denied me. I believe there is a curse on me! Eh—what?"

"I didn't speak," said she, meekly.

"You muttered though. I heard you mumble something below your breath, as if you agreed with what I said. Say it out, madam, if you think it."

She heaved a weary sigh, but said nothing.

"Has Beattie been here?" asked he, hastily.

“Yes; he stayed for above an hour, but was obliged to go at last to visit another patient. He brought Dr Lendrick out with him; he arrived this evening.”

“Lendrick! Do you mean the man from the Cape?”

“Yes.”

“That completes it!” burst he, as he flung his arms wildly up. “I was just wondering what other malignant piece of spite Fortune could play me, and there it is! Had you any talk with this man?”

“Yes; he remained with me all the time Dr Beattie was up-stairs.”

“And what was his tone? has he come back to turn us out?—that of course he has—but does he avow it?”

“He shows no such intentions. He asked whether you held much to the Nest, if it was a place that you liked, or if you could relinquish it without any regret?”

“Why so?”

“Because Sir Brook Fossbrooke has just purchased it.”

“What nonsense! you know as well as I do that he couldn't purchase a dog-kennel. That property was valued at sixteen thousand pounds four years ago—it is worth twenty now; and you talk to me of this beggar buying it!”

“I tell you what he told me, and it was this: Some mine that Sir Brook owned in Sardinia has turned out to be all silver, and in consequence he has suddenly become immensely rich—so rich, indeed, that he has already determined to settle this estate on Lucy Lendrick; and intends, if he can induce Lord Drumcarran to part with ‘The Forest,’ to add it to the grounds.”

Sewell grasped his hair with both hands, and ground his teeth together with passion as he listened.

“You believe this story, I suppose?” said he at last.

“Yes; why should I not believe it?”

“I don’t believe a word of it. I see the drift—I saw the drift of it before you had told me ten words. This tale is got up to lull us into security, and to quiet our suspicions. Lendrick knows well the alarm his unexpected return is likely to give us, and to allay our anxieties they have coined this narrative, as though to imply they will be rich enough not to care to molest us, nor stand between us and this old man’s money. Don’t you see that?”

“I do not. It did not occur to me before, and I do not admit it now.”

“I ought not to have asked you. I ought to have remembered what old Fossbrooke once called ‘the beautiful trustfulness of your nature.’”

“If I had it once, it has left me many a long day ago!”

“But I deny that you ever had it. You had the woman’s trick of affecting to believe, and thus making out what you assumed to think, to be a pledge given by another—a bit of female craft that you all trade on so long as you are young and good-looking.”

“And what supplies the place of this ingenious device when we are neither young nor good-looking?”

“I don’t know, for the simple reason that I never much interested myself in the sex after that period.”

“That’s a very sad thing for us. I declare I never had an idea how much we’re to be pitied before.”

“You would be to be pitied if you knew how we all think of you;” and he spoke with a spiteful malignity almost demoniac.

“It’s better, then, for each of us that we should not know this. The trustfulness that you sneer at does us good service after all.”

“And it was this story of the mine that induced Lendrick to come home from the Cape, wasn’t it?”

“No; he only heard of the mine since he arrived here.”

“I thought,” rejoined he, with a sneer, “that he ought to have resigned his appointment on account of this sudden wealth, all the more because I have known that he intended to come back this many a



day. And what is Fossbrooke going to do for you? Is there a diamond necklace ordered? or is it one of the brats he is going to adopt?"

"By the way, I have been robbed: some one has carried off my gold comb and some pins; they were on my dressing-table last night. Jane saw them when I went into my room."

"Now's your time to replace the loss! It's the sort of tale old Fossbrooke always responded to."

She made no answer; and for several minutes each sat in silence. "One thing is pretty evident," said he at last, as he made figures with his cane on the ground—"we'll have to troop off, whether the Lendricks come here or not. The place will not be tenable once they are in the vicinity."

"I don't know."

"You don't know! Do you mean that the Doctor and his daughter will stand the French cook here, and the dinners, and let the old man make a blessed fool of himself, as he has been doing for the last eight or ten months past? or do you pretend that if we were to go back to the leg-of-mutton days, and old Haire for company, that it would be worth holding on to? I don't; and I tell you frankly that I intend to demand my passports, as the Ministers say, and be off."

"But *I* can't 'be off.' I have no such alternative!"

“The worse luck yours, or rather the worse skill ; for if you had played your hand better, it would not have been thus with you. By the way, what about Trafford ? I take it he’ll marry this girl now.”

“I have not heard,” said she, pinching her lips, and speaking with a forced composure.

“If I were you I’d make myself Lucy’s confidante, get up the match, and go and live with them. These are the really happy *ménages*. If there be such a thing as bliss, perfect bliss in this world, it is where the wife has a dear friend in the house with her, who listens to all her sorrows, and helps her to manage the tyrant that inflicts them. It was a great mistake of ours not to have known this in early life. Marriage was meant to be a triangle.”

“If you go, as you speak of going, have you any objection to my addressing myself to Sir Brook for some assistance ?”

“None whatever. I think it the most natural thing in life ; he was your guardian, and you have a right to ask what has become of your fortune.”

“He might refer me to *you* for the information.”

“Very unmannerly if he should, and very ungal-lant too, for an old admirer. I’m certain if I were to be—what is the phrase?—removed, yes, removed—he’d marry you. Talk of three-volume novels and virtue rewarded, after that !”

“You have been playing to-night,” said she, gravely.

“Yes.”

“And lost?”

“Lost heavily.”

“I thought so. Your courtesies to me have been the measure of your bad-luck for many a day. I have often felt that ‘four by honours’ has saved me from a bad headache.”

“Then there has been more sympathy between us than I ever suspected,” said he, rising, and stretching himself; and after a moment or two added, “Must I call on this Dr Lendrick?—will he expect me to visit him?”

“Perhaps so,” said she, carelessly—“he asked after you.”

“Indeed!—did he ask after Trafford too? Do you remember the day at the Governor’s dinner he mistook you for Trafford’s wife, and explained his mistake by the familiarity of his manner to you in the garden? It was the best bit of awkwardness I ever witnessed.”

“I suppose you felt it so?”

“*I—I* felt it so! I suspect not! I don’t believe there was a man at table enjoyed the blunder as heartily.”

“I wish—how I wish!” said she, clasping her hands together.

“Well—what?”

“I wish I could be a man for one brief half-

hour!" cried she, and her voice rang with a mild but clear resonance, that made it seem louder than it really was.

"And then?" said he, mockingly.

"Oh, do not ask me more!" cried she, as she bent down and hid her face in her hands.

"I think I *will* call on Lendrick," said he, after a moment. "It may not be exactly the sort of task a man would best like; but I opine, if he is about to give his daughter in marriage to this fellow, he ought to know more about him. Now *I* can tell him something, and my wife can tell him more. There's no indiscretion in saying so much, is there?"

She made no reply; and after a pause he went on—"If Trafford hadn't been a shabby dog, he'd not have higgled about buying up those letters. Cane & Kincaid offered them to him for a thousand pounds. I suspect he'd like to have the offer repeated now, but he shall not. He believes, or affects to believe, that, for my own sake, I'll not make a public scandal: he doesn't know his man when he thinks this. *You*, madam, might have taught him better—eh?" Still no reply, and he continued—"There's not a man living despises public opinion as I do. If you are rich you trample on it, if poor it tramples on *you*; but so long as a fellow braves the world, and declares that he shrinks from nothing—evades nothing—neither turns right nor left to avoid

its judgments—the coward world gives way and lets him pass. *I'll* let them see that I don't care a straw for my own life, when at the price of it I can blow up a magazine."

"No, no, no!" muttered she, in a low but clear tone.

"What do you mean by No, no?" cried he, in a voice of passion.

"I mean that you care a great deal for your own life, and a great deal for your own personal safety; and that if your tyranny to a poor, crushed, weak woman has any bounds, it is from your fear, your abject fear, that in her desperation she might seek a protector, and find him."

"I told you once before, madam, men don't like this sort of protectorate. The old bullying days are gone by. Modern decorum 'takes it out' in damages." She sat still and silent; and after waiting some time, he said, in a calm, unmoved voice, "These little interchanges of courtesy do no good to either of us; they haven't even the poor attraction of novelty: so, as my friend Mr O'Reardon says, let us 'be practical.' I had hoped that the old gentleman up-stairs was going to do the polite thing, and die; but it appears now he has changed his mind about it. This, to say the least of it, is very inconvenient to me. My embarrassments are such that I shall be obliged to leave the country; my only diffi-

culty is, I have no money. Are you attending? are you listening to me?"

"Yes; I hear you," said she, in a faint whisper.

"*You*, I know, cannot help me; neither can my mother. Of course the old Judge is out of the question. As for the fellows at the Club, I am deeply in debt to many of them; and Kincaid only reminds me of his unsettled bill of costs when I ask for a loan. A blank look-out, on the whole; isn't it?"

She muttered something like assent, and he went on. "I have gone through a good many such storms before, but none fully as bad as this; because there are certain things which in a few days must come out—ugly little disclosures—one or two there will be. I inadvertently sold that beech timber to two different fellows, and took the money too."

She lifted up her face, and stared at him without speaking.

"Fact, I assure you! I have a confoundedly bad memory; it has got me into scores of scrapes all through life. Then, this very evening, thinking that the Chief couldn't rub through, I made a stupid wager with Balfour that the seat on the Bench would be vacant within a week; and finished my bad run of luck by losing—I can't say how much, but very heavily indeed—at the Club."

A low faint sigh escaped her, but not a word.

"As to bills renewed, protested, and to be pro-



tested," said he, in the same easy tone, "they are legion. These take their course, and are no worse than any other man's bills—I don't fret myself about *them*. As in the old days of chivalry one never cared how scurvily he treated the 'villains,' so he behaved like a knight to his equals: so nowadays a man must book up at Tattersall's though he cheat his tailor. I like the theory, too; it keeps 'the ball rolling,' if it does nothing else."

All this he rattled out as though his own fluency gave him a sort of Dutch courage; and who knows, too—for there is a fund of vanity in these men—if he was not vain of showing with what levity he could treat dangers that might have made the stoutest heart afraid?

"Taking the 'tottle of the whole' of these—as old Joe Hume used to say—it's an ugly balance!"

"What do you mean to do?" said she, quietly.

"Bolt, I suppose. I see nothing else for it."

"And will that meet the difficulty?"

"No, but it will secure *me*; secure me from arrest, and the other unpleasant consequences that might follow arrest. To do this, however, I need money, and I have not five pounds—no, nor, I verily believe, five shillings—in the world."

"There are a few trinkets of mine up-stairs. I never wear them——"

"Not worth fifty pounds, the whole lot; nor

would one get half fifty for them in a moment of pressure.”

“ We have some plate——”

“ We had, but I sold it three weeks ago; and that reminds me there was a rum old tea-urn got somehow mixed up with our things and I sold it too, though it has Lendrick’s crest upon it. You’ll have to get it back some of these days—I told the fellow not to break it up till he heard from you.”

“ Then what is to be done ? ” said she, eagerly.

“ That’s the question ; travelling is the one thing that can’t be done on tick.”

“ If you were to go down to the Nest——”

“ But our tenure expires on the seventeenth, just one fortnight hence—not to say that I couldn’t call myself safe there one hour. No, no ; I must manage to get abroad, and instantly, that I may escape from my present troubles ; but I must strike out some way of life—something that will keep me.”

She sat still and almost stupefied, trying to see an escape from these difficulties, but actually overwhelmed by the number and the nature of them.

“ I told you a while ago that I did not believe one word of this story of the mine, and the untold wealth that has fallen to old Fossbrooke ; *you*, however, do believe it; you affirm the tale as if you had seen and touched the ingots ; so that you need have no reluctance to ask him to help you.”

“ You do not object to this course, then ? ” asked she, eagerly.

“ How can I object ? If I clutch at a plank when I’m drowning, I don’t let go because it may have nails in it. Tell him that you want to buy me off, to get rid of me ; that by a couple of hundred pounds—I wish he’d make it five—you can insure my leaving the country, and that my debts here will prevent my coming back again. It’s the sort of compact he’ll fully concur in ; and you can throw in, as if accidentally, how useless it is for him to go on persecuting me, that his confounded memory for old scores has kept my head under water all my life ; and hint that those letters of Trafford’s he insists on having——”

“ *He* insists on having ! ”

“ To be sure he does ; I thought I had told you what brought him over here ! The old meddling humbug, in his grand benevolence vein, wants to smooth down the difficulties between Lucy Lendrick and Trafford, one of which was thought to be the fellow’s attachment to *you*. Don’t blush ; take it as coolly as I do. I’m not sure whether reading the correspondence aloud isn’t the best way to dispel this illusion. You can say that better than I can.”

“ Trafford never wrote one line to me which I should be afraid or ashamed to see in print.”

“ These are matters of taste. There are scores of

women like publicity, and would rather be notorieties for scandal than models of unnoticed virtue, so we'll not discuss that. There, there; don't look so supremely indignant and contemptuous. That expression became you well enough at three-and-twenty; but ten years, ten long years of not the very smoothest existence, leave their marks!"

She shook her head mournfully, but in silence.

"At all events," resumed he, "declare that you object to the letters being in other hands than your own; and as to a certain paper of mine—a perfectly worthless document, as he well knows—let him give it to you or burn it in your presence."

She pushed her hair back from her temples, and pressed her hands to either side of her head as though endeavouring to collect her thoughts, and rally herself to an effort of calm determination.

"How much of this is true?" said she at last.

"What do you mean?" said he, sternly.

"I mean this," said she, resolutely—"that I want to know, if you should get this money, is it really your intention to go abroad?"

"You want a pledge from me on this?" said he, with a jeering laugh. "You are not willing to stoop to all this humiliation without having the price of it afterwards? Is not that your meaning?"

Her lips moved, but no sound was audible.

"All fair and reasonable," said he, calmly. "It's

not every woman in the world would have the pluck to tell her husband how much meanness she would submit to simply to get rid of him ; but you were always courageous, that I will say—you have courage enough.”

“ I had need of it.”

“ Go on, madam, finish your speech. I know what you would say. ‘ You had need of courage for two ; ’ that was the courteous speech that trembled on your lip. The only thing that beats your courage is your candour ! Well, I must content myself with humbler qualities. I cannot accompany you into these high flights of excellence, but I can go away ; and that, after all, is something. Get me this money, and I will go—I promise you faithfully—go, and not come back.”

“ The children,” said she, and stopped.

“ Madam ! ” said he, with a mock-heroic air, “ I am not a brute ! I respect your maternal feelings, and would no more think of robbing you of your children——”

“ There—there, that will do. Where is Sir Brook to be found—where does he live ? ”

“ I have his address written down—here it is,” said he—“ the last cottage on the southern side of Howth. There is a porch to the door, which, it would seem, is distinctive, as well as three chimneys ; my informant was as descriptive as Figaro. You had

better keep this piece of paper as a reminder ; and the trains deposit you at less than half a mile from the place."

" I will go early to-morrow morning. Shall I find you here on my return ? "

" Of that you may be certain. I can't venture to leave the house all day ; I'm not sure there will not be a writ out against me."

She arose and seemed about to say something—hesitated for a moment or two, and then slowly entered the house, and disappeared.



## CHAPTER LXVI.

### GOING OUT.

IN a small dinner-room of the Viceregal Lodge, in the Phoenix Park, the Viceroy sat at dinner with Sir Brook Fossbrooke. He had arrived in great haste, and incognito, from England, to make preparations for his final departure from Ireland; for his party had been beaten in the House, and expected that, in the last debate on the measure before them, they would be driven to resign office. Lord Wilmington had no personal regrets on the subject. With high station and a large fortune, Ireland, to him, meant little else than estrangement from the habits and places that he liked, with the exposure to that species of comment and remark which the Press so unsparingly bestows on all public men in England. He had accepted office to please his party; and, though naturally sorry for their defeat, there was a secret selfish satisfaction at being able to go back to a life more congenial to him than more than consoled him for the ministerial reverse.

It is difficult for the small world of place-hunters and office-seekers to understand this indifference; but I have little doubt that it exists largely amongst men of high position and great fortune, and imparts to their manner that seeming dignity in adversity which we humble folk are so prone to believe the especial gift of the "order."

Cholmondely Balfour did not take matters so coolly; he had been summoned over by telegram to take his part in the "third reading," and went away with the depressing feeling that his official sun was about to set, and all the delightful insolences of a "department" were about to be withdrawn from him.

Balfour had a brief interview with the Viceroy before he started, and hurriedly informed him how events stood in Ireland. Nor was it without a sense of indignation that he saw how little his Excellency cared for the defeat of his party, and how much more eager he seemed to see his old friend Fossbrooke, and thank him for his conduct, than listen to the details of the critical questions of the hour.

"And this is his address, you say?" said Lord Wilmington, as he held a card in his hand. "I must send off to him at once."

"It's all Bentley's fault," said Balfour, full of the House and the debate. "If that fellow were drowning, and had only breath for it, he'd move an amendment! And it's so provoking, now we had got so

splendidly through our prosecutions, and were winning the Catholics round to us besides; not to say that I have at last managed to induce Lendrick to resign, and we have a Judgeship to bestow." In a few hurried words he recounted his negotiation with Sewell, placing in the Viceroy's hand the document of the resignation.

Lord Wilmington's thoughts were fully as much on his old friend Fossbrooke all this time as on questions of office, and not a little disconcerted the Secretary by muttering, "I hope the dear old fellow bears me no ill-will. I would not for worlds that he should think me unmindful of him."

And now they sat over their wine together, talking pleasantly of bygone times and old friends—many lost to them by death, and some by distance.

"I take it," said Fossbrooke, after a pause, "that you are not sorry to get back to England."

Lord Wilmington smiled, but said nothing.

"You never could have cared much for the pomp and state of this office, and, I suppose, beyond these, there is little in it."

"You have hit it exactly. There is nothing to be done here—nothing! The shortness of the period that is given to any man to rule this country, and the insecurity of his tenure, even for that time, compel him to govern by a party; and the result is, we go on alternately pitting one faction against the other, till

we end by marshalling the nation into two camps, instead of massing them into one people. Then there is another difficulty. In Ireland, the question is not so much what you do as by whom you do it. It is the men, not the measures, that are thought of. There is not an infringement on personal freedom I could not carry out, if you only let me employ for its enactment some popular demagogue. Give me a good patriot in Ireland, and I'll engage to crush every liberty in the island."

"I don't envy you your office, then," said Fossbrooke, gravely.

"Of course you don't; and between ourselves, Fossbrooke, I'm not heartbroken by the thought of laying it down. I suspect, too, that after a spell of Irish official life every statesman ought to lie fallow for a while: he grows so shifty and so unscrupulous here, he is not fit for home work."

"And how soon do you leave?"

"Let me see," said he, pondering. "We shall be beaten to-night or to-morrow night at farthest. They'll take a day to talk it over, and another to see the Queen; and allowing three days more for the negotiations back and forward, I think I may say we shall be out by this day week. A week of worry and annoyance it will be!"

"How so?"

"All the hungry come to be fed at the last hour.

They know well that an outgoing administration is always bent on filling up everything in their gift. You make a clean sweep of the larder before you give up the key to the new housekeeper; and one is scarcely so inquisitive as to the capacity of the new office-holder as he would be if, remaining in power, he had to avail himself of his services. For instance, Pemberton may not be the best man for Chief Baron, but we mean to bequeath him in that condition to our successors."

"And what becomes of Sir William Lendrick?"

"He resigns."

"With his peerage?"

"Nothing of the kind; he gets nothing. I'm not quite clear how the matter was brought about. I heard a very garbled, confused story from Balfour. As well as I could gather, the old man intrusted his step-son, Sewell, with the resignation, probably to enable him to make some terms for himself; and Sewell—a shifty sort of fellow, it would seem—held it back,—the Judge being ill, and unable to act,—till he found that things looked ticklish. We might go out—the Chief Baron might die—heaven knows what might occur. At all events he closed the negotiation, and placed the document in Balfour's hands, only pledging him not to act upon it for eight-and-forty hours."

"This interests me deeply. I know the man Se-

well well, and I know that no transaction in which he is mixed up can be clean-handed."

"I have heard of him as a man of doubtful character."

"Quite the reverse; he is the most indubitable scoundrel alive. I need not tell you that I have seen a great deal of life, and not always of its best or most reputable side. Well, this fellow has more bad in him, and less good, than any one I have ever met. The world has scores, thousands, of unprincipled dogs, who, when their own interests are served, are tolerably indifferent about the rest of humanity. They have even, at times, their little moods of generosity, in which they will help a fellow-blackguard, and actually do things that seem good-natured. Not so Sewell. Swimming for his life, he'd like to drown the fellow that swam alongside of him."

"It is hard to believe in such a character," said the other.

"So it is! I stood out long—ay, for years—against the conviction; but he has brought me round to it at last, and I don't think I can forgive the fellow for destroying in me a long-treasured belief that no heart was so depraved as to be without its relieving trait."

"I never heard you speak so hardly before of any one, Fossbrooke."

"Nor shall you ever again, for I will never men-



tion this man more. These fellows jar upon one's nature, and set it out of tune towards all humanity."

"It is strange how a shrewd old lawyer like the Chief Baron could have taken such a man into his confidence."

"Not so strange as it seems at first blush. Your men of the world—and Sewell is eminently one of these—wield an immense influence over others immeasurably their superiors in intellect, just by force of that practical skill which intercourse with life confers. Think for a moment how often Sewell might refer some judgment or opinion of the old Chief to that tribunal they call 'Society,' of whose ways of thought, or whose prejudices, Lendrick knows as much as he knows of the domestic habits of the Tonga Islanders. Now Sewell was made to acquire this influence, and to employ it."

"That would account for his being intrusted with this," said the Viceroy, drawing from his breast-pocket the packet Balfour had given him. "This is Sir William's long-awaited-for resignation."

"The address is in Sewell's writing. I know the hand well."

"Balfour assured me that he was well acquainted with the Chief Baron's writing, and could vouch for the authenticity of the document. Here it is." As he said, he opened the envelope, and drew forth a half-sheet of post-paper, and handed it to Fossbrooke.

“Ay, this is veritable. I know the hand too, and the style confirms it.” He pondered for some seconds over the paper, turned it, looked at the back of it, examining it all closely and carefully, and then, holding it out at arm’s length, he said, “You know these things far better than I do, and you can say if this be the sort of document a man would send on such an occasion.”

“You don’t mean that it is a forgery?”

“No, not that; nor is it because a forgery would be an act Sewell would hold back from. I merely ask if this looks like what it purports to be? Would Sir William Lendrick, in performing so solemn an act, take a half-sheet of paper,—the first that offered, it would seem—for see, here are some words scribbled on the back,—and send in his resignation blurred, blotted, and corrected like this?”

“I read it very hurriedly. Balfour gave it to me as I landed, and I only ran my eyes over it; let me see it again. Yes, yes,” muttered he, “there is much in what you say; all these smudges and alterations are suspicious. It looks like a draft of a despatch.”

“And so it is. I’ll wager my head on it—just a draft.”

“I see what you mean. It was a draft abstracted by Sewell, and forwarded under this envelope.”

“Precisely. The Chief Baron, I am told, is a hot, hasty, passionate man, with moments of rash, im-

petuous action; in one of these he sat down and wrote this, as Italians say, 'per sfogarsi.' Warm-tempered men blow off their extra steam in this wise, and then go on their way like the rest of us. He wrote this, and, having written it, felt he had acquitted a debt he owed his own indignation."

"It looks amazingly like it; and now I remember in a confused sort of way something about a bet Balfour lost; a hundred—I am not sure it was not two hundred——"

"There, there," said Fossbrooke, laughing. "I recognise my honourable friend at once. I see the whole, as if it were revealed to me. He grows bolder as he goes on. Formerly, his rascalities were what brokers call 'time bargains,' and not to be settled for till the end of the month, but now he only asks a day's immunity."

"A man must be a consummate scoundrel who would do this."

"And so he is—a fellow who stops at nothing. Oh, if the world only knew how many brigands wore diamond shirt-buttons, there would be as much terror in going into a drawing-room as people now feel about a tour in Greece. You will let me have this document for a few hours?"

"To be sure, Fossbrooke. I know well I may rely on your discretion; but what do you mean to do with it?"

“Let the Chief Baron see it, if he’s well enough; if not, I’ll show it to Beattie, his doctor, and ask his opinion of it. Dr Lendrick, Sir William’s son, is also here, and he will probably be able to say if my suspicions are well-founded.”

“It seems odd enough to me, Fossy, to hear *you* talk of your suspicions! How hardly the world must have gone with you since we met to inflict you with suspicions! You never had one long ago.”

“And shall I tell you how I came by them, Wilmington?” said he, laughing. “I have grown rich again—there’s the whole secret. There’s no such corrupter as affluence. My mine has turned out a perfect Potosi, and here am I ready to think every man a knave and a rascal, and the whole world in a conspiracy to cheat me!”

“And is this fact about the mine?—tell me all about it.”

And Fossbrooke now related the story of his good fortune, dwelling passingly on the days of hardship that preceded it; but frankly avowing that it was a consummation of which he never for a moment doubted. “I knew it,” said he; “and I was not impatient. The world is always an amusing drama, and though one may not be ‘cast’ for a high part, he can still ‘come on’ occasionally, and at all events he can enjoy the performance.”

“And is this fortune to go like the others, Fossy?” said the Viceroy, laughing.

“Have I not told you how much wiser I have grown? that I trust no one? I’m not sure that I’ll not set up as a money-lender.”

“So you were forty years ago, Fossy, to my own knowledge; but I don’t suspect you found it very profitable.”

“Have I not had my fifty—ay, my five hundred—per cent in my racy enjoyment of life? One cannot be paid in meal and malt too; and *I* have ‘commuted,’ as they call it, and ‘taken out’ in cordiality what others prefer in cash. I do not believe there is a corner of the globe where I could not find some one to give me a cordial welcome.”

“And what are your plans?”

“I have fully a thousand; my first, however, is to purchase that place on the Shannon, where, if you remember, we met once—the Swan’s Nest. I want to settle my friends the Lendricks in their old home. I shall have to build myself a crib near them. But before I turn squatter I’ll have a run over to Canada. I have a large tract there near Huron, and they have built a village on me, and now are asking me for a church, and a schoolhouse, and an hospital. It was but a week ago they might as well have asked me for the moon! I must see Ceylon too, and my coffee-fields. I am dying to be ‘bon Prince’ again

and lower my rents. 'There's arrant snobbery,' some one told me t'other day, 'in that same love of popularity;' but they'll have to give it even a worse name before they disgust me with it. I shall have to visit Cagliari also, and relieve Tom Lendrick, who would like, I have no doubt, to take that 'three months in Paris,' which young fellows call 'going over to see their friends.' "

"You are a happy fellow, Brook; perhaps the happiest I ever knew."

"I'll sell my secret for it cheap," said Fossbrooke, laughing. "It is, never to go grubbing for mean motives in this life; never tormenting yourself what this might mean or that other might portend, but take the world for what it seems, or what it wishes you to believe it. Take it with its company face on, and never ask to see any one in *déshabille* but old and dear friends. Life has two sides, and some men spin the coin so as always to make the wrong face of the medal come uppermost. I learned the opposite plan when I was very young, and I have not forgotten it. Good-night now; I promised Beattie to look in on him before midnight, and it's not far off, I see."

"We shall have a day or two of you, I hope, at Crew before you leave England."

"When I have purchased my estate and married off my young people, I'll certainly make you a visit."



## CHAPTER LXVII.

### AT HOWTH.

ON the same evening that Fossbrooke was dining with the Viceroy Trafford arrived in Dublin, and set out at once for the little cottage at Howth to surprise his old friend by his sudden appearance. Tom Lendrick had given him so accurate a description of the spot that he had no difficulty in finding it. If somewhat disappointed at first on learning that Sir Brook had dined in town, and might not return till a late hour, his mind was so full of all he had to say and to do that he was not sorry to have some few hours to himself for quiet and tranquil thought. He had come direct from Malta without going to Holt, and therefore was still mainly ignorant of the sentiments of his family towards him, knowing nothing beyond the fact that Sir Brook had induced his father to see him. Even that was something. He did not look to be restored to his place as the future head of the house, but he wanted recognition and forgiveness—

the first for Lucy's sake more than his own. The thought was too painful that his wife—and he was determined she should be his wife—should not be kindly received and welcomed by his family. “I ask nothing beyond this,” would he say over and over to himself. “Let us be as poor as we may, but let them treat us as kindred, and not regard us as outcasts. I bargain for no more.” He believed himself thoroughly and implicitly when he said this. He was not conscious with what force two other and very different influences swayed him. He wished his father, and still more his mother, should see Lucy—not alone see her beauty and gracefulness, but should see the charm of her manner, the fascination which her bright temperament threw around her. “Why, her very voice is a spell!” cried he, aloud, as he pictured her before him. And then, too, he nourished a sense of pride in thinking how Lucy would be struck by the sight of Holt—one of the most perfect specimens of old Saxon architecture in the kingdom; for though a long line of descendants had added largely, and incongruously too, to the building, the stern and squat old towers, the low broad battlements and square casements, were there, better blazons of birth and blood than all the gilded decorations of a herald's college.

He honestly believed he would have liked to show her Holt as a true type of an ancient keep, bold,

bluff, and stern-looking, but with an unmistakable look of power, recalling a time when there were lords and serfs, and when a Trafford was as much a despot as the Czar himself. He positively was not aware how far personal pride and vanity influenced this desire on his part, nor how far he was moved by the secret pleasure his heart would feel at Lucy's wondering admiration.

“If I cannot say, This is your home—this is your own, I can at least say, It is from the race who have lived here for centuries he who loves you is descended. We are no ‘new rich,’ who have to fall back upon our wealth for the consideration we count upon. We were men of mark before the Normans were even heard of.” All these, I say, he felt, but knew not. That Lucy was one to care for such things he was well aware. She was intensely Irish in her reverence for birth and descent, and had that love of the traditionary which is at once the charm and the weakness of the Celtic nature. Trafford sat thinking over these things, and thinking over what might be his future. It was clear enough he could not remain in the army; his pay, barely sufficient for his support at present, would never suffice when he had a wife. He had some debts, too; not very heavy, indeed, but onerous enough when their payment must be made out of the sale of his commission. How often had he done over that weary sum of subtraction! not that repeti-

tion made matters better to him ; for somehow, though he never could manage to make more of the sale of his majority, he could still, unhappily for him, continually go on recalling some debt or other that he had omitted to jot down—an unlucky ‘fifty’ to Jones which had escaped him till now ; and then there was Sewell ! The power of the unknown is incommensurable ; and so is it, there is that in a vague threat that terrifies the stoutest heart. Just before he left Malta he had received a letter from a man whose name was not known to him in these terms :—“ Sir,—It has come to my knowledge professionally, that proceedings will shortly be instituted against you in the Divorce Court at the suit of Colonel Sewell, on the ground of certain letters written by you. These letters, now in the hands of Messrs Cane & Kincaid, solicitors, Dominick Street, Dublin, may be obtained by you on payment of one thousand pounds, and the costs incurred up to this date. If it be your desire to escape the scandal and publicity of this action, and the much heavier damages that will inevitably result, you may do so by addressing yourself to your very obedient and faithful servant,

“ JAMES MAHER,

“ Attorney-at-Law,

“ Kildare Place.”

He had had no time to reply to this unpleasant

epistle before he started, even had he known what reply to make, all that he resolved on being to do nothing till he saw Sir Brook. He had opened his writing-desk to find Lucy's last letter to him, and by ill luck it was this ill-omened document first came to his hand. Fortune will play us these pranks. She will change the glass we meant to drink out of, and give us a bitter draught at the moment that we dreamed of nectar! "If I'm to give this thousand pounds," muttered he, moodily, "I may find myself with about eight hundred in the world! for I take it these costs he speaks of will be no trifle! I shall need some boldness to go and tell this to Sir William Lendrick when I ask him for his granddaughter." Here again he bethought him of Sir Brook, and reassured himself that with his aid even this difficulty might be conquered. He arose to ask if it were certain that Sir Brook would return home that night, and discovered that he was alone in the cottage, the fisherman and his wife who lived there having gone down to the shore to gather the seaweed left by the retreating tide. Trafford knew nothing of Fossbrooke's recent good fortune. The letters which conveyed that news reached Malta after he had left, and his journey to England was prompted by impatience to decide his fate at once, either by some arrangement with his family which might enable him to remain in the army, or, failing all hope of that, by the sale of his

commission. "If Tom Lendrick can face the hard life of a miner, why should not I?" would he say. "I am as well able to rough it as any man. Fellows as tenderly nurtured as myself go out to the gold-diggings and smash quartz, and what is there in me that I should shrink from this labour?" There was a grim sort of humour in the way he repeated to himself the imaginary calls of his comrades. 'Where's Sir Lionel Trafford? Will some one send the distinguished baronet down here with his shovel?' "Lucy, too, has seen the life of hard work and stern privation. She showed no faint-heartedness at its hardships; far from it. I never saw her look happier nor cheerier. To look at her, one would say that she liked its wild adventure—its very uncommonness. I'll be sworn if we'll not be as happy—happier, perhaps, than if we had rank and riches. As Sir Brook says, it all depends upon himself in what spirit a man meets his fortune. Whether you confront life or death, there are but two ways—that of the brave man or the coward.

"How I wish he were come! How impatient I am to know what success he has had with my father! My own mind is made up. The question is, Shall I be able to persuade others to regard the future as I do? Will Lucy's friends let her accept a beggar? No, not that! He who is able and willing to work need not be a beggar. Was that a tap at the door?"



Come in." As he spoke the door slowly opened, and a lady entered: her veil, closely drawn and folded, completely concealed her face, and a large shawl wrapped her figure from shoulders to feet.

As she stood for an instant silent, Trafford arose and said, "I suppose you wished to see Sir Brook Fossbrooke; but he is from home, and will not return till a late hour."

"Don't you remember me, Lionel?" said she, drawing back her veil, while she leaned against the wall for support.

"Good heavens! Mrs Sewell!" and he sprang forward and led her to a seat. "I never thought to see you here," said he, merely uttering words at random in his astonishment.

"When did you come?" asked she, faintly.

"About an hour ago."

"True? Is this true?"

"On my honour. Why do you ask? why should you doubt it?"

"Simply to know how long you could have been here without coming to me." These words were uttered in a voice slightly tremulous, and full of a tender significance. Trafford's cheeks grew scarlet, and for a moment he seemed unable to reply. At last he said, in a confused way, "I came by the mail-packet, and at once drove out here. I was anxious to see Sir Brook. And you?"

“I came here also to see him.”

“He has been in some trouble lately,” said Trafford, trying to lead the conversation into an indifferent channel. “By some absurd mistake they arrested him as a Celt.”

“How long do you remain here, Lionel?” asked she, totally unmindful of his speech.

“My leave is for a month, but the journey takes off one-half of it.”

“Am I much changed, Lionel, since you saw me last? You can scarcely know. Come over and sit beside me.”

Trafford drew his chair close to hers. “Well,” said she, pushing back her bonnet, and by the action letting her rich and glossy hair fall in great masses over her back, “you have not answered me?. How am I looking?”

“You were always beautiful, and fully as much so now as ever.”

“But I am thinner, Lionel. See my poor hands, how they are wasted. These are not the plump fingers you used to hold for hours in your own—all that dreary time you were so ill;” and as she spoke she laid her hand, as if unconsciously, over his.

“You were so good to me,” muttered he—“so good and so kind.”

“And you have wellnigh forgotten it all,” said she, sighing heavily.

“Forgotten it! far from it. I never think of you but with gratitude.”

She drew her hand hastily away, and averted her head at the same time with a quick movement.

“Were it not for your tender care and watchfulness, I know well I could never have recovered from that severe illness. I cannot forget, I do not want to forget, the thousand little ways in which you assuaged my suffering, nor the still more touching kindness with which you bore my impatience. I often live it all over again, believe me, Mrs Sewell.”

“You used to call me Lucy,” said she, in a faint whisper.

“Did I—did I dare?”

“Yes, you dared. You dared even more than that, Lionel. You dared to speak to me, to write to me, as only he can write or speak who offers a woman his whole heart. I know the manly code on these matters is, that when a married woman listens even once to such addresses, she admits the plea on which her love is sought; but I believed—yes, Lionel, I believed—that yours was a different nature. I knew—my heart told me—that you pitied me.”

“That I did,” said he, with a quivering lip.

“You pitied me because you saw the whole sad story of my life. You saw the cruel outrages, the insults I was exposed to! Poor Lionel,” and she caught his hand as she spoke—“how severely did it

often try your temper to endure what you witnessed!"

Trafford bit his lip in silence, and she went on more eagerly, "I needed not defenders. I could have had scores of them. There was not a man who came to the house would not have been proud to be my champion. You know if this be a boast. You know how I was surrounded. For the very least of those caresses I bestowed upon you on your sickbed, there was not one who would not have risked his life. Is this true?"

"I believe it," muttered he.

"And why did I bear all this," cried she, wildly—"why did I endure, not alone and in the secrecy of my own home, but before the world—in the crowd of a drawing-room—outrage that wounds a woman's pride worse than a brought-home crime? Why did I live under it all? Just for this, that the one man who should have avenged me was sick, if not dying; and that if *he* could not defend me, I would have no other. You said you pitied me," said she, leaning her head against his shoulder. "Do you pity me still?"

"With all my heart I pity you."

"I knew it—I was sure of it!" said she, with a voice vibrating with a sort of triumph. "I always said you would come back—that you had not, could not, forget me—that you would no more desert me

than a man deserts the comrade that has been shipwrecked with him. You see that I did not wrong you, Lionel."

Trafford covered his face with both his hands, but never uttered a word, while she went on—"Your friends, indeed, if that be the name for them, insisted that I was mistaken in you! How often have I had to hear such speeches as 'Trafford always looks to himself. Trafford will never entangle himself deeply for any one;' and then they would recount some little story of a heartless desertion here, or some betrayal there, as though your life—your whole life—was made up of these treacheries; and I had to listen to these as to the idle gossip one hears in the world and takes no account of! Would you believe it, Lionel, it was only last week I was making a morning call at my mother-in-law's, and I heard that you were coming home to England to be married! Perhaps I was ill that day—I had enough to have made me ill—perhaps more wretched than usual—perhaps, who knows, the startling suddenness of the news—I cannot say how, but so overcome was I by indignation, that I cried out, 'It is untrue—every syllable of it untrue.' I meant to have stopped there, but somehow I went on to say—heaven knows what—that I would not sit by and hear you slandered—that you were a man of unblemished honour—in a word, Lionel, I silenced your detractors; but in do-

ing so, I sacrificed myself; and as one by one each visitor rose to withdraw—they were all women—they made me some little apology for whatever pain they had given me, and in such a tone of mock sorrow and real sarcasm, that as the last left the room I fell into a fit of hysterics that lasted for hours. ‘Oh, Lucy, what have you done!’ were the first words I heard, and it was *his* mother who spoke them. Ay, Lionel, they were bitter words to hear! Not but that she pitied me. Yes, women have pity on each other in such miseries. She was very kind to me, and came back with me to the Priory, and stayed all the evening with me, and we talked of *you*! Yes, Lionel, she forgave me. She said she had long foreseen what it must come to—that no woman had ever borne what I had—that over and over again she had warned him, conjuring him, if not for his own sake, for the children’s—— Oh, Lionel, I cannot go on!” burst she out, sobbing bitterly, as she fell at his feet, and rested her head on his knees. He carried her tenderly in his arms and placed her on a sofa, and she lay there to all seeming insensible and unconscious. He was bending anxiously over her as she lifted her eyelids and gazed at him—a long steadfast look it was, as though it would read his very heart within him. “Well,” asked she—“well?”

“Are you better?” asked he, in a kind voice.



“When you have answered *my* question, I will answer yours,” said she, in a tone almost stern.

“You have not asked me anything, Lucy,” said he, tremulously.

“And do you want me to say I doubt you?” cried she, with almost a scream. “Do you want me to humble myself to ask, Am I to be forsaken?—in plain words, Is there one word of truth in this story of the marriage? Why don’t you answer me? Speak out, sir, and deny it, as you would deny the charge that called you a swindler or a coward. What! are you silent? Is it the fear of what is to come after that appals you? but I absolve you from the charge, Trafford. You shall not be burthened by me. My mother-in-law will take me. She has offered me a home, and I have accepted it. There, now, you are released of that terror. Say that this tale of the marriage is a lie—a foul lie—a lie invented to outrage and insult me;—say that, Lionel—just bow your head, my own—— What! It is not a lie, then?” said she, in a low distinct voice—“and it is *I* that have been deceived, and you are——all that they called you.”

“Listen to me, Lucy.”

“How dare you, sir?—by what right do you presume to call me Lucy? Are you such a coward as to take this freedom because my husband is not here to resent it? Do not touch me, sir. That old man,

in whose house I am, would strike you to the ground if you insulted me. It was to see him I came here—to see him, and not you. I came here with a message from my husband to Sir Brook Fossbrooke—and not to listen to the insulting addresses of Major Trafford. Let me go, sir; and at your peril touch me with a finger. Look at yourself in that glass yonder—look at yourself, and you will see why I despise you.” And with this she arose and passed out, while with a warning gesture of her hand she motioned that he should not follow her.

## CHAPTER LXVIII.

### TO REPORT.

IT was long after midnight when Mrs Sewell reached the Priory. She dismissed her cab at the gate lodge, and was slowly walking up the avenue when Sewell met her.

“I was beginning to think you didn’t mean to come back at all,” cried he, in a voice of mingled taunt and irritation—“it is close on one o’clock.”

“He had dined in town, and I had to wait till he returned,” said she, in a low, faint tone.

“You saw him, however?”

“Yes, we met at the station.”

“Well, what success?”

“He gave me some money—he promised me more.”

“How much has he given you?” cried he, eagerly.

“Two hundred, I think; at least I thought he said there was two hundred—he gave me his pocket-

book. Let me reach the house, and have a glass of water before you question me more. I am tired—very tired.”

“You seem weak, too; have you eaten nothing?”

“No, nothing.”

“There is some supper on the table. We have had guests here. Old Lendrick and his daughter came up with Beattie. They are not above half an hour gone. They thought to see the old man, but Beattie found him so excited and irritable he advised them to defer the visit.”

“Did you see them?”

“Yes; I passed the evening with them most amicably. The girl is wonderfully good-looking; and she has got rid of that shy, half-furtive way she had formerly, and looks at one steadfastly, and with such a pair of eyes too! I had no notion she was so beautiful.”

“Were they cordial in manner—friendly?”

“I suppose they were. Dr Lendrick was embarrassed and timid, and with that fidgety uneasiness as if he wanted to be anywhere else than where he was; but she was affable enough—asked affectionately about you and the children, and hoped to see you to-morrow.”

She made no reply, but, hastening her steps, walked on till she entered the house, when, passing into a small room off the hall, she threw off her bonnet,

and, with a deep-drawn sigh, said, "I am dead tired—get me some water."

"You had better have wine."

"No, water. I am feverish. My head is throbbing painfully."

"You want food and support. Come into the dining-room and eat something. I'll keep you company, too, for I couldn't eat while those people were here. I felt, all the time, that they had come to turn us out; and indeed Beattie, with a delicate tact quite his own, half avowed it, as he said, 'It is a pity there is not light enough for you to see your old flower-garden, Lucy, for I know you are impatient to be back in it again.'"

"I'll try and eat something," said Mrs Sewell, rising, and with weary steps moving into the dining-room.

Sewell placed a chair for her at the table, helped her, and filled her glass, and, telling the servant that he need not wait, sat down opposite her. "From what Beattie said I gather," said he, "that the Chief is out of danger; the crisis of the attack is over, and he has only to be cautious to come through. Isn't it like our luck?"

"Hush!—take care."

"No fear. They can't hear even when they try—these double doors puzzle them. You are not eating."

"I cannot eat; give me another glass of wine."

“Yes, that will do you good; it’s the old thirty-four. I took it out in honour of Lendrick, but he is a water-drinker. I’m sure I wish Beattie were. I grudged the rascal every glass of that glorious claret which he threw down with such gusto, telling me the while that it was infinitely finer than when he last tasted it.”

“I feel better now, but I want rest and sleep. You can wait for all I have to tell you till to-morrow—can’t you?”

“If I must, there’s no help for it; but considering that my whole future, in a measure, hangs upon it, I’d rather hear it now.”

“I am wellnigh worn out,” said she, plaintively; and she held out her glass to be filled once more; “but I’ll try and tell you.”

Supporting her head on both her hands, and with her eyes half closed, she went on in a low monotonous tone, like that of one reading from a book:—“We met at the station, and had but a few minutes to confer together. I told him I had been at his house; that I came to see him, and ask his assistance; that you had got into trouble, and would have to leave the country, and were without means to go. He seemed, I thought, to be aware of all this, and asked me, Was it only now that I had learned or knew of this necessity? He also asked if it were at your instance, and by your wish, that I had come to



him? I said, Yes; you had sent me." Sewell started as if something sharp had pierced him, and she went on—"There was nothing for it but the truth; and, besides, I know him well, and if he had once detected me in an attempt to deceive him, he would not have forgiven it. He then said, 'It is not to the wife I will speak harshly of the husband, but what assurance have I that he will go out of the country?' I said, 'You had no choice between that and a jail.' He nodded assent, and muttered, 'A jail—and worse; and *you*,' said he, 'what is to become of you?' I told him 'I did not know; that perhaps Lady Lendrick would take me and the children.'"

"He did not offer you a home with himself?" said Sewell, with a diabolical grin.

"No," said she, calmly; "but he objected to our being separated. He said that it was to sacrifice our children, and we had no right to do this; and that, come what might, we ought to live together. He spoke much on this, and asked me more than once if our hard-bought experiences had not taught us to be more patient, more forgiving towards each other."

"I hope you told him that I was a miracle of tolerance, and that I bore with a saintly submission what more irritable mortals were wont to go half mad about—did you tell him this?"

"Yes; I said you had a very practical way of deal-

ing with life, and never resented an unprofitable insult."

"How safe a man's honour always is in a good wife's keeping!" said he, with a savage laugh. "I hope your candour encouraged him to more frankness; he must have felt at ease after that?"

"Still he persisted in saying there must be no separation."

"That was hard upon you; did you not tell him that was hard upon *you*?"

"No; I avoided mixing up myself in the discussion. I had come to treat for you, and you alone."

"But you might have said that he had no right to impose upon you a life of—what shall I call it?—incompatibility or cruelty."

"I did not; I told him I would repeat to you whatever he told me as nearly as I could. He then said, 'Go abroad and live together in some cheap place, where you can find means to educate the children. I,' said he, 'will take the cost of that, and allow you five hundred a-year for your own expenses. If I am satisfied with your husband's conduct, and well assured of his reformation, I will increase this allowance.'"

"He said nothing about you nor *your* reformation—did he?"

"Not a word."

"How much will he make it if we separate?"

“He did not say. Indeed he seemed to make our living together the condition of aiding us.”

“And if he knew of anything harder or harsher he'd have added it. Why, he has gone about the world these dozen years back telling every one what a brute and blackguard you had for a husband—that, short of murder, I had gone through every crime towards you. Where was it I beat you with a hunting-whip?”

“At Rangoon,” said she, calmly.

“And where did I turn you into the streets at midnight?”

“At Winchester.”

“Exactly; these were the very lies—the infernal lies—he has been circulating for years; and now he says, ‘If you have not yet found out how suited you are to each other, how admirably your tastes and dispositions agree, it's quite time you should do so. Go back and live together, and if one of you does not poison the other, I'll give you a small annuity.’”

“Five hundred a-year is very liberal,” said she, coldly.

“I could manage on it for myself alone, but it's meant to support a family. It's beggary, neither more nor less.”

“We have no claim upon him.”

“No claim! What! no claim on your godfather, your guardian, not to say the impassioned and de-

voted admirer who followed you over India just to look at you, and spent a little fortune in getting portraits of you. Why, the man must be a downright impostor if he does not put half his fortune at your feet !”

“I ought to tell you that he annexed certain conditions to any help he tendered us. ‘They were matters,’ he said, ‘could best be treated between you and himself; that I did not, nor need not, know any of them.’”

“I know what he alluded to.”

“Last of all, he said you must give him your answer promptly, for he would not be long in this country.”

“As to that, time is fully as pressing to me as to him. The only question is, Can we make no better terms with him ?”

“You mean more money ?”

“Of course I mean more money. Could you make him say one thousand, or at least eight hundred, instead of five ?”

“It would not be a pleasant mission,” said she, with a bitter smile.

“I suppose not; a ruined man’s wife need not look for many ‘pleasant missions,’ as you call them. This same one of to-day was not over-gratifying.”

“Less even than you are aware,” said she, slowly.

“Oh, I can very well imagine the tone and man-

ner of the old fellow; how much of rebuke and severity he could throw into his voice; and how minutely and painstakingly he would dwell upon all that could humiliate you."

"No; you are quite wrong. There was not a word of reproach, not a syllable of blame; his manner was full of gentle and pitying kindness, and when he tried to comfort and cheer me, it was like the affection of a father."

"Where, then, was this great trial and suffering of which you have just said I could take no full measure?"

"I was thinking of what occurred before I met Sir Brook," said she, looking up, and with her eyes now widely opened, and a nostril distended as she spoke. "I was thinking of an incident of the morning. I have told you that when I reached the cottage where Sir Brook lived, I found that he was absent, and would not return till a late hour. Tired with my long walk from the station, I wished to sit down and rest before I had determined what to do, whether to await his arrival or go back to town. I saw the door open, I entered the little sitting-room, and found myself face to face with Major Trafford."

"Lionel Trafford?"

"Yes; he had come by that morning's packet from England, and gone straight out to see his friend."

"He was alone, was he?"

“Alone! there was no one in the house but ourselves.”

Sewell shrugged his shoulders, and said, “Go on.”

The insult of his gesture sent the blood to her face and forehead, and for an instant she seemed too much overcome by anger to speak.

“Am I to tell you what this man said to me? Is *that* what you mean?” said she, in a voice that almost hissed with passion.

“Better not, perhaps,” replied he, calmly, “if the very recollection overcome you so completely.”

“That is to say, it is better I should bear the insult how I may than reveal it to one who will not resent it.”

“When you say resent, do you intend I should call him out?—fight him?”

“If I were the husband instead of the wife, it is what I should do—ay,” cried she, wildly, “and thank Fortune that gave me the chance.”

“I don’t think I’m going to show any such gratitude,” said he, with a cold grin. “If he made love to you, I take it he fancied you had given him some encouragement. When you showed him that he was mistaken, he met his punishment. A woman always knows how to make a man look like a confounded fool at such a moment.”

“And is that enough?”

“Is *what* enough?”



“I ask, is it enough to make him like a confounded fool? Will *that* soothe a wife’s insulted pride, or avenge a husband’s injured honour?”

“I don’t know much of the wife’s part; but as to the husband’s share in the matter, if I had to fight every fellow who made up to you, my wedding garment ought to have been a suit of chain-armour.”

“A husband need not fight for his wife’s flirtations; besides, he can make her give these up if he likes. There are insults, however, that a man,”—and she said the word with a fierce emphasis,—“resents with the same instinct that makes him defend his life.”

“I know well enough what he’d say; he’d say that there was nothing serious in it, that he was merely indulging in that sort of larking talk one offers to a pretty woman who does not seem to dislike it. The chances are he’d turn the tables a bit, and say that you rather led him on than repressed him.”

“And would these pleas diminish your desire to have his heart’s blood?” cried she, wild with passion and indignation together.

“Having his heart’s blood is very fine, if I was sure—quite sure—he might not have mine. The fellow is a splendid shot.”

“I thought so. I could have sworn it,” cried she, with a taunting laugh.

“I admit no man my superior with a pistol,” said Sewell, stung far more by her laughter than her words; “but what have I to gain if I shoot him? His family would prosecute me to a certainty: and it went devilish close with that last fellow who was tried at Newgate.”

“If you care so little for my honour, sir, I’ll show you how cheaply I can regard yours. I will go back to Sir Brook to-morrow, and return him his money. I will tell him besides that I am married to one so hopelessly lost to every sentiment and feeling, not merely of the gentleman, but of the man, that it is needless to try to help him; that I will accept nothing for him—not a shilling; that he may deal with you on those other matters he spoke of as he pleases; that it will be no favour shown me when he spares you. There, sir, I leave you now to compute whether a little courage would not have served you better than all your cunning.”

“You do not leave this room till you give me that pocket-book,” said he, rising, and placing his back to the door.

“I foresaw this, sir,” said she, laughing quietly, “and took care to deposit the money in a safe place before I came here. You are welcome to every farthing I have about me.”

“Your scheme is too glaring, too palpable by half. There is a vulgar shamelessness in the way you ‘make

your book,' standing to win whichever of us should kill the other. I read it at a glance," said he, as he threw himself into a chair; "but I'll not help to make you an interesting widow. Are you going? Good-night."

She moved towards the door, and just as she reached it he arose and said, "On what pretext could I ask this man to meet me? What do I charge him with? How could I word my note to him?"

"Let *me* write it," said she, with a bitter laugh. "You will only have to copy it."

"And if I consent, will you do all the rest? Will you go to Fossbrooke and ask him for the increased allowance?"

"I will."

"Will you do your best—your very best—to obtain it? Will you use all the power and influence you have over him to dissuade him from any act that might injure *me*? Will you get his pledge that he will not molest me in any way?"

"I will promise to do all that I can with him."

"And when must this come off—this meeting, I mean?"

"At once, of course. You ought to leave this by the early packet for Bangor. Harding or Vaughan—any one—will go with you. Trafford can follow you by the mid-day mail, as your note will have reached him early."

“You seem to have a capital head for these sort of things; you arrange all to perfection,” said he, with a sneer.

“I had need of it, as I have to think for two,” and the sarcasm stung him to the quick.

“I will go to your room and write the note. I shall find paper and ink there?”

“Yes; everything. I’ll carry these candles for you,” and he arose and preceded her to his study. “I wish he would not mix old Fossbrooke in the affair. I hope he’ll not name him as his friend.

“I have already thought of that,” said she, as she sat down at the table and began to write. After a few seconds she said, “This will do, I think:”

“‘SIR,—I have just learned from my wife how grossly insulting was your conduct towards her yesterday, on the occasion of her calling at Sir Brook Fossbrooke’s house. The shame and distress in which she returned here would fully warrant any chastisement I might inflict upon you; but for the sake of the cloth you wear, I offer you the alternative which I would extend to a man of honour, and desire you will meet me at once with a friend. I shall leave by the morning packet for Holyhead, and be found at the chief hotel, Bangor, where, waiting your pleasure, I am your obedient servant.

“‘I hope it is needless to say that my wife’s former

guardian, Sir B. F., should not be chosen to act for you on this occasion.’”

“I don’t think I’d say that about personal chastisement. People don’t horsewhip nowadays.”

“So much the worse. I would leave it there, however. It will insult him like a blow.”

“Oh, he’s ready enough—he’ll not need poking to rouse his pluck. I’ll say that for him.”

“And yet I half suspect he’ll write some blundering sort of apology; some attempt to show that I was mistaken. I know—I know it as well as if I saw it—he’ll not fire at you.”

“What makes you think that?”

“He couldn’t. It would be impossible for him.”

“I’m not so sure of that. There’s something very provocative in the sight of a pistol muzzle staring at one a few paces off. I’d fire at my father if I saw him going to shoot at me.”

“I think *you* would,” said she, dryly. “Sit down and copy that note. We must send it by a messenger at once.”

“I don’t think you put it strongly enough about old Fossbrooke. I’d have said distinctly,—I object to his acting on account of his close and intimate connection with my wife’s family.”

“No, no; leave it all as it stands. If we begin

to change, we shall never have an end of the alterations."

"If I believed he would not fire at me, I'd not shoot him," said Sewell, biting the end of his pen.

"He'll not fire the first time; but if you go on to a second shot, I'm certain he will aim at you."

"I'll try and not give him this chance, then," said he, laughing. "Remember," added he, "I'm promising to cross the Channel, and I have not a pound in my pocket."

"Write that, and I'll go fetch you the money," said she, leaving the room; and, passing out through the hall and the front door, she put her arm and hand into a large marble vase, several of which stood on the terrace, and drew forth the pocket-book which Sir Brook had given her, and which she had secretly deposited there as she entered the house.

"There, that's done," said he, handing her his note as she came in.

"Put it in an envelope and address it. And now, where are you to find Harding, or whoever you mean to take with you?"

"That's easy enough; they'll be at supper at the Club by this time. I'll go in at once. But the money?"

"Here it is. I have not counted it; he gave me the pocket-book as you see."

"There's more than he said. There are two



hundred and eighty-five pounds. He must be in funds."

"Don't lose time. It is very late already—nigh two o'clock; these men will have left the Club, possibly?"

"No, no; they play on till daybreak. I suppose I'd better put my traps in a portmanteau at once, and not require to come back here."

"I'll do all that for you."

"How amiable a wife can be at the mere prospect of getting rid of her husband!"

"You will send me a telegram?"

"Very likely. Good-bye. Adieu."

"*Adieu, et bonne chance,*" said she, gaily.

"That means a good aim, I suppose," said he, laughing.

She nodded pleasantly, kissed her hand to him, and he was gone.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

### A MOMENT OF CONFIDENCE.

MRS SEWELL'S maid made two ineffectual efforts to awaken her mistress on the following morning, for agitation had drugged her like a narcotic, and she slept the dull heavy sleep of one overpowered by opium. "Why, Jane, it is nigh twelve o'clock," said she, looking at her watch. "Why did you let me sleep so late?"

"Indeed, ma'am, I did my best to rouse you. I opened the shutters, and I splashed the water into your bath, and made noise enough, I'm sure, but you didn't mind it all; and I brought up the Doctor to see if there was anything the matter with you, and he felt your pulse, and put his hand on your heart, and said, No, it was just over-fatigue; that you had been sitting up too much of late, and hadn't strength for it."

"Where's Colonel Sewell?" asked she, hurriedly.

"He's gone off to the country, ma'am; leastways,

he went away early this morning, and George thinks it was to Killaloe."

"Is Dr Beattie here?"

"Yes, ma'am; they all breakfasted with the children at nine o'clock."

"Whom do you mean by all?"

"Mr Lendrick, ma'am, and Miss Lucy. I hear as how they are coming back to live here. They were up all the morning in his lordship's room, and there was much laughing, as if it was a wedding."

"Whose wedding? What were you saying about a wedding?"

"Nothing, ma'am; only that they were as merry—that's all."

"Sir William must be better, then?"

"Yes, ma'am—quite out of danger; and he's to have a partridge for dinner, and the Doctor says he'll be down-stairs and all right before this day week; and I'm sure it will be a real pleasure to see him lookin' like himself again, for he told Mr Cheetor to take them wigs away, and all the pomatum-pots, and that he'd have the shower-bath that he always took long ago. It's a fine day for Mr Cheetor, for he has given him I don't know how many coloured scarfs, and at least a dozen new waistcoats, all good as the day they were made; and he says he won't wear anything but black, like

long ago ; and, indeed, some say that old Rives, the butler as was, will be taken back, and the house be the way it used to be formerly. I wonder, ma'am, if the Colonel will let it be—they say below-stairs that he won't."

"I'm sure Colonel Sewell cares very little on the subject. Do you know if they are going to dine here to-day?"

"Yes, ma'am, they are. Miss Lucy said the butler was to take your orders as to what hour you'd like dinner."

"Considerate, certainly," said she, with a faint smile.

"And I heard Mr Lendrick say, 'I think you'd better go up yourself, Lucy, and see Mrs Sewell, and ask if we inconvenience her in any way;' but the Doctor said, 'You need not; she will be charmed to meet you.'"

"He knows me perfectly, Jane," said she, calmly. "Is Miss Lucy so very handsome? Colonel Sewell called her beautiful."

"Indeed I don't think so, ma'am. Mr Cheetor and me thought she was too robusteous for a young lady; and she's freckled, too, quite dreadful. The picture of her below in the study's a deal more pretty; but perhaps she was delicate in health when it was done."

"That would make a great difference, Jane."

“Yes, ma’am, it always do; every one is much genteeler-looking when they’re poorly. Not but old Mr Haire said she was far more beautiful than ever.”

“And is he here, too?”

“Yes, ma’am. It was he that pushed Miss Lucy down into the arm-chair, and said, ‘Take your old place there, darling, and pour out the tea, and we’ll forget that you were ever away at all.’”

“How pretty and how playful! The poor children must have felt themselves quite old in such juvenile company.”

“They was very happy, ma’am. Miss Cary sat in Miss Lucy’s lap all the time, and seemed to like her greatly.”

“There’s nothing worse for children than taking them out of their daily habits. I’m astonished Mrs Groves should let them go and breakfast below-stairs without orders from me.”

“It’s what Miss Lucy said, ma’am. ‘Are we quite sure Mrs Sewell would like it?’”

“She need never have asked the question; or if she did, she might have waited for the answer. Mrs Sewell could have told her that she totally disapproved of any one interfering with the habits of her children.”

“And then old Mr Haire said, ‘Even if she should not like it, when she knows all the pleasure it has given us, she will forgive it.’”

“What a charming disposition I must have, Jane, without my knowing it!”

“Yes, ma’am,” said the girl, with a pursed-up mouth, as though she would not trust herself to expatiate on the theme.

“Did Colonel Sewell take Capper with him?”

“No, ma’am; Mr Capper is below. The Colonel gave him a week’s leave, and he’s going a-fishing with some other gentlemen down into Wicklow.”

“I suspect, Jane, that you people below-stairs have the pleasantest life of all. You have little to trouble you. When you take a holiday, you can enjoy it with all your hearts.”

“The gentlemen does, I believe, ma’am; but we don’t. We can’t go a-pleasuring like them; and if it an’t a picnic, or a thing of the kind that’s arranged for us, we have nothing for it but a walk to church and back, or a visit to one of our friends.”

“So that you know what it is to be bored!” said she, sighing drearily—“I mean, to be very tired of life, and sick of everything and everybody.”

“Not quite so bad as that, ma’am; put out, ma’am, and provoked at times—not in despair, like.”

“I wish I was a housemaid.”

“A housemaid, ma’am!” cried the girl, in almost horror.

“Well, a lady’s-maid. I mean, I’d like a life where my heaviest sorrow would be a refused leave



to go out, or a sharp word or two for an ill-ironed collar. See who is that at the door; there's some one tapping there the last two minutes."

"It's Miss Lucy, ma'am; she wants to know if she may come in?"

Mrs Sewell looked in the glass before which she was sitting, and as speedily passed her hands across her brow, and by the action seeming to chase away the stern expression of her eyes; then, rising up with a face all smiles, she rushed to the door and clasped Lucy in her arms, kissing her again and again, as she said, "I never dreamed of such happiness as this; but why didn't you come and awaken me? why did you rob me of one precious moment of your presence?"

"I knew how tired and worn-out you were. Grand-papa has told me of all your unwearying kindness."

"Come over to the light, child, and let me see you well. I'm wildly jealous of you, I must own, but I'll try to be fair and judge you honestly. My husband says you are the loveliest creature he ever saw; and I declare I'm afraid he spoke truly. What have you done with your eyes? they are far darker than they used to be; and this hair—you need not tell me it's all your own, child. Gold could not buy it. Yes, Jane, you are right; she *is* perfectly beautiful."

"Oh, do not turn my head with vanity," said Lucy, blushing.

“I wish I could—I wish I could do anything to lessen any of your fascinations. Do you know it’s very hard—very hard indeed—to forgive any one being so beautiful, and hardest of all for *me* to do so?”

“Why for you?” said Lucy, anxiously.

“I’ll tell you another time,” said she, in a half-whisper, and with a significant glance at her maid, who, with the officiousness of her order, was taking far more than ordinary trouble to put things to rights. “There, Jane,” said her mistress at last, “all that opening and shutting of drawers is driving me distracted; leave everything as it is, and let us have quiet. Go and fetch me a cup of chocolate.”

“Nothing else, ma’am?”

“Nothing; and ask if there are any letters for me. It’s a dreadful house, Lucy, for sending one’s letters astray. The Chief used to have scores of little scented notes sent up to him that were meant for me, and I used to get masses of formal-looking documents that should have gone to him; but everything is irregular here. There was no master, and, worse, no mistress; but I’ll hope, as they tell me here, that there will soon be one.”

“I don’t know—I have not heard.”

“What a diplomatic damsel it is! Why, child, can’t you be frank, and say if you are coming back to live here?”

“ I never suspected that I was in question at all ; if I had, I'd have told you, as I tell you now, there is not the most remote probability of such an event. We are going back to live at the Nest. Sir Brook has bought it, and made it over to papa or myself—I don't know which, but it means the same in the sense I care for, that we are to be together again.”

“ How delightful ! I declare, child, my envy of you goes on increasing every minute. I never was able to captivate any man, old or young, who would buy a beautiful house and give it to me. Of all the fortunate creatures I ever heard or read of, you are the luckiest.”

“ Perhaps I am. Indeed I own as much to myself when I bethink me how little I have contributed to my own good fortune.”

“ And I,” said she, with a heavy sigh, “ about the most unlucky ! I suppose I started in life with almost as fair a promise as your own. Not so handsome, I admit. I had neither these long lashes nor that wonderful hair, that gives you a look of one of those Venetian beauties Giorgione used to paint ; still less that lovely mouth, which I envy you more even than your eyes or your skin ; but I was good-looking enough to be admired, and I was admired, and some of my admirers were very great folk indeed ; but I rejected them all and married Sewell ! I need not tell you what came of that. Poor papa

foresaw it all. I believe it helped to break his heart; it might have broken mine too if I happened to have one. There, don't look horrified, darling. I wasn't born without one; but what with vanity and distrust, a reckless ambition to make a figure in the world, and a few other like good qualities, I made of the heart that ought to have been the home of anything that was worthy in my nature, a scene of plot and intrigue, till at last I imagine it wore itself out, just as people do who have to follow uncongenial labour. It was like a lady set down to pick oakum! Why don't you laugh, dear, at my absurd simile?"

"Because you frighten me," said Lucy, almost shuddering.

"I'm certain," resumed the other, "I was very like yourself when I was married. I had been very carefully brought up—had excellent governesses, and was trained in all the admirable discipline of a well-ordered family. All I knew of life was the good side. I saw people at church on Sundays, and fancied that they wore the same tranquil and virtuous faces throughout the week. Above all things I was trustful and confiding. Colonel Sewell soon uprooted such delusions. He believed in nothing nor in any one. If he had any theory at all of life, it was that the world consisted of wolves and lambs, and that one must make an early choice which flock he would belong to. I'm ashamed to

own what a zest it gave to existence to feel that the whole thing was a great game in which, by the exercise of skill and cleverness, one might be almost sure to win. He soon made me as impassioned a gambler as himself, as ready to risk anything—everything—on the issue. But I have made you quite ill, child, with this dark revelation; you are pale as death.”

“No, I am only frightened — frightened and grieved.”

“Don’t grieve for me,” said the other, haughtily. “There is nothing I couldn’t more easily forgive than pity. But let me turn from my odious self and talk of you. I want you to tell me everything about your own fortune, where you have been all this time, what seeing and doing, and what is the vista in front of you?”

Lucy gave a full account of Cagliari and her life there, narrating how blank their first hopes had been, and what a glorious fortune had crowned them at last. “I’m afraid to say what the mine returns at present; and they say it is a mere nothing to what it may yield when improved means of working are employed, new shafts sunk, and steam power engaged.”

“Don’t get technical, darling; I’ll take your word for Sir Brook’s wealth; only tell me what he means to do with it. You know he gambled away one

large fortune already, and squandered another, nobody knows how. Has he gained anything by these experiences to do better with the third?"

"I have only heard of his acts of munificence or generosity," said Lucy, gravely.

"What a reproachful face to put on, and for so little!" said the other, laughing. "You don't think that when I said he gambled I thought the worse of him."

"Perhaps not; but you meant that *I* should."

"You are too sharp in your casuistry; but you have been living with only men latterly, and the strong-minded race always impart some of their hardness to the women who associate with them. You'll have to come down to silly creatures like me, Lucy, to regain your softness."

"I shall be delighted if you let me keep your company."

"We will be sisters, darling, if you will only be frank with me."

"Prove me if you like; ask me anything you will, and see if I will not answer you freely."

"Have you told me all your Cagliari life—all?"

"I think so; all at least that was worth telling."

"You had a shipwreck on your island, we heard here; are such events so frequent that they make slight impression?"



“I was but speaking of ourselves and our fortunes,” said Lucy; “my narrative was all selfish.”

“Come—I never beat about the bush—tell me one thing—it’s a very abrupt way to ask, but perhaps it’s the best way—are you going to be married?”

“I don’t know,” said she; and her face and neck became crimson in a moment.

“You don’t know! Do you mean that you’re like one of those young ladies in the foreign convents who are sent for to accept a husband whenever the papas and mammas have agreed upon the terms?”

“Not that; but I mean that I am not sure whether grandpapa will give his consent, and without it papa will not either.”

“And why should not grandpapa say yes? Major Trafford—we needn’t talk riddles to each other—Major Trafford has a good position, a good name, and will have a good estate: are not these the three gifts the mothers of England go in pursuit of?”

“His family, I suspect, wish him to look higher; at all events they don’t like the idea of an Irish daughter-in-law.”

“More fools they! Irish women, of the better class, are more ready to respond to good treatment, and less given to resent bad usage, than any I ever met.”

“Then I have just heard since I came over that Lady Trafford has written to grandpapa in a tone of such condescension and gentle sorrow, that it has driven him half crazy. Indeed, his continual inference from the letter is—What must the son of such a woman be !”

“That’s most unfair !”

“So they have all told him—papa, and Beattie, and even Mr Haire, who met Lionel one morning at Beattie’s.”

“Perhaps I might be of service here ; what a blush, child ! dear me, you are crimson, far too deep for beauty. How I have fluttered the dear little bird ! but I’m not going to rob its nest, or steal its mate away. All I meant was, that I could exactly contribute that sort of worldly testimony to the goodness of the match that old people like and ask for. You must never talk to them about affections, nor so much as allude to tastes or tempers ; never expatiate on anything that cannot be communicated by parchment, and attested by proper witnesses. Whatever is not subject to stamp-duty, they set down as mere moonshine.”

While she thus ran on, Lucy’s thoughts never strayed from a certain letter which had once thrown a dark shadow over her, and even yet left a gloomy memory behind it. The rapidity with which Mrs Sewell spoke, too, had less the air of one carried

away by the strong current of feeling than of a speaker who was uttering everything, anything, to relieve her own overburdened mind.

“You look very grave, Lucy,” went she on. “I suspect I know what’s passing in that little brain. You are doubting if I should be the fittest person to employ on the negotiation; come, now, confess it.”

“You have guessed aright,” said Lucy, gravely.

“But all that’s past and over, child. The whole is a mere memory now, if even so much. Men have a trick of thinking, once they have interested a woman on their behalf, that the sentiment survives all changes of time and circumstance, and that they can come back after years and claim the deposit; but it is a great mistake, as *he* has found by this time. But don’t let this make you unhappy, dear; there never was less cause for unhappiness. It is just of these sort of men the model husbands are made. The male heart is a very tough piece of anatomy, and requires a good deal of manipulation to make it tender, and, as you will learn one day, it is far better all this should be done before marriage than after.—Well, Jane, I did begin to think you had forgotten about the chocolate. It is about an hour since I asked for it.”

“Indeed, ma’am, it was Mr Cheetor’s fault; he was a-shooting rabbits with another gentleman.”

“There, there, spare me Mr Cheetor’s diversions, and fetch me some sugar.”

“Mr Lendrick and another gentleman, ma’am, is below, and wants to see Miss Lucy.”

“A young gentleman, Jane?” asked Mrs Sewell, while her eyes flashed with a sudden fierce brilliancy.

“No, ma’am, an old gentleman, with a white beard, very tall and stern to look at.”

“We don’t care for descriptions of old gentlemen, Jane. Do we, Lucy? Must you go, darling?”

“Yes; papa perhaps wants me.”

“Come back to me soon, pet. Now that we have no false barriers between us, we can talk in fullest confidence.”

Lucy hurried away, but no sooner had she reached the corridor than she burst into tears.

## CHAPTER LXX.

### THE TELEGRAM.

WHEN Lucy reached the drawing-room she found her father and Sir Brook deep in conversation in one of the window-recesses, and actually unaware of her entrance till she stood beside them.

“No,” cried Lendrick, eagerly; “I can’t follow these men in their knaveries. I don’t see the drift of them, and I lose the clue to the whole machinery.”

“The drift is easy enough to understand,” said Fossbrooke. “A man wants to escape from his embarrassments, and has little scruple as to the means.”

“But the certainty of being found out——”

“There is no greater fallacy than that. Do you imagine that one-tenth of the cheats that men practise on the world are ever brought to light? Or do you fancy that all the rogues are in jail, and all the people who are abroad and free are honest men? Far from it. Many an inspector that comes to taste the prison soup and question the governor, ought to have

more than an experimental course of the dietary ; and many a juryman sits on the case of a creature far better and purer than himself. But here comes one will give our thoughts a pleasanter channel to run in. How well you look, Lucy ! I am glad to see the sunny skies of Sardinia haven't blanched your cheeks."

"Such a scheme as Sir Brook has discovered !—such an ignoble plot against my poor dear father !" said Lendrick. "Tell her—tell her the whole of it."

In a very few words Sir Brook recounted the story of Sewell's interview with Balfour, and the incident of the stolen draft of the Judge's writing bartered for money.

"It would have killed my father. The shock would have killed him," said Lendrick. "And it was this man—this Sewell—who possessed his entire confidence of late—actually wielded complete influence over him. The whole time I sat with my father, he did nothing but quote him,—Sewell said so—Sewell told me—or Sewell suspected such a thing ; and always with some little added comment on his keen sharp intellect, his clear views of life, and his consummate knowledge of men. It was by the picture Sewell drew of Lady Trafford that my father was led to derive his impression of her letter. Sewell taught him to detect a covert impertinence and a sneer where none was intended. I read the letter my-



self, and it was only objectionable on the score of its vanity. She thought herself a very great personage writing to another great personage."

"Just so," said Fossbrooke. "It was right royal throughout. It might have begun, '*Madame ma sœur.*' And as I knew something of the writer, I thought it a marvel of delicacy and discretion."

"My father, unfortunately, deemed it a piece of intolerable pretension and offensive condescension, and he burned to be well enough to reply to it."

"Which is exactly what we must not permit. If they once get to a regular interchange of letters, there is nothing they will not say to each other. No, no; my plan is the best of all. Lionel made a most favourable impression the only time Sir William saw him. Beattie shall bring him up here again as soon as the Chief can be about: the rest will follow naturally. Lucy agrees with me, I see."

How Sir Brook knew this is not so easy to say, as Lucy had turned her head away persistently all the time he was speaking, and still continued in that attitude.

"It cannot be to-night, however, and possibly not to-morrow night," said Fossbrooke, musing; and though Lucy turned quickly and eagerly towards him to explain his words, he was silent for some minutes, when at length he said, "Lionel started this morning by daybreak, and for England. It must have been

a sudden thought. He left me a few lines, in pencil, which went thus—‘I take the early mail to Holyhead, but mean to be back to-morrow, or at farthest the day after. No time for more.’”

“If the space were not brief that he assigns for his absence, I’d say he had certainly gone to see his father,” said Lendrick.

“It’s not at all unlikely that his mother may have arranged to meet him in Wales,” said Sir Brook. “She is a fussy, meddlesome woman, who likes to be, or to think herself, the prime mover in everything. I remember when Hugh Trafford—a young fellow at that time—was offered a Junior Lordship of the Treasury, it was she who called on the Premier, Lord Dornington, to explain why he could not accept office. Nothing but great abilities or great vices enable a man to rise above the crushing qualities of such a wife. Trafford had neither, and the world has always voted him a nonentity.”

“There, Lucy,” said Lendrick, laughing—“there at least is one danger you must avoid in married life.”

“Lucy needs no teachings of mine,” said Sir Brook. “Her own instincts are worth all my experiences twice told. But who is this coming up to the door?”

“Oh, that is Mr Haire, a dear friend of grand-papa’s.” And Lucy ran to meet him, returning soon after to the room leaning on his arm.

Lendrick and Haire were very old friends, and

esteemed each other sincerely; and though on the one occasion on which Sir Brook and Haire had met, Fossbrooke had been the object of the Chief's violence and passion, his dignity and good temper had raised him highly in Haire's estimation, and made him glad to meet him again.

"You are half surprised to see me under this roof, sir," said Sir Brook, referring to their former meeting; "but there are feelings with me stronger than resentments."

"And when my poor father knows how much he is indebted to your generous kindness," broke in Lendrick, "he will be the first to ask your forgiveness."

"That he will. Of all the men I ever met, he is the readiest to redress a wrong he has done," cried Haire, warmly. "If the world only knew him as I know him! But his whole life long he has been trying to make himself appear stern and cold-hearted and pitiless, with, all the while, a nature overflowing with kindness."

"The man who has attached to himself such a friendship as yours," said Fossbrooke, warmly, "cannot but have good qualities."

"*My* friendship!" said Haire, blushing deeply; "what a poor tribute to such a man as he is! Do you know, sir," and here he lowered his voice till it became a confidential whisper—"do you know, sir,

that since the great days of the country—since the time of Burke, we have had nothing to compare with the Chief Baron. Plunkett used to wish he had his law, and Bushe envied his scholarship, and Lysaght often declared that a collection of Lendrick's epigrams and witty sayings would be the pleasantest reading of the day. And such is our public press, that it is for the quality in which he was least eminent they are readiest to praise him. You wouldn't believe it, sir. They call him a 'master of sarcastic eloquence.' Why, sir, there was a tenderness in him that would not have let him descend to sarcasm. He could rebuke, censure, condemn if you will; but his large heart had not room for a sneer."

"You well deserve all the love he bears you," said Lendrick, grasping his hand and pressing it affectionately.

"How could I deserve it? Such a man's friendship is above all the merits of one like me. Why, sir, it is honour and distinction before the world. I would not barter his regard for me to have a seat beside him on the Bench. By the way," added he, cautiously, "let him not see the papers this morning. They are at it again about his retirement. They say that Lord Wilmington had actually arranged the conditions, and that the Chief had consented to everything; and now they are beaten. You have heard, I suppose, the Ministry are out?"

“No; were they Whigs?” asked Lendrick, innocently.

Haire and Fossbrooke laughed heartily at the poor Doctor's indifference to party, and tried to explain to him something of the struggle between rival factions, but his mind was full of home events, and had no place for more. “Tell Haire,” said he at last—“tell Haire the story of the letter of resignation; none so fit as he to break the tale to my father.”

Fossbrooke took from his pocket a piece of paper, and handed it to Haire, saying, “Do you know that handwriting?”

“To be sure I do! It is the Chief's.”

“Does it seem a very formal document?”

Haire scanned the back of it, and then scrutinised it all over for a few seconds. “Nothing of the kind. It's the sort of thing I have seen him write scores of times. He is always throwing off these sketches. I have seen him write the preamble to a fancied Act of Parliament—a peroration to an imaginary speech; and as to farewells to the Bar, I think I have a dozen of them—and one, and not the worst, is in doggrel.”

Though, wherever Haire's experiences were his guides, he could manage to comprehend a question fairly enough, yet, where these failed him, or wherever the events introduced into the scene characters

at all new or strange, he became puzzled at once, and actually lost himself while endeavouring to trace out motives for actions, not one of which had ever occurred to him to perform.

Through this inability on his part, Sir Brook was not very successful in conveying to him the details of the stolen document ; nor could Haire be brought to see that the Government officials were the dupes of Sewell's artifice as much as, or even more than, the Chief himself.

"I think you must tell the story yourself, Sir Brook ; I feel I shall make a sad mess of it if you leave it to me," said he at last ; "and I know, if I began to blunder, he'd overwhelm me with questions how this was so, and why that had not been otherwise, till my mind would get into a hopeless confusion, and he'd send me off in utter despair."

"I have no objection whatever, if Sir William will receive me. Indeed, Lord Wilmington charged me to make the communication in person, if permitted to do so."

"I'll say that," said Haire, in a joyful tone, for already he saw a difficulty overcome. "I'll say it was at his Excellency's desire you came," and he hurried away to fulfil his mission. He came almost immediately in radiant delight. "He is most eager to see you, Sir Brook ; and, just as I said, impatient to make you every *amende*, and ask your forgiveness.



He looks more like himself than I have seen him for many a day."

While Sir Brook accompanied Haire to the Judge's room, Lendrick took his daughter's arm within his own, saying, "Now for a stroll through the wood, Lucy. It has been one of my day-dreams this whole year past."

Leaving the father and daughter to commune together undisturbed, let us turn for a moment to Mrs Sewell, who, with feverish anxiety, continued to watch from her window for the arrival of a telegraph messenger. It was already two o'clock. The mail-packet for Ireland would have reached Holyhead by ten, and there was therefore ample time to have heard what had occurred afterwards.

From the servant who had carried Sewell's letter to Trafford, she had learned that Trafford had set out almost immediately after receiving it; the man heard the order given to the coachman to drive to Richmond Barracks. From this she gathered he had gone to obtain the assistance of a friend. Her first fear was, that Trafford, whose courage was beyond question, would have refused the meeting, standing on the ground that no just cause of quarrel existed. This he would certainly have done had he consulted Fossbrooke, who would, besides, have seen the part her own desire for vengeance played in the whole affair. It was with this view that

she made Sewell insert the request that Fossbrooke might not know of the intended meeting. Her mind, therefore, was at rest on two points. Trafford had not refused the challenge, nor had he spoken of it to Fossbrooke.

But what had taken place since? that was the question. Had they met, and with what result? If she did not dare to frame a wish how the event might come off, she held fast by the thought that, happen what might, Trafford never could marry Lucy Lendrick after such a meeting. The mere exchange of shots would place a whole hemisphere between the two families, while the very nature of the accusation would be enough to arouse the jealousy and insult the pride of such a girl as Lucy. Come therefore what might, the marriage is at an end.

If Sewell were to fall! She shuddered to think what the world would say of her! One judgment there would be no gainsaying. Her husband certainly believed her false, and with his life he paid for the conviction. But would she be better off if Trafford were the victim? That would depend on how Sewell behaved. She would be entirely at his mercy—whether he determined to separate from her or not. *His* mercy seemed a sorry hope to cling to. Hopeless as this alternative looked, she never relented, even for an instant, as to what she

had done; and the thought that Lucy should not be Trafford's wife repaid her for all and everything.

While she thus waited in all the feverish torture of suspense, her mind travelled over innumerable contingencies of the case, in every one of which her own position was one of shame and sorrow; and she knew not whether she would deem it worse to be regarded as the repentant wife, taken back by a forgiving pitying husband, or the woman thrown off and deserted! "I suppose I must accept either of those lots, and my only consolation will be my vengeance."

"How absurd," broke she out, "are they who imagine that one only wants to be avenged on those who hate us! It is the wrongs done by people who are indifferent to us, and who, in search of their own objects, bestow no thought upon us,—these are the ills that cannot be forgiven. I never hated a human being—and there have been some who have earned my hate—as I hate this girl; and just as I feel the injustice of the sentiment, so does it eat deeper and deeper into my heart.

"A despatch, ma'am," said her maid, as she laid a paper on the table and withdrew. Mrs Sewell clutched it eagerly, but her hand trembled so she could not break the envelope. To think that her whole fate lay there, within that fold of paper, so overcame her that she actually sickened with fear as she looked on it.

“Whatever is done, is done,” muttered she, as she broke open the cover. There were but two lines; they ran thus—

“HOLYHEAD, 12 o'clock.

“Have thought better of it. It would be absurd to meet him. I start for town at once, and shall be at Boulogne to-morrow. “DUDLEY.”

She sat pondering over these words till the paper became blurred and blotted by her tears as they rolled heavily along her cheeks, and dropped with a distinct sound. She was not conscious that she wept. It was not grief that moved her; it was the blankness of despair—the sense of hopelessness that comes over the heart when life no longer offers a plan or a project, but presents a weariful road to be travelled, uncheered and dreary.

Till she had read these lines it never occurred to her that such a line of action was possible. But now that she saw them there before her, her whole astonishment was that she had not anticipated this conduct on his part. “I might have guessed it; I might have been sure of it,” muttered she. “The interval was too long; there were twelve mortal hours for reflection. Cowards think acutely—at least they say that in their calculations they embrace more casualties than brave men. And so he has ‘thought better

of it'—a strange phrase. 'Absurd to meet him!' but not absurd to run away. How oddly men reason when they are terrified! And so my great scheme has failed, all for want of a little courage, which I could have supplied, if called on; and now comes my hour of defeat, if not worse—my hour of exposure. I am not brave enough to confront it. I must leave this; but where to go is the question. I suppose Boulogne, since it is there I shall join my husband," and she laughed hysterically as she said it.

## CHAPTER LXXI.

### A FAMILY PARTY.

WHILE the interview between Sir Brook and the Chief Baron lasted—and it was a long time—the anxiety of those below-stairs was great to know how matters were proceeding. Had the two old men, who differed so strongly in many respects, found out that there was that in each which could command the respect and esteem of the other, and had they gained that common ground where it was certain there were many things they would agree upon?

“I should say,” cried Beattie, “they have become excellent friends before this. The Chief reads men quickly, and Fossbrooke’s nature is written in a fine bold hand, easy to read and impossible to mistake.”

“There, there,” burst in Haire—“they are laughing, and laughing heartily too. It does me good to hear the Chief’s laugh.”

Lendrick looked gratefully at the old man whose



devotion was so unvarying. "Here comes Cheetor—what has he to say?"

"My lord will dine below-stairs to-day, gentlemen," said the butler; "he hopes you have no engagements which will prevent your meeting him at dinner."

"If we had we'd soon throw them over," burst out Haire. "This is the pleasantest news I have heard this half-year."

"Fossbrooke has done it. I knew he would," said Beattie; "he's just the man to suit your father, Tom. While the Chief can talk of events, Fossbrooke knows people, and they are sure to make capital company for each other."

"There's another laugh! Oh, if one only could hear him now," said Haire; "he must be in prime heart this morning. I wonder if Sir Brook will remember the good things he is saying."

"I'm not quite so sure about this notion of dining below-stairs," said Beattie, cautiously; "he may be over-taxing his strength."

"Let him alone, Beattie; leave him to himself," said Haire. "No man ever knew how to make his will his ally as he does. He told me so himself."

"And in these words?" said Beattie, slyly.

"Yes, in those very words."

"Why, Haire, you are almost as useful to him as Bozzy was to Johnson."

Haire only caught the last name, and thinking it referred to a judge on the Irish bench, cried out, "Don't compare him with Johnston, sir; you might as well liken him to *me!*"

"I must go and find Lucy," said Lendrick. "I think she ought to go and show Mrs Sewell how anxious we all are to prove our respect and regard for her in this unhappy moment; the poor thing will need it."

"She has gone away already. She has removed to Lady Lendrick's house in Merrion Square; and I think very wisely," said Beattie.

"There's some burgundy below — Chambertin, I think it is—and Cheetor won't know where to find it," said Haire. "I'll go down to the cellar myself—the Chief will be charmed to see it on the table."

"So shall I," chimed in Beattie. "It is ten years or more since I saw a bottle of it, and I half feared it had been finished."

"You are wrong," broke in Haire. "It will be nineteen years on the 10th of June next. I'll tell you the occasion. It was when your father, Tom, had given up the Solicitor-Generalship, and none of us knew who was going to be made Chief Baron. Plunkett was dining here that day, and when he tasted the burgundy he said, 'This deserves a toast, gentlemen,' said he. 'I cannot ask you to drink to the health of the Solicitor-General, for I believe there

is no Solicitor-General ; nor can I ask you to pledge the Chief Baron of the Exchequer, for I believe there is no Chief Baron ; but I can give you a toast about which there can be no mistake nor misgiving—I give you the ornament of the Irish Bar.’ I think I hear the cheers yet. The servants caught them up too in the hall, and the house rang with a hip-hurrah till it trembled.”

“ Well done, Bozzy ! ” said Beattie. “ I ’ m glad that my want of memory should have recalled so glorious a recollection.”

At last Fossbrooke’s heavy tread was heard descending the stairs, and they all rushed to the door to meet him.

“ It is all right,” cried he. “ The Chief Baron has taken the whole event in an admirable spirit, and, like a truly generous man, he dwells on every proof of regard and esteem that has been shown him, and forgets the wrongs that others would have done him.”

“ The shock, then, did not harm him ? ” asked Lendrick, eagerly.

“ Far from it ; he said he felt revived and renovated. Yes, Beattie, he told me I had done him more good than all your phials. His phrase was, ‘ *Your* bitters, sir, leave no bad flavour behind them.’ I am proud to think I made a favourable impression upon him ; for he permitted me not only to state my own views, but to correct some of his. He agrees, now,

to everything. He even went so far as to say that he will employ his first half-hour of strength in writing to Lady Trafford; and he charges you, Beattie, to invite Lionel Trafford to come and pass some days here."

"*Viva!*" cried Haire; "this is grand news."

"He asks, also, if Tom could not come over for the wedding, which he trusts may not be long deferred,—as he said with a laugh, 'At *my* time of life, Sir Brook, it is best to leave as little as possible to *Nisi Prius*.'"

"You must tell me all these again, Sir Brook, or I shall inevitably forget them," whispered Haire in his ear.

"And shall I tell you, Lendrick, what I liked best in all I saw of him?" said Sir Brook, as he slipped his arm within the other's, and drew him towards a window. "It was the way he said to me, as I rose to leave the room, 'One word more, Sir Brook. We are all very happy, and in consequence very selfish. Let us not forget that there is one sad heart here—that there is one up-stairs there who can take no part in all this joy. What shall we, what can we, do for her?' I knew whom he meant at once—poor Mrs Sewell; and I was glad to tell him that I had already thought of her. 'She will join her husband,' said I, 'and I will take care that they have wherewithal to live on.'"

“‘I must share in whatever you do for her, Sir Brook,’ said your father; ‘she has many attractive qualities—she has some lovable ones. Who is to say what such a nature might not have been, if spared the contamination of such a husband?’

“I’m afraid I shocked, if I did not actually hurt him, by the way I grasped his hands in my gratitude for this speech. I know I said, ‘God bless you for those words!’ and I hurried out of the room.”

“Ah, *you* know him, sir!—*you* read him aright! And how few there are who do it!” cried Haire, warmly.

The old Judge was too weak to appear in the drawing-room, but when the company entered the dining-room they found him seated at the table, and, though pale and wasted, with a bright eye and a clear, fresh look.

“I declare,” said he, as they took their places, “this repays one for illness. No, Lucy—opposite me, my dear. Yes, Tom, of course; that is your place—your old place,” and he smiled benignly as he said it. “Is there not a place too many, Lucy?”

“Yes, grandpapa. It was for Mrs Sewell, but she sent me a line to say she had promised Lady Lendrick to dine with her.”

The old Chief’s eyes met Fossbrooke’s, and in the glances they exchanged there was much meaning.

“I cannot eat, Sir Brook, till we have had a glass

of wine together. Beattie may look as reproachfully as he likes, but it shall be a bumper. This old room has great traditions," he went on. "Curran, and Avonmore, and Parsons, and others scarce their inferiors, held their tournaments here."

"I have my doubts if they had a happier party round the board than we have to-night," said Haire.

"We only want Tom," said Dr Lendrick. "If we had poor Tom with us, it would be perfect."

"I think I know of another too," whispered Beattie in Lucy's ear. "Don't you?"

"What soft nonsense is Beattie saying, Lucy? it has made you blush," said the Chief. "It was all my fault, child, to have placed you in such bad company. I ought to have had you at my side here; but I wanted to look at you."

Leaving them thus, in happy pleasantry and enjoyment, let us turn for a moment to a very different scene—to a drawing-room in Merrion Square, where, at that same hour, Lady Lendrick and Mrs Sewell sat in close conference.

Mrs Sewell had related the whole story of the intended duel, and its finale, and was now explaining to her mother-in-law how impossible it would be for her to continue any longer to live under the Chief Baron's roof, if even—which she deemed unlikely—he would still desire it.

"He'll not turn you out, dear—of that I am quite



certain. I suspect I am the only one in the world he would treat in that fashion."

"I must not incur the risk."

"Dear me, have you not been running risks all your life, Lucy? Besides, what else have you open to you?"

"Join my husband, I suppose, whenever he sends for me—whenever he says he has a home to receive me."

"Dudley, I'm certain, will do his best," said Lady Lendrick, stiffly. "It is not very easy for a poor man to make these arrangements in a moment. But, with all his faults—and even his mother must own that he has many faults—yet I have never known him to bear malice."

"Certainly, madam, you are justified in your panegyric by his conduct on the present occasion; he has indeed displayed a most forgiving nature."

"You mean by not fighting Trafford, I suppose; but come now, Lucy, we are here alone, and can talk freely to each other; why should he fight him?"

"I will not follow you, Lady Lendrick, into that inquiry, nor give you any pretext for saying to me what your candour is evidently eager for. I will only repeat that the one thing I ever knew Colonel Sewell pardon was the outrage that no gentleman ever endures."

“He fought once before and was greatly condemned for it.”

“I suppose you know why, madam. I take it you have no need I should tell you the Agra story, with all its shameful details?”

“I don’t want to hear it; and if I did I would certainly hesitate to listen to it from one so deeply and painfully implicated as yourself.”

“Lady Lendrick, I will have no insinuations,” said she, haughtily. “When I came here it never occurred to me I was to be insulted.”

“Sit down again, Lucy, and don’t be angry with me,” said Lady Lendrick, pressing her back into her chair. “Your position is a very painful one—let us not make it worse by irritation; and to avoid all possibility of this, we will not look back at all, but only regard the future.”

“That may be more easy for *you* to do than for *me*.”

“Easy or not easy, Lucy, we have no alternative; we cannot change the past.”

“No, no, no! I know that—I know that,” cried she, bitterly, as her clasped hands dropped upon her knee.

“For that reason then, Lucy, forget it, ignore it. I have no need to tell you, my dear, that my own life has not been a very happy one, and if I venture to give advice, it is not without having had my share

of sorrows. You say you cannot go back to the Priory?"

"No; that is impossible."

"Unpleasant it would certainly be, and all the more so with these marriage festivities. The wedding, I suppose, will take place there?"

"I don't know; I have not heard;" and she tried to say this with an easy indifference.

"Trafford is disinherited, is he not? passed over in the entail, or something or other?"

"I don't know," she muttered out; but this time her confusion was not to be concealed.

"And will this old man they talk of—this Sir Brook somebody—make such a settlement on them as they can live on?"

"I know nothing about it at all."

"I wonder, Lucy dear, it never occurred to you to fascinate Dives yourself. What nice crumbs these would have been for Algy and Cary."

"You forget, madam, what a jealous husband I have!" and her eyes now darted a glance of almost wild malignity.

"Poor Dudley, how many faults we shall find in you if we come to discuss you!"

"Let us not discuss Colonel Sewell, madam; it will be better for all of us. A thought has just occurred; it was a thing I was quite forgetting. May

I send one of your servants with a note, for which he will wait the answer?"

"Certainly. You will find paper and pens there."

The note was barely a few lines, and addressed to George Kincaid, Esq., Ely Place. "You are to wait for the answer, Richard," said she, as she gave it to the servant.

"Do you expect he will let you have some money, Lucy?" asked Lady Lendrick, as she heard the name.

"No; it was about something else I wrote. I'm quite sure he would not have given me money if I asked for it."

"I wish *I* could, my dear Lucy; but I am miserably poor. Sir William, who was once the very soul of punctuality, has grown of late most neglectful. My last quarter is over-due two months. I must own all this has taken place since Dudley went to live at the Priory. I hear the expenses were something fabulous."

"There was a great deal of waste; a great deal of mock splendour and real discomfort."

"Is it true the wine bill was fifteen hundred pounds for the last year?"

"I think I heard it was something to that amount."

"And four hundred for cigars?"

"No; that included pipes, and amber mouth-

pieces, and meerschaums for presents — it rained presents !”

“ And did Sir William make no remark or remonstrance about this ?”

“ I believe not. I rather think I heard that he liked it. They persuaded him that all these indiscretions, like his new wigs, and his rouge, and his embroidered waistcoats, made him quite juvenile, and that nothing made a man so youthful as living beyond his income.”

“ It is easy enough to see how I was left in arrear ; and *you*, dear, were you forgotten all this while and left without a shilling ?”

“ Oh, no ; I could make as many debts as I pleased ; and I pleased to make them too, as they will discover one of these days. I never asked the price of anything, and therefore I enjoyed unlimited credit. If you remark, shopkeepers never dun the people who simply say, ‘ Send that home.’ How quickly you did your message, Richard ! Have you brought an answer ? Give it to me at once.”

She broke open the note with eager impatience, but it fell from her fingers as she read it, and she lay back almost fainting in her chair.

“ Are you ill, dear—are you faint ?” asked Lady Lendrick.

“ No ; I’m quite well again. I was only provoked —put out ;” and she stooped and took up the letter.

“I wrote to Mr Kincaid to give me certain papers which were in his hands, and which I know Colonel Sewell would wish to have in his own keeping, and he writes me this—

“DEAR MADAM,—I am sorry that it is not in my power to comply with the request of your note, inasmuch as the letters referred to were this morning handed over to Sir Brook Fossbrooke on his producing an order from Colonel Sewell to that intent.—I am, Madam, your most obedient servant,

“GEORGE KINCAID.”

“They were letters then?”

“Yes, Lady Lendrick, they were letters,” said she, dryly, as she arose and walked to the window to hide an agitation she could no longer subdue. After a few minutes she turned round and said, “You will let me stay here to-night?”

“Certainly, dear, of course I will.”

“But the children must be sent for—I can’t suffer them to remain there. Will you send for them?”

“Yes; I’ll tell Rose to take the carriage and bring them over here.”

“This is very kind of you—I am most grateful. We shall not be a burden beyond to-morrow.”

“What do you mean to do?”



“To join my husband, as I told you a while ago. Sir Brook Fossbrooke made that the condition of his assisting us.”

“What does he call assisting you?”

“Supporting us—feeding, housing, clothing us; we shall have nothing but what he will give us.”

“That is very generous indeed.”

“Yes; it is generous—more generous than you dream of; for we did not always treat him very well: but *that* also is a bygone, and I’ll not return to it.”

“Come down and have some dinner—it has been on the table this half-hour—it will be nigh cold by this.”

“Yes; I’m quite ready. I’d like to eat, too, if I could. What a great resource it is to men in their dark hours that they can drink and smoke! I think I could do both to-day if I thought they would help me to a little insensibility.”

## CHAPTER LXXII.

### PROJECTS.

TRAFFORD arrived from England on the evening after, and hastened off to Howth, where he found Sir Brook deeply engaged over the maps and plans of his new estate—for already the preliminaries had so far advanced that he could count upon it as his own.

“Look here, Trafford,” he cried, “and see what a noble extension we shall give to the old grounds of the Nest. The whole of this wood—eleven hundred and seventy acres—comes in, and this mountain down to that stream there is ours, as well as all these meadow-lands between the mountain and the Shannon—one of the most picturesque estates it will be in the kingdom. If I were to have my own way, I’d rebuild the house. With such foliage—fine old timber much of it—there’s nothing would look better than one of those Venetian villas, those half-castellated buildings one sees at the foot of the mountains of Conigliano—and they are grand, spacious places

to live in, with wide stairs, and great corridors, and terraces everywhere. I see, however, Lendrick's heart clings to his old cottage, and we must let him have his way."

"What is this here?" asked Trafford, drawing out from the mass of papers the plan of a very pretty but very diminutive cottage.

"That's to be mine. This window you see here will project over the river, and that little terrace will be carried on arches all along the river bank. I have designed everything, even to the furniture. You shall see a model cottage, Trafford—not one of those gingerbread things to be shown to strangers by ticket on Tuesdays or Saturdays, with a care-taker to be tipped, and a book to be scribbled full of vulgar praises of the proprietor, or doggrel ecstasies over some day of picnicking. But come and report yourself—where have you been, and what have you done, since I saw you?"

"I have a long budget for you. First of all read that," and he handed Sir Brook Sewell's letter.

"What! do you mean to say that you met him?"

"No; I rejoice to say I have escaped that mischance; but you shall hear everything, and in as few words as I can tell it. I have already told you of Mrs Sewell's visit here, and I have not a word to add to that recital. I simply would say, that I pledge

my honour to the strict truth of everything I have told you. You may imagine, then, with what surprise I was awoke from my sleep to read that note. My first impression was to write him a full and explicit denial of what he laid to my charge ; but as I read the letter over a third and even a fourth time, I thought I saw that he had written it on some sort of compulsion—that, in fact, he had been instigated to the step, which was one he but partly concurred in. I do not like to say more on this head.”

“ You need not. Go on.”

“ I then deemed that the best thing to do was to let him have his shot, after which my explanation would come more forcibly ; and as I had determined not to fire at him, he would be forced to see that he could not persist in his quarrel.”

“ There you mistook your man, sir,” cried Sir Brook, fiercely.

“ I don't think so ; but you shall hear. We must have crossed over in the same packet, but we never met. Stanhope, who went with me, thought he saw him on the landing-slip at Holyhead, but was not quite sure. At all events, we reached the inn at the Head, and had just sat down to luncheon, when the waiter brought in this note, asking which of us was Major Trafford. Here it is:—‘ Pray accept my excuses for having given you a rough sea passage ; but, on second thoughts, I have satisfied myself that

there is no valid reason why I should try to blow your brains out, "et pour si peu de chose." As I can say without any vanity that I am a better pistol-shot than you, I have the less hesitation in taking a step which, as a man of honour and courage, you will certainly not misconstrue. With this assurance, and the not less strong conviction that my conduct will be safely treated in any representation you make of this affair, I am your humble and faithful servant,

‘DUDLEY SEWELL.’

“I don’t think I was ever so grateful to any man in the world as I felt to him on reading his note, since, let the event take what turn it might, it rendered my position with the Lendricks a most perilous one. I made Stanhope drink his health, which I own he did with a very bad grace, telling me at the same time what good luck it was for me that *he* had been my friend on the occasion, for that any man but himself would have thought me a regular poltroon. I was too happy to care for his sarcasms, such a load had been removed from my heart, and such terrible forebodings too.

“I started almost immediately for Holt, and got there by midnight. All were in bed, and my arrival was only known when I came down to breakfast. My welcome was all I could wish for. My father was looking well, and in great spirits. The new Ministry have offered him his choice of a Lordship of

the Admiralty, or something else—I forget what; and just because he has a fine independent fortune, and loves his ease, he is more than inclined to take office, one of his chief reasons being ‘how useful he could be to me.’ I must own to you frankly that the prospect of all these new honours to the family rather frightened than flattered me, for I thought I saw in them the seeds of more strenuous opposition to my marriage; but I was greatly relieved when my mother—who you may remember had been all my difficulty hitherto—privately assured me that she had brought my father round to her opinion, and that he was quite satisfied—I am afraid her word was reconciled, but no matter—reconciled to the match. I could see that you must have been frightening her terribly by some menaced exposure of the family pretensions, for she said over and over again, ‘Why is Sir Brook so angry with me? can’t you manage to put him in better temper with us. I have scarcely had courage to open his letters of late. I never got such lectures in my life.’ And what a horrid memory you seem to have! She says she’d be afraid to see you. At all events you have done me good service. They agree to everything; and we are to go on a visit to Holt—such at least I believe to be the object of the letter which my mother has written to Lucy.”

“All this is excellent news, and we’ll announce it to-night at the Priory. As for the Sewell episode,



we must not speak of it. The old Judge has at last found out the character of the man to whose confidence he committed himself, but his pride will prevent his ever mentioning his name."

"Is there any rumour afloat as to the Chief's advancement to the Peerage?"

"None—so far as I have heard."

"I'll tell you why I ask. There is an old maiden aunt of mine, a sister of my father, who told me, in strictest confidence, that my father had brought back from town the news that Baron Lendrick was to be created a Peer; that it was somewhat of a party move to enable the present people to prosecute the charge against the late Government of injustice towards the Judge, as well as of a very shameful intrigue to obtain his retirement. Now, if the story were true, or if my mother believed it to be true, it would perfectly account for her satisfaction with the marriage, and for my father's 'resignation!'"

"I had hoped her consent was given on better grounds, but it may be as you say. Since I have turned miner, Trafford," added he, laughing, "I am always well content if I discover a grain of silver in a bushel of dross, and let us take the world in the same patient way."

"When do you intend to go to the Priory?"

"I thought of going this evening. I meant to devote the morning to these maps and drawings, so

that I might master all the details before I should show them to my friends at night."

"Couldn't that be deferred? I mean, is there anything against your going over at once? I'll own to you I am very uneasy lest some incorrect version of this affair with Sewell should get abroad. Even without any malevolence there is plenty of mischief done by mere blundering, and I would rather anticipate than follow such disclosures."

"I perceive," said Sir Brook, musingly, as with longing eyes he looked over the coloured plans and charts which strewed the table, and had for him all the charm of a romance.

"Then," resumed Trafford, "Lucy should have my mother's letter. It might be that she ought to reply to it at once."

"Yes, I perceive," mused Sir Brook again.

"I'm sure, besides, it would be very politic in you to keep up the good relations you have so cleverly established with the Chief; he holds so much to every show of attention, and is so flattered by every mark of polite consideration for him."

"And for all these good reasons," said Sir Brook, slowly, "you would say, we should set out at once. Arriving there, let us say, for luncheon, and being begged to stay and dine—which we certainly should—we might remain till, not impossibly, midnight."

Perhaps it was the pleasure of such a prospect sent

the blood to Trafford's face, for he blushed very deeply as he said, "I don't think, sir, I have much fault to find with your arrangement."

"And yet the real reason for the plan remains unstated," said Fossbrooke, looking him steadfastly in the face, "so true is what the Spanish proverb says, 'Love has more perfidies than war.' Why not frankly say you are impatient to see your sweetheart, sir? I would to heaven the case were my own, and I'd not be afraid nor ashamed to avow it; but I yield to the plea, and let us be off there at once."

## CHAPTER LXXIII.

### THE END OF ALL.

THE following paragraph appeared in the Irish, and was speedily copied into some of the English papers: "An intrigue, which involves the character of more than one individual of rank, and whose object was to compel the Chief Baron of her Majesty's Exchequer in Ireland to resign his seat on the Bench, has at length been discovered, and, it is said, will soon be made matter of Parliamentary explanation. We hope, for the reputation of our public men, that the details which have reached us of the transaction may not be substantiated; but the matter is one which demands, and must have, the fullest and most searching inquiry."

"So, sir," said the old Chief to Haire, who had read this passage to him aloud as they sat at breakfast, "they would make political capital of my case, and, without any thought for me or for my feelings, convert the conduct displayed towards me into a

means of attacking a fallen party. What says Sir Brook Fossbrooke to this? or how would he act were he in my place?"

"Just as you mean to act now," said Fossbrooke, promptly.

"And how may that be, sir?"

"By refusing all assistance to such party warfare; at least, my Lord Chief Baron, it is thus that I read your character."

"You do me justice, sir; and it is my misfortune that I have not earlier had the inestimable benefit of your friendship. I trust," added he, haughtily, "I have too much pride to be made the mere tool of a party squabble; and, fortunately, I have the means to show this. Here, sir, is a letter I have just received from the Prime Minister. Read it—read it aloud, Haire, and my son will like to hear its contents also."

"DOWNING STREET, *Tuesday evening.*

"MY DEAR LORD CHIEF BARON,—It is with much pleasure I have to communicate to you, that my colleagues unanimously agree with me in the propriety of submitting your name to the Queen for the Peerage. Your long and distinguished services, and your great abilities, will confer honour on any station; and your high character will give additional lustre to those qualities which have marked you out for her Majesty's choice. I am both proud and delighted,

my lord, that it has fallen to my lot to be the bearer of these tidings to you ; and with every assurance of my great respect and esteem, I am, most sincerely yours,

“ ELLERTON.”

“ At last,” cried Haire—“ at last ! But I always knew that it would come.”

“ And what answer have you returned ?” cried Lendrick, eagerly.

“ Such an answer as will gladden your heart, Tom. I have declined the proffered distinction.”

“ Declined it ! Great God ! and why ?” cried Haire.

“ Because I have passed that period in which I could accommodate myself to a new station, and show the world that I was not inferior to my acquired dignity. This for my first reason ; and for my second, I have a son whose humility would only be afflicted if such greatness were forced upon him. Ay, Tom, I have thought of all it would cost you, my poor fellow, and I have spared you.”

“ I thank you with my whole heart,” cried Lendrick, and he pressed the old man’s hand to his lips.

“ And what says Lucy ?” said the Judge. “ Are you shocked at this epidemic of humility amongst us, child ? Or does your woman’s heart rebel against all our craven fears about a higher station ? ”



“I am content, sir; and I don't think Tom, the miner, will fret that he wears a leather cap instead of a coronet.”

“I have no patience with any of you,” muttered Haire. “The world will never believe you have refused such a splendid offer. The correspondence will not get abroad.”

“I trust it will not, sir,” said the Chief. “What I have done I have done with regard to myself and my own circumstances, neither meaning to be an example nor a warning. The world has no more concern with the matter than with what we shall have for dinner to-day.”

“And yet,” said Sir Brook, with a dry ripple at the angle of his mouth, “I think it is a case where one might forgive the indiscreet friend”—here he glanced at Haire—“who incautiously gave the details to a newspaper.”

“Indiscreet or not, I'll do it,” said Haire, resolutely.

“What, sir,” cried the Chief, with mock sternness of eye and manner—“what, sir, if I even forbade you?”

“Ay, even so. If you told me you'd shut your door against me, and never see me here again, I'd do it.”

“Look at that man, Sir Brook,” said the Judge, with well-feigned indignation; “he was my school-fellow, my chum in college, my colleague at the Bar,

and my friend everywhere, and see how he turns on me in my hour of adversity."

"If there be adversity it is of your own making," said Haire. "It is that you won't accept the prize when you have won it."

"I see it all now," cried the Chief, laughing, "and stupid enough of me not to see it before. Haire has been a bully all his life; he is the very terror of the Hall; he has bullied sergeants and silk gowns, judges and masters in equity, and his heart is set upon bullying a peer of the realm. Now, if I will not become a lord, he loses this chance; he stands to win or lose on *me*. Out with it, Haire; make a clean confession, and own, have I not hit the blot?"

"Well," said Haire, with a sigh, "I have been called sly, sarcastic, witty, and what not, but I never thought to hear that I was a bully, or could be a terror to any one."

The comic earnestness of this speech threw them all into a roar of laughing, in which even Haire himself joined at last.

"Where is Lucy?" cried the old Judge. "I want *her* to testify how this man has tyrannised over me."

"Lucy has gone into the garden to read a letter Trafford brought her." Sir Brook did not add that Trafford had gone with her to assist in the interpretation.

“ I have told Lord Ellerton,” said the Chief, referring once more to the Minister’s letter, “ that I will not lend myself in any way to the attack on the late Government. The intrigue which they planned towards me could not have ever succeeded if they had not found a traitor in the garrison ; but of him I will speak no more. The old Greek adage was, ‘ Call no man happy till he dies.’ I would say, he is nearer happiness when he has refused some object that has been the goal of all his life, than he is ever like to be under other circumstances.”

Tom looked at his father with wistful eyes, as though he owed him gratitude for the speech.

“ When it is the second horse claims the cup, Haire,” cried the old Judge, with a burst of his instinctive vanity, “ it is because the first is disqualified by previous victories. And now let us talk of those whose happiness can be promoted without the intrigues of a Cabinet or a debate in the House. Sir Brook tells me that Lady Trafford has made her submission. She is at last willing to see that in an alliance with us there is no need to call condescension to her aid.”

“ Trafford’s account is most satisfactory,” said Fossbrooke, “ and I trust the letter of which he was the bearer from his mother will amply corroborate all he says.”

“ I like the young man,” said the Judge, with that

sort of authoritative tone that seems to say, The cause is decided—the verdict is given.

“There’s always good stuff in a fellow when he is not afraid of poverty,” said Fossbrooke. “There are scores of men will rough it for a sporting tour on the Prairies or a three months’ lion-shooting on the Gaboon; but let me see the fellow bred to affluence, and accustomed to luxury, who will relinquish both and address himself to the hard work of life rather than give up the affection of a girl he loves. That’s the man for me.”

“I have great trust in him,” said Lendrick, thoughtfully.

“All the Bench has pronounced but one,” cried the Chief. “What says our brother Haire?”

“I’m no great judge of men. I’m no great judge of anything,” muttered Haire; “but I don’t think one need be a sphinx to read that he is a right good fellow, and worthy of the dearest girl in Christendom.”

“Well summed up, sir; and now call in the prisoner.”

Fossbrooke slipped from the room, but was speedily back again. “His sentence has been already pronounced outside, my lord, and he only begs for a speedy execution.”

“It is always more merciful,” said the Chief, with mock solemnity; “but could we not have Tom over here? I want to have you all around me.”

“ I’ll telegraph to him to come,” said Fossbrooke. “ I was thinking of it all the morning.”

About three weeks after this, Chief Baron Lendrick opened the Commission at Limerick, and received from the grand jury of the county a most complimentary address on his reappearance upon the Bench, to which he made a suitable and dignified reply. Even the newspapers which had so often censured the tenacity with which he held to office, and inveighed against the spectacle of an old and feeble man in the discharge of laborious and severe duties, were now obliged to own that his speech was vigorous and eloquent ; and though allusion had been faintly made in the address to the high honour to which the Crown had desired to advance him and the splendid reward which was placed within his reach, yet, with a marked delicacy, had he forborne from any reference to this passage other than his thankfulness at being so far restored to health that he could come back again to those functions, the discharge of which formed the pride and the happiness of his life.

“ Never,” said the journal which was once his most bitter opponent, “ has the Chief Baron exhibited his unquestionable powers of thought and expression more favourably than on this occasion. There were no artifices of rhetoric, no tricks of phrase, none of those conceits by which so often he used to mar the

wisdom of his very finest displays; he was natural for once, and they who listened to him might well have regretted that it was not in this mood he had always spoken. *Si sic omnia*—and the press had never registered his defects nor railed at his vanities.

“The celebrated Sir Brook Fossbrooke, so notorious in the palmy days of the Regency, sat on the bench beside his lordship, and received a very flattering share of the cheers which greeted the party as they drove away to Killaloe, to be present at the wedding of Miss Lendrick, which takes place to-morrow.”

Much-valued reader, has it ever occurred to you, towards the close of a long, possibly not very interesting, discourse, to experience a sort of irreverent impatience when the preacher, appearing to take what rowing men call “second wind,” starts off afresh, and seems to threaten you with fully the equal of what he has already given? At such a moment it is far from unlikely that all the best teachings of that sermon are not producing upon you their full effect of edification, and that, even as you sat, you meditated ignoble thoughts of stealing away.

I am far from desiring to expose either you or myself to this painful position. I want to part good friends with you; and if there may have been anything in my discourse worth carrying away, I would



not willingly associate it with weariness at the last. And yet I am very loath to say good-bye. Authors are, *par excellence*, button-holders, and they cannot relinquish their grasp on the victim whose lapel they have caught. Now I would like to tell you of that wedding at the Swan's Nest. You'd read it if in the 'Morning Post,' but I'm afraid you'd skip it from *me*. I'd like to recount the events of that breakfast, the present Sir Brook made the bride, and the charming little speech with which the Chief proposed her health. I'd like to describe to you the uproar and joyous confusion when Tom, whose costume bore little trace of a wedding garment, fought his way through the servants into the breakfast-room.

And I'd like to grow moral and descriptive, and a bit pathetic perhaps, over the parting between Lucy and her father; and, last of all, I'd like to add a few words about him who gives his name to this story, and tell how he set off once more on his wanderings, no one well knowing whither bent, but how, on reaching Boulogne, he saw from the steamer's deck, as he landed, the portly figure of Lady Lendrick walking beside her beautiful daughter-in-law, Sewell bringing up the rear, with a little child holding his hand on either side—a sweet picture, combining, to Boulogne appreciation, the united charm of fashion, beauty, and domestic felicity; and finally, how, steal-

ing by back streets to the hotel where these people stopped, he deposited to their address a somewhat weighty packet, which made them all very happy, or at least very merry, that evening as they opened it, and induced Sewell to order a bottle of Cliquot, if not, as he said, "to drink the old buck's health," at least to wish him many returns of the same good dispositions of that morning.

If, however, you are disposed to accept the will for the deed, I need say no more. They who have deserved some share of happiness in this tale are likely to have it, They who have little merited will have to meet a world which, neither over cruel nor over generous, has a rough justice that generally gives people their deserts.

THE END.







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