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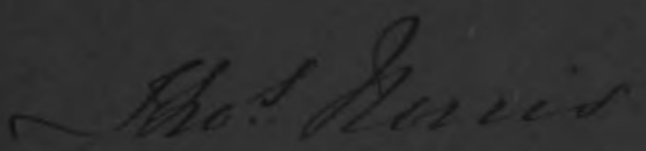

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THE

HOUSE BY THE CHURCH-YARD.

BY

J. SHERIDAN LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF 'UNCLE SILAS,' 'GUY DEVERELL,' ETC.

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1866.

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TO

PERCY FITZ-GERALD, ESQ.,

IN MEMORY

OF YEARS OF PLEASANT INTERCOURSE

AND FRIENDSHIP,

AND IN WARM ADMIRATION OF HIS WRITINGS,

This Tale is Inscribed

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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THE HOUSE BY THE CHURCH-YARD.

A PROLOGUE—BEING A DISH OF VILLAGE CHAT.

We are going to talk, if you please, in the ensuing chapters, of what was going on in Chapelizod about a hundred years ago. A hundred years, to be sure, is a good while; but though fashions have changed, some old phrases dropped out, and new ones come in; and snuff and hair-powder, and sacques and solitaires quite passed away—yet men and women were men and women, all the same—as elderly fellows, like your humble servant, who have seen and talked with rearward stragglers of that generation—now all and long marched off—can testify, if they will.

In those days Chapelizod was about the gayest and prettiest of the outpost villages in which old Dublin took a complacent pride. The poplars which stood, in military rows, here and there, just showed a glimpse of formality among the orchards and old timber that lined the banks of the river and the valley of the Liffey, with a lively sort of richness. The broad old street looked hospitable and merry, with steep roofs and many coloured hall-doors. The jolly old inn, just beyond the turnpike at the sweep of the road, leading over the buttressed bridge by the mill, was first to welcome the excursionist from Dublin, under the sign of the Phœnix. There, in the grand wainscoted back-parlour, with "the great and good King William," in his robe, garter, periwig, and sceptre presiding in the panel over the chimney-piece, and confronting the large projecting window, through which the river, and the daffodils, and the summer foliage looked so bright and quiet, the Aldermen of Skinner's-alley—a club of the "true blue" dye, as old as the Jacobite wars of the previous century—the corporation of Shoemakers, or of Tailors, or the Freemasons, or the musical clubs, loved to dine at the stately hour of five, and deliver their jokes, sentiments, songs, and wisdom, on a pleasant summer's

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evening. Alas! the inn is as clean gone as the guests—a dream of the shadow of smoke.

Lately, too, came down the old "Salmon House"—so called from the blazonry of that noble fish upon its painted sign-board—at the other end of the town, that, with a couple more, wheeled out at right angles from the line of the broad street, and directly confronting the passenger from Dublin, gave to it something of the character of a square, and just left room for the high road and Martin's-row to slip between its flank and the orchard that overtopped the river wall. Well! it is gone. I blame nobody. I suppose it was quite rotten, and that the rats would soon have thrown up their lease of it; and that it was taken down, in short, chiefly, as one of the players said of 'Old Drury,' to prevent the inconvenience of its coming down of itself. Still a peevish but harmless old fellow—who hates change, and would wish things to stay as they were just a little, till his own great change comes; who haunts the places where his childhood was passed, and reverences the homeliest relics of by-gone generations—may be allowed to grumble a little at the impertinences of improving proprietors with a taste for accurate parallelograms and pale new brick.

Then there was the village church, with its tower dark and rustling from base to summit, with thick piled, bowering ivy. The royal arms cut in bold relief in the broad stone over the porch—where, pray, is that stone now, the memento of its old viceregal dignity? Where is the elevated pew, where many a lord lieutenant, in point, and gold-lace, and thunder-cloud periwig, sate in awful isolation, and listened to orthodox and loyal sermons, and took French rappee; whence too, he stepped forth—between the files of the guard of honour of the Royal Irish Artillery from the barrack over the way, in their courtly uniform, white, scarlet, and blue, cocked-hats, and cues, and ruffles, presenting arms—into his emblazoned coach-and-six, with hanging footmen, as wonderful as Cinderella's, and out-riders out-blazing the liveries of the troops, and rolling grandly away in sunshine and dust.

The 'Ecclesiastical Commissioners' have done their office here. The tower, indeed, remains, with half its antique growth of ivy gone; but the body of the church is new, and I, and perhaps an elderly fellow or two more, miss the old-fashioned square pews, distributed by a traditional tenure among the families and dignitaries of the town and vicinage, (who are they now?) and sigh for the queer, old, clumsy reading-desk and pulpit, grown dearer from the long and hopeless separation; and wonder where the tables of the Ten Commandments, in long gold letters of Queen Anne's date, upon a vivid blue ground, arched above, and flanking the communion-table, with its tall thin

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rails, and fifty other things that appeared to me in my non-age, as stable as the earth, and as sacred as the heavens, are gone to.

As for the barrack of the Royal Irish Artillery, the great gate leading into the parade ground, by the river side, and all that, I believe the earth, or rather that grim giant factory, which is now the grand feature and centre of Chapelizod, throbbing all over with steam, and whizzing with wheels, and vomiting pitchy smoke, has swallowed them up.

A line of houses fronting this—old familiar faces—still look blank and regretfully forth, through their glassy eyes, upon the changed scene. How different the company they kept some ninety or a hundred years ago?

Where is the mill, too, standing fast by the bridge, the manorial appendage of the town, which I loved in my boyhood for its gaunt and crazy aspect and dim interior, whence the clapper kept time mysteriously to the drone of the mill-sluice? I think it is gone. Surely *that* confounded thing can't be my venerable old friend in masquerade!

But, I can't expect you, my reader—polite and patient as you manifestly are—to potter about with me, all the summer day, through this melancholy and mangled old town, with a canopy of factory soot between your head and the pleasant sky. One glance, however, before you go, you will vouchsafe at the village tree—that stalworth elm. It has not grown an inch these hundred years. It does not look a day older than it did fifty years ago, *I* can tell you. There he stands the same; and yet a stranger in the place of his birth, in a new order of things, joyless, busy, transformed Chapelizod, listening, as it seems to me, always to the unchanged song and prattle of the river, with his reveries and affections far away among by-gone times and a buried race. Thou hast a story, too, to tell, thou slighted and solitary sage, if only the winds would steal it musically forth, like the secret of Midas from the moaning reeds.

The palmy days of Chapelizod were just about a hundred years ago, and those days—though I am jealous of their pleasant and kindly fame, and specially for the preservation of the few memorials they have left behind, were yet, I may say, in your ear, with all their colour and adventure—perhaps, on the whole, more pleasant to read about, and dream of, than they were to live in. Still their violence, follies, and hospitalities, softened by distance, and illuminated with a sort of barbaric splendour, have long presented to my fancy the glowing and ever-shifting combinations upon which, as on the red embers, in a winter's gloaming, I love to gaze, propping my white head upon my

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hand, in a lazy luxury of reverie, from my own arm-chair, while they drop, ever and anon, into new shapes, and silently tell their 'winter's tales.'

When your humble servant, Charles de Cresseron, the compiler of this narrative, was a boy some fourteen years old—how long ago precisely that was, is nothing to the purpose, 'tis enough to say he remembers what he then saw and heard a good deal better than what happened a week ago—it came to pass that he was spending a pleasant week of his holidays with his benign uncle and godfather, the curate of Chapelizod. On the second day of his, or rather *my* sojourn (I take leave to return to the first person), there was a notable funeral of an old lady. Her name was Darby, and her journey to her last home was very considerable, being made in a hearse, by easy stages, from her house of Lisnabane, in the county of Sligo, to the churchyard of Chapelizod. There was a great flat stone over that small parcel of the rector's freehold, which the family held by a tenure, not of lives, but of deaths, renewable for ever. So that my uncle, who was a man of an anxious temperament, had little trouble in satisfying himself of the meerings and identity of this narrow tenement, to which Lemuel Mattocks, the sexton, led him as straight and confidently as he could have done to the communion-table.

My uncle, therefore, fiated the sexton's presentment, and the work commenced forthwith. I don't know whether all boys have the same liking for horrors which I am conscious of having possessed—I only know that I liked the churchyard, and deciphering tombstones, and watching the labours of the sexton, and hearing the old-world village talk that often got up over the relics.

When this particular grave was pretty nearly finished—it lay from east to west—a lot of earth fell out at the northern side, where an old coffin had lain, and good store of brown dust and grimy bones, and the yellow skull itself came tumbling about the sexton's feet. These fossils, after his wont, he lifted decently with the point of his shovel, and pitched into a little nook beside the great mound of mould at top.

'Be the powers o' war! here's a batthered head-piece for yez,' said young Tim Moran, who had picked up the cranium, and was eyeing it curiously, turning it round, the while.

'Show it here, Tim;' 'let *me* look,' cried two or three neighbours, getting round as quickly as they could.

'Oh! murdher;' said one.

'Oh! be the powers o' Moll Kelly!' cried another.

'Oh! bloody wars!' exclaimed a third.

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'That poor fellow got no chance for his life, at all, at all!' said Tim.

'That was a bullet,' said one of them, putting his finger into a clean circular aperture as large as a half-penny.

'An' look at them two cracks. Och, murther!'

'There's only one. Oh, I see you're right, *two*, begorra!'

'Aich o' them a wipe iv a poker.'

Mattocks had climbed nimbly to the upper level, and taking the skull in his fist, turned it about this way and that, curiously. But though he was no chicken, his memory did not go far enough back to throw any light upon the matter.

'Could it be the Mattross that was shot in the year '90, as I often heerd, for sthrikin' his captain?' suggested a by-stander.

'Oh! that poor fellow's buried round by the north side of the church,' said Mattocks, still eyeing the skull. 'It could not be Counsellor Gallagher, that was kilt in the jewel with Colonel Ruck—he was hot in the head—bud it could not be—augh! not at all.'

'Why not, Misther Mattocks?'

'No, nor the Mattross neither. This, ye see, is a dhry bit o' the yard here; there's ould Darby's coffin, at the bottom, down there, sound enough to stand on, as you see, wid a plank; an' he was buried in the year '93. Why, look at the coffin this skull belongs to, 'tid go into powdher between your fingers; 'tis nothin' but tindher.'

'I believe you're right, Mr. Mattocks.'

'Phiat! to be sure. 'Tis longer undher ground by thirty years, good, or more maybe.'

Just then the slim figure of my tall mild uncle, the curate, appeared, and his long thin legs, in black worsted stockings and knee-breeches, stepped reverently and lightly among the graves. The men raised their hats, and Mattocks jumped lightly into the grave again, while my uncle returned their salute with the sad sort of smile, a regretful kindness, which he never exceeded, in these solemn precincts.

It was his custom to care very tenderly for the bones turned up by the sexton, and to wait with an awful solicitude until, after the reading of the funeral service, he saw them gently replaced, as nearly as might be, in their old bed; and discouraging all idle curiosity or levity respecting them, with a solemn rebuke, which all respected. Therefore it was, that so soon as he appeared the skull was, in Hibernian phrase, 'dropt like a hot potato,' and the grave-digger betook himself to his spade so nimbly.

'Oh! Uncle Charles,' I said, taking his hand, and leading him towards the foot of the grave; 'such a wonderful skull has come up!

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It is shot through with a bullet, and cracked with a poker, besides.'

'"Tis thrue for him, your Raverence; he was murthered twiste over, whoever he was—rest his sowl;' and the sexton, who had nearly completed his work, got out of the grave again, with a demure activity, and raising the brown relic with great reverence, out of regard for my good uncle, he turned it about slowly before the eyes of the curate, who scrutinized it, from a little distance, with a sort of melancholy horror.

'Yes, Lemuel,' said my uncle, still holding my hand, ''twas undoubtedly a murder; ay, indeed! He sustained two heavy blows, beside that gunshot through the head.'

'"Twasn't a gunshot, sir; why the hole 'id take in a grape-shot,' said an old fellow, just from behind my uncle, in a pensioner's cocked-hat, leggings, and long old-world red frock-coat, speaking with a harsh reedy voice, and a grim sort of reserved smile.

I moved a little aside, with a sort of thrill, to give him freer access to my uncle, in the hope that he might, perhaps, throw a light upon the history of this remarkable memorial. The old fellow had a rat-like grey eye—the other was hid under a black patch—and there was a deep red scar across his forehead, slanting from the patch that covered the extinguished orb. His face was purplish, the tinge deepening towards the lumpish top of his nose, on the side of which stood a big wart, and he carried a great walking-cane over his shoulder, and bore, as it seemed to me, an intimidating, but caricatured resemblance to an old portrait of Oliver Cromwell in my Whig grandfather's parlour.

'You don't think it a bullet wound, sir?' said my uncle, mildly, and touching his hat—for coming of a military stock himself, he always treated an old soldier with uncommon respect.

'Why, please your Raverence,' replied the man, reciprocrating his courtesy; 'I *know* it's not.'

'And what *is* it, then, my good man?' interrogated the sexton, as one in authority, and standing on his own dunghill.

'The trepan,' said the fogey, in the tone in which he'd have cried 'attention' to a raw recruit, without turning his head, and with a scornful momentary skew-glance from his grey eye.

'And do you know whose skull that was, sir?' asked the curate.

'Ay do I, sir, *well*,' with the same queer smile, he answered. 'Come, now, you're a grave-digger, my fine fellow,' he continued, accosting the sexton cynically; 'how long do you suppose that skull's been under ground?'

'Long enough; but not so long, *my* fine fellow, as your's has been above ground.'

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'Well, you're right there, for *I* seen him buried,' and he took the skull from the sexton's hands; 'and I'll tell you more, there was some dry eyes, too, at his funeral—ha, ha, ha!'

'You were a resident in the town, then?' said my uncle, who did not like the turn his recollections were taking.

'Ay, sir, that I was,' he replied; 'see that broken tooth, there—I forgot 'twas there—and the minute I seen it, I remembered it like this morning—I could swear to it—when he laughed; ay, and that sharp corner to it—hang him,' and he twirled the loose tooth, the last but two of all its fellows, from its socket, and chucked it into the grave.

'And were you—you weren't in the army, *then?*' inquired the curate, who could not understand the sort of scoffing dislike he seemed to bear it.

'Be my faith I was *so*, sir—the Royal Irish Artillery;' replied he, promptly.

'And in what capacity?' pursued his Reverence.

'Drummer,' answered the mulberry-faced veteran.

'Ho!—Drummer? That's a good time ago, I dare say,' said my uncle, looking on him reflectively.

'Well, so it is, not far off fifty years,' answered he. 'He was a hard-headed codger, he was; but you see the sprig of shillelagh was too hard for him—ha, ha, ha!' and he gave the skull a smart knock with his walking-cane, as he grinned at it and wagged his head.

'Gently, gently, my good man,' said the curate, placing his hand hastily upon his arm, for the knock was harder than was needed for the purpose of demonstration.

'You see, sir, at that time, our Colonel-in-Chief was my Lord Blackwater,' continued the old soldier, 'not that we often seen him, for he lived in France mostly; the Colonel-en-Second was General Chattesworth, and Colonel Stafford was Lieutenant-Colonel, and under him Major O'Neill; Captains, four—Cluffe, Devereux, Barton, and Burgh; First Lieutenants—Puddock, Delany, Sackville, and Armstrong; Second Lieutenants—Salt, Barber, Lillyman, and Pringle; Lieutenant Fireworkers—O'Flaherty——'

'I beg your pardon,' interposed my uncle, '*Fireworkers*, did you say?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And what, pray, does a Lieutenant *Fireworker* mean?'

'Why, Law bless you, sir! a Fireworker! 'twas his business to see that the men loaded, sarved, laid, and fired the gun all right. But that doesn't signify; you see this old skull, sir: well, 'twas a nine

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days' wonder, and the queerest business you ever heerd tell of. Why, sir, the women was frightened out of their senses, an' the men puzzled out o' their wits—they wor—ha, ha, ha! an' I can tell you all about it—a mighty black and bloody business it was——'

'I—I beg your pardon, sir; but I think—yes—the funeral has arrived; and for the present, I must bid you good morning.'

And so my uncle hurried to the church, where he assumed his gown, and the solemn rite proceeded.

When all was over, my uncle, after his wont, waited until he had seen the disturbed remains re-deposited decently in their place; and then, having disrobed, I saw him look with some interest about the church-yard, and I knew 'twas in quest of the old soldier.

'I saw him go away during the funeral,' I said.

'Ay, the old pensioner,' said my uncle, peering about in quest of him.

And we walked through the town, and over the bridge, and we saw nothing of his cocked-hat and red single-breasted frock, and returned rather disappointed to tea.

I ran into the back room which commanded the church-yard in the hope of seeing the old fellow once more, with his cane shouldered, grinning among the tombstones in the evening sun. But there was no sign of him, or indeed of any one else there. So I returned, just as my uncle, having made the tea, shut down the lid of his silver tea-pot with a little smack; and with a kind but absent smile upon me, he took his book, sat down and crossed one of his thin legs over the other, and waited pleasantly until the delightful infusion should be ready for our lips, reading his old volume, and with his disengaged hand gently stroking his long shin-bone.

In the meantime, I, who thirsted more for that tale of terror which the old soldier had all but begun, of which in that strangely battered skull I had only an hour ago seen face to face so grizzly a memento, and of which in all human probability I never was to hear more, looked out dejectedly from the window, when, whom should I behold marching up the street, at slow time, towards the Salmon House, but the identical old soldier, cocked-hat, copper nose, great red single-breasted coat with its prodigious wide button-holes, leggings, cane, and all, just under the village tree.

'Here he is, O! Uncle Charles, here he comes,' I cried.

'Eh, the soldier, is he?' said my uncle, tripping in the carpet in his eagerness, and all but breaking the window.

'So it is, indeed; run down, my boy, and beg him to come up.'

But by the time I had reached the street, which you may be sure

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was not very long, I found my uncle had got the window up and was himself inviting the old boy, who having brought his left shoulder forward, thanked the curate, saluting soldier-fashion, with his hand to his hat, palm foremost. I've observed, indeed, that those grim old campaigners who have seen the world, make it a principle to accept anything in the shape of a treat. If it's bad, why, it costs them nothing; and if good, so much the better.

So up he marched, and into the room with soldierly self-possession, and being offered tea, preferred punch, and the ingredients were soon on the little round table by the fire, which, the evening being sharp, was pleasant; and the old fellow being seated, he brewed his nectar, to his heart's content; and as we sipped our tea in pleased attention, he, after his own fashion, commenced the story, to which I listened with an interest which I confess has never subsided.

Many years after, as will sometimes happen, a flood of light was unexpectedly poured over the details of his narrative; on my coming into possession of the diary, curiously minute, and the voluminous correspondence of Rebecca, sister to General Chattesworth, with whose family I had the honour to be connected. And this journal, to me, with my queer cat-like affection for this old village, a perfect treasure —and the interminable *bundles* of letters, sorted and arranged so neatly, with little abstracts of their contents in red ink, in her own firm thin hand upon the covers, from all and to all manner of persons —for the industrious lady made fair copies of all the letters she wrote —formed for many years my occasional, and always pleasant winter night's reading.

I wish I could infuse their spirit into what I am going to tell, and above all that I could inspire my readers with ever so little of the peculiar interest with which the old town has always been tinted and saddened to my eye. My boyish imagination, perhaps, kindled all the more at the story, by reason of it being a good deal connected with the identical old house in which we three—my dear uncle, my idle self, and the queer old soldier—were then sitting. But wishes are as vain as regrets; so I'll just do my best, bespeaking your attention, and submissively abiding your judgment.

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CHAPTER I.

THE RECTOR'S NIGHT-WALK TO HIS CHURCH.

A.D. 1767—in the beginning of the month of May—I mention it because, as I said, I write from memoranda, an awfully dark night came down on Chapelizod and all the country round.

I believe there was no moon, and the stars had been quite put out under the wet 'blanket of the night,' which impenetrable muffler overspread the sky with a funereal darkness.

There was a little of that sheet-lightning early in the evening, which betokens sultry weather. The clouds, column after column, came up sullenly over the Dublin mountains, rolling themselves from one horizon to the other into one black dome of vapour, their slow but steady motion contrasting with the awful stillness of the air. There was a weight in the atmosphere, and a sort of undefined menace brooding over the little town, as if unseen crime or danger—some mystery of iniquity—was stealing into the heart of it, and the disapproving heavens scowled a melancholy warning.

That morning old Sally, the rector's housekeeper, was disquieted. She had dreamed of making the great four-post, state bed, with the dark green damask curtains—a dream that betokened some coming trouble—it might, to be sure, be ever so small—(it had once come with no worse result than Dr. Walsingham's dropping his purse, containing something under a guinea in silver, over the side of the ferry boat)—but again it might be tremendous. The omen hung over them doubtful.

A large square letter, with a great round seal, as big as a crown piece, addressed to the Rev. Hugh Walsingham, Doctor of Divinity, at his house, by the bridge, in Chapelizod, had reached him in the morning, and plainly troubled him. He kept the messenger a good hour awaiting his answer; and, just at two o'clock, the same messenger returned with a second letter—but this time a note sufficed for reply. ''Twill seem ungracious,' said the doctor, knitting his brows over his closed folio in the study; 'but I cannot choose but walk clear in my calling before the Lord. How can I honestly pronounce hope, when in my mind there is nothing but *fear*—let another do it if he see his way—I do enough in being present, as 'tis right I should.'

It was, indeed, a remarkably dark night—a rush and down-pour of rain! The doctor stood just under the porch of the stout brick house—of King William's date, which was then the residence of the worthy rector of Chapelizod—with his great surtout and cape on—his leggings

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buttoned up—and his capacious leather 'overalls' pulled up and strapped over these—and his broad-leafed hat tied down over his wig and ears with a mighty silk kerchief. I dare say he looked absurd enough—but it was the women's doing—who always, upon emergencies, took the doctor's wardrobe in hands. Old Sally, with her kind, mild, grave face, and grey locks, stood modestly behind in the hall; and pretty Lilias, his only child, gave him her parting kiss, and her last grand charge about his shoes and other exterior toggery, in the porch; and he patted her cheek with a little fond laugh, taking old John Tracy's, the butler's, arm. John carried a handsome horn-lantern, which flashed now on a roadside bush—now on the discoloured battlements of the bridge—and now on a streaming window. They stepped out—there were no umbrellas in those days—splashing among the wide and widening pools; while Sally and Lilias stood in the porch, holding candles for full five minutes after the doctor and his 'Jack-o'-the-lantern,' as he called honest John, whose arm and candle always befriended him in his night excursions, had got round the corner.

Through the back bow-window of the Phœnix, there pealed forth—faint in the distance and rain—a solemn royal ditty, piped by the tuneful Aldermen of Skinner's Alley, and neither unmusical nor somehow uncongenial with the darkness, and the melancholy object of the doctor's walk, the chant being rather monastic, wild, and dirge-like. It was a quarter past ten, and no other sound of life or human neighbourhood was stirring. If secrecy were an object, it was well secured by the sable sky, and the steady torrent which rolled down with electric weight and perpendicularity, making all nature resound with one long hush—sh—sh—sh—sh—deluging the broad street, and turning the channels and gutters into mimic mill-streams, which snorted and hurtled headlong through their uneven beds, and round the corners towards the turbid Liffey, which, battered all over with rain, muddy, and sullen, reeled its way towards the sea, rolling up to the heavens an aspect black as their own.

As they passed by the Phœnix, (a little rivulet, by-the-bye, was spouting down from the corner of the sign; and indeed the night was such as might well have caused that suicidal fowl to abandon all thoughts of self-incremation, and submit to an unprecedented death by drowning), there was no idle officer, or lounging waiter upon the threshold. Military and civilians were all snug in their quarters that night; and the inn, except for the 'Aldermen' in the back parlour, was doing no business. The door was nearly closed, and only let out

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a tall, narrow slice of candle-light upon the lake of mud, over every inch of which the rain was drumming.

The doctor's lantern glided by—and then across the street—and so leisurely along the foot-way, by the range of lightless hall doors towards the Salmon House, also dark; and so, sharp round the corner, and up to the church-yard gate, which stood a little open, as also the church door beyond, as was evidenced by the feeble glow of a lantern from within.

I dare say old Bob Martin, the sexton, and grave Mr. Irons, the clerk, were reassured when they heard the cheery voice of the rector hailing them by name. There were now three candles in church; but the edifice looked unpleasantly dim, and went off at the far end into total darkness. Zekiel Irons was a lean, reserved fellow, with a black wig and blue chin, and something shy and sinister in his phiz. I don't think he had entertained honest Bob with much conversation from those thin lips of his during their grizzly *tête-à-tête* among the black windows and the mural tablets that overhung the aisle.

But the rector had lots to say—though deliberately and gravely, still the voice was genial and inspiring—and exorcised the shadows that had been gathering stealthily around the lesser church functionaries. Mrs. Irons' tooth, he learned, was still bad; but she was no longer troubled with 'that sour humour in her stomach.' There were sour humours, alas! still remaining—enough, and to spare, as the clerk knew to his cost. Bob Martin thanked his reverence; 'the cold rheumatism in his hip was better.' Irons, the clerk, replied, 'he had brought two prayer-books.' Bob averred 'he could not be mistaken; the old lady was buried in the near vault; though it was forty years before, he remembered it like last night. They changed her into her lead coffin in the vault—he and the undertaker together—her own servants would not put a hand to her. She was buried in white satin, and with her rings on her fingers. It was her fancy, and so ordered in her will. They said she was mad. He'd know her face again if he saw her. She had a long hooked nose; and her eyes were open. For, as he was told, she died in her sleep, and was quite cold and stiff when they found her in the morning. He went down and saw the coffin to-day, half an hour after meeting his Reverence.'

The rector consulted his great warming-pan of a watch. It was drawing near eleven. He fell into a reverie, and rambled slowly up and down the aisle, with his hands behind his back, and his dripping hat in them, swinging nearly to the flags—now lost in the darkness—now emerging again, dim, nebulous, in the foggy light of the lanterns. When this clerical portrait came near, he was looking

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down, with gathered brows, upon the flags, moving his lips and nodding, as if counting them, as was his way. The doctor was thinking all the time upon the one text:—Why should this livid memorial of two great crimes be now disturbed, after an obscurity of twenty-one years, as if to jog the memory of scandal, and set the great throat of the monster baying once more at the old midnight horror?

And as for that old house at Ballyfermot, why any one could have looked after it as well as he. 'Still he must live somewhere, and certainly this little town is quieter than the city, and the people, on the whole, very kindly, and by no means curious.' This latter was a mistake of the doctor's, who, like other simple persons, was fond of regarding others as harmless repetitions of himself. 'And his sojourn will be,' he says, 'but a matter of weeks;' and the doctor's mind wandered back again to the dead, and forward to the remoter consequences of his guilt, so he heaved a heavy, honest sigh, and lifted up his head and slackened his pace for a little prayer, and with that there came the rumble of wheels to the church door.

CHAPTER II.

THE NAMELESS COFFIN.

THREE vehicles with flambeaux, and the clang and snorting of horses came close to the church porch, and there appeared suddenly, standing within the disk of candle-light at the church door, before one would have thought there was time, a tall, very pale, and peculiar looking young man, with very large, melancholy eyes, and a certain cast of evil pride in his handsome face.

John Tracy lighted the wax candles which he had brought, and Bob Martin stuck them in the sockets at either side of the cushion, on the ledge of the pew, beside the aisle, where the prayer-book lay open at 'the burial of the dead,' and the rest of the party drew about the door, while the doctor was shaking hands very ceremoniously with that tall young man, who had now stepped into the circle of light, with a short, black mantle on, and his black curls uncovered, and a certain air of high breeding in his movements. 'He reminded me painfully of him who is gone, whom we name not,' said the doctor to pretty Lilias, when he got home; 'he has his pale, delicately-formed features, with a shadow of his evil passions, too, and his mother's large, sad eyes.'

And an elderly clergyman, in surplice, band, and white wig, with

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a hard, yellow, furrowed face, hovered in, like a white bird of night, from the darkness behind, and was introduced to Dr. Walsingham, and whispered for a while to Mr. Irons, and then to Bob Martin, who had two short forms placed transversely in the aisle to receive what was coming, and a shovel full of earth—all ready. So, while the angular clergyman ruffled into the front of the pew, with Irons on one side, a little in the rear, both books open; the plump little undertaker, diffusing a steam from his moist garments. making a prismatic halo round the candles and lanterns, as he moved successively by them, whispered a word or two to the young gentleman [Mr. Mervyn, the doctor called him], and Mr. Mervyn disappeared. Dr. Walsingham and John Tracy got into contiguous seats, and Bob Martin went out to lend a hand. Then came the shuffling of feet, and the sound of hard-tugging respiration, and the suppressed, energetic mutual directions of the undertaker's men, who supported the ponderous coffin. How much heavier, it always seems to me, that sort of load than any other of the same size!

A great oak shell: the lid was outside in the porch, Mr. Tressels was unwilling to screw it down, having heard that the entrance to the vault was so narrow, and apprehending it might be necessary to take the coffin out. So it lay its length with a dull weight on the two forms. The lead coffin inside, with its dusty black velvet, was plainly much older. There was a plate on it with two bold capitals, and a full stop after each, thus:—

R. D.
obiit May 11th,
A.D. 1746.
ætat 38.

And above this plain, oval plate was a little bit of an ornament no bigger than a sixpence. John Tracy took it for a star, Bob Martin said he knew it to be a Freemason's order, and Mr. Tressels, who almost overlooked it, thought it was nothing better than a fourpenny cherub. But Mr. Irons, the clerk, knew that it was a coronet; and when he heard the other theories thrown out, being a man of few words, he let them have it their own way, and with his thin lips closed, with their changeless and unpleasant character of an imperfect smile, he coldly kept this little bit of knowledge to himself.

Earth to earth (rumble), dust to dust (tumble), ashes to ashes (rattle).

And now the coffin must go out again, and down to its final abode.

The flag that closed the entrance of the vault had been removed.

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But the descent of Avernus was not facile, the steps being steep and broken, and the roof so low. Young Mervyn had gone down the steps to see it duly placed; a murky, fiery light came up, against which the descending figures looked black and cyclopean.

Dr. Walsingham offered his brother-clergyman his hospitalities; but somehow that cleric preferred returning to town for his supper and his bed. Mervyn also excused himself. It was late, and he meant to stay that night at the Phœnix, and to-morrow designed to make his compliments in person to Dr. Walsingham. So the bilious clergyman from town climbed into the vehicle in which he had come, and the undertaker and his troop got into the hearse and the mourning coach and drove off demurely through the town; but once a hundred yards or so beyond the turnpike, at such a pace that they overtook the rolicking *cortege* of the Alderman of Skinner's Alley upon the Dublin road, all singing and hallooing, and crowing and shouting scraps of banter at one another, in which recreations these professional mourners forthwith joined them; and they cracked screaming jokes, and drove wild chariot races the whole way into town, to the terror of the divine, whose presence they forgot, and whom, though he shrieked from the window, they never heard, until getting out, when the coach came to a stand-still, he gave Mr. Tressels a piece of his mind, and that in so alarming a sort, that the jolly undertaker, expressing a funereal concern at the accident, was obliged to explain that all the noise came from the scandalous party they had so unfortunately overtaken, and that 'the drunken blackguards had lashed and frightened his horses to a runaway pace, singing and hallooing in the filthy way he heard, it being a standing joke among such roisters to put quiet tradesmen of his melancholy profession into a false and ridiculous position.' He did not convince, but only half-puzzled the ecclesiastic, who, muttering, 'credat Judæus,' turned his back upon Mr. Tressels, with an angry whisk, without bidding him good night.

Dr. Walsingham, with the aid of his guide, in the meantime, had reached the little garden in front of the old house, and the gay tinkle of a harpsichord and the notes of a sweet contralto suddenly ceased as he did so; and he said—smiling in the dark, in a pleasant soliloquy, for he did not mind John Tracy—old John was not in the way—'She always hears my step—always—little Lily, no matter how she's employed,' and the hall-door opened, and a voice that was gentle, and yet somehow very spirited and sweet, cried a loving and playful welcome to the old man.

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CHAPTER III.

MR. MERVYN IN HIS INN.

THE morning was fine—the sun shone out with a yellow splendour—all nature was refreshed—a pleasant smell rose up from tree, and flower, and earth. The now dry pavement and all the row of village windows were glittering merrily—the sparrows twittered their lively morning gossip among the thick ivy of the old church tower—here and there the village cock challenged his neighbour with high and vaunting crow, and the bugle notes soared sweetly into the air from the artillery ground beside the river.

Moore, the barber, was already busy making his morning circuit, serving-men and maids were dropping in and out at the baker's, and old Poll Delany, in her weather-stained red hood, and neat little Kitty Lane, with her bright, young, careful face and white basket, were calling at the doors of their customers with new-laid eggs. Through half-opened hall-doors you might see the powdered servant. or the sprightly maid in her mob-cap in hot haste steaming away with the red japanned 'tea kitchen' into the parlour. The town of Chapelizod, in short, was just sitting down to its breakfast.

Mervyn, in the meantime, had had his solitary meal in the famous back parlour of the Phœnix, where the newspapers lay, and all comers were welcome. He was by no means a bad hero to look at, if such a thing were needed. His face was pale, melancholy, statuesque—and his large enthusiastic eyes, suggested a story and a secret—perhaps a horror. Most men, had they known all, would have wondered with good Doctor Walsingham, why, of all places in the world, he should have chosen the little town where he now stood for even a temporary residence. It was not a perversity, but rather a fascination. His whole life had been a flight and a pursuit—a vain endeavour to escape from the evil spirit that pursued him—and a chase of a chimera.

He was standing at the window, not indeed enjoying, as another man might, the quiet verdure of the scene, and the fragrant air, and all the mellowed sounds of village life, but lost in a sad and dreadful reverie, when in bounced little red-faced, bustling Dr. Toole—the joke and the chuckle with which he had just requited the fat old bar-maid still ringing in the passage—'Stay there, sweetheart,' addressed to a dog squeezing by him, and which screeched out as he kicked it neatly round the door-post.

'Hey, your most obedient, sir,' cried the doctor, with a short but grand bow, affecting surprise, though his chief object in visiting the

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back parlour at that moment was precisely to make a personal inspection of the stranger. 'Pray, don't mind me, sir—your—ho! Breakfast ended, eh? Coffee not so bad, sir; rather good coffee, I hold it. at the Phœnix. Cream very choice, sir?—I don't tell 'em so though (a wink); it might not improve it, you know. I hope they gave you —eh? (he peeped into the cream-ewer, which he turned towards the light, with a whisk). And no disputing the eggs—forty-eight hens in the poultry yard, and ninety ducks in Tresham's little garden, next door to Sturks. They make a precious noise, I can tell you, when it showers. Sturk threatens to shoot 'em. He's the artillery surgeon here; and Tom Larkin said, last night, it's because they only dabble and quack—and two of a trade, you know—ha! ha! ha! And what a night we had—dark as Erebus—pouring like pumps, by Jove. I'll remember it, I warrant you. Out on business—a medical man, you know, can't always choose—and near meeting a bad accident, too. Anything in the paper, eh? ho! I see, sir—haven't read it. Well, and what do you think—a queer night for the purpose, eh? you'll say—we had a funeral in the town last night, sir—some one from Dublin. It was Tressel's men came out. The turnpike rogue, just round the corner there—one of the talkingest gossips in the town—and a confounded prying, tattling place it is, I can tell you—knows the driver! and Bob Martin—the sexton, you know—tells me there were two parsons, no less—hey! Cauliflowers in season, by Jove! Old Dr. Walsingham, our rector—a pious man, sir, and does a world of good—that's to say, relieves half the blackguards in the parish—ha! ha! when we're on the point of getting rid of them—but means well, only he's a little bit lazy, and queer, you know; and that rancid, raw-boned parson, Gillespie—how the plague did they pick him up? —one of the mutes told Bob 'twas he. He's from Donegal; I know all about him; the sourest dog I ever broke bread with—and mason, if you please, by Jove—a prince pelican! He supped at the Grand Lodge, after labour, one night—*you're* not a mason, I see; tipt you the sign—and his face was so pinched, and so yellow, by Jupiter, I was near squeezing it into the punch-bowl for a lemon—ha! ha! hey?'

Mervyn's large eyes expressed a well-bred surprise. Dr. Toole paused for nearly a minute, as if expecting something in return; but it did not come.

So the doctor started afresh, never caring for Mervyn's somewhat dangerous looks.

'Mighty pretty prospects about here, sir. The painters come out by dozens in the summer, with their books and pencils, and scratch

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away like so many Scotchmen. Ha! ha! ha! If you draw, sir, there's one prospect up the river, by the mills—upon my conscience—but you don't draw?'

No answer.

'A little, sir, maybe? Just for a maggot, I'll wager—like *my* good lady, Mrs. Toole.' A nearer glance at his dress had satisfied Toole that he was too much of a maccaroni for an artist, and he was thinking of placing him upon the Lord Lieutenant's staff. 'We've capital horses here, if you want to go on to Leixlip,' (where—this between ourselves and the reader—during the summer months His Excellency and Lady Townshend resided, and where, the old newspapers tell us, they 'kept a public day every Monday,' and he 'had a levée, as usual, every Thursday.') But this had no better success.

'If you design to stay over the day, and care for shooting, we'll have some ball practice on Palmerstown fair-green to-day. Seven baronies to shoot for ten and five guineas. One o'clock—hey?'

At this moment entered Major O'Neill, of the Royal Irish Artillery, a small man, very neatly got up, and with a decidedly Milesian cast of countenance, who said little, but smiled agreeably—

'Gentlemen, your most obedient. Ha, doctor; how goes it?—anything new—anything *on* the *Freeman*?'

Toole had scanned that paper, and hummed out, as he rumpled it over, 'nothing—very—particular. Here's Lady Moira's ball: fancy dresses—all Irish; no masks; a numerous appearance of the nobility and gentry—upwards of five hundred persons. A good many of your corps there, Major?'

'Ay, Lord Blackwater, of course, and the General, and Devereux, and little Puddock, and'——

'*Sturk* wasn't,' with a grin, interrupted Toole, who bore that practitioner no good-will. 'A gentleman robbed, by two foot-pads, on Chapelizod-road, on Wednesday night, of his watch and money, together with his hat, wig, and cane, and lies now in a dangerous state, having been much abused; one of them dressed in an old light-coloured coat, wore a wig. By Jupiter, Major, if I was in General Chattesworth's place, with two hundred strapping fellows at my orders, I'd get a commission from Government to clear that road. It's too bad, sir, we can't go in and out of town, unless in a body, after nightfall, but at the risk of our lives. [The convivial doctor felt this public scandal acutely.] The bloody-minded miscreants, I'd catch every living soul of them, and burn them alive in tar-barrels. By Jove! here's old Joe Napper, of Dirty-lane's dead.

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Plenty of dry eyes after *him*. And stay, here's another row." And so he read on.

In the meantime, stout, tightly-braced Captain Cluffe of the same corps, and little dark, hard-faced, and solemn Mr. Nutter, of the Mills, Lord Castlemallard's agents, came in, and half a dozen more, chiefly members of the club, which met by night in the front parlour on the left, opposite the bar, where they entertained themselves with agreeable conversation, cards, backgammon, draughts, and an occasional song by Dr. Toole, who was a florid tenor, and used to give them, 'While gentlefolks strut in silver and satins,' or 'A maiden of late had a merry design,' or some other such ditty, with a recitation by plump little stage-stricken Ensign Puddock, who, in 'thpite of hith lithp,' gave rather spirited imitations of some of the players—Mossop, Sheridan, Macklin, Barry, and the rest. So Mervyn, the stranger, by no means affecting this agreeable society, took his cane and cocked-hat, and went out—the dark and handsome apparition—followed by curious glances from two or three pairs of eyes, and a whispered commentary and criticism from Toole.

So, taking a meditative ramble in 'His Majesty's Park, the Phœnix;' and passing out at Castleknock-gate, he walked up the river, between the wooded slopes, which make the valley of the Liffey so pleasant and picturesque, until he reached the ferry, which crossing, he at the other side found himself not very far from Palmerstown, through which village his return route to Chapelizod lay.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAIR-GREEN OF PALMERSTOWN.

THERE were half-a-dozen carriages and a score of led horses outside the fair-green, a precious lot of ragamuffins, and a good resort to the public-house opposite; and the gate being open, the artillery band, rousing all the echoes round with harmonious and exhilarating thunder, within—an occasional crack of a 'Brown Bess,' with a puff of white smoke over the hedge, being heard, and the cheers of the spectators, and sometimes a jolly chorus of many-toned laughter, all mixed together, and carried on with a pleasant running hum of voices—Mervyn, the stranger, reckoning on being unobserved in the crowd, and weary of the very solitude he courted, turned to his right and so found himself upon the renowned fair-green of Palmerstown.

It was really a gay rural sight. The circular target stood, with its bright concentric rings, in conspicuous isolation, about a hundred

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yards away, against the green slope of the hill. The competitors, in their best Sunday suits, some armed with muskets and some with fowling-pieces—for they were not particular—and with bunches of ribbons fluttering in their three-cornered hats, and sprigs of gay flowers in their breasts, stood, in the foreground, in an irregular cluster, while the spectators, in pleasant disorder, formed two broad, and many-coloured parterres, broken into little groups, and separated by a wide, clear sweep of green sward, running up from the marksmen to the target.

In the luminous atmosphere the men of those days showed bright and gay. Such fine scarlet and gold waistcoats—such sky-blue and silver—such pea-green lutestrings—and pink silk linings—and flashing buckles—and courtly wigs—or becoming powder—went pleasantly with the brilliant costume of the stately dames and smiling lasses. There was a pretty sprinkling of uniforms, too—the whole picture in gentle motion, and the bugles and drums of the Royal Irish Artillery filling the air with inspiring music.

All the neighbours were there—merry little Dr. Toole, in his grandest wig and gold-headed cane, with three dogs at his heels—he seldom appeared without this sort of train—sometimes three—sometimes five—sometimes as many as seven—and his hearty voice was heard bawling at them by name, as he sauntered through the town of a morning, and theirs' occasionally in short screeches, responsive to the touch of his cane. Now it was, 'Fairy, you savage, let that pig alone!' a yell and a scuffle—'Juno, drop it, you slut'—or 'Cæsar, you blackguard, where are you going?'

'Look at Sturk there, with his lordship,' said Toole, to the fair Magnolia, with a wink and a nod, and a sneering grin. 'Good natured dog that—ha! ha! You'll find he'll oust Nutter at last, and get the agency; that's what he's driving at—always undermining somebody.' Doctor Sturk and Lord Castlemallard were talking apart on the high ground, and the artillery surgeon was pointing with his cane at distant objects. 'I'll lay you fifty he's picking holes in Nutter's management this moment.'

I'm afraid there was some truth in the theory, and Toole—though he did not remember to mention it—had an instinctive notion that Sturk had an eye upon the civil practice of the neighbourhood, and was meditating a retirement from the army, and a serious invasion of his domain.

Sturk and Toole, behind backs, did not spare one another. Toole called Sturk a 'horse doctor,' and 'the smuggler'—in reference to some affair about French brandy never made quite clear to me, but in

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which I believe, Sturk was really not to blame; and Sturk called him 'that drunken little apothecary'—for Toole had a boy who compounded, under the rose, his draughts, pills, and powders in the back parlour—and sometimes, 'that smutty little ballad-singer,' or 'that whiskeyfied dog-fancier, Toole.' There was no actual quarrel, however; they met freely—told one another the news—their mutual disagreeabilities were administered guardedly—and, on the whole, they hated one another in a neighbourly way.

Fat, short, radiant, General Chattesworth—in full artillery uniform—was there, smiling, and making little speeches to the ladies, and bowing stiffly from his hips upward—his great cue playing all the time up and down his back, and sometimes so near the ground when he stood erect and threw back his head, that Toole, seeing Juno eyeing the appendage, rather viciously, thought it prudent to cut her speculations short with a smart kick.

His sister Rebecca—tall, erect, with grand lace, in a splendid stiff brocade, and with a fine fan—was certainly five-and-fifty, but still wonderfully fresh, and sometimes had quite a pretty little pink colour—perfectly genuine—in her cheeks; command sat in her eye and energy on her lip—but though it was imperious and restless, there was something provokingly likeable and even pleasant in her face. Her niece, Gertrude, the General's daughter, was also tall, graceful—and, I am told, perfectly handsome.

'Be the powers, she's mighty handsome!' observed 'Lieutenant Fireworker' O'Flaherty, who, being a little stupid, did not remember that such a remark was not likely to pleasure the charming Magnolia Macnamara, to whom he had transferred the adoration of a passionate, but somewhat battered heart.

'They must not see with my eyes that think so,' said Mag, with a disdainful toss of her head.

'They say she's not twenty, but I'll wager a pipe of claret she's something to the back of it,' said O'Flaherty, mending his hand.

'Why, bless your innocence, she'll never see five-and-twenty, and a bit to spare,' sneered Miss Mag, who might more truly have told that tale of herself. 'Who's that pretty young man my Lord Castlemallard is introducing to her and old Chattesworth?' The commendation was a shot at poor O'Flaherty.

'Hey—so, my Lord knows him!' says Toole, very much interested. 'Why that's Mr. Mervyn, that's stopping at the Phœnix. A. Mervyn,—I saw it on his dressing case. See how she smiles.'

'Ay, she simpers like a firmity kettle,' said scornful Miss Mag.

'They're very grand to-day, the Chattesworths, with them two

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livery footmen behind them,' threw in O'Flaherty, accommodating his remarks to the spirit of his lady-love.

'That young buck's a man of consequence,' Toole rattled on; 'Miss does not smile on everybody.'

'Ay, she looks as if butter would not melt in her mouth, but I warrant cheese won't choke her,' Magnolia laughed out with angry eyes.

Magnolia's fat and highly painted parent—poor bragging, good-natured, cunning, foolish Mrs. Macnamara, the widow—joined, with a venemous wheeze in the laugh.

Those who suppose that all this rancour was produced by mere feminine emulations and jealousy do these ladies of the ancient sept Macnamara foul wrong. Mrs. Mack, on the contrary, had a fat and genial soul of her own, and Magnolia was by no means a particularly ungenerous rival in the lists of love. But Aunt Rebecca was hoity-toity upon the Macnamaras, whom she would never consent to more than half-know, seeing them with difficulty, often failing to see them altogether—though Magnolia's stature and activity did not always render that easy. To-day, for instance, when the firing was brisk, and some of the ladies uttered pretty little timid squalls, Miss Magnolia not only stood fire like a brick, but with her own fair hands cracked off a firelock, and was more complimented and applauded than all the marksmen beside, although she shot most dangerously wide, and was much nearer hitting old Arthur Slowe than that respectable gentleman, who waved his hat and smirked gallantly, was at all aware. Aunt Rebecca, notwithstanding all this, and although she looked straight at her from a distance of only ten steps, yet she could not see that large and highly-coloured heroine; and Magnolia was so incensed at her serene impertinence that when Gertrude afterwards smiled and curtsied twice, she only held her head the higher and flung a flashing defiance from her fine eyes right at that unoffending virgin.

Everybody knew that Miss Rebecca Chattesworth ruled supreme at Belmont. With a docile old General and a niece so young, she had less resistance to encounter than, perhaps, her ardent soul would have relished. Fortunately for the General it was only now and then that Aunt Becky took a whim to command the Royal Irish Artillery. She had other hobbies just as odd, though not quite so scandalous. It had struck her active mind that such of the ancient women of Chapelizod as were destitute of letters—mendicants and the like—should learn to read. Twice a week her 'old women's school,' under that energetic lady's presidency, brought together its muster-roll of rheumatism, paralysis, dim eyes, bothered ears, and invincible stupidity.

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Over the fire-place in large black letters, was the legend, 'BETTER LATE THAN NEVER;' and out came the horn-books and spectacles, and to it they went with their A-B ab, etc., and plenty of wheezing and coughing. Aunt Becky kept good fires, and served out a mess of bread and broth, along with some pungent ethics, to each of her hopeful old girls. In winter she further encouraged them with a flannel petticoat apiece, and there was besides a monthly dole. So that although after a year there was, perhaps, on the whole, no progress in learning, the affair wore a tolerably encouraging aspect; for the academy had increased in numbers, and two old fellows, liking the notion of the broth and the 6d. a month—one a barber, Will Potts, ruined by a shake in his right hand, the other a drunken pensioner, Phil Doolan, with a wooden leg—petitioned to be enrolled, and were, accordingly, admitted. Then Aunt Becky, visited the gaols, and had a knack of picking up the worst characters there, and had generally two or three discharged felons on her hands. Some people said she was a bit of a Voltairian, but unjustly; for though she now and then came out with a bouncing social paradox, she was a good bitter Churchwoman. So she was liberal and troublesome—off-handed and dictatorial—not without good nature, but administering her benevolences somewhat tyrannically, and, for the most part, doing more or less of positive mischief in the process.

And now the General ('old Chattesworth,' as the scornful Magnolia called him) drew near, with his benevolent smirk, and his stiff bows, and all his good-natured formalities—for the General had no notion of ignoring his good friend and officer, Major O'Neill, or his sister or niece—and so he made up to Mrs. Macnamara, who arrested a narrative in which she was demonstrating to O'Flaherty, the General's lineal descent from old Chattesworth—an army tailor in Queen Anne's time—and his cousinship to a live butter dealer in Cork—and spicing her little history with not a very nice epigram on his uncle, 'the counsellor,' by Dr. Swift, which she delivered with a vicious chuckle in the 'Fire-worker's' ear, who also laughed, though he did not quite see the joke, and said, 'Oh-ho-ho, murdher!'

The good Mrs. Mack received the General haughtily and slightly, and Miss Magnolia with a short courtesy and a little toss of her head, and up went her fan, and she giggled something in Toole's ear, who grinned, and glanced uneasily out of the corner of his shrewd little eye at the unsuspicious General and on to Aunt Rebecca; for it was very important to Dr. Toole to stand well at Belmont. So, seeing that Miss Mag was disposed to be vicious, and not caring to be compromised by her tricks, he whistled and bawled to his dogs, and with a jolly smirk

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and flourish of his cocked-hat, off he went to seek other adventures.

Thus, was there feud and malice between two houses, and Aunt Rebecca's wrong-headed freak of cutting the Macnamaras (for it was not 'snobbery,' and she would talk for hours on band-days publicly and familiarly with scrubby little Mrs. Toole), involved her innocent relations in scorn and ill-will; for this sort of offence, like Chinese treason, is not visited on the arch offender only, but according to a scale of consanguinity, upon his kith and kin. The criminal is minced—his sons lashed—his nephews reduced to cutlets—his cousins to joints—and so on—none of the family quite escapes; and seeing the bitter reprisals provoked by this kind of uncharity, fiercer and more enduring by much than any begotten of more tangible wrongs, Christian people who pray, 'lead us not into temptation,' and repeat, 'blessed are the peace-makers,' will, on the whole, do wisely to forbear practising it.

As handsome, slender Captain Devereux, with his dark face, and great, strange, earnest eyes, and that look of intelligence so racy and peculiar, that gave him a sort of enigmatical interest, stepped into the fair-green, the dark blue glance of poor Nan Glynn, of Palmerstown, from under her red, Sunday riding-hood, followed the tall, dashing, graceful apparition, with a stolen glance of wild loyalty and admiration. Poor Nan! with thy fun and thy rascalities, thy strong affections and thy fatal gift of beauty, where does thy head rest now?

Handsome Captain Devereux!—Gipsy Devereux, as they called him for his clear dark complexion—was talking a few minutes later to Lilias Walsingham. Oh, pretty Lilias—oh, true lady—I never saw the pleasant crayon sketch that my mother used to speak of, but the tradition of thee has come to me—so bright and tender, with its rose and violet tints, and merry, melancholy dimples, that I see thee now, as then, with the dew of thy youth still on thee, and sigh as I look, as if on a lost, early love of mine.

'I'm out of conceit with myself,' he said; 'I'm so idle and useless; I wish that were all—I wish myself better, but I'm such a weak coxcomb—a father-confessor might keep me nearer to my duty—some one to scold and exhort me. Perhaps some charitable lady would take me in hand, something might be made of me still.'

There was a vein of seriousness in this reverie which amused the young lady; for she had never heard any thing worse of him—very young ladies seldom do hear the worst—than that he had played once or twice rather high.

'Shall I ask Gertrude Chattesworth to speak to her Aunt Rebecca?'

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said Lilias, slyly. 'Suppose you attend her school in Martin's-row, with "better late than never" over her chimney-piece; there are two pupils of your own sex, you know, and you might sit on the bench with poor Potts and good old Doolan.'

'Thank you, Miss Lilias,' he answered, with a bow and a little laugh, as it seemed just the least bit in the world piqued; 'I know she would do it zealously; but neither so well nor so wisely as others might; I wish I dare ask *you* to lecture me.'

'I!' said that young lady. 'Oh, yes, I forgot,' she went on merrily, 'five years ago, when I was a little girl, you once called me Dr. Walsingham's curate, I was so grave—do you remember?'

She did not know how much obliged Devereux was to her for remembering that poor little joke, and how much the handsome lieutenant would have given, at that instant, to kiss the hand of the grave little girl of five years ago.

'I was a more impudent fellow then,' he said, 'than I am now; won't you forget my old impertinences, and allow me to make atonement, and be your—your *very* humble servant now?'

She laughed. 'Not my servant—but you know I can't help you being my parishioner.'

'And as such surely I may plead an humble right to your counsels and reproof. Yes, you *shall* lecture me—I'll bear it from none but *you*, and the more you do it, the happier at least, you make me,' he said.

'Alas, if my censure is pleasant to you, 'tis a certain sign it can do you no good.'

'It *shall* do me good, and be it never so bitter and so true, it will be pleasant to me too,' he answered, with an honest and very peculiar light in his dark, strange eyes; and after a little pause, 'I'll tell you why, just because I had rather you remembered my faults, than that you did not remember me at all.'

'But, 'tis not my business to make people angry.'

'More likely you should make me sad, or perhaps happy, that is to say, better. I think you'd like to see your parish improve.'

'So I would—but by means of my example, not my preaching. No; I leave that to wiser heads—to the rector, for instance'—and she drew closer to the dear old man, with a quick fond glance of such proud affection, for she thought the sun never shone upon his like, as made Devereux sigh a little unconscious sigh. The old man did not hear her—he was too absorbed in his talk—he only felt the pressure of his darling's little hand, and returned it, after his wont, with a gentle squeeze of his cassocked arm, while he continued the learned

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essay he was addressing to young, queer, erudite, simple Dan Loftus, on the descent of the Decies branch of the Desmonds. There was, by-the-bye, a rumour—I know not how true—that these two sages were concocting between them, beside their folios on the castle of Chapelizod, an interminable history of Ireland.

Devereux was secretly chafed at the sort of invisible, but insuperable resistance which pretty Lilias Walsingham, as it seemed, unconsciously opposed to his approaches to a nearer and tenderer sort of trifling. 'The little Siren! there are air-drawn circles round her which I cannot pass—and why should I? How is it that she interests me, and yet repels me so easily? And—and when I came here first,' he continued aloud, 'you were, oh dear! how mere a child, hardly eleven years old. How long I've known you, Miss Lilias, and yet how formal you are with me.' There was reproach almost fierce in his eye, though his tones were low and gentle. 'Well!' he said, with an odd changed little laugh, 'you *did* commit yourself at first—you spoke against card-playing, and I tell you frankly I mean to play a great deal more, and a great deal higher than I've ever done before, and so adieu.'

He did not choose to see the little motion which indicated that she was going to shake hands with him, and only bowed the lower, and answered her grave smile, which seemed to say, 'Now, you are vexed,' with another little laugh, and turned gaily away, and so was gone.

'She thinks she has wounded me, and she thinks, I suppose, that I can't be happy away from her. I'll let her see I can; I shan't speak to her, no, nor look at her, for a month!'

The Chattesworths by this time, as well as others, were moving away—and that young Mr. Mervyn, more remarked upon than he suspected, walked with them to the gate of the Fair Green. As he passed he bowed low to good parson Walsingham, who returned his salute, not unkindly—that never was—but very gravely, and with his gentle and thoughtful blue eyes followed the party sadly on their way.

'Ay—there he goes—Mervyn! Well!—so—so—pray heaven, sorrow and a blight follow him not into this place.' The rector murmured to himself, and sighed, still following him with his glance.

Little Lilias with her hand within his arm, wondered, as she glanced upward into that beloved face, what could have darkened it with a look so sad and anxious; and then her eyes also followed the retreating figure of that pale young man, with a sort of interest not quite unmixed with uneasiness.

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CHAPTER V.

HOW THE ROYAL IRISH ARTILLERY ENTERTAINED SOME OF THE NEIGHBOURS AT DINNER.

If I stuck at a fib as little as some historians, I might easily tell you who won the prizes at this shooting on Palmerstown Green. But the truth is I don't know; my granduncle could have told me, for he had a marvellous memory, but he died, a pleasant old gentleman of four-score and upwards, when I was a small urchin. I remember his lively, old face, his powdered bald head and pig-tail, his slight, erect figure, and how merrily he used to play the fiddle for his juvenile posterity to dance to. But I was not of an age to comprehend the value of this thin, living volume of old lore, or to question the oracle. Well, it can't be helped now, and the papers I've got are silent upon the point. But there were jollifications to no end both in Palmerstown and Chapelizod that night, and declamatory conversations rising up in the street at very late hours, and singing and '*hurrooing*' along the moon-lit roads.

There was a large and pleasant dinner-party, too, in the mess-room of the Royal Irish Artillery. Lord Castlemallard was there in the place of honour, next to jolly old General Chattesworth, and the worthy rector, Doctor Walsingham, and Father Roach, the dapper, florid little priest of the parish, with his silk waistcoat and well-placed paunch, and his keen relish for funny stories, side-dishes, and convivial glass; and Dan Loftus, that simple, meek, semi-barbarous young scholar, his head in a state of chronic dishevelment, his harmless little round light-blue eyes, pinkish from late night reading, generally betraying the absence of his vagrant thoughts, and I know not what of goodness, as well as queerness, in his homely features.

Good Dr. Walsingham, indeed, in his simple benevolence, had helped the strange, kindly creature through college, and had a high opinion of him, and a great delight in his company. They were both much given to books, and according to their lights zealous archæologists. They had got hold of Chapelizod Castle, a good tough enigma. It was a theme they never tired of. Loftus had already two folios of extracts copied from all the records to which Dr. Walsingham could procure him access. They could not have worked harder, indeed, if they were getting up evidence to prove their joint title to Lord Castlemallard's estates. This pursuit was a bond of close sympathy between the rector and the student, and they spent more time than appeared to his parishioners quite consistent with sanity in the paddock by the

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river, pacing up and down, and across, poking sticks into the earth and grubbing for old walls underground.

Loftus, moreover, was a good Irish scholar, and from Celtic MSS. had elicited some cross-lights upon his subject—not very bright or steady, I allow—but enough to delight the rector, and inspire him with a tender reverence for the indefatigable and versatile youth, who was devoting to the successful equitation of their hobby so many of his hours, and so much of his languages, labour, and brains.

Lord Castlemallard was accustomed to be listened to, and was not aware how confoundedly dull his talk sometimes was. It was measured, and dreamy, and every way slow. He was entertaining the courteous old General at the head of the table, with an oration in praise of Paul Dangerfield—a wonderful man—immensely wealthy—the cleverest man of his age—he might have been anything he pleased. His lordship really believed his English property would drop to pieces if Dangerfield retired from its management, and he was vastly obliged to him inwardly, for retaining the agency even for a little time longer. He was coming over to visit the Irish estates—perhaps to give Nutter a wrinkle or two. He was a bachelor, and his lordship averred would be a prodigious great match for some of our Irish ladies. Chapelizod would be his headquarters while in Ireland. No, he was not sure—he rather thought he was *not* of the Thorley Family; and so on, for a mighty long time. But though he tired them prodigiously, he contrived to evoke before their minds' eyes a very gigantic, though somewhat hazy figure, and a good deal stimulated the interest with which a new arrival was commonly looked for in that pleasant suburban village. There is no knowing how long Lord Castlemallard might have prosed upon this theme, had he not been accidentally cut short, and himself laid fast asleep in his chair, without his or anybody else's intending it. For overhearing, during a short pause, in which he sipped some claret, Surgeon Sturk applying some very strong, and indeed, frightful language to a little pamphlet upon magnetism, a subject then making a stir—as from a much earlier date it has periodically done down to the present day—he languidly asked Dr. Walsingham his opinion upon the subject.

Now, Dr. Walsingham was a great reader of out-of-the-way lore, and retained it with a sometimes painful accuracy; and he forthwith began—

'There is, my Lord Castlemallard, a curious old tract of the learned Van Helmont, in which he says, as near as I can remember his words, that magnetism is a magical faculty, which lieth dormant in us by the opiate of primitive sin, and, therefore, stands in need of an excitator,

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which excitator may be either good or evil; but is more frequently Satan himself, by reason of some previous oppignoration or compact with witches. The power, indeed, is in the witch, and not conferred by him; but this versipellous or Protean impostor—these are his words—will not suffer her to know that it is of her own natural endowment, though for the present charmed into somnolent inactivity by the narcotic of primitive sin.'

I verily believe that a fair description—none of your poetical baulderdash, but an honest plodding description of a perfectly comfortable bed, and of the process of going to sleep, would, judiciously administered soon after dinner, overpower the vivacity of any tranquil gentleman who loves a nap after that meal—gently draw the curtains of his senses, and extinguish the bed-room candle of his consciousness. In the Doctor's address and quotation there was so much about somnolency and narcotics, and lying dormant, and opiates, that my Lord Castlemallard's senses forsook him, and he lost, as you, my kind reader, must, all the latter portion of the Doctor's lullaby.

'I'd give half I'm pothethed of, thir, and all my prothpecth in life,' lisped vehemently plump little Lieutenant Puddock, in one of those stage frenzies to which he was prone, 'to be the firtht Alecthander on the boardth.'

Between ourselves, Puddock was short and fat, very sentimental, and a little bit of a *gourmet;* his desk stuffed with amorous sonnets and receipts for side-dishes; he, always in love, and often in the kitchen, where, under the rose, he loved to direct the cooking of critical little *plats*, very good-natured, rather literal, very courteous, *a chevallier*, indeed, *sans reproche*. He had a profound faith in his genius for tragedy, but those who liked him best could not help thinking that his plump cheeks, round, little, light eyes, his lisp, and a certain lack-a-daisical, though solemn expression of surprise, which Nature, in one of her jocular moods, seemed to have fixed upon his countenance, were against his shining in that walk of the drama. He was blessed, too, with a pleasant belief in his acceptance with the fair sex, but had a real one with his comrades, who knew his absurdities and his virtues, and laughed at and loved him.

'But hang it, there 'th no uthe in doing things by halves. Melpomene's the most jealous of the Muses. I tell you if you stand well in her gratheth, by Jove, thir, you mutht give yourthelf up to her body and thoul. How the deuthe can a fellow that's out at drill at thicth in the morning, and all day with his head filled with tacticth and gunnery, and '—

'And "farced pigeons" and lovely women,' said Devereux.

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'And such dry professional matterth,' continued he, without noticing, perhaps hearing the interpolation, 'How can he pothibly have a chance againth geniuses, no doubt—vaththly thuperior by nature'—(Puddock, the rogue, believed no such thing)—'but who devote themthelveth to the thtudy of the art incethantly, exclusively, and—and'——

'Impossible,' said O'Flaherty. 'There now, was Tommy Shycock, of Ballybaisly, that larned himself to balance a fiddle-stick on his chin; and the young leedies, and especially Miss Kitty Mahony, used to be all around him in the ball-room at Thralee, lookin' wondhrin, and laughin'; and I that had twiste his brains, could not come round it, though I got up every morning for a month at four o'clock, and was obleeged to give over be rason of a soart iv a squint I was gettin' be looking continually at the fiddle-stick. I began with a double bass, the way he did—it's it that was the powerful fateaguin' exercise, I can tell you. Two blessed hours a-day, regular practice, besides an odd half-hour, now and agin, for three mortial years, it took him to larn it, and dhrilled a dimple in his chin you could put a marrow-fat pay in.'

'Practice,' resumed Puddock, I need not spell his lisp, 'study—time to devote—industry in great things as in small—there's the secret. *Nature*, to be sure'—

'Ay, Nature, to be sure—we must sustain Nature, dear Puddock, so pass the bottle,' said Devereux, who liked his glass.

'Be the powers, Mr. Puddock, if I had half your janius for play-acting,' persisted O'Flaherty, 'nothing i'd keep me from the boards iv Smockalley playhouse—incog., I mean, of course. There's that wondherful little Mr. Garrick—why he's the talk of the three kingdoms as long as I can remember—an' making his thousand pounds a week—coining, be gannies—an' he can't be much taller than you. for he's contimptably small.'

'I'm the taller man of the two,' said little Puddock, haughtily, who had made inquiries, and claimed half an inch over Rocius, honestly, let us hope. 'But this is building castles in the air; joking apart, however, I do confess I should dearly love—just for a maggot—to play two parts—Richard the Third and Tamerlane.'

'Was not that the part you spoke that sympathetic speech out of for me before dinner?'

'No; that was Justice Greedy,' said Devereux.

'Ay, so it was—was it?—that smothered his wife.'

'With a pudding clout,' persisted Devereux.

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'No. With a—pooh!—a—you know—and stabbed himself,' continued O'Flaherty.

'With a larding-pin—'tis written in good Italian.'

'Augh, not at all- -it isn't Italian, but English, I'm thinking of—a pilla, Puddock, you know—the *black* rascal.'

'Well, English or Italian—tragedy or comedy,' said Devereux, who liked Puddock, and would not annoy him, and saw he was hurt by Othello's borrowing his properties from the kitchen; 'I venture to say you were well entertained; and for my part, sir, there are some characters'—(in farce Puddock was really highly diverting)—'in which I prefer Puddock to any player I ever saw.'

'Oh—ho—ho!' laughed poor little Puddock, with a most gratified derisiveness, for he cherished in secret a great admiration for Devereux.

And so they talked stage-talk. Puddock lithping away, grand and garrulous; O'Flaherty, the illiterate, blundering in with sincere applause; and Devereux sipping his claret and dropping a quiet saucy word now and again.

'I shall never forget Mrs. Cibber's countenance in that last scene—you know—in the "Orphan"—Monimia *you* know, Devereux.' And the table being by this time in high chat, and the chairs a little irregular, Puddock slipped off his, and addressing himself to Devereux and O'Flaherty—just to give them a notion of Mrs. Cibber—began, with a countenance the most wo-begone, and in a piping falsetto—

'When I am laid low, i' the grave, and quite forgotten.'

Monimia dies at the end of the speech—as the reader may not be aware; but when Puddock came to the line—

'When I am dead, as presently I shall be,'

all Mrs. Cibber's best points being still to come, the little lieutenant's heel caught in the edge of the carpet, as he sailed with an imaginary hoop on grandly backward, and in spite of a surprising flick-flack cut in the attempt to recover his equipoise, down came the 'orphan,' together with a table-load of spoons and plates, with a crash that stopt all conversation.

Lord Castlemallard waked up, with a snort and a 'hallo, gentlemen!'

'It's only poor dear Monimia, General,' said Devereux with a melancholy bow, in reply to a fiery and startled stare darted to the point by that gallant officer.

'Hey—eh?' said his lordship, brightening up, and gazing glassily

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round with a wan smile; and I fancy he thought a lady had somehow introduced herself during his nap, and was pleased, for he admired the sex.

'If there's any recitation going on, I think it had better be for the benefit of the company,' said the General, a little surly, and looking full upon the plump Monimia, who was arranging his frill and hair, and getting a little awkwardly into his place.

'And I think 'twould be no harm, Lieutenant Puddock, my dear,' says Father Roach, testily, for he had been himself frightened by the crash, 'if you'd die a little aisier the next time.'

Puddock began to apologize.

'Never mind,' said the General, recovering, 'let's fill our glasses —my Lord Castlemallard, they tell me this claret is a pretty wine.'

'A very pretty wine,' said my Lord.

'And suppose, my Lord, we ask these gentlemen to give us a song? I say, gentlemen, there are fine voices among you. Will some gentleman oblige the company with a song?'

'Mr. Loftus sings a very fine song, I'm told,' said Captain Cluffe, with a wink at Father Roach.

'Ay,' cried Roach, backing up the joke (a good old one, and not yet quite off the hooks), 'Mr. Loftus sings, I'll take my davy—I've heard him!'

Loftus was shy, simple, and grotesque, and looked like a man who could not sing a note. So when he opened his eyes, looked round, and blushed, there were a general knocking of glasses, and a very flattering clamour for Mr. Loftus's song.

But when silence came, to the surprise of the company he submitted, though with manifest trepidation, and told them that he would sing as the company desired. It was a song from a good old writer upon fasting in Lent, and was, in fact, a reproof to all hypocrisy. Hereupon there was a great ringing of glasses, and a jolly round of laughter rose up in the cheer that welcomed the announcement. Father Roach looked queer and disconcerted, and shot a look of suspicion at Devereux, for poor Dan Loftus had, in truth, hit that divine strait in a very tender spot.

The fact is, Father Roach was, as Irish priests were sometimes then, a bit of a sportsman. He and Toole used occasionally to make mysterious excursions to the Dublin mountains. He had a couple of mighty good dogs, which he lent freely, being a good-natured fellow. He liked good living and jolly young fellows, and was popular among the officers, who used to pop in freely enough at his reverence's green hall-door whenever they wanted a loan of his dogs, or to take counsel

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of the ghostly father (whose opinion was valued more highly even than Toole's) upon the case of a sick dog or a lame nag.

Well, one morning—only a few weeks before—Devereux and Toole together had looked in on some such business upon his reverence—a little suddenly—and found him eating a hare!—by all the gods, it *was*—hare-pie in the middle of Lent!

It was at breakfast. His dinner was the meal of an anchorite, and who would have guessed that these confounded sparks would have bounced into his little refectory at that hour of the morning? There was no room for equivocation; he had been caught in the very act of criminal conversation with the hare-pie. He rose with a spring, like a Jack-in-a-box, as they entered, and knife and fork in hand, and with shining chops, stared at them with an angry, bothered, and alarmed countenance, which increased their laughter. It was a good while before he obtained a hearing, such was the hilarity, so sustained the fire of ironical compliments, inquiries, and pleasantries, and the general uproar.

When he did, with hand uplifted, after the manner of a prisoner arraigned for murder, he pleaded 'a dispensation.' I suppose it was true, for he backed the allegation with several most religious oaths and imprecations, and explained how men were not always quite so strong as they looked; that he might, if he liked it, by permission of his bishop, eat meat at every meal in the day, and every day in the week; that his not doing so was a voluntary abstinence—not conscientious, only expedient—to prevent the 'unreasonable remarks' of his parishioners (a roar of laughter); that he was, perhaps, rightly served for not having publicly availed himself of his bishop's dispensation (renewed peals of merriment). By this foolish delicacy (more of that detestable horse-laughter), he had got himself into a false position: and so on, till the *ad misericordiam* peroration addressed to 'Captain Devereux, dear,' and 'Toole, my honey.' Well, they quizzed him unmercifully; they sat down and eat all that was left of the hare-pie, under his wistful ogle. They made him narrate minutely every circumstance connected with the smuggling of the game, and the illicit distillation for the mess. They never passed so pleasant a morning. Of course, he bound them over to eternal secrecy, and of course, as in all similar cases, the vow was religiously observed; nothing was ever heard of it at mess—oh, no—and Toole never gave a dramatic representation of the occurrence, heightened and embellished with all the little Doctor's genius for farce.

There certainly was a monologue to which he frequently afterwards treated the Aldermen of Skinner's Alley, and other convivial bodies,

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at supper. The Doctor's gestures were made with knife and fork in hand, and it was spoken in a rich brogue and tones sometimes of thrilling pathos, anon of sharp and vehement indignation, and again, of childlike endearment, amidst pounding and jingling of glasses, and screams of laughter from the company. Indeed, the Lord Mayor, a fat slob of a fellow, though not much given to undue merriment, laughed his ribs into such a state of breathless torture, that he implored of Toole, with a wave of his hand—he could not speak—to give him breathing time, which that voluble performer disregarding, his Lordship had to rise twice, and get to the window, or, as he afterwards said, he should have lost his life; and when the performance was ended, his fat cheeks were covered with tears, his mouth hung down, his head wagged slowly from side to side, and with short gasping 'oohs,' and 'oohs,' his hands pressed to his pudgy ribs, he looked so pale and breathless, that although they said nothing, several of his comrades stared hard at him, and thought him in rather a queer state.

Shortly after this little surprise, I suppose by way of ratifying the secret treaty of silence, Father Roach gave the officers and Toole a grand Lent dinner of fish, with no less than nineteen different *plats*, baked, boiled, stewed, in fact, a very splendid feast; and Puddock talked of some of those dishes more than twenty years afterwards.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH THE MINSTRELSY PROCEEDS.

No wonder, then, if Father Roach, when Loftus, in the innocence of his heart, announced his song and its theme, was thoroughly uneasy, and would have given a good deal that he had not helped that simple youth into his difficulty. But things must now take their course. So amid a decorous silence, Dan Loftus lifted up his voice, and sang. That voice was a high small pipe, with a very nervous quaver in it. He leaned back in his chair, and little more than the whites of his upturned eyes were visible; and beating time upon the table with one hand, claw-wise, and with two or three queer little trills and roulades, which re-appeared with great precision in each verse, he delivered himself thus, in what I suspect was an old psalm tune:—

"Now Lent is come, let us refrain
From carnal creatures, quick or slain;
Let's fast and macerate the flesh,
Impound and keep it in distress."

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Here there came a wonderful unspellable choking sound, partly through the mouth, partly through the nose, from several of the officers; and old General Chattesworth, who was frowning hard upon his dessert-plate, and making wonderful faces, cried, 'Order, gentlemen,' in a stern, but very tremulous tone. Lord Castlemallard, leaning upon his elbow, was staring with a grave and dreamy curiosity at the songster, and neither he nor his Lordship heard the interruption, and on went the pleasant ditty; and as the musician regularly repeated the last two lines like a clerk in a piece of psalmody, the young wags, to save themselves from bursting outright, joined in the solemn chorus, while verse after verse waxed more uproarious and hilarious, and gave a singular relief to Loftus's thin, high, quavering solo:—

(*Loftus, solo.*)
"For forty days, and then we shall
Have a replevin from this thrall,
By warrant good, that for this fast,
Will give us angels' food at last.

(*Chorus of Officers.*)
"By warrant good, that for this fast,
Will give us angels' food at last.

'Tis a good song,' murmured Doctor Walsingham in Lord Castlemallard's ear—'I know the verses well—the ingenious and pious Howel penned them in the reign of King James the First.'

'Ha! thank you, sir,' said his Lordship.

(*Loftus, solo.*)
"But to forbear from flesh, fowl, fish,
And eat potatoes in a dish,
Done o'er with amber, or a mess
Of ringos in a Spanish dress.

(*Chorus of Officers.*)
"Done o'er with amber, or a mess
Of ringos in a Spanish dress.

(*Loftus, solo.*)
"Or to refrain from all high dishes,
But feed our thoughts with wanton wishes,
Making the soul, like a light wench,
Wear patches of concupiscence.

(*Chorus of Officers.*)
"Making the soul, like a light wench,
Wear patches of concupiscence.

(*Loftus, solo.*)
"This is not to keep Lent aright,
But play the juggling hypocrite;
For we must starve the inward man,
And feed the outward too on bran.

(*Chorus of Officers.*)
"For we must starve the inward man,
And feed the outward too on bran."

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I believe no song was ever received with heartier bursts of laughter and applause. Puddock indeed was grave, being a good deal interested in the dishes sung by the poet. So, for the sake of its moral point, was Dr. Walsingham, who, with brows gathered together judicially, kept time with head and hand, murmuring 'true, true—*good*, sir, good,' from time to time, as the sentiment liked him.

But honest Father Roach was confoundedly put out by the performance. He sat with his blue double chin buried in his breast, his mouth pursed up tightly, a red scowl all over his face, his quick, little, angry, suspicious eyes peeping cornerwise, now this way, now that, not knowing how to take what seemed to him like a deliberate conspiracy to roast him for the entertainment of the company, who followed the concluding verse with a universal roaring chorus, which went off into a storm of laughter, in which Father Roach made an absurd attempt to join. But it was only a gunpowder glare, swallowed in an instant in darkness, and down came the black portcullis of his scowl with a chop, while clearing his voice, and directing his red face and vicious little eyes straight on simple Dan Loftus, he said, rising very erect and square from an unusually ceremonious bow—

'I don't know, Mr. Loftus, exactly what you mean by a "ring-goat in a Spanish dress"' (the priest had just smuggled over a wonderful bit of ecclesiastical toggery from Salamanca); 'and—a—person wearing patches, you said of—of—patches of concupiscence, I think.' (Father Roach's housekeeper unfortunately wore patches, though, it is right to add, she was altogether virtuous, and by no means young); 'but I'm bound to suppose, by the amusement our friends seem to derive from it, sir, that a ring-goat, whatever it means, is a good joke, as well as a good-natured one.'

'But, by your leave, sir,' emphatically interposed Puddock, on whose ear the ecclesiastic's blunder grated like a discord, 'Mr. Loftus sang nothing about a goat, though kid is not a bad thing; he said, "ringos," meaning, I conclude, eringocous, a delicious preserve or confection. Have you never eaten them, either preserved or candid—a—why I—a—I happen to have a receipt—a—and if you permit me, sir—a capital receipt. When I was a boy, I made some once at home, sir; and, by Jupiter, my brother, Sam, eat of them till he was quite sick—I remember, *so* sick, by Jupiter, my poor mother and old Dorcas had to sit up all night with him—a—and—I was going to say, if you will allow me, sir, I shall be very happy to send the receipt to your housekeeper.'

'You'll not like it, sir,' said Devereux, mischievously: 'but there really is a capital one—quite of another kind—a lenten dish—fish,

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you know, Puddock—the one you described yesterday; but Mr. Loftus has, I think, a still better way.'

'Have you, sir?' asked Puddock, who had a keen appetite for knowledge.

'I don't know, Captain Puddock,' murmured Loftus, bewildered.

'What is it?' remarked his reverence, shortly.

'A roast roach,' answered Puddock, looking quite innocently in that theologian's fiery face.

'*Thank* you,' said Father Roach, with an expression of countenance which polite little Puddock did not in the least understand.

'And how do *you* roast him—we know Loftus's receipt,' persisted Devereux, with remarkable cruelty.

'Just like a lump,' said Puddock, briskly.

'And how is that?' inquired Devereux.

'Flay the lump—splat him—divide him,' answered Puddock, with great volubility; 'and cut each side into two pieces; season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg, and baste with clarified butter; dish him with slices of oranges, barberries, grapes, gooseberries, and butter; and you will find that he eats deliciously either with farced pain or gammon pain.'

This rhapsody, delivered with the rapidity and emphasis of Puddock's earnest lisp, was accompanied with very general tokens of merriment from the company, and the priest, who half suspected him of having invented it, was on the point of falling foul of him, when Lord Castlemallard rose to take leave, and the general forthwith vacated the chair, and so the party broke up, fell into groups, and the greater part sauntered off to the Phœnix, where, in the club-room, they, with less restraint, and some new recruits, carried on the pleasures of the evening, which pleasures, as will sometimes happen, ended in something rather serious.

CHAPTER VII.

SHOWING HOW TWO GENTLEMEN MAY MISUNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER, WITHOUT ENABLING THE COMPANY TO UNDERSTAND THEIR QUARREL.

Loftus had by this time climbed to the savage lair of his garret, overstrewn with tattered papers and books; and Father Roach, in the sanctuary of his little parlour, was growling over the bones of a devilled turkey, and about to soothe his fretted soul in a generous

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libation of hot whiskey punch. Indeed, he was of an appeasable nature, and on the whole a very good fellow.

Dr. Toole, whom the young fellows found along with Nutter over the draught-board in the club-room, forsook his game to devour the story of Loftus's Lenten Hymn, and poor Father Roach's penance, rubbed his hands, and slapped his thigh, and crowed and shouted with ecstasy. O'Flaherty, who called for punch, and was unfortunately prone to grow melancholy and pugnacious over his liquor, was now in a saturnine vein of sentiment, discoursing of the charms of his peerless mistress, the Lady Magnolia Macnamara—for he was not one of those maudlin shepherds who pipe their loves in lonely glens and other sequestered places, but rather loved to exhibit his bare scars, and roar his tender torments for the edification of the market-place.

While he was descanting on the attributes of that bewitching 'crature,' Puddock, not two yards off, was describing, with scarcely less unction, the perfections of 'pig roast with the hair on;' and the two made a medley like 'The Roast Beef of Old England,' and 'The Last Rose of Summer,' arranged in alternate stanzas. O'Flaherty suddenly stopped short, and said a little sternly to Lieutenant Puddock—

'Does it very much signify, sir, (or as O'Flaherty pronounced it "sorr,") whether the animal has hair upon it or not?'

'*Every* thing, thir, in thith particular retheipt,' answered Puddock, a little loftily.

'But,' said Nutter, who, though no great talker, would make an effort to prevent a quarrel, and at the same time winking to Puddock in token that O'Flaherty was just a little 'hearty,' and so to let him alone; 'what signifies pig's hair, compared with human tresses?'

'Compared with *human* tresses?' interrupted O'Flaherty, with stern deliberation, and fixing his eyes steadily and rather unpleasantly upon Nutter, (I think he saw that wink and perhaps did not understand its import.)

'Ay, sir, and Mrs. Magnolia Macnamara has as rich a head of hair as you could wish to see,' says Nutter, thinking he was drawing him off very cleverly.

'As *I* could wish to see?' repeated O'Flaherty grimly.

'As *you* could desire to see, sir,' reiterated Nutter, firmly, for he was not easily put down; and they looked for several seconds in silence a little menacingly, though puzzled, at one another.

But O'Flaherty, after a short pause, seemed to forget Nutter, and returned to his celestial theme.

'Be the powers, sir, that young leedy has the most beautiful dimple in her chin I ever set eyes on!'

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'Have you ever put a marrowfat pea in it, sir?' inquired Devereux, simply, with all the beautiful rashness of youth.

'No, sorr,' replied O'Flaherty, in a deep tone, and with a very dangerous glare; 'and I'd like to see the man who, in my presence, id preshume to teeke that libertee.'

'What a glorious name Magnolia is!' interposed little Toole in great haste; for it was a practice among these worthies to avert quarrels—very serious affairs in these jolly days—by making timely little diversions, and it is wonderful, at a critical moment, what may be done by suddenly presenting a trifle; a pin's point, sometimes—at least, a marvellous small one—will draw off innocuously, the accumulating electricity of a pair of bloated scowling thunder-clouds.

'It was her noble godmother, when the family resided at Castlemara, in the county of Roscommon, the Lady Carrick-o'-Gunniol, who conferred it,' said O'Flaherty, grandly, 'upon her god-daughter, as who had a better right—I say, *who* had a better right?' and he smote his hand upon the table, and looked round inviting contradiction. 'My godmothers, in my baptism—that's catechism—and all the town of Chapelizod won't put that down—the Holy Church Catechism—while Hyacinth O'Flaherty, of Coolnaquirk, Lieutenant Fireworker, wears a sword.'

'Nobly said, Lieutenant!' exclaimed Toole, with a sly wink over his shoulder.

'And what about that leedy's neeme, sir?' demanded the enamoured fireworker.

'By Jove, sir, it is quite true, Lady Carrick-o'-Gunniol *was* her godmother;' and Toole ran off into the story of how that relationship was brought about; narrating it, however, with great caution and mildness, extracting all the satire, and giving it quite a dignified and creditable character, for the Lieutenant Fireworker smelt so confoundedly of powder that the little doctor, though he never flinched when occasion demanded, did not care to give him an open. Those who had heard the same story from the mischievous merry little doctor before, were, I dare say, amused at the grand and complimentary turn he gave it now.

The fact was, that poor Magnolia's name came to her in no very gracious way. Young Lady Carrick-o-Gunniol was a bit of a wag, and was planting a magnolia—one of the first of those botanical rarities seen in Ireland—when good-natured, vapouring, vulgar Mrs. Macnamara's note, who wished to secure a Peeress for her daughter's spiritual guardian, arrived. Her ladyship pencilled on the back of the note, 'Pray call the dear babe Magnolia,' and forthwith forgot all

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about it. But Madam Macnamara was charmed, and the autograph remained afterwards for two generations among the archives of the family; and, with great smiles and much complacency, she told Lord Carrack-o-Gunniol all about it, just outside the grand jury-room, where she met him during the assize week; and, being a man of a weak and considerate nature, rather kind, and very courteous—although his smile was very near exploding into a laugh, as he gave the good lady snuff out of his own box—he was yet very much concerned and vexed, and asked his lady, when he went home, how she could have induced old Mrs. Macnamara to give that absurd name to her poor infant: whereat her ladyship, who had not thought of it since, was highly diverted; and being assured that the babe was actually christened, and past recovery, Magnolia Macnamara, laughed very merrily, kissed her lord, who was shaking his head gravely, and then popped her hood on, kissed him again, and, laughing still, ran out to look at her magnolia, which, by way of reprisal, he henceforth, notwithstanding her entreaties, always called her 'Macnamara;' until, to her infinite delight, he came out with it, as it sometimes happens, at a wrong time, and asked old Mac—a large, mild man—then extant, madame herself, nurse, infant Magnolia, and all, who had arrived at the castle, to walk out and see Lady Carrick-o-Gunniol's 'Macnamara' and perceived not the slip, such is the force of habit, though the family stared, and Lady C. laughed in an uncalled-for-way, at a sudden recollection of a tumble she once had, when a child, over a flower-bed; and broke out repeatedly, to my lord's chagrin and bewilderment, as they walked towards the exotic.

When Toole ended his little family anecdote, which, you may be sure, he took care to render as palatable to Magnolia's knight as possible, by not very scrupulous excisions and interpolations, he wound all up, without allowing an instant for criticism or question, by saying briskly, though incoherently,

'And so, what do you say, Lieutenant, to a Walsh rabbit for supper?'

'The Lieutenant nodded a stolid assent.

'Will *you* have one, Nutter?' cried Toole.

'No,' said Nutter.

'And why not?' says Toole.

'Why, I believe Tom Rooke's song in praise of oysters,' answered Nutter, 'especially the verse—

> '"The youth will ne'er live to scratch a grey head,
> On a supper who goes of Welsh rabbit to bed."'

How came it to pass that Nutter hardly opened his lips this evening

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—on which, as the men who knew him longest all remarked, he was unprecedentedly talkative — without instantaneously becoming the mark at which O'Flaherty directed his fiercest and most suspicious scowls? And now that I know the allusion which the pugnacious lieutenant apprehended, I cannot but admire the fatality with which, without the smallest design, a very serious misunderstanding was brought about.

'As to *youths* living to scratch grey heads or not, sir,' said the young officer, in most menacing tones; 'I don't see what concern persons of your age can have in that. But I'll take leave to tell you, sir, that a gentleman, whether he be a "youth" as you *say*, or aged, as you *are*, who endayvours to make himself diverting at the expense of others, runs a murdhering good risk, sir, of getting himself scratched where he'll like it least.'

Little Nutter, though grave and generally taciturn, had a spirit of his own, and no notion whatever of knocking under to a bully. It is true, he had not the faintest notion why he was singled out for the young gentleman's impertinence; but neither did he mean to inquire. His mahogany features darkened for a moment to logwood, and his eyes showed their whites fiercely.

'We are not accustomed, sir, in this part of the world, to your Connaught notions of politeness; we meet here for social—a—a—sociality, sir; and the long and the short of it is, young gentleman, if you don't change your key, you'll find two can play at that game—and—and, I tell you, sir, there will be wigs on the green, sir.'

Here several voices interposed.

'Silence, gentlemen, and let me speak, or I'll assault him,' bellowed O'Flaherty, who, to do him justice, at this moment looked capable of anything. 'I believe, sir,' he continued, addressing Nutter, who confronted him like a little game-cock, 'it is not usual for one gentleman who renders himself offensive to another to oblige him to proceed to the length of manually malthrating his person.'

'Hey! eh?' said Nutter, drawing his mouth tight on one side, with an ugly expression, and clenching his hands in his breeches pockets.

'Manually malthrating his person, sir,' repeated O'Flaherty, 'by striking, kicking, or whipping any part or mimber of his body; or offering a milder assault, such as a pull by the chin, or a finger-tap upon the nose. It is usual, sir, for the purpose of avoiding ungentlemanlike noise, inconvenience, and confusion, that one gentleman should request of another to suppose himself affronted in the manner, whatever it may be, most intolerable to his feelings, which request I

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now, sir, tecke the libertee of preferring to you; and when you have engaged the services of a friend, I trust that Lieutenant Puddock, who lodges in the same house with me, will, in consideration of my being an officer of the same honourable corps, a sthranger in this part of the counthry, and, above all, a gentleman who can show paydagree like himself [here a low bow to Puddock, who returned it]; that Lieutenant Puddock will be so feelin' and so kind as to receive him on my behalf, and acting as *my* friend to manage all the particulars for settling, as easily as may be, this most unprovoked affair.'

With which words he made another bow, and a pause of inquiry directed to Puddock, who lisped with dignity—

'Sir, the duty is for many reasons, painful; but I—I can't refuse, sir, and I accept the trust.'

So O'Flaherty shook his hand, with another bow; bowed silently and loftily round the room, and disappeared, and a general buzz and a clack of tongues arose.

'Mr. Nutter—a—I hope things may be settled pleasantly,' said Puddock, looking as tall and weighty as he could; 'at present I—a—that is, at the moment, I—a—don't quite see—[the fact is, he had not a notion what the deuce it was all about]—but your friend will find me—your friend—a—at my lodgings up to one o'clock to-night, if necessary.'

And so Puddock's bow. For the moment an affair of this sort presented itself, all concerned therein became reserved and official, and the representatives merely of a ceremonious etiquette and a minutely-regulated ordeal of battle. So, as I said, Puddock bowed grandly and sublimely to Nutter, and then magnificently to the company, and made his exit.

There was a sort of a stun and a lull for several seconds. Something very decisive and serious had occurred. One or two countenances wore that stern and mysterious smile, which implies no hilarity, but a kind of reaction in presence of the astounding and the slightly horrible. There was a silence; the gentlemen kept their attitudes too, for some moments, and all eyes were directed toward the door. Then some turned to Charles Nutter, and then the momentary spell dissolved itself.

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CHAPTER VIII.

RELATING HOW DOCTOR TOOLE AND CAPTAIN DEVEREUX WENT ON A MOONLIGHT ERRAND.

NEARLY a dozen gentlemen broke out at once into voluble speech. Nutter was in a confounded passion; but being a man of few words, showed his wrath chiefly in his countenance, and stood with his legs apart and his arms stuffed straight into his coat pockets, his back to the fire-place, with his chest thrown daringly out, sniffing the air in a state of high tension, and as like as a respectable little fellow of five feet six could be to that giant who smelt the blood of the Irishman, and swore, with a 'Fee! Faw!! Fum!!!' he'd 'eat him for his supper that night.'

'None of the corps can represent you, Nutter, you know, said Captain Cluffe. 'It may go hard enough with Puddock and O'Flaherty, as the matter stands; but, by Jove! if any of us appear on the other side, the General would make it a very serious affair, indeed.'

'Toole, can't you?' asked Devereux.

'Out of the question,' answered he, shutting his eyes, with a frown, and shaking his head. 'There's no man I'd do it sooner for, Nutter knows; but I can't—I've refused too often; besides, you'll want me professionally, you know; for Sturk must attend that Royal Hospital inquiry to-morrow all day—but hang it, where's the difficulty? Isn't there?—pooh!—why there must be lots of fellows at hand. Just—a—just think for a minute.'

'I don't care who,' said Nutter, with dry ferocity, 'so he can load a pistol.'

'Tom Forsythe would have done capitally, if he was at home,' said one.

'But he's *not*,' remarked Cluffe.

'Well,' said Toole, getting close up to Devereux, in a coaxing, under tone, 'suppose we try Loftus.'

'Dan Loftus!' ejaculated Devereux.

'Dan Loftus,' repeated the little doctor, testily; 'remember, it's just eleven o'clock. He's no great things, to be sure; but what better can we get?'

'Allons, donc!' said Devereux, donning his cocked-hat, with a shrug, and the least little bit of a satirical smile, and out bustled the doctor beside him.

'Where the deuce did that broganeer, O'Flaherty, come from?' said Cluffe, confidentially, to old Major O'Neill.

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'A Connaughtman,' answered the Major, with a grim smile, for he was himself of that province and was, perhaps, a little bit proud of his countryman.

'Toole says he's well connected,' pursued Cluffe; 'but, by Jupiter! I never saw so mere a Teague; and the most cross-grained devil of a cat a-mountain.'

'I could not quite understand why he fastened on Mr. Nutter,' observed the Major, with a mild smile.

'I'll rid the town of him,' rapped out Nutter, with an oath, leering at his own shoebuckle, and tapping the sole with asperity on the floor.

'If you are thinking of any unpleasant measures, gentlemen, I'd rather, if you please, know nothing of them,' said the sly, quiet Major; 'for the General, you are aware, has expressed a strong opinion about such affairs; and as 'tis past my bed-hour, I'll wish you, gentlemen, a good-night,' and off went the Major.

'Upon my life, if this Connaught rapparee is permitted to carry on his business of indiscriminate cut-throat here, he'll make the service very pleasant,' resumed Cluffe, who, though a brisk young fellow of eight-and-forty, had no special fancy for being shot. 'I say the General ought to take the matter into his own hands.'

'Not till I'm done with it,' growled Nutter.

'And send the young gentleman home to Connaught,' pursued Cluffe.

'I'll send him first to the other place,' said Nutter, in allusion to the Lord Protector's well-known alternative.

In the open street, under the sly old moon, red little Dr. Toole, in his great wig, and Gipsy Devereux, in quest of a squire for the good knight who stood panting for battle in the front parlour of the 'Phœnix,' saw a red glimmer in Loftus's dormant window.

'He's alive and stirring still,' said Devereux, approaching the hall door with a military nonchalance.

'Whisht!' said Toole, plucking him back by the sash; 'we must not make a noise—the house is asleep. I'll manage it—leave it to me.'

And he took up a handful of gravel, but not having got the range, he shied it all against old Tom Drought's bedroom window.

'Deuce take that old sneak,' whispered Toole vehemently, 'he's always in the way; the last man in the town I'd have—but no matter:' and up went a pebble, better directed, for this time it went right through Loftus's window, and a pleasant little shower of broken glass jingled down into the street.

'Confound you, Toole,' said Devereux, 'you'll rouse the town.'

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'Plague take the fellow's glass—it's as thin as paper,' spluttered Toole.

'Loftus, we want you,' said Toole, in a hard whispered shout, and making a speaking trumpet of his hands, as the wild head of the student, like nothing in life but a hen's nest, appeared above.

'Cock-Loftus, come down, d'ye hear?' urged Devereux.

'Dr. Toole and Lieutenant Devereux—I—I—dear me! yes. Gentlemen, your most obedient,' murmured Loftus vacantly, and knocking his head smartly on the top of the window frame, in recovering from a little bow. 'I'll be wi' ye, gentlemen, in a moment.' And the hen's nest vanished.

Toole and Devereux drew back a little into the shadow of the opposite buildings, for while they were waiting, a dusky apparition, supposed to be old Drought in his night-shirt, appeared at that gentleman's windows, saluting the ambassadors with mop and moe, in a very threatening and energetic way. Just as this demonstration subsided, the hall door opened wide—and indeed was left so—while our friend Loftus, in a wonderful tattered old silk coat, that looked quite indescribable by moonlight, the torn linings hanging down in loops inside the skirts, pale and discoloured, like the shreds of banners in a cathedral; his shirt loose at the neck, his breeches unbuttoned at the knees, and a gigantic, mishapen, and mouldy pair of slippers clinging and clattering about his feet, came down the steps, his light, round little eyes and queer, quiet face peering at them into the shade, and a smokified volume of divinity tucked under his arm, with his finger between the leaves to keep the place.

When Devereux saw him approaching, the whole thing—mission, service, man, and all—struck him in so absurd a point of view, that he burst out into an explosion of laughter, which only grew more vehement and uproarious the more earnestly and imploringly Toole tried to quiet him, pointing up with both hands, and all his fingers extended, to the windows of the sleeping townsfolk, and making horrible grimaces, shrugs, and ogles. But the young gentleman was not in the habit of denying himself innocent indulgences, and shaking himself loose of Toole, he walked down the dark side of the street in peals of laughter, making, ever and anon, little breathless remarks to himself, which his colleague could not hear, but which seemed to have the effect of setting him off again into new hemi-demi-semi-quavers and roars of laughter, and left the doctor to himself, to conduct the negociation with Loftus.

'Well?' said Devereux, by this time recovering breath, as the

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little doctor, looking very red and glum, strutted up to him along the shady pavement.

'Well? *well?*—oh, ay, *very* well, to be sure. I'd like to know what the plague we're to do now,' grumbled Toole.

'Your precious armour-bearer refuses to act then?' asked Devereux.

'To be sure he does. He sees *you* walking down the street, ready to die o' laughing—at *nothing*, by Jove!' swore Toole, in deep disgust; 'and—and—och! hang it! it's all a confounded pack o' nonsense. Sir, if you could not keep grave for five minutes, you ought not to have come at all. But what need *I* care? It's Nutter's affair, not mine.'

'And well for him we failed. Did you ever see such a fish? He'd have shot himself or Nutter, to a certainty. But there's a chance yet: we forgot the Nightingale Club; they're still in the Phœnix.'

'Pooh, sir! they're all tailors and green-grocers,' said Toole, in high dudgeon.

'There are two or three good names among them, however,' answered Devereux; and by this time they were on the threshold of the Phœnix.

'Larry,' he cried to the waiter, 'the Nightingale Club is *there*, is it not?' glancing at the great back parlour door.

'Be the powers! Captain, you may say that,' said Larry, with a wink, and a grin of exquisite glee.

'See, Larry,' said Toole, with importance, 'we're a little serious now; so just say if there's any of the gentlemen there; you—you understand, now; quite steady? D'ye see me?'

Larry winked—this time a grave wink—looked down at the floor, and up to the cornice, and—

'Well,' said he, 'to be candid with you, jest at this minute—half-an-hour ago, you see, it was different—the only gentleman I'd take on myself to recommend to you as perfectly sober is Mr. Macan, of Petticoat-lane.'

'Is he in business?' asked Toole.

'Does he keep a shop?' said Devereux.

'A shop! *two* shops;—a great man in the chandlery line,' responded Larry.

'H'm! not precisely the thing we want, though,' says Toole.

'There are some of them, surely, that *don't* keep shops,' said Devereux, a little impatiently.

'Millions!' said Larry.

'Come, say their names.'

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'Only one of them came this evening, Mr. Doolan, of Stonnybatther—he's a retired merchant.'

'That will do,' said Toole, under his breath, to Devereux. Devereux nodded.

'Just, I say, tap him on the shoulder, and tell him that Dr. Toole, you know, of this town, with many compliments and excuses, begs one word with him,' said the doctor.

'Hoo! Docthur dear, he was the first of them down, and was carried out to his coach insensible jist when Mr. Crozier of Christ Church began, "Come Roger and listen;" he's in his bed in Stonybatther a good hour and a half ago.'

'A retired merchant,' says Devereux; 'well, Toole, what do you advise, now?'

'By Jove, I think one of us must go into town. 'Twill never do to leave poor Nutter in the lurch; and between ourselves, that O'Flaherty's a—a blood-thirsty idiot, by Jove—and ought to be put down.'

'Let's see Nutter—you or I must go—we'll take one of these songster's "noddies."'

A 'noddy' give me leave to remark, was the one-horse hack vehicle of Dublin and the country round, which has since given place to the jaunting car, which is, in its turn, half superseded by the cab.

And Devereux, followed by Toole, entered the front parlour again. But without their help, the matter was arranging itself, and a second, of whom they knew nothing, was about to emerge.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW A SQUIRE WAS FOUND FOR THE KNIGHT OF THE RUEFUL COUNTENANCE.

When Dr. Toole grumbled at his disappointment, he was not at all aware how nearly his interview with Loftus had knocked the entire affair on the head. He had no idea how much that worthy person was horrified by his proposition; and Toole walked off in a huff, without bidding him good night, and making a remark in which the words 'old woman' occurred pretty audibly. But Loftus remained under the glimpses of the moon in perturbation and sore perplexity. It was so late he scarcely dared disturb Dr. Walsingham or General Chattesworth. But there came the half-stifled cadence of a song—not bacchanalian, but sentimental--something about Daphne and a swain—struggling through the window-shutters next the green hall-

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door close by, and Dan instantly bethought himself of Father Roach. So knocking stoutly at the window, he caused the melody to subside and the shutter to open. When the priest, looking out, saw Dan Loftus in his deshabille, I believe he thought for a moment it was something from the neighbouring church-yard.

However, his reverence came out and stood on the steps, enveloped in a hospital aroma of broiled bones, lemons, and alcohol, and shaking his visitor affectionately by the hand—for he bore no malice, and the Lenten ditty he quite forgave as being no worse in modern parlance than an unhappy 'fluke'—was about to pull him into the parlour, where there was ensconced, he told him, 'a noble friend of his.' This was 'Pat Mahony, from beyond Killarney, just arrived—a man of parts and conversation, and a lovely singer.'

But Dan resisted, and told his tale in an earnest whisper in the hall. The priest made his mouth into a round queer little O, through which he sucked a long breath, elevating his brows, and rolling his eyes slowly about.

'A jewel! And Nutter, of all the men on the face of the airth—though I often heerd he was a fine shot, and a sweet little fencer in his youth, an' game, too—oh, be the powers! you can see that still—game to the back-bone—and—whisht a bit now—whose the other?'

'Lieutenant O'Flaherty.'

(A low whistle from his reverence). 'That's a boy that comes from a fighting county—Galway. I wish you saw them at an election time. Why, there's no end of divarsion—the divarsion of *stopping* them, of course, I mean (observing a sudden alteration in Loftus's countenance). An' *you*, av coorse, want to stop it? And so, av coorse, do I, my dear. Well, then, wait a bit, now—we must have our eyes open. Don't be in a hurry—let us be harrumless as sarpints, but *wise* as doves. Now, 'tis a fine thing, no doubt, to put an end to a jewel by active intherfarence, though I have known cases, my dear child, where suppressing a simple jewel has been the cause of half a dozen breaking out afterwards in the same neighbourhood, and on the very same quarrel, d'ye mind—though, of coorse, that's no reason here or there, my dear boy! But take it that a jewel is breaking down and coming to the ground of itself (here a hugely cunning wink), in an aisy, natural, accommodating way, the only effect of intherfarence is to bolster it up, d'ye see, so just considher how things are, my dear. Lave it all to me, and mind my words, it *can't* take place without a second. The officers have refused, so has Toole, *you* won't undertake it, and it's too late to go into town. I defy it to come to anything. Jest be said be me, Dan Loftus, and let sleeping dogs lie. Here I am,

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an old experienced observer, that's up to their tricks, with my eye upon them. Go you to bed—lave them to me—and they're check-mated without so much as seeing how we bring it to pass.'

Dan hesitated.

'Arrah! go to your bed, Dan Loftus, dear. It's past eleven o'clock—they're nonplussed already; and lave *me*—me that understands it—to manage the rest.'

'Well, sir, I do confide it altogether to you. I know I might, through ignorance, do a mischief.'

And so they bid a mutual good night, and Loftus scaled his garret stair and snuffed his candle, and plunged again into the business of two thousand years ago.

'Here's a purty business,' says the priest, extending both his palms, with a face of warlike importance, and shutting the door behind him with what he called 'a cow's kick;' 'a jewel, my dear Pat, no less; bloody work I'm afeared.'

Mr. Mahony, who had lighted a pipe during his entertainer's absence, withdrew the fragrant tube from his lips, and opened his capacious mouth with a look of pleasant expectation, for he, like other gentlemen of his day—and, must we confess, not a few jolly clerics of my creed, as well as of honest Father Roach's—regarded the ordeal of battle, and all its belongings, simply as the highest branch of sporting. Not that the worthy Father avowed any such sentiment; on the contrary, his voice and his eyes, if not his hands, were always raised against the sanguinary practice; and scarce a duel occurred within a reasonable distance unattended by his reverence, in the capacity, as he said, of 'an unauthorized, but airnest, though, he feared, unavailing peace-maker.' There he used to spout little maxims of reconciliation, and Christian brotherhood and forbearance; exhorting to forget and forgive; wringing his hands at each successive discharge; and it must be said, too, in fairness, playing the part of a good Samaritan towards the wounded, to whom his green hall-door was ever open, and for whom the oil of his consolation and the wine of his best bin never refused to flow.

'Pat, my child,' said his reverence, 'that Nutter's a divil of a fellow—at least he *was*, by all accounts; he'll be bad enough, I'm afeared, and hard enough to manage, if everything goes smooth; but if he's kept waiting there, fuming and boiling over, do ye mind, without a natural vent for his feelings, or a *friend*, do ye see, at his side to—to *resthrain* him, and bring about, if possible, a friendly mutual understanding—why, my dear child, he'll get into that state

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of exasperation an' violence, he'll have half a dozen jewels on his hands before morning.'

'Augh! 'tid be a murther to baulk them for want of a friend,' answered Mr. Mahony, standing up like a warrior, and laying the pipe of peace upon the chimney. 'Will I go down, Father Denis, and offer my sarvices?'

'With a view to a *reconciliation*, mind,' said his reverence, raising his finger, closing his eyes, and shaking his florid face impressively.

'Och, bother! don't I know—of coorse, reconciliation;' and he was buttoning his garments where, being a little 'in flesh,' as well as tall, he had loosed them. '*Where* are the gentlemen now, and who will I ask for?'

'I'll show you the light from the steps. Ask for Dr. Toole; and he's *certainly* there; and if he's not, for Mr. Nutter; and just say you came from my house, where you—a—pooh! accidentally heard, through Mr. Loftus, do ye mind, there was a difficulty in finding a friend to—a—strive to make up matters between thim.'

By this time they stood upon the door-steps; and Mr. Mahony had clapt on his hat with a pugnacious cock o' one side; and following, with a sporting and mischievous leer, the direction of the priest's hand, that indicated the open door of the Phœnix, through which a hospitable light was issuing.

'There's where you'll find the gentlemen, in the front parlour,' says the priest. 'You remember Dr. Toole, and *he'll* remember *you*. An' *mind*, dear, it's to make it up you're goin'.' Mr. Mahony was already under weigh, at a brisk stride, and with a keen relish for the business. 'And the blessing of the peace-maker go with you, my child!' added his reverence, lifting his hands and his eyes towards the heavens, 'An' upon my fainy!' looking shrewdly at the stars, and talking to himself, 'they'll have a fine morning for the business, *if*, unfortunately'—and here he re-ascended his door-steps with a melancholy shrug—'if, *unfortunately*, Pat Mahony should fail.'

When Mr. Pat Mahony saw occasion for playing the gentleman, he certainly did come out remarkably strong in the part. It was done in a noble, florid, glowing style, according to his private ideal of the complete fine gentleman. Such bows, such pointing of the toes, such graceful flourishes of the three-cocked hat—such immensely engaging smiles and wonderful by-play, such an apparition, in short, of perfect elegance-valour, and courtesy, were never seen before in the front parlour of the Phœnix.

'Mr. Mahony, by jingo!' ejaculated Toole, in an accent of thankfulness amounting nearly to rapture. Nutter seemed relieved, too,

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and advanced to be presented to the man who, instinct told him, was to be his friend. Cluffe, a man of fashion of the military school, eyed the elegant stranger with undisguised disgust and wonder, and Devereux with that sub-acid smile with which men will sometimes quietly relish absurdity.

Mr. Mahony, 'discoursin'' a country neighbour outside the half-way-house at Muckafubble, or enjoying an easy *tête-à-tête* with Father Roach, was a very inferior person, indeed, to Patrick Mahony, Esq., the full-blown diplomatist and pink of gentility astonishing the front parlour of the Phœnix.

There, Mr. Mahony's periods were fluent and florid, and the words chosen occasionally rather for their grandeur and melody than for their exact connexion with the context or bearing upon his meaning. The consequence was a certain gorgeous haziness and bewilderment, which made the task of translating his harangues rather troublesome and conjectural.

Having effected the introduction, and made known the object of his visit, Nutter and he withdrew to a small chamber behind the bar, where Nutter, returning some of his bows, and having listened without deriving any very clear ideas to two consecutive addresses from his companion, took the matter in hand himself, and said he—

'I beg, sir, to relieve you at once from the trouble of trying to arrange this affair amicably. I have been grossly insulted, he's not going to apologize, and nothing but a meeting will satisfy me. He's a mere murderer. I have not the faintest notion why he wants to kill me; but being reduced to this situation, I hold myself obliged, if I can, to rid the town of him finally.'

'Shake hands, sir,' cried Mahony, forgetting his rhetoric in his enthusiasm; 'be the hole in the wall, sir, I honour you.'

CHAPTER X.

THE DEAD SECRET, SHOWING HOW THE FIRE-WORKER PROVED TO PUDDOCK THAT NUTTER HAD SPIED OUT THE NAKEDNESS OF THE LAND.

WHEN Puddock, having taken a short turn or two in the air, by way of tranquillizing his mind, mounted his lodging stairs, he found Lieutenant O'Flaherty, not at all more sober than he had last seen him, in the front drawing-room, which apartment was richly perfumed with powerful exhalations of rum punch.

'Dhrink this, Puddock—dhrink it,' said O'Flaherty, filling a large

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glass in equal quantities with rum and water; 'dhrink it, my sinsare friend; it will studdy you, it will, upon my honour, Puddock!'

'But—a—thank you, sir, I am anxious to understand exactly'—— said Puddock. Here he was interrupted by a frightful grin and a '*ha!*' from O'Flaherty, who darted to the door, and seizing his little withered French servant, who was entering, swung him about the room by his coat collar.

'So sorr, you've been prating again, have you, you desateful, idle old dhrunken miscreant; you did it on purpose, you blundherin' old hyena; it's the third jewel you got your masther into; and if I loose my life, divil a penny iv your wages ye'll ever get—that's one comfort. Yes, sorr! this is the third time you have caused me to brew my hands in human blood; I dono' if it's malice, or only blundherin'. Oh!' he cried, with a still fiercer shake, 'it's I that wishes I could be sure 'twas malice, I'd skiver you, heels and elbows, on my sword, and roast you alive on that fire. Is not it a hard thing, my darlin' Puddock, I can't find out.' He was still holding the little valet by the collar, and stretching out his right hand to Puddock. 'But I am always the sport of misfortunes—small and great. If there was an ould woman to be handed into supper—or a man to be murthered by mistake—or an ugly girl to be danced with, whose turn was it, ever and always to do the business, but poor Hyacinth O'Flaherty's—(tears.) I could tell you, Puddock,' he continued, forgetting his wrath, and letting his prisoner go, in his eager pathos—the Frenchman made his escape in a twinkling—'I was the only man in our regiment that tuck the mazles in Cork, when it was goin' among the childhren, bad luck to them—I that was near dyin' of it when I was an infant; and I was the only officer in the regiment, when we were at Athlone, that was prevented going to the race ball—and I would not for a hundred pounds. I was to dance the first minuet, and the first country dance, with that beautiful creature, Miss Rose Cox. I was makin' a glass of brandy punch—not feelin' quite myself—and I dhressed and all, in our room, when Ensign Higgins, a most thoughtless young man, said something disrespectful about a beautiful mole she had on her chin; bedad, sir, he called it a wart, if you plase! and feelin' it sthrongly, I let the jug of scaldin' wather drop on my knees; I wish you felt it, my darlin' Puddock. I was scalded in half a crack from a fut above my knees down to the last joint of my two big toes; and I raly thought my sinses were leving me. I lost the ball by it. Oh, ho, wirresthrue! poor Hyacinth O'Flaherty!' and thereupon he wept.

'You thee, Lieutenant O'Flaherty,' lisped Puddock, growing im-

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patient, 'we can't say how soon Mr. Nutter's friend may apply for an interview, and—a— I must confeth I don't yet quite understand the point of difference between you and him, and therefore'——

'A where the devil's that blackguard little French wazel gone to?' exclaimed O'Flaherty, for the first time perceiving that his captive had escaped. 'Kokang Modate! Do you hear me, Kokang Modate!' he shouted.

'But really, sir, you must be so good as to place before me, before me, sir, clearly, the—the cause of this unhappy dispute, the exact offenth, thir, for otherwitho'——

'Cause, to be sure! and plenty iv cause. I never fought a jewel yet, Puddock, my friend—and this will be the ninth—without cause. They said, I'm tould, in Cork, I was quarrelsome; they lied; I'm not quarrelsome; I only want pace, and quiet, and justice; I hate a quarrelsome man; I tell you, Puddock, if I only knew where I'd find a quarrelsome man, be the powers I'd go fifty miles out of my way to pull him be the nose. They lied, Puddock, my dear boy, an' I'd give twenty pounds this minute I had them on this flure, to tell them how *damnably* they lied!'

'No doubt, thir,' said Puddock, 'but if you pleathe I really mutht have a dithtinct answer to my'——

'Get out o' that sorr,' thundered O'Flaherty, with an awful stamp on the floor, as the 'coquin maudit,' O'Flaherty's only bit of French, such as it was, in obedience to that form of invocation, appeared nervously at the threshold, 'or I'll fling the contints of the r-r-oo-oo-oom at your head, (exit monsieur, again). Be gannies! if I thought it was he that done it, I'd jirk his old bones through the top of the window. Will I call him back and give him his desarts, will I, Puddock! Oh, ho, hone! my darlin' Puddock, everything turns agin me; what'll I do, Puddock, jewel, or what's to become o' me?' and he shed some more tears, and drank off the greater part of the beverage which he had prepared for Puddock.

'I believe, sir, that this is the sixth time I've ventured to ask a distinct statement from your lips, of the cauthe of your dithagreement with Mr. Nutter, which I plainly tell you, thir, I don't at prethent underthtand,' said Puddock, loftily and firmly enough.

'To be sure, my darlin' Puddock,' replied O'Flaherty, 'it was that cursed little French whipper-snapper, with his monkeyfied intherruptions; be the powers, Puddock, if you knew half the mischief that same little baste has got me into, you would not wondher if I murthered him. It was he was the cause of my jewel with my cousin, Art Considine, and I wanting to be the very pink of politeness to

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him. I wrote him a note when he came to Athlone, afther two years in France, and jist out o' compliment to him, I unluckily put in a word of French: come an' dine, says I, and we'll have a dish of chat. I knew u-n p-l-a-t (spelling it), was a dish, an' says I to Jerome, that pigimy (so he pronounced it) you seen here at the door, that's his damnable name, what's *chat* in French—c-h-a-t—spelling it to him; "sha," says he; "sha?" says I, "spell it, if you plase" says I; "c-h-a-t," says he, the stupid old viper. Well, I took the trouble to write it out, "un plat de chat;" "is that right," says I, showing it to him. "It is, my lord," says he, looking at me as if I had two heads. I never knew the manin' of it for more than a month afther I shot poor Art through the two calves. An' he that fought two jewels before, all about cats, one of them with a Scotch gentleman that he gave the lie to, for saying that French cooks had a way of stewing cats you could not tell them from hares; and the other immadiately afther, with Lieutenant Rugge, of the Royal Navy, that got one stewed for fun, and afther my cousin Art dined off it, like a man, showed him the tail and the claws. It's well he did not die of it, and no wondher he resented my invitation, though upon my honour, as a soldier and a gentleman, may I be stewed alive myself in a pot, Puddock my dear, if I had the laste notion of offering him the smallest affront!'

'I begin to despair, sir,' exclaimed Puddock, 'of receiving the information without which 'tis vain for me to try to be useful to you; once more, may I entreat to know what *is* the affront of which you complain?'

'You don't know; raly and truly now, you don't know?' said O'Flaherty, fixing a solemn tipsy leer on him.

'I tell you *no*, thir,' rejoined Puddock.

'And do you mean to tell me you did not hear that vulgar dog Nutter's unmanly jokes?'

'Jokes!' repeated Puddock, in large perplexity, 'why I've been here in this town for more than five years, and I never heard in all that time that Nutter once made a joke—and upon my life, I don't think he could make a joke, sir, if he tried—I don't, indeed, Lieutenant O'Flaherty, upon my honour!'

'And rat it, sir, how can I help it?' cried O'Flaherty, relapsing into pathos.

'Help what?' demanded Puddock.

O'Flaherty took him by the hand, and gazing on his face with a maudlin, lacklustre tenderness, said:—

'Absalom was caught by the hair of his head—he was, Puddock

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—long hair or short hair, or (a hiccough) no hair at all, isn't it nature's doing, I ask you my darlin' Puddock, *isn't* it?' He was shedding tears again very fast. 'There was Cicero and Julius Cæsar, wor both as bald as that,' and he thrust a shining sugar basin, bottom upward, into Puddock's face. '*I'm* not bald; I tell you I'm *not*—no, my darlin' Puddock, I'm not—poor Hyacinth O'Flaherty is *not bald*,' shaking Puddock by both hands.

'That's very plain, sir, but I don't see your drift,' he replied.

'I want to tell you, Puddock, dear, if you'll only have a minute's patience. The door can't fasten, divil bother it; come into the next room;' and toppling a little in his walk, he led him solemnly into his bed-room—the door of which he locked—somewhat to Puddock's disquietude, who began to think him insane. Here having informed Puddock that Nutter was driving at the one point the whole evening, as any one that knew the secret would have seen; and having solemnly imposed the seal of secrecy upon his second, and essayed a wild and broken discourse upon the difference between total baldness and partial loss of hair, he disclosed to him the grand mystery of his existence, by lifting from the summit of his head a circular piece of wig, which in those days they called I believe, a 'topping,' leaving a bare shining disk exposed, about the size of a large pat of butter.

'Upon my life, thir, it'th a very fine piethe of work,' says Puddock, who viewed the wiglet with the eye of a stage-property man, and held it by a top lock near the candle. 'The very finetht piethe of work of the kind I ever thaw. 'Tith thertainly French. Oh, yeth —we can't do such thingth here. By Jove, thir, what a wig that man would make for Cato!'

'An' he must be a mane crature—I say, a mane crature,' pursued O'Flaherty, 'for there was not a soul in the town but Jerome, the—the threacherous ape, that knew it. It's he that dhresses my head every morning behind the bed-curtain there, with the door locked. And Nutter could never have found it out—*who* was to tell him, unless that ojus French damon, that's never done talkin' about it;' and O'Flaherty strode heavily up and down the room with his hands in his breeches' pockets, muttering savage invectives, pitching his head from side to side, and whisking round at the turns in a way to show how strongly he was wrought upon.

'Come in, sorr!' thundered O'Flaherty, unlocking the door, in reply to a knock, and expecting to see his 'ojus French damon.' But it was a tall fattish stranger, rather flashily dressed, but a little soiled, with a black wig, and a rollicking red face, showing a good deal of chin and jaw.

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O'Flaherty made his grandest bow, quite forgetting the exposure at the top of his head; and Puddock stood rather shocked, with the candle in one hand and O'Flaherty's scalp in the other.

'You come, sir, I presume, from Mr. Nutter,' said O'Flaherty, with lofty courtesy. This, sir, is my friend, Lieutenant Puddock, of the Royal Irish Artillery, who does me the honour to support me with his advice and"——

As he moved his hand towards Puddock he saw his scalp dangling between that gentleman's finger and thumb, and became suddenly mute. He clapped his hand upon his bare skull, and made an agitated pluck at that article, but missed, and disappeared, with an imprecation in Irish, behind the bed curtains.

'If you will be so obliging, sir, as to precede me into that room,' lisped Puddock, with grave dignity, and waving O'Flaherty's scalp slightly toward the door—for Puddock never stooped to hide any thing, and being a gentleman, pure and simple, was not ashamed or afraid to avow his deeds, words, and situations; 'I shall do myself the honour to follow.'

'Gi' me *that*,' was heard in a vehement whisper from behind the curtains. Puddock understood it, and restored the treasure.

The secret conference in the drawing-room was not tedious, nor indeed very secret, for anyone acquainted with the diplomatic slang in which such affairs were conducted might have learned in the lobby, or indeed in the hall, so mighty was the voice of the stranger, that there was no chance of any settlement without a meeting which was fixed to take place at twelve o'clock next day on the Fifteen Acres.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME TALK ABOUT THE HAUNTED HOUSE—BEING, AS I SUPPOSE, ONLY OLD WOMAN'S TALES.

OLD SALLY always attended her young mistress while she prepared for bed—not that Lilias required help, for she had the spirit of neatness and a joyous, gentle alacrity, and only troubled the good old creature enough to prevent her thinking herself grown old and useless.

Sally, in her quiet way, was garrulous, and she had all sorts of old-world tales of wonder and adventure, to which Lilias often went pleasantly to sleep; for there was no danger while old Sally sat knitting there by the fire, and the sound of the rector's mounting upon his chairs, as was his wont, and taking down and putting up

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his books in the study beneath, though muffled and faint, gave evidence that that good and loving influence was awake and busy.

Old Sally was telling her young mistress, who sometimes listened with a smile, and sometimes lost a good five minutes together of her gentle prattle, how the young gentleman, Mr. Mervyn, had taken that awful old haunted habitation, the Tiled House 'beyant at Ballyfermot,' and was going to stay there, and wondered no one had told him of the mysterious dangers of that desolate mansion.

It stood by a lonely bend of the narrow road. Lilias had often looked upon the short, straight, grass-grown avenue with an awful curiosity at the old house which she had learned in childhood to fear as the abode of shadowy tenants and unearthly dangers.

'There are people, Sally, now-a-days, who call themselves free-thinkers, and don't believe in anything—even in Ghosts,' said Lilias.

'A then the place he's stopping in now, Miss Lily, 'ill soon cure him of free-thinking, if the half they say about it's true,' answered Sally.

'But I don't say, mind, he's a free-thinker, for I don't know anything of Mr. Mervyn; but if he be not, he must be very brave, or very good, indeed. I know, Sally, I should be horribly afraid, indeed, to sleep in it myself,' answered Lilias, with a cosey little shudder, as the aërial image of the old house for a moment stood before her, with its peculiar malign, sacred, and skulking aspect, as if it had drawn back in shame and guilt under the melancholy old elms among the tall hemlock and nettles.

'And now, Sally, I'm safe in bed. Stir the fire my old darling.' For although it was the first week in May, the night was frosty. 'And tell me all about the Tiled House again, and frighten me out of my wits.'

So good old Sally, whose faith in such matters was a religion, went off over the well-known ground in a gentle little amble—sometimes subsiding into a walk as she approached some special horror, and pulling up altogether—that is to say, suspending her knitting, and looking with a mysterious nod at her young mistress in the four-poster, or lowering her voice to a sort of whisper when the crisis came.

So she told her how when the neighbours hired the orchard that ran up to the windows at the back of the house, the dogs they kept there used to howl so wildly and wolfishly all night among the trees, and prowl under the walls of the house so dejectedly, that they were fain to open the door and let them in at last; and, indeed, small need was there for dogs; for no one, young or old, dared go near the

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orchard after night-fall. No, the burnished golden pippins that peeped through the leaves in the western rays of evening, and made the mouths of the Ballyfermot school-boys water, glowed undisturbed in the morning sunbeams, and secure in the mysterious tutelage of the night smiled coyly on their predatory longings. And this was no fanciful reserve and avoidance. Mick Daly, when he had the orchard, used to sleep in the loft over the kitchen; and he swore that within five or six weeks, while he lodged there, he twice saw the same thing, and that was a lady in a hood and a loose dress, her head drooping, and her finger on her lip, walking in silence among the crooked stems, with a little child by the hand, who ran smiling and skipping beside her. And the Widow Cresswell once met them at night-fall, on the path through the orchard to the back-door, and she did not know what it was until she saw the men looking at one another as she told it.

'It's often she told it to me,' said old Sally; 'and how she came on them all of a sudden at the turn of the path, just by the thick clump of alder trees; and how she stopped, thinking it was some lady that had a right to be there; and how they went by as swift as the shadow of a cloud, though she only seemed to be walking slow enough, and the little child pulling by her arm, this way and that way, and took no notice of her, nor even raised her head, though she stopped and curtsied. And old Dalton, don't you remember old Dalton, Miss Lily?'

'I think I do, the old man who limped, and wore the odd black wig?'

'Yes, indeed, acushla, so he did. See how well she remembers! That was by a kick of one of the earl's horses—he was groom there,' resumed Sally. 'He used to be troubled with hearing the very sounds his master used to make to bring him and old Oliver to the door, when he came back late. It was only on very dark nights when there was no moon. They used to hear all on a sudden, the whimpering and scraping of dogs at the hall-door, and the sound of the whistle, and the light stroke across the window with the lash of the whip, just like as if the earl himself—may his poor soul find rest—was there. First the wind 'id stop, like you'd be holding your breath, then came these sounds they knew so well, and when they made no sign of stirring or opening the door, the wind 'id begin again with such a hoo-hoo-o-o-high, you'd think it was laughing, and crying, and hooting all at once.'

Here old Sally's tale and her knitting ceased for a moment, as if she were listening to the wind outside the haunted precincts of the Tiled House; and she took up her parable again.

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'The very night he met his death in England, old Oliver, the butler, was listening to Dalton—for Dalton was a scholar—reading the letter that came to him through the post that day, telling him to get things ready, for his troubles wor nearly over, and he expected to be with them again in a few days, and may-be almost as soon as the letter; and sure enough, while he was reading, there comes a frightful rattle at the window, like some one all in a tremble, trying to shake it open, and the earl's voice, as they both conceited, cries from outside, "Let me in, let me in, let me in!" "It's him,' says the butler. "Tis so, bedad," says Dalton, and they both looked at the windy, and at one another—and then back again—overjoyed, in a soart of a way, and frightened all at onst. Old Oliver was bad with the rheumatiz. So away goes Dalton to the hall-door, and he calls "who's there?" and no answer. "May-be," says Dalton, to himself, "'tis what he's rid round to the back-door;" so to the back-door with him, and there he shouts again—and no answer, and not a sound outside—and he began to feel quare, and to the hall-door with him back again. "Who's there? do you hear, who's there?" he shouts, and receiving no answer still. "I'll open the door at any rate," says he, "maybe it's what he's made his escape," for they knew all about his troubles, and wants to get in without noise, so praying all the time—for his mind misgave him, it might not be all right—he shifts the bars and unlocks the door; but neither man, woman, nor child, nor horse, nor any living shape was standing there, only something or another slipt into the house close by his leg; it might be a dog, or something that way, he could not tell, for he only seen it for a moment with the corner of his eye, and it went in just like as if it belonged to the place. He could not see which way it went, up or down, but the house was never a happy one, or a quiet house after; and Dalton bangs the hall-door, and he took a sort of a turn and a thrembling, and back with him to Oliver, the butler, looking as white as the blank leaf of his master's letter, that was between his finger and thumb. "What is it? *what* is it?" says the butler, catching his crutch like a waypon, fastening his eyes on Dalton's white face, and growing almost as pale himself. "The master's dead," says Dalton—and so he was, signs on it.

'After the turn she got by what she seen in the orchard, when she came to know the truth of what it was, Jinny Cresswell, you may be sure, did not stay there an hour longer than she could help: and she began to take notice of things she did not mind before—such as when she went into the big bed-room over the hall, that the lord used to sleep in, whenever she went in at one door the other door used to be

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pulled to very quick, as if some one avoiding her was getting out in haste; but the thing that frightened her most was just this—that sometimes she used to find a long straight mark from the head to the foot of her bed, as if 'twas made by something heavy lying there, and the place where it was, used to feel warm—as if—whoever it was—they only left it as she came into the room.

'But the worst of all was poor Kitty Haplin, the young woman that died of what she seen. Her mother said it was how she was kept awake all the night with the walking about of some one in the next room, tumbling about boxes, and pulling over drawers, and talking and sighing to himself, and she, poor thing, wishing to go asleep, and wondering who it could be, when in he comes, a fine man, in a sort of loose silk morning-dress, an' no wig, but a velvet cap on, and to the windy with him quiet and aisy, and she makes a turn in the bed to let him know there was some one there, thinking he'd go away, but instead of that, over he comes to the side of the bed, looking very bad, and says something to her—but his speech was thick and choakin' like a dummy's that id be trying to spake—and she grew very frightened, and says she, 'I ask your honour's pardon, sir, but I can't hear you right,' and with that he stretches up his neck nigh out of his cravat, turning his face up towards the ceiling, and—grace between us and harm!—his throat was cut across, and wide open; she seen no more, but dropped in a dead faint in the bed, and back to her mother with her in the morning, and she never swallied bit or sup more, only she just sat by the fire holding her mother's hand, crying and trembling, and peepin' over her shoulder, and starting with every sound, till she took the fever and died, poor thing, not five weeks after.'——

And so on, and on, and on flowed the stream of old Sally's narrative, while Lilias dropped into dreamless sleep, and then the story-teller stole away to her own tidy bed room and innocent slumbers.

CHAPTER XII.

SOME ODD FACTS ABOUT THE TILED HOUSE—BEING AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE OF THE GHOST OF A HAND.

I'm sure she believed every word she related, for old Sally was veracious. But all this was worth just so much as such talk commonly is—marvels, fabulæ, what our ancestors called winter's tales—which gathered details from every narrator, and dilated in the act of narration. Still it was not quite for nothing that the house was held to be

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haunted. Under all this smoke there smouldered just a little spark of truth—an authenticated mystery, for the solution of which some of my readers may possibly suggest a theory, though I confess I can't.

Miss Rebecca Chattesworth, in a letter dated late in the autumn of 1753, gives a minute and curious relation of occurrences in the Tiled House, which, it is plain, although at starting she protests against all such fooleries, she has heard with a peculiar sort of interest, and relates it certainly with an awful sort of particularity.

I was for printing the entire letter, which is really very singular as well as characteristic. But my publisher meets me with his *veto*; and I believe he is right. The worthy old lady's letter *is*, perhaps, too long; and I must rest content with a few hungry notes of its tenor.

That year, and somewhere about the 24th October, there broke out a strange dispute between Mr. Alderman Harper, of High-street, Dublin, and my Lord Castlemallard, who, in virtue of his cousinship to the young heir's mother, had undertaken for him the management of the tiny estate on which the Tiled or Tyled House—for I find it spelt both ways—stood.

This Alderman Harper had agreed for a lease of the house for his daughter, who was married to a gentleman named Prosser. He furnished it and put up hangings, and otherwise went to considerable expense. Mr. and Mrs. Prosser came there sometime in June, and after having parted with a good many servants in the interval, she made up her mind that she could not live in the house, and her father waited on Lord Castlemallard, and told him plainly that he would not take out the lease because the house was subjected to annoyances which he could not explain. In plain terms, he said it was haunted, and that no servants would live there more than a few weeks, and that after what his son-in-law's family had suffered there, not only should he be excused from taking a lease of it, but that the house itself ought to be pulled down as a nuisance and the habitual haunt of something worse than human malefactors.

Lord Castlemallard filed a bill in the Equity side of the Exchequer to compel Mr. Alderman Harper to perform his contract, by taking out the lease. But the Alderman drew an answer, supported by no less than seven long affidavits, copies of all which were furnished to his lordship, and with the desired effect; for rather than compel him to place them upon the file of the court, his lordship struck, and consented to release him.

I am sorry the cause did not proceed at least far enough to place

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upon the files of the court the very authentic and unaccountable story which Miss Rebecca relates.

The annoyances described did not begin till the end of August, when, one evening, Mrs. Prosser, quite alone, was sitting in the twilight at the back parlour window, which was open, looking out into the orchard, and plainly saw a hand stealthily placed upon the stone window-sill outside, as if by some one beneath the window, at her right side, intending to climb up. There was nothing but the hand, which was rather short but handsomely formed, and white and plump, laid on the edge of the window-sill; and it was not a very young hand, but one aged, somewhere about forty, as she conjectured. It was only a few weeks before that the horrible robbery at Clondalkin had taken place, and the lady fancied that the hand was that of one of the miscreants who was now about to scale the windows of the Tiled House. She uttered a loud scream and an ejaculation of terror, and at the same moment the hand was quietly withdrawn.

Search was made in the orchard, but no indications of any person's having been under the window, beneath which, ranged along the wall, stood a great column of flower-pots, which it seemed must have prevented any one's coming within reach of it.

The same night there came a hasty tapping, every now and then, at the window of the kitchen. The women grew frightened, and the servant-man, taking fire-arms with him, opened the back-door, but discovered nothing. As he shut it, however, he said, 'a thump came on it,' and a pressure as of somebody striving to force his way in, which frightened *him;* and though the tapping went on upon the kitchen window panes, he made no further explorations.

About six o'clock on the Saturday evening following, the cook, 'an honest, sober woman, now aged nigh sixty years,' being alone in the kitchen, saw, on looking up, it is supposed, the same fat but aristocratic-looking hand, laid with its palm against the glass, near the side of the window, and this time moving slowly up and down, pressed all the while against the glass, as if feeling carefully for some inequality in its surface. She cried out, and said something like a prayer on seeing it. But it was not withdrawn for several seconds after.

After this, for a great many nights, there came at first a low, and afterwards an angry rapping, as it seemed with a set of clenched knuckles at the back-door. And the servant-man would not open it, but called to know who was there; and there came no answer, only a sound as if the palm of the hand was placed against it, and drawn slowly from side to side with a sort of soft, groping motion.

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All this time, sitting in the back parlour, which, for the time, they used as a drawing-room, Mr. and Mrs. Prosser were disturbed by rappings at the window, sometimes very low and furtive, like a clandestine signal, and at others sudden and so loud as to threaten the breaking of the pane.

This was all at the back of the house, which looked upon the orchard as you know. But on a Tuesday night, at about half-past nine, there came precisely the same rapping at the hall-door, and went on, to the great annoyance of the master and terror of his wife, at intervals, for nearly two hours.

After this, for several days and nights, they had no annoyance whatsoever, and began to think that the nuisance had expended itself. But on the night of the 13th September, Jane Easterbrook, an English maid, having gone into the pantry for the small silver bowl in which her mistress's posset was served, happening to look up at the little window of only four panes, observed through an augur-hole which was drilled through the window frame, for the admission of a bolt to secure the shutter, a white pudgy finger—first the tip, and then the two first joints introduced, and turned about this way and that, crooked against the inside, as if in search of a fastening which its owner designed to push aside. When the maid got back into the kitchen, we are told 'she fell into "a swounde," and was all the next day very weak.'

Mr. Prosser being, I've heard, a hard-headed and conceited sort of fellow, scouted the ghost, and sneered at the fears of his family. He was privately of opinion that the whole affair was a practical joke or a fraud, and waited an opportunity of catching the rogue *flagrante delicto*. He did not long keep this theory to himself, but let it out by degrees with no stint of oaths and threats, believing that some domestic traitor held the thread of the conspiracy.

Indeed it was time something were done; for not only his servants, but good Mrs. Prosser herself, had grown to look unhappy and anxious. They kept at home from the hour of sunset, and would not venture about the house after night-fall, except in couples.

The knocking had ceased for about a week; when one night, Mrs. Prosser being in the nursery, her husband, who was in the parlour, heard it begin very softly at the hall-door. The air was quite still, which favoured his hearing distinctly. This was the first time there had been any disturbance at that side of the house, and the character of the summons was changed.

Mr. Prosser, leaving the parlour-door open, it seems, went quietly into the hall. The sound was that of beating on the outside of the

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stout door, softly and regularly, 'with the flat of the hand.' He was going to open it suddenly, but changed his mind; and went back very quietly, and on to the head of the kitchen stair, where was a 'strong closet' over the pantry, in which he kept his firearms, swords, and canes.

Here he called his man-servant, whom he believed to be honest, and, with a pair of loaded pistols in his own coat-pockets, and giving another pair to him, he went as lightly as he could, followed by the man, and with a stout walking-cane in his hand, forward to the door.

Everything went as Mr. Prosser wished. The besieger of his house, so far from taking fright at their approach, grew more impatient; and the sort of patting which had aroused his attention at first assumed the rhythm and emphasis of a series of double-knocks.

Mr. Prosser, angry, opened the door with his right arm across, cane in hand. Looking, he saw nothing; but his arm was jerked up oddly, as it might be with the hollow of a hand, and something passed under it, with a kind of gentle squeeze. The servant neither saw nor felt anything, and did not know why his master looked back so hastily, cutting with his cane, and shutting the door with so sudden a slam.

From that time Mr. Prosser discontinued his angry talk and swearing about it, and seemed nearly as averse from the subject as the rest of his family. He grew, in fact, very uncomfortable, feeling an inward persuasion that when, in answer to the summons, he had opened the hall-door, he had actually given admission to the besieger.

He said nothing to Mrs. Prosser, but went up earlier to his bedroom, 'where he read a while in his Bible, and said his prayers.' I hope the particular relation of this circumstance does not indicate its singularity. He lay awake a good while, it appears; and, as he supposed, about a quarter past twelve he heard the soft palm of a hand patting on the outside of the bedroom-door, and then brushed slowly along it.

Up bounced Mr. Prosser, very much frightened, and locked the door, crying, 'Who's there?' but receiving no answer but the same brushing sound of a soft hand drawn over the panels, which he knew only too well.

In the morning the housemaid was terrified by the impression of a hand in the dust of the 'little parlour' table, where they had been unpacking delft and other things the day before. The print of the naked foot in the sea-sand did not frighten Robinson Crusoe half so much. They were by this time all nervous, and some of them half-crazed, about the hand.

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Mr. Prosser went to examine the mark, and, made light of it, but, as he swore afterwards, rather to quiet his servants than from any comfortable feeling about it in his own mind; however, he had them all, one by one, into the room, and made each place his or her hand, palm downward, on the same table, thus taking a similar impression from every person in the house, including himself and his wife; and his 'affidavit' deposed that the formation of the hand so impressed differed altogether from those of the living inhabitants of the house, and corresponded with that of the hand seen by Mrs. Prosser and by the cook.

Whoever or whatever the owner of that hand might be, they all felt this subtle demonstration to mean that it was declared he was no longer out of doors, but had established himself in the house.

And now Mrs. Prosser began to be troubled with strange and horrible dreams, some of which as set out in detail, in Aunt Rebecca's long letter, are really very appalling nightmares. But one night, as Mr. Prosser closed his bedchamber-door, he was struck somewhat by the utter silence of the room, there being no sound of breathing, which seemed unaccountable to him, as he knew his wife was in bed, and his ears were particularly sharp.

There was a candle burning on a small table at the foot of the bed, beside the one he held in one hand, a heavy ledger, connected with his father-in-law's business being under his arm. He drew the curtain at the side of the bed, and saw Mrs. Prosser lying, as for a few seconds he mortally feared, dead, her face being motionless, white, and covered with a cold dew; and on the pillow, close beside her head, and just within the curtains, was, as he first thought, a toad—but really the same fattish hand, the wrist resting on the pillow, and the fingers extended towards her temple.

Mr. Prosser, with a horrified jerk, pitched the ledger right at the curtains, behind which the owner of the hand might be supposed to stand. The hand was instantaneously and smoothly snatched away, the curtains made a great wave, and Mr. Prosser got round the bed in time to see the closet-door, which was at the other side, pulled to by the same white, puffy hand, as he believed.

He drew the door open with a fling, and stared in: but the closet was empty, except for the clothes hanging from the pegs on the wall, and the dressing-table and looking-glass facing the windows. He shut it sharply, and locked it, and felt for a minute, he says, 'as if he were like to lose his wits;' then, ringing at the bell, he brought the servants, and with much ado they recovered Mrs. Prosser from a sort of 'trance,' in which, he says, from her looks, she seemed to

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have suffered 'the pains of death:' and Aunt Rebecca adds, 'from what she told me of her visions, with her own lips, he might have added, "and of hell also."'

But the occurrence which seems to have determined the crisis was the strange sickness of their eldest child, a little boy aged between two and three years. He lay awake, seemingly in paroxysms of terror, and the doctors who were called in, set down the symptoms to incipient water on the brain. Mrs. Prosser used to sit up with the nurse, by the nursery fire, much troubled in mind about the condition of her child.

His bed was placed sideways along the wall, with its head against the door of a press or cupboard, which, however, did not shut quite close. There was a little valance, about a foot deep, round the top of the child's bed, and this descended within some ten or twelve inches of the pillow on which it lay.

They observed that the little creature was quieter whenever they took it up and held it on their laps. They had just replaced him, as he seemed to have grown quite sleepy and tranquil, but he was not five minutes in his bed when he began to scream in one of his frenzies of terror; at the same moment the nurse, for the first time, detected, and Mrs. Prosser equally plainly saw, following the direction of *her* eyes, the real cause of the child's sufferings.

Protruding through the aperture of the press, and shrouded in the shade of the valance, they plainly saw the white fat hand, palm downwards, presented towards the head of the child. The mother uttered a scream, and snatched the child from its little bed, and she and the nurse ran down to the lady's sleeping-room, where Mr. Prosser was in bed, shutting the door as they entered; and they had hardly done so, when a gentle tap came to it from the outside.

There is a great deal more, but this will suffice. The singularity of the narrative seems to me to be this, that it describes the ghost of a hand, and no more. The person to whom that hand belonged never once appeared; nor was it a hand separated from a body, but only a hand so manifested and introduced that its owner was always, by some crafty accident, hidden from view.

In the year 1819, at a college breakfast, I met a Mr. Prosser—a thin, grave, but rather chatty old gentleman, with very white hair drawn back into a pigtail—and he told us all, with a concise particularity, a story of his cousin, James Prosser, who, when an infant, had slept for some time in what his mother said was a haunted nursery in an old house near Chapelizod, and who, whenever he was ill, over-fatigued, or in anywise feverish, suffered all through his

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life as he had done from a time he could scarce remember, from a vision of a certain gentleman, fat and pale, every curl of whose wig, every button and fold of whose laced clothes, and every feature and line of whose sensual, benignant, and unwholesome face, was as minutely engraven upon his memory as the dress and lineaments of his own grandfather's portrait, which hung before him every day at breakfast, dinner, and supper.

Mr. Prosser mentioned this as an instance of a curiously monotonous, individualized, and persistent nightmare, and hinted the extreme horror and anxiety with which his cousin, of whom he spoke in the past tense as 'poor Jemmie,' was at any time induced to mention it.

I hope the reader will pardon me for loitering so long in the Tiled House, but this sort of lore has always had a charm for me; and people, you know, especially old people, will talk of what most interests themselves, too often forgetting that others may have had more than enough of it.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH THE RECTOR VISITS THE TILED HOUSE, AND DOCTOR TOOLE LOOKS AFTER THE BRASS CASTLE.

NEXT morning Toole, sauntering along the low road towards the mills, as usual bawling at his dogs, who scampered and nuzzled hither and thither, round and about him, saw two hackney coaches and a 'noddy' arrive at 'the Brass Castle,' a tall old house by the river, with a little bit of a flower-garden, half-a-dozen poplars, and a few old privet hedges about it; and being aware that it had been taken the day before for Mr. Dangerfield, for three months, he slackened his pace, in the hope of seeing that personage, of whom he had heard great things, take seisin of his tabernacle. He was disappointed, however; the great man had not arrived, only a sour-faced, fussy old lady, Mrs. Jukes, his housekeeper, and a servant-wench and a great lot of boxes and trunks; and so leaving the coachman grumbling and swearing at the lady, who, bitter, shrill, and voluble, was manifestly well able to fight her own battles, he strolled back to the Phœnix, where a new evidence of the impending arrival met his view in an English groom with three horses, which the hostler and he were leading into the inn-yard.

There were others, too, agreeably fidgeted about this arrival. The fair Miss Magnolia, for instance, and her enterprising parent, the agreeable Mrs. Macnamara: who both as they gaped and peeped from

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the windows, bouncing up from the breakfast-table every minute, to the silent distress of quiet little Major O'Neill, painted all sorts of handsome portraits, and agreeable landscapes, and cloud-capped castles, each for her private contemplation, on the spreading canvas of her hopes.

Dr. Walsingham rode down to the 'Tiled House,' where workmen were already preparing to make things a little more comfortable. The towering hall-door stood half open; and down the broad stairs—his tall, slim figure, showing black against the light of the discoloured lobby-window—his raven hair reaching to his shoulders—Mervyn, the pale, large-eyed genius of that haunted place, came to meet him. He led him into the cedar parlour, the stained and dusty windows of which opened upon that moss-grown orchard, among whose great trunks and arches those strange shapes were said sometimes to have walked at night, like penitents and mourners through cathedral pillars.

It was a reception as stately, but as sombre and as beggarly withal as that of the Master of Ravenswood, for there were but two chairs in the cedar-parlour—one with but three legs, the other without a bottom; so they were fain to stand. But Mervyn could smile without bitterness, and his desolation had not the sting of actual poverty, as he begged the rector to excuse his dreary welcome, and hoped that he would find things better the next time.

Their little colloquy got on very easily, for Mervyn liked the rector, and felt a confidence in him which was comfortable and almost exhilarating. The Doctor had a cheery, kindly, robust voice, and a good, honest emphasis in his talk; a guileless blue eye; a face furrowed, thoughtful, and benevolent; well formed too. He must have been a handsome curate in his day. Not uncourtly, but honest; the politeness of a gentle and tender heart; *very* courteous and popular among ladies, although he sometimes forgot that they knew no Latin.

So Mervyn drew nigh to him in spirit, and liked him, and talked to him rather more freely [though even that was enigmatically enough] than he had done to anybody else for a long time. It would seem that the young man had formed no very distinct plan of life. He appeared to have some thought of volunteering to serve in America, and some of entering into a foreign service; but his plans, were, I suppose, *in nubibus*. All that was plain was that he was restless and eager for some change—any.

It was not a very long visit, you may suppose; and just as Dr. Walsingham rode out of the avenue, Lord Castlemallard was riding leisurely by towards Chapelizod, followed by his groom.

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His lordship, though he had a drowsy way with him, was esteemed rather an active man of business, being really, I'm afraid, only what is termed a fidget; and the fact is, his business would have been better done if he had looked after it himself a good deal less.

He was just going down to the town to see whether Dangerfield had arrived, and slackened his pace to allow the Doctor to join him, for he could ride with him more comfortably than with parsons generally, the Doctor being well descended, and having married, besides, into a good family. He stared, as he passed, at the old house listlessly and peevishly. He had heard of Mervyn's doings there, and did not like them.

'Yes, sir, he's a very pretty young man, and very well dressed,' said his lordship, with manifest dissatisfaction; 'but I don't like meeting him, you know. 'Tis not his fault; but one can't help thinking of—of things; and I'd be glad his friends would advise him not to dress in velvets, you know—particularly black velvets you can understand. I could not help thinking, at the time, of a pall, somehow. I'm not—no—not pleasant near him. No—I—I can't—his face is so pale—you don't often see so pale a face—no—it looks like a reflection from one that's still paler—you understand—and in short, even in his perfumes there's a taint of—of—you know—a taint of blood, sir.' Then there was a pause, during which he kept slapping his boot peevishly with his little riding-whip. 'One can't, of course, but be kind,' he recommenced, 'I can't do much—I can't make him acceptable, you know—but I pity him, Dr. Walsingham, and I've tried to be kind to him, *you* know that; for ten years I had all the trouble, sir, of a guardian without the authority of one. Yes, of course we're kind; but body o' me! sir, he'd be better any where else than here, and without occupation, you know, quite idle, and so conspicuous. I promise you there are more than I who think it. And he has commenced fitting up that vile old house—that vile house, sir. It is ready to tumble down—upon my life they say so; Nutter says so, and Sturk—Dr. Sturk, of the Artillery here—an uncommon sensible man, you know, says so too. 'Tis a vile house, and ready to tumble down, and you know the trouble I was put to by that corporation fellow—a—what's his name—about it; and he can't let it—people's servants won't stay in it, you know, the people tell such stories about it, I'm told; and what business has he here, you know? It is all very fine for a week or so, but they'll find him out, they will, sir. He may call himself Mervyn, or Fitzgerald, or Thompson, sir, or any other name, but it won't do, sir. No, Dr. Walsingham, it won't do. The people down in this little village here, sir, are plaguy sharp—

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they're cunning; upon my life, I believe, they are too hard for Nutter.'

In fact, Sturk had been urging on his lordship the purchase of this little property, which, for many reasons ought to be had a bargain, and adjoined Lord Castlemallard's, and had talked him into viewing it quite as an object. No wonder, then, he should look on Mervyn's restorations and residence, in the light of an impertinence and an intrusion.

CHAPTER XIV.

RELATING HOW PUDDOCK PURGED O'FLAHERTY'S HEAD—A CHAPTER WHICH IT IS HOPED, NO GENTEEL PERSON WILL READ.

Rum disagreed with O'Flaherty confoundedly, but, being sanguine, and also of an obstinate courage not easily to be put down, and liking that fluid, and being young withal, he drank it defiantly and liberally whenever it came in his way. So this morning he announced to his friend Puddock that he was suffering under a head-ache 'that 'id burst a pot.' The gallant fellow's stomach, too, was qualmish and disturbed. He heard of breakfast with loathing. Puddock rather imperiously insisted on his drinking some tea, which he abhorred, and of which, in very imperfect clothing and with deep groans and occasional imprecations on 'that bastely clar't'—to which he chose to ascribe his indisposition—he drearily partook.

'I tell you what, thir,' said Puddock, finding his patient nothing better, and not relishing the notion of presenting his man in that seedy condition upon the field: 'I've got a remedy, a very thimple one; it used to do wondereth for my poor uncle Neagle, who loved rum shrub, though it gave him the headache *always*, and sometimes the gout.'

And Puddock had up Mrs. Hogg, his landlady, and ordered a pair of little muslin bags about the size of a pistol-cartridge each, which she promised to prepare in five minutes, and he himself tumbled over the leaves of his private manuscript quarto—a desultory and miscellaneous album, stuffed with sonnets on Celia's eye—a lock of hair, or a pansy here or there pressed between the pages—birth-day verses addressed to Sacharissa, receipts for 'puptons,' 'farces,' &c.; and several for toilet luxuries 'Angelica water,' 'The Queen of Hungary's' ditto, 'surfeit waters,' and finally, that he was in search of, to wit, 'My great aunt Bell's recipe for purging the head' (good against melancholy or the head-ache.) You are not to suppose that the

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volume was slovenly or in anywise unworthy of a gentleman and officer of those days. It was bound in red and gold, had two handsome silver-gilt clasps and red edges, the writing being exquisitely straight and legible, and without a single blot.

'I have them all except—two—*three*,' murmured the thoughtful Puddock when he had read over the list of ingredients. These, however, he got from Toole, close at hand, and with a little silver grater and a pretty little agate pocket pestle and mortar—an heir-loom derived from poor Aunt Bell—he made a wonderful powder; 'nutmeg and ginger, cinnamon and cloves,' as the song says, and every other stinging product of nature and chemistry which the author of this famous family 'purge for the head' could bring to remembrance; and certainly it *was* potent. With this the cartridges were loaded, the ends tied up, and O'Flaherty placed behind a table on which stood a basin, commenced the serious operation, under Puddock's directions, by introducing a bag at each side of his mouth, which, as a man of honour, he was bound to retain there until Puddock had had his morning's tête-à-tête with the barber.

Those who please to consult old domestic receipt-books of the last century, will find the whole process very exactly described therein.

'Be the powers, sorr, that was the stuff!' said O'Flaherty, discussing the composition afterwards, with an awful shake of his head; 'my chops wor blazing before you could count twenty.'

It was martyrdom; but anything was better than the incapacity which threatened, and certainly, by the end of five minutes, his head was something better. In this satisfactory condition—Jerome being in the back garden brushing his regimentals, and preparing his other properties—he suddenly heard voices close to the door, and gracious powers! one was certainly Magnolia's.

'That born devil, Juddy Carrol,' blazed forth. O'Flaherty, afterwards, 'pushed open the door; it sarved me right for not being in my bed-room, and the door locked—though who'd a thought there was such a cruel eediot on airth—bad luck to her—as to show a leedy into a gentleman, with scarcely the half of his clothes on, and undhergoin' a soart iv an operation, I may say.'

Happily the table behind which he stood was one of those old-fashioned toilet affairs, with the back part, which was turned toward the door, sheeted over with wood, so that his ungartered stockings and rascally old slippers, were invisible. Even so, it was bad enough: he was arrayed in a shabby old silk roquelaire, and there was a towel upon his breast, pinned behind his neck. He had just a second to pop the basin under the table, and to whisk the towel

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violently from under his chin, drying that feature with merciless violence; when the officious Judy Carroll, Grand Chamberlain in Jerome's absence, with the facetious grin of a good-natured lady about to make two people happy, introduced the bewitching Magnolia, and her meek little uncle, Major O'Neill.

In they came, rejoicing, to ask the gallant fireworker (it was a different element just now), to make one of a party of pleasure to Leixlip. O'Flaherty could not so much as hand the young lady a chair; to emerge from behind the table, or even to attempt a retreat, was, of course, not to be thought of in the existing state of affairs. The action of Puddock's recipe was such as to make his share in the little complimentary conversation that ensued very indistinct, and to oblige him, to his disgrace and despair, when the poor fellow tried a smile, actually to apply his towel hastily to his mouth.

He saw that his visitors observed those symptoms with some perplexity: the Major was looking steadfastly at O'Flaherty's lips, and unconsciously making corresponding movements with his own, and the fair Magnolia was evidently full of pleasant surprise and curiosity. I really think, if O'Flaherty had had a pistol within reach, he would have been tempted to deliver himself summarily from that agonising situation.

'I'm afraid, Lieutenant, you've got the tooth-ache,' said Miss Mag, with her usual agreeable simplicity.

In his alacrity to assure her there was no such thing, he actually swallowed one of the bags. 'Twas no easy matter, and he grew very red, and stared frightfully, and swallowed a draught of water precipitately. His misery was indeed so great that at the conclusion of a polite little farewell speech of the Major's, he uttered an involuntary groan, and lively Miss Mag, with an odious titter, exclaimed—

'The little creature's teething, uncle, as sure as you're not; either that, or he's got a hot potato in his poor little mouzey-wouzey;' and poor O'Flaherty smiled a great silent moist smile at the well-bred pleasantry. The Major, who did not choose to hear Mag's banter, made a formal, but rather smiling salute. The Lieutenant returned it, and down came the unlucky mortar and a China plate, on which Puddock had mingled the ingredients, with a shocking crash and jingle on the bare boards; a plate and mortar never made such a noise before, O'Flaherty thought, with a mental imprecation.

'Nothing—hash—'appened—shur,' said O'Flaherty, whose articulation was affected a good deal, in terror lest the Major should arrest his departure.

So the Major and tall Miss Magnolia, with all her roses and lilies,

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and bold broad talk, and her wicked eyes, went down the stairs; and O'Flaherty, looking with lively emotion in the glass, at the unbecoming coup-d'œil, heard that agreeable young lady laughing most riotously under the windows as she and the Major marched away.

It was well for Judy, that being of the gentler sex, the wrath of the fireworker could not wreak itself upon her. The oftener he viewed himself in the pier-glass, trying in vain to think he did not look so very badly after all, the more bitter were his feelings. Oh, that villainous old silk morning gown! and his eyes so confoundedly red, and his hair all dishevelled—bad luck to that clar't! the wig was all right, that was his only comfort, and his mouth, 'och, look at it; twiste its natural size' though that was no trifle.

'Another week I'll not stop in her lodgings,' cried poor O'Flaherty, grinning at himself in the glass, 'if she keeps that savage, Judy Carrol, here a day longer.'

Then he stumbled to the stair-head to call her up for judgment; but changed his mind, and returned to the looking-glass, blowing the cooling air in short whistles through his peppered lips—and I'm sorry to say, blowing out also many an ejaculation and invective, as that sorry sight met his gaze in the oval mirror, which would have been much better not uttered.

CHAPTER XV.

ÆSCULAPIUS TO THE RESCUE.

It was not until Puddock had returned, that the gallant Fireworker recollected all on a sudden that he had swallowed one of the bags.

'Thwallowed?—thwallowed it!' said Puddock, looking very blank and uncomfortable; 'why, thir, I told you you were to be *very* careful.'

'Why, why curse it, it's *not*, 'tisn't'—

There was a long pause, and O'Flaherty stared a very frightened and hideous stare at the proprietor of the red quarto.

'Not *what*, thir?' demanded Puddock, briskly, but plainly disconcerted.

'Not anything—anything *bad*—or, or—there's no use in purtendin', Puddock,' he resumed, turning quite yellow. 'I see, sir, I see by your looks, it's what you think, I'm poisoned!'

'I—I—do *not*, thir, think you're poisoned,' he replied, indignantly, but with some flurry; 'that is, there's a great deal in it that could not pothibly do you harm—there's only one ingredient, yes—or, or,

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yes, perhapth three, but thertainly no more, that I don't quite know about—depend upon it, 'tis nothing—a—nothing—a—seriouthly—a—But why, my dear thir, why on earth did you violate the thimple directions—why did you thwallow a particle of it?'

'Och, why did I let it into my mouth at all—the divil go with it!' retorted poor O'Flaherty; 'an wasn't I the born eediot to put them devil's dumplins inside my mouth? but I did not know what I was doin'—no more I didn't.'

'I hope your head'th better,' said Puddock, vindicating by that dignified inquiry the character of his recipe.

'Auch! my head be smathered, what the puck do I care about it?' O'Flaherty broke out. 'Ah, why the devil, Puddock, do you keep them ould women's charrums and divilments, about you?—you'll be the death of some one yet, so you will.'

'It's a recipe, sir,' replied Puddock, with the same dignity, 'from which my great uncle, General Neagle, derived frequent benefit.'

'And here I am,' says O'Flaherty, vehemently; 'and you don't know whether I'm poisoned or no!'

At this moment he saw Dr. Sturk passing by, and drummed violently at the window. The doctor was impressed by the summons; for however queer the apparition, it was plain he was desperately in earnest.

'Let's see the recipe,' said Sturk, drily; 'you think you're poisoned—I know you do;' poor O'Flaherty had shrunk from disclosing the extent of his apprehensions, and only beat about the bush; 'and if you be, I lay you fifty, *I* can't save you, nor all the doctors in Dublin—show me the recipe.'

Puddock put it before him, and Sturk looked at the back of the volume with a leisurely disdain, but finding no title there, returned to the recipe. They both stared on his face, without breathing, while he conned it over. When he came about halfway, he whistled; and when he arrived at the end, he frowned hard; and squeezed his lips together till the red disappeared altogether, and he looked again at the back of the book, and then turned it round once more reading the last line over with a severe expression.

'And so you actually swallowed this—this devil's dose, sir, did you?' demanded Sturk.

'I—I believe he did, some of it; but I warned him, I did, upon my honour! Now, tell him, did I not warn you, my dear Lieutenant, not to thwallow,' interposed little Puddock, who began to grow confoundedly agitated; but Sturk, who rather liked shocking and frightening people, and had a knack of making bad worse, and

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an alacrity in waxing savage without adequate cause, silenced him with—

'I p-pity you, sir,' and 'pity' shot like a pellet from his lips. 'Why the deuce will you dabble in medicine, sir? Do you think it's a thing to be learnt in an afternoon out of the bottom of an old cookery-book?'

'Cookery-book! excuse me, Doctor Sturk,' replied Puddock offended. 'I'm given to underthtand, sir, it's to be found in Culpepper.'

'Culpepper!' said Sturk, viciously. 'Cull-*poison*—you have peppered him to a purpose, I promise you! How much of it, pray, sir, (to O'Flaherty,) have you got in your stomach?'

'Tell him, Puddock,' said O'Flaherty, helplessly.

'Only a trifle I assure you,' extenuated Puddock (I need not spell his lisp), 'in a little muslin bag, about the size of the top joint of a lady's little finger.'

'Top joint o' the devil!' roared O'Flaherty, bitterly, rousing himself; 'I tell you, Dr. Sturk, it was as big as my thumb, and a miracle it did not choke me.'

'It may do that job for you yet, sir,' sneered the doctor with a stern disgust. 'I dare say you feel pretty hot here?' jerking his finger into his stomach.

'And—and—and—*what* is it?—is it—do you think—it's anything—anyways—*dangerous?*' faltered poor O'Flaherty.

'Dangerous!' responded Sturk, with an angry chuckle—indeed, he was specially vindictive against lay intruders upon the mystery of his craft; 'why, yes—ha,—ha!—just maybe a little. It's only *poison*, sir, deadly, barefaced poison!' he began, sardonically, with a grin, and ended with a black glare and a knock on the table, like an auctioneer's 'gone!'

'There are no less than two—three—*five* mortal poisons in it,' said the Doctor, with emphatic acerbity. 'You and Mr. Puddock will allow *that's* rather strong.'

O'Flaherty sat down and looked at Sturk, and wiping his damp face and forehead, he got up without appearing to know where he was going. Puddock stood with his hands in his breeches pockets, staring with his little round eyes on the Doctor, I must confess, with a very foolish and rather guilty vacuity all over his plump face, rigid and speechless, for three or four seconds; then he put his hand which did actually tremble, upon the Doctor's arm, and he said, very thickly—

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'I feel, sir, you're right; it is my fault, sir, I've poisoned him—merthiful goodneth!—I—I—'

Puddock's address acted for a moment on O'Flaherty. He came up to him pale and queer, like a somnambulist, and shook his fingers very cordially with a very cold grasp.

'If it was the last word I ever spoke, Puddock, you're a good-natured—he's a gentleman, sir—and it was *all* my own fault; he warned me, he did, again' swallyin' a dhrop of it—remember what I'm saying, Doctor—'twas *I* that done it; I was *always* a botch, Puddock, an' a fool; and—and—gentlemen—good-by.'

And the flowered dressing-gown and ungartered stockings disappeared through the door into the bed-room, from whence they heard a great souse on the bed, and the bedstead gave a dismal groan.

'Is there—*is* there nothing, Doctor—for mercy's sake, think—Doctor do—I conjure you—pray think—there must be something'—urged Puddock, imploringly.

'Ay, that's the way, sir, fellows quacking themselves and one another; when they get frightened, and with good reason, come to us and expect miracles; but, as in this case, the quantity was not very much, 'tis not, you see, overpowering, and he *may* do, if he takes what I'll send him.'

Puddock was already at his bedside, shaking his hand hysterically, and tumbling his words out one over the other—

'You're thafe, my dear thir—*dum thpiro thpero*—he thayth—Dr. Thturk—he can thave you, my dear thir—my dear Lieutenant—my dear O'Flaherty—he can thave you, thir—thafe and thound, thir.'

O'Flaherty, who had turned his face to the wall, in the bitterness of his situation—for like some other men, he had the intensest horror of death when he came peaceably to his bedside, though ready enough to meet him with a 'hurrah!' and a wave of his rapier, if he arrived at a moment's notice, with due dash and eclat—sat up like a shot, and gaping upon Puddock for a few seconds, relieved himself with a long sigh, a devotional upward roll of the eyes, and some muttered words, of which the little ensign heard only 'blessing,' very fervently, and 'catch me again,' and 'divil bellows it;' and forthwith out came one of the fireworker's long shanks, and O'Flaherty insisted on dressing, shaving and otherwise preparing as a gentleman and an officer, with great gaiety of heart, to meet his fate on the Fifteen Acres.

In due time arrived the antidote. It was enclosed in a gallipot, and was what I believe they called an electuary. I don't know whether it is an obsolete abomination now, but it looked like brick-

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dust and treacle, and what it was made of even Puddock could not divine. O'Flaherty, that great Hibernian athlete, unconsciously winced and shuddered like a child at sight of it. Puddock stirred it with the tip of a tea-spoon, and looked into it with inquisitive disgust, and seemed to smell it from a distance, lost for a minute in inward conjecture, and then with a slight bow, pushed it ceremoniously toward his brother in arms.

'There is not much the matter with me now—I feel well enough,' said O'Flaherty, mildly, and eyeing the mixture askaunce; and after a little while he looked at Puddock. That disciplinarian understood the look, and said, peremptorily, shaking up his little powdered head, and lisping vehemently—

'Lieutenant O'Flaherty, sir! I insist on your instantly taking that physic. How you may feel, sir, has nothing to do with it. If you hesitate, I withdraw my sanction to your going to the field, sir. There's no—there *can* be—no earthly excuse but a—a miserable objection to a—swallowing a—recipe, sir—that isn't—that is may be—not intended to please your palate, but to save your *life*, sir—remember, sir, you've swallowed a—you—you *require*, sir—you don't think I fear to say it, sir!—you have swallowed that you ought not to have swallowed, and don't sir—don't—for *both* our sakes—for heaven's sake—I implore—and insist—don't trifle, sir.'

O'Flaherty felt himself passing under the chill and dismal shadow of death once more, such was the eloquence of Puddock, and so impressible his own nature, as he followed the appeal of his second. 'Life is sweet;' and, though the compound was nauseous, and a necessity upon him of swallowing it in horrid instalments, spoonful after spoonful, yet, though not without many interruptions, and many a shocking apostrophe, and even some sudden paroxysms of horror, which alarmed Puddock, he did contrive to get through it pretty well, except a little residuum in the bottom, which Puddock wisely connived at.

The clink of a horse-shoe drew Puddock to the window. Sturk riding into town, reined in his generous beast, and called up to the little Lieutenant,

'Well, he's taken it, eh?'

Puddock smiled a pleasant smile, and nodded.

'Walk him about, then, for an hour or so, and he'll do.'

'Thank you, sir,' said little Puddock, gaily.'

'Don't thank *me*, sir, *either* of you, but remember the lesson you've got,' said the Doctor, tartly, and away he plunged into a sharp trot, with a cling-clang and a cloud of dust. And Puddock followed that

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ungracious leech, with a stare of gratitude and admiration, almost with a benediction. And this anxiety relieved, he and his principal prepared forthwith to provide real work for the surgeons.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ORDEAL BY BATTLE.

THE chronicles of the small-sword and pistol are pregnant with horrid and absurd illustrations of certain great moral facts. Let them pass. A duel, we all know, is conceived in the spirit of 'Punch and Judy'—a farce of murder. Sterne's gallant father expired, or near it, with the point of a small-sword sticking out two feet between his shoulders, all about a goose-pie. I often wondered what the precise quarrel was. But these tragedies smell all over of goose-pie. Why—oh, why—brave Captain Sterne, as with saucy, flashing knife and fork you sported with the outworks of that fated structure, was there no augur at thine elbow, with a shake of his wintry beard, to warn thee that the birds of fate—*thy* fate—sat vigilant under that festive mask of crust? Beware, it is Pandora's pie! Madman! hold thy hand! The knife's point that seems to thee about to glide through that pasty is palpably levelled at thine own windpipe! But this time Mephistophiles leaves the revellers to use their own cutlery; and now the pie is opened; and now the birds begin to sing! Come along, then, to the Fifteen Acres and let us see what will come of it all.

That flanking demi-bastion of the Magazine, crenelled for musketry, commands, with the aid of a couple of good field-glasses, an excellent and secret view of the arena on which the redoubted O'Flaherty and the grim Nutter were about to put their metal to the proof. General Chattesworth, who happened to have an appointment, as he told his sister at breakfast, in town about that hour, forgot it just as he reached the Magazine, gave his bridle to the groom, and stumped into the fortress, where he had a biscuit and a glass of sherry in the Commandant's little parlour, and forth the two cronies sallied mysteriously, side by side; the Commandant, Colonel Bligh, being remarkably tall, slim, and straight, with an austere, mulberry-coloured face; the General stout and stumpy, and smiling plentifully, short of breath, and double chinned, they got into the sanctum I have just mentioned.

I don't apologize to my readers, English-born and bred, for assuming them to be acquainted with the chief features of the Phœnix

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Park, near Dublin. Irish scenery is now as accessible as Welsh. Let them study the old problem, not in blue books, but in the green and brown ones of our fields and heaths, and mountains. If Ireland be no more than a great capability and a beautiful landscape, faintly visible in the blue haze, even from your own headlands, and separated by hardly four hours of water, and a ten-shilling fare, from your jetties, it is your own shame, not ours, if a nation of bold speculators and indefatigable tourists leave it unexplored.

So I say, from this coigne of vantage, looking westward over the broad green level toward the thin smoke that rose from Chapelizod chimneys, lying so snugly in the lap of the hollow by the river, the famous Fifteen Acres, where so many heroes have measured swords, and so many bullies have bit the dust, was distinctly displayed in the near foreground. You all know the artillery butt. Well, that was the centre of a circular enclosure containing just fifteen acres, with broad entrances eastward and westward.

The old fellows knew very well where to look.

Father Roach was quite accidentally there, reading his breviary when the hostile parties came upon the ground—for except when an accident of this sort occurred, or the troops were being drilled, it was a sequestered spot enough—and he forthwith joined them, as usual, to reconcile the dred debate.

Somehow, I think his arguments were not altogether judicious.

'I don't ask particulars, my dear—I abominate all that concerns a quarrel; but, Lieutenant O'Flaherty, jewel, supposin' the very worst—supposin', just for argument, that he has horsewhipped you'——

'An' who dar' suppose it?' glared O'Flaherty.

'Or, we'll take it that he spit in your face, honey. Well,' continued his reverence, not choosing to hear the shocking ejaculations which this hypothesis wrung from the lieutenant; 'what of that, my darlin'? Think of the indignities, insults, and disgraces that the blessed saint Martellus suffered, without allowing anything worse to cross his lips than an Ave Mary or a smile iv resignation.'

'Ordher that priest off the ground, sorr,' said O'Flaherty, lividly, to little Puddock, who was too busy with Mr. Mahony to hear him; and Roach had already transferred his pious offices to Nutter, who speedily flushed up and became, to all appearances, in his own way, just as angry as O'Flaherty.

'Lieutenant O'Flaherty, a word in your ear,' once more droned the mellow voice of Father Roach; 'you're a young man, my dear, and here's Lieutenant Puddock by your side, a young man too; I'm as ould, my honies, as the two of you put together, an' I advise you, for

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your good—don't shed human blood—don't even draw your swords—don't my darlin's; don't be led or said by them army-gentlemen, that's always standin' up for fightin' because the leedies admire fightin' men. They'll call you cowards, polthroons, curs, sneaks, turn-tails—let them!'

'There's no standin' this any longer, Puddock,' said O'Flaherty, incensed indescribably by the odious names which his reverence was hypothetically accumulating; 'if you want to see the fightin' Father Roach'——

'Apage, Sathanas!' murmured his reverence, pettishly, raising his plump, blue chin, and dropping his eyelids with a shake of the head, and waving the back of his fat, red hand gently towards the speaker.

'In that case, stay here, an' look your full, an' welcome, only don't make a noise; behave like a Christian, an' hould your tongue; but if you really hate fightin', as you say'——

Having reached this point in his address, but intending a good deal more, O'Flaherty suddenly stopped short, drew himself into a stooping posture, with a flush and a strange distortion, and his eyes fastened upon Father Roach with an unearthly glare for nearly two minutes, and seized Puddock upon the upper part of his arm with so awful a grip, in his great boney hand, that the gallant little gentleman piped out in a flurry of anguish—

'O—O—O'Flaherty, thir—*let* go my arm, thir.'

O'Flaherty drew a long breath, uttered a short, deep groan, and wiping the moisture from his red forehead, and resuming a perpendicular position was evidently trying to recover the lost thread of his discourse.

'There'th dethidedly thomething the matter with you, thir,' said Puddock, anxiously, *sotto voce*, while he worked his injured arm a little at the shoulder.

'You may say that,' said O'Flaherty, very dismally, and, perhaps, a little bitterly.

'And—and—and—you don't mean to thay—why—eh?' asked Puddock, uneasily.

'I tell you what, Puddock—there's no use in purtendin'—the poison's working—*that's* what's the matter;' returned poor O'Flaherty, in what romance-writers call 'a hissing whisper.'

'Good—merthiful—graciouth—thir!' ejaculated poor little Puddock, in a panic, and gazing up into the brawny fireworkers' face with a pallid fascination; indeed they both looked unpleasantly unlike the popular conception of heroes on the eve of battle.

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'But—but it can't be—you forget Dr. Sturk and—oh, dear!—the antidote. It—I thay—it can't *be*, thir,' said Puddock, rapidly.

'It's no use, now; but I shirked two or three spoonfuls, and I left some more in the bottom,' said the gigantic O'Flaherty, with a gloomy sheepishness.

Puddock made an ejaculation—the only violent one recorded of him—and turning his back briskly upon his principal, actually walked several steps away, as if he intended to cut the whole concern. But such a measure was really not to be thought of.

'O'Flaherty—Lieutenant—I won't reproach you,' began Puddock.

'*Reproach* me! an' who *poisoned* me, my tight little fellow?' retorted the fireworker, savagely.

Puddock could only look at him, and then said, quite meekly—

'Well, and my dear thir, what on earth had we better do?'

'Do,' said O'Flaherty, 'why isn't it completely Hobson's choice with us? What can we do but go through with it?'

The fact is, I may as well mention, lest the sensitive reader should be concerned for the gallant O'Flaherty, that the poison had very little to do with it, and the antidote a great deal. In fact, it was a reckless compound conceived in a cynical and angry spirit by Sturk, and as the fireworker afterwards declared, while expressing in excited language his wonder how Puddock (for he never suspected Sturk's elixir) had contrived to compound such a poison—'The torture was such, my dear madam, as fairly thranslated me into the purlieus of the other world.'

Nutter had already put off his coat and waistcoat, and appeared in a neat little black lustring vest, with sleeves to it, which the elder officers of the R.I.A. remembered well in by-gone fencing matches.

''Tis a most *miserable* situation,' said Puddock, in extreme distress.

'Never mind,' groaned O'Flaherty, grimly taking off his coat; 'you'll have *two* corpses to carry home with you; don't you show the laste taste iv unaisiness, an' I'll not disgrace you, *if* I'm spared to see it out.'

And now preliminaries were quite adjusted; and Nutter, light and wiry, a good swordsman, though not young, stepped out with his vicious weapon in hand, and his eyes looking white and stony out of his dark face. A word or two to his armour-bearer, and a rapid gesture, right and left, and that magnificent squire spoke low to two or three of the surrounding officers, who forthwith bestirred themselves to keep back the crowd, and as it were to keep the ring unbroken. O'Flaherty took his sword, got his hand well into the hilt, poised the blade, shook himself up as it were, and made a feint

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or two and a parry in the air, and so began to advance, like Goliah, towards little Nutter.

'Now, Puddock, back him up—encourage your man,' said Devereux, who took a perverse pleasure in joking; 'tell him to flay the lump, splat him, divide him, and cut him in two pieces—'

It was a custom of the corps to quiz Puddock about his cookery; but Puddock, I suppose, did not hear his last night's 'receipt' quoted, and he kept his eye upon his man, who had now got nearly within fencing distance of his adversary. But at this critical moment, O'Flaherty, much to Puddock's disgust, suddenly stopped, and got into the old stooping posture, making an appalling grimace in what looked like an endeavour to swallow, not all his under lip, but his chin also. Uttering a quivering groan, he continued to stoop nearer to the earth, on which he finally actually sat down and hugged his knees close to his chest, holding his breath all the time till he was perfectly purple, and rocking himself this way and that.

The whole procedure was a mystery to everybody except the guilty Puddock, who changed colour, and in manifest perturbation, skipped to his side.

'Bleth me—bleth me—my dear O'Flaherty, he'th very ill—where ith the pain?'

'Is it "farced pain," Puddock, or "gammon pain?"' asked Devereux, with much concern.

Puddock's plump panic-stricken little face, and staring eyeballs, were approached close to the writhing features of his redoubted principal—as I think I have seen honest Sancho Panza's, in one of Tony Johannot's sketches, to that of the prostrate Knight of the Rueful Countenance.

"I wish to heaven I had thwallowed it myself—it'th dreadful—what ith to be—are you eathier—I *think* you're eathier.'

I don't think O'Flaherty heard him. He only hugged his knees tighter, and slowly turned up his face, wrung into ten thousand horrid puckers, to the sky, till his chin stood as high as his forehead, with his teeth and eyes shut, and he uttered a sound like a half-stifled screech; and, indeed, looked very black and horrible.

Some of the spectators, rear-rank men, having but an imperfect view of the transaction, thought that O'Flaherty had been hideously run through the body by his solemn opponent, and swelled the general chorus of counsel and ejaculation, by all together advising cobwebs, brown-paper plugs, clergymen, brandy, and the like; but as none of these comforts were at hand, and nobody stirred, O'Flaherty was left to the resources of Nature.

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Puddock threw his cocked hat upon the ground and stamped in a momentary frenzy.

'He'th *dying*—Devereux—Cluffe—he'th—I *tell* you, he'th dying;' and he was on the point of declaring himself O'Flaherty's murderer, and surrendering himself as such into the hands of anybody who would accept the custody of his person, when the recollection of his official position as poor O'Flaherty's second flashed upon him, and collecting with a grand effort, his wits and his graces—

'It'th totally impothible, gentlemen,' he said, with his most ceremonious bow; 'conthidering the awful condition of my printhipal—I—I have reathon to fear—in fact I know—Dr. Thturk has theen him—that he'th under the action of *poithon*—and it'th quite impracti-thable, gentlemen, that thith affair of honour can prothced at pre-thent;' and Puddock drew himself up peremptorily, and replaced his hat, which somebody had slipped into his hand, upon his round powdered head.

Mr. Mahony, though a magnificent gentleman, was, perhaps, a little stupid, and he mistook Puddock's agitation, and thought he was in a passion, and disposed to be offensive. He, therefore, with a marked and stern sort of elegance, replied—

'*Pison*, sir, is a remarkably strong aipathet; it's language, sir which, if a gentleman uses at all, he's bound in justice, in shivalry, and in dacency to a generous adversary, to define with precision. Mr. Nutter is too well known to the best o' society, moving in a circle as he does, to require the panegyric of humble me. They drank together last night, they differed in opinion, that's true, but fourteen clear hours has expired, and pison being mentioned——'

'Why, body o' me! sir,' lisped Puddock, in fierce horror; 'can you imagine for one moment, sir, that I or any man living could suppose for an instant, that my respected friend, Mr. Nutter, to whom (a low bow to Nutter, returned by that gentleman) I have now the misfortune to be opposed, is capable—capable, sir, of poisoning any living being—man, woman, or child; and to put an end, sir, at once to all misapprehension upon this point, it was I—*I*, sir—myself—who poisoned him, altogether accidentally, of course, by a valuable, but mismanaged receipt, this morning, sir—you—you *see*, Mr. Nutter!'

Nutter, baulked of his gentlemanlike satisfaction, stared with a horrified but somewhat foolish countenance from Puddock to O'Flaherty.

'And now, thir,' pursued Puddock, addressing himself to Mr. Mahony, 'if Mr. Nutter desires to postpone the combat, I consent; if not, I offer mythelf to maintain it inthead of my printhipal.'

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And so he made another low bow, and stood bareheaded, hat in hand, with his right hand on his sword hilt.

'Upon my honour, Captain Puddock, it's precisely what I was going to propose myself, sir,' said Mahony, with great alacrity; 'as the only way left us of getting honourably out of the great embarrassment in which we are placed by the premature *death*-struggles of your friend; for nothing, Mr. Puddock, but being *bonâ fide in articulo mortis*, can palliate his conduct.'

'My dear Puddock,' whispered Devereux, in his ear, 'surely you would not kill Nutter to oblige two such brutes as these?' indicating by a glance Nutter's splendid second and the magnanimous O'Flaherty, who was still sitting speechless upon the ground.

'Captain Puddock,' pursued that mirror of courtesy, Mr. Patrick Mahony, of Muckafubble, who, by-the-bye, persisted in giving him his captaincy, may I inquire who's *your* friend upon this unexpected turn of affairs?'

'There's no need, sir,' said Nutter, dryly and stoutly, 'I would not hurt a hair of your head, Lieutenant Puddock.

'Do you hear him?' panted O'Flaherty, for the first time articulate, and stung by the unfortunate phrase—it seemed fated that Nutter should not open his lips without making some allusion to human hair; 'do you *hear* him, Puddock? Mr. Nutter—(he spoke with great difficulty, and in jerks)—sir—Mr. Nutter—you shall—ugh—you shall render a strict accow-ow-oh-im-m-m!'

The sound was smothered under his compressed lips, his face wrung itself again crimson with a hideous squeeze, and Puddock thought the moment of his dissolution was come, and almost wished it over.

'Don't try to speak—pray, sir, don't—there—there, now,' urged Puddock, distractedly; but the injunction was unnecessary.

'Mr. Nutter,' said his second sulkily, 'I don't see anything to satisfy your outraged honour in the curious spectacle of that gentleman sitting on the ground making faces; we came here not to trifle, but, as I conceive, to dispatch business, sir.'

'To dispatch that unfortunate gentleman, you mean, and that seems pretty well done to your hand,' said little Dr. Toole, bustling up from the coach where his instruments, lint, and plasters were deposited. 'What's it all, eh?—oh, Dr. *Sturk's* been with him, eh? Oh, ho, ho, ho!' and he laughed sarcastically, in an undertone, and shrugged, as he stooped down and took O'Flaherty's pulse in his fingers and thumb.

'I tell you what, Mr. a—a—a— sir,' said Nutter, with a very dangerous look; 'I have had the honour of knowing Lieutenant

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Puddock since August, 1756; I won't hurt him, for I like and respect him; but, if fight I must, I'll fight *you*, sir!'

'Since August, 1756?' repeated Mr. Mahony, with prompt surprise. 'Pooh! why didn't you mention that before? Why, sir, he's an old friend, and you *could* not pleasantly ask him to volunteer to bare his wapon against the boosom of his friend. No, sir, shivalry is the handmaid of Christian charity, and honour walks hand in hand with the human heart!'

With this noble sentiment he bowed and shook Nutter's cold, hard hand, and then Puddock's plump little white paw.

You are not to suppose that Pat Mahony, of Muckafubble, was a poltroon; on the contrary, he had fought several shocking duels, and displayed a remarkable amount of savagery and coolness; but having made a character, he was satisfied therewith. They may talk of fighting for the fun of it, liking it, delighting in it; don't believe a word of it. We all hate it, and the hero is only he who hates it least.

'Ugh, I can't stand it any longer; take me out of this, some of you,' said O'Flaherty, wiping the damp from his red face. 'I don't think there's ten minutes' life in me.'

'*De profundis conclamavi*,' murmured fat Father Roach; 'lean upon me, sir.'

'And me,' said little Toole.

'For the benefit of your poor soul, my honey, just say you forgive Mr. Nutter before you leave the field,' said the priest quite sincerely.

'Anything at all, Father Roach,' replied the sufferer; 'only don't bother me.'

'You forgive him then, aroon?' said the priest.

'Och, bother! forgive him, to be sure I do, *That's* supposin' mind, I don't recover; but if I *do*——'

'Och, pacible, pacible, my son,' said Father Roach, patting his arm, and soothing him with his voice. It was the phrase he used to address to his nag, Brian O'Lynn, when Brian had too much oats, and was disagreeably playful. 'Nansinse, now, can't you be pacible —pacible my son—there now, pacible, pacible.'

Upon his two supporters, and followed by his little second, this towering sufferer was helped, and tumbled into the coach, into which Puddock, Toole, and the priest, who was curious to see O'Flaherty's last moments, all followed; and they drove at a wild canter—for the coachman was 'hearty'—over the green grass, and toward Chapelizod, though Toole broke the check-string without producing any effect, down the hill, quite frightfully, and were all within an ace of being

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capsized. But ultimately they reached, in various states of mind, but safely enough, O'Flaherty's lodgings.

Here the gigantic invalid, who had suffered another paroxysm on the way, was slowly assisted to the ground by his awe-struck and curious friends, and entered the house with a groan, and roared for Judy Carroll with a curse, and invoked Jerome, the *cokang modate*, with horrible vociferation. And as among the hushed exhortations of the good priest, Toole and Puddock, he mounted the stairs, he took occasion over the bannister, in stentorian tones, to proclaim to the household his own awful situation, and the imminent approach of the moment of his dissolution.

CHAPTER XVII.

LIEUTENANT PUDDOOCK RECEIVES AN INVITATION AND A RAP OVER THE KNUCKLES.

THE old gentlemen, from their peepholes in the Magazine, watched the progress of this remarkable affair of honour, as well as they could, with the aid of their field-glasses, and through an interposing crowd.

'By Jupiter, sir, he's through him!' said Colonel Bligh, when he saw O'Flaherty go down.

'So he is, by George!' replied General Chattesworth; 'but, eh, which is he?'

'The *long* fellow,' said Bligh.

'O'Flaherty?—hey!—no, by George!—though so it is—there's work in Frank Nutter yet, by Jove,' said the General, poking his glass and his fat face an inch or two nearer.

'Quick work, General!' said Bligh.

'Devilish,' replied the General.

The two worthies never moved their glasses; as each, on his inquisitive face, wore the grim, wickedish, half-smile, with which an old stager recalls, in the prowess of his juniors, the pleasant devilment of his own youth.

'The cool, old hand, sir, too much for your new fireworker,' remarked Bligh, cynically.

'Tut, sir, this O'Flaherty has not been three weeks among us,' spluttered out the General, who was woundily jealous of the honour of his corps. 'There are lads among our fireworkers who would whip Nutter through the liver while you'd count ten!'

'They're removing the—the—(a long pause) the *body*, eh?' said Bligh. 'Hey! no, see, by George, he's walking but he's *hurt*.'

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'I'm mighty well pleased it's no worse, sir,' said the General, honestly glad.

'They're helping him into the coach—long legs the fellow's got,' remarked Bligh.

'These—things—sir—are—are—very—un—pleasant,' said the General, adjusting the focus of the glass, and speaking slowly—though no Spanish dandy ever relished a bull-fight more than he an affair of the kind. He and old Bligh had witnessed no less than five—not counting this—in which officers of the R.I.A. were principal performers, from the same snug post of observation. The General, indeed, was conventionally supposed to know nothing of them, and to reprobate the practice itself with his whole soul. But somehow, when an affair of the sort came off on the Fifteen Acres, he always happened to drop in, at the proper moment, upon his old crony, the Colonel, and they sauntered into the demi-bastion together, and quietly saw what was to be seen. It was Miss Becky Chattesworth who involved the poor General in this hypocrisy. It was not exactly her money; it was her force of will and unflinching audacity that established her control over an easy, harmless, plastic old gentleman.

'They are unpleasant—devilish unpleasant—somewhere in the body, I think, hey? they're stooping again, stooping again—eh?—*plaguy* unpleasant, sir (the General was thinking how Miss Becky's tongue would wag, and what she might not even *do*, if O'Flaherty died). Ha! on they go again, and a—Puddock—getting in—and that's Toole. He's not so much hurt—eh? He helped himself a good deal, you saw; but (taking heart of grace) when a quarrel does occur, sir, I believe, after all, 'tis better off the stomach at once—a few passes—you know—or the crack of a pistol—who's that got in—the priest—hey? by George!'

'Awkward if he dies a Papist,' said cynical old Bligh—the R.I.A. were Protestant by constitution.

'That never happens in our corps, sir,' said the General, haughtily; 'but, as I say, when a quarrel—does—occur—sir—there, they're off at last; when it does occur—I say—heyday! what a thundering pace! a gallop, by George! that don't look well (a pause)—and—and—a—about what you were saying you know he *couldn't* die a Papist in our corps—no one does—no one ever *did*—it would be, you know—it would be a *trick*, sir, and O'Flaherty's a gentleman; it *could* not be—(he was thinking of Miss Becky again—she was so fierce on the Gunpowder Plot, the rising of 1642, and Jesuits in general, and he went on a little flustered); but then, sir, as I was saying, though the thing has its uses——'

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'I'd like to know where society 'd be without it,' interposed Bligh, with a sneer.

'Though it may have it's uses, sir; it's not a thing one can sit down and say is *right*—we *can't!*'

'I've heard your sister, Miss Becky, speak strongly on that point, too,' said Bligh.

'Ah! I dare say,' said the General, quite innocently, and coughing a little. This was a sore point with the hen-pecked warrior, and the grim scarecrow by his side knew it, and grinned through his telescope; 'and you see—I say—eh! I think they're breaking up, a—and—I say—I—it seems all over—eh—and so, dear Colonel, I must take my leave, and——'

And after a lingering look, he shut up his glass, and walking thoughtfully back with his friend, said suddenly—

'And, now I think of it—it could not be *that*—Puddock, you know, would not suffer the priest to sit in the same coach with such a design—Puddock's a good officer, eh! and knows his duty.'

A few hours afterwards, General Chattesworth, having just dismounted outside the Artillery barrack, to his surprise, met Puddock and O'Flaherty walking leisurely in the street of Chapelizod. O'Flaherty looked pale and shaky, and rather wild; and the General returned his salute, looking deuced hard at him, and wondering all the time in what part of his body (in his phrase) 'he had got it;' and how the plague the doctors had put him so soon on his legs again.

'Ha, Lieutenant Puddock,' with a smile, which Puddock thought significant—'give you good evening, sir. Dr. Toole anywhere about, or have you seen Sturk?'

'No, he had not.'

The General wanted to hear by accident, or in confidence, all about it; and having engaged Puddock in talk, that officer followed by his side.

'I should be glad of the honour of your company, Lieutenant Puddock, to dinner this evening—Sturk comes, and Captain Cluffe, and this wonderful Mr. Dangerfield too, of whom we all heard so much at mess, at five o'clock, if the invitation's not too late.'

The Lieutenant acknowledged and accepted, with a blush and a very low bow, his commanding officer's hospitality; in fact, there was a *tendre* in the direction of Belmont, and little Puddock had inscribed in his private book many charming stanzas of various lengths and structures, in which the name of 'Gertrude' was of frequent recurrence.

'And—a—I say, Puddock—Lieutenant O'Flaherty, I thought—I

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—I thought, d'ye see, just now, eh? (he looked inquisitively, but there was no answer); I thought, I say, he looked devilish out of sorts, is he—a—*ill?*'

'He *was very* ill, indeed, this afternoon, General; a sudden attack——'

The General looked quickly at Puddock's plump, consequential face; but there was no further light in it. 'He *was* hurt then, I knew it'—he thought—'who's attending him—and why is he out—and was it a flesh-wound—or where was it?' all these questions silently, but vehemently, solicited an answer—and he repeated the last aloud, in a careless sort of way.

'And—a—Lieutenant Puddock, you were saying—a—tell me—now—*where* was it?'

'In the Park, General,' said Puddock, in perfect good faith.

'Eh? ah! in the Park, was it? but I want to know, you know, what part of the body—d'ye see—the shoulder—or?——'

'The duodenum, Dr. Toole called it—just here, General,' and he pressed his fingers to what is vulgarly known as the 'pit' of his stomach.

'What, sir, do you mean to say the pit of his stomach?' said the General, with more horror and indignation than he often showed.

'Yes, just about that point, General, and the pain was very violent indeed,' answered Puddock, looking with a puzzled stare at the General's stern and horrified countenance—an officer might have a pain in his stomach, he thought, without exciting all that emotion. Had he heard of the poison, and did he know more of the working of such things than, perhaps, the doctors did?

'And what in the name of Bedlam, sir, does he mean by walking about the town with a hole through his—his—what's his name? I'm hanged but I'll place him under arrest this moment,' the General thundered, and his little eyes swept the perspective this way and that, as if they would leap from their sockets in search of the reckless O'Flaherty. 'Where's the adjutant, sir?' he bellowed with a crimson scowl and a stamp, to the unoffending sentry.

'That's the way to make him lie quiet, and keep his bed till he heals, sir.'

Puddock explained, and the storm subsided, rumbling off in half a dozen testy assertions on the General's part that he, Puddock, had distinctly used the word '*wounded*,' and now and then renewing faintly, in a muttered explosion, on the troubles and worries of his command, and a great many 'pshaws!' and several fits of coughing, for the General continued out of breath for some time. He had

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showed his cards, however, and so, in a dignified disconcerted sort of way, he told Puddock that he had heard something about O'Flaherty's having got most improperly into a foolish quarrel, and having met Nutter that afternoon, and for a moment feared he might have been hurt; and then came inquiries about Nutter, and there appeared to have been no one hurt, and yet the parties on the ground—and no fighting—and yet no reconciliation—and, in fact, the General was so puzzled with this conundrum, and so curious, that he was very near calling after Puddock, when they parted at the bridge, and making him entertain him, at some cost of consistency, with the whole story.

So Puddock—his head full of delicious visions—marched homeward—to powder and perfume, and otherwise equip for that banquet of the gods, of which he was to partake at five o'clock, and just as he turned the corner at 'The Phœnix,' who should he behold, sailing down the Dublin road from the King's House, with a grand powdered footman, bearing his cane of office, and a great bouquet behind her, and Gertrude Chattesworth by her side, but the splendid and formidable Aunt Becky, who had just been paying her compliments to old Mrs. Colonel Stafford, from whom she had heard all about the duel. So as Puddock's fat cheeks grew pink at sight of Miss Gertrude, all Aunt Becky's colour flushed into her face, as her keen eye pierced the unconscious Lieutenant from afar off, and chin and nose high in air, her mouth just a little tucked in, as it were, at one corner—a certain sign of coming storm—an angry hectic in each cheek, a fierce flirt of her fan, and two or three short sniffs that betokened mischief—she quickened her pace, leaving her niece a good way in the rear, in her haste to engage the enemy. Before she came up she commenced the action at a long range, and very abruptly—for an effective rhetorician of Aunt Becky's sort, jumps at once, like a good epic poet, *in medias res;* and as Nutter, who, like all her friends in turn, experienced once or twice 'a taste of her quality,' observed to his wife, 'by Jove, that woman says things for which she ought to be put in the watch-house.' So now and here she maintained her reputation—

'You ought to be flogged, sir; yes,' she insisted, answering Puddock's bewildered stare, 'tied up to the halberts and flogged.'

Aunt Rebecca was accompanied by at least half a dozen lap-dogs, and those intelligent brutes, aware of his disgrace, beset poor Puddock's legs with a furious vociferation.

'Madam,' said he, his ears tingling, and making a prodigious low bow; 'commissioned officers are never flogged.'

'So much the worse for the service, sir; and the sooner they abolish

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that anomalous distinction the better. I'd have them begin, sir, with you, and your accomplice in murder, Lieutenant O'Flaherty.'

'Madam! your most obedient humble servant,' said Puddock, with another bow, still more ceremonious, flushing up intensely to the very roots of his powdered hair, and feeling in his swelling heart that all the generals of all the armies of Europe dare not have held such language to him.

'Good evening, sir,' said Aunt Becky, with an energetic toss of her head, having discharged her shot; and with an averted countenance, and in high disdain, she swept grandly on, quite forgetting her niece, who said a pleasant word or two to Puddock as she passed, and smiled so kindly, and seemed so entirely unconscious of his mortification, that he was quite consoled, and on the whole was made happy and elated by the rencontre, and went home to his wash-balls and perfumes in a hopeful and radiant, though somewhat excited state.

Indeed, the little Lieutenant knew that kind-hearted termagant, Aunt Becky, too well, to be long cast down or even flurried by her onset. When the same little Puddock, about a year ago, had that ugly attack of pleurisy, and was so low and so long about recovering, and so puny and fastidious in appetite, she treated him as kindly as if he were her own son, in the matter of jellies, strong soups, and curious light wines, and had afterwards lent him some good books which the little Lieutenant had read through, like a man of honour as he was. And, indeed, what specially piqued Aunt Becky's resentment just now was, that having had, about that time, a good deal of talk with Puddock upon the particular subject of duelling, he had, as she thought, taken very kindly to her way of thinking; and she had a dozen times in the last month, cited Puddock to the General; and so his public defection was highly mortifying and intolerable.

So Puddock, in a not unpleasant fuss and excitement, sat down in his dressing-gown before the glass; and while Moore the barber, with tongs, powder, and pomade, repaired the dilapidations of the day, he contemplated his own plump face, not altogether unapprovingly, and thought with a charming anticipation of the adventures of the approaching evening.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RELATING HOW THE GENTLEMEN SAT OVER THEIR CLARET, AND HOW DR. STURK SAW A FACE.

PUDDOCK drove up the avenue of gentlemanlike old poplars, and over the little bridge, and under the high-arched bowers of elms, walled

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up at either side with evergreens, and so into the court-yard of Belmont. Three sides of a parallelogram, the white old house being the largest, and offices white and in keeping, but overgrown with ivy, and opening to yards of their own on the other sides, facing one another at the flanks, and in front a straight Dutch-like moat, with a stone balustrade running all along from the garden to the bridge, with great stone flower-pots set at intervals, the shrubs and flowers of which associated themselves in his thoughts with beautiful Gertrude Chattesworth, and so were wonderfully bright and fragrant. And there were two swans upon the water, and several peacocks marching dandily in the court-yard; and a grand old Irish dog, with a great collar, and a Celtic inscription, dreaming on the steps in the evening sun.

It was always pleasant to dine at Belmont. Old General Chattesworth was so genuinely hospitable and so really glad to see you, and so hilarious himself, and so enjoying. A sage or a scholar, perhaps, might not have found a great deal in him. Most of his stories had been heard before. Some of them, I am led to believe, had even been printed. But they were not very long, and he had a good-natured word and a cordial smile for everybody; and he had a good cook, and explained his dishes to those beside him, and used sometimes to toddle out himself to the cellar in search of a curious bonbouche; and of nearly every bin in it he had a little anecdote or a pedigree to relate. And his laugh was frequent and hearty, and somehow the room and all in it felt the influence of his presence like the glow, and cheer, and crackle of a bright Christmas fire.

Miss Becky Chattesworth, very stately in a fine brocade and a great deal of point lace, received Puddock very loftily, and only touched his hand with the tips of her fingers. It was plain he was not yet taken into favour. When he entered the drawing-room, that handsome stranger, with the large eyes, so wonderfully elegant and easy in the puce-coloured cut-velvet—Mr. Mervyn—was leaning upon the high back of a chair, and talking agreeably, as it seemed, to Miss Gertrude. He had a shake of the hand and a fashionable greeting from stout, dandified Captain Cluffe, who was by no means so young as he would be supposed, and made up industriously and braced what he called his waist, with great fortitude, and indeed sometimes looked half-stifled, in spite of his smile and his swagger. Sturk, leaning at the window with his shoulders to the wall, beckoned Puddock gruffly, and cross-examined him in an undertone as to the issue of O'Flaherty's case. Of course he knew all about the duel, but the Corps also knew that Sturk would not attend on the ground in any affair where the Royal Irish Artillery were concerned, and there-

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fore they could bring what doctor they pleased to the field without an affront.

'And see, my buck,' said Sturk, winding up rather savagely with a sneer; 'you've got out of that scrape, you and your *patient*, by a piece of good luck that's not like to happen twice over; so take my advice, and cut that leaf out of your—your—grandmother's cookery-book, and light your pipe with it.'

This slight way of treating both his book and his ancestors nettled little Puddock,—who never himself took a liberty, and expected similar treatment—but he knew Sturk, the nature of the beast, and he only bowed grandly, and went to pay his respects to cowed, kindly, querulous little Mrs. Sturk, at the other end of the room. An elderly gentleman, with a rather white face, a high forehead and grim look, was chatting briskly with her; and Puddock, the moment his eye lighted on the stranger, felt that there was something remarkable about him. Taken in detail, indeed, he was insignificant. He was dressed as quietly as the style of that day would allow, yet in his toilet there was entire ease and even a latent air of fashion. He wore his own hair; and though there was a little powder upon it and upon his coat collar, it was perfectly white, frizzed out a little at the sides, and gathered into a bag behind. The stranger rose and bowed as Puddock approached the lady, and the Lieutenant had a nearer view of his great white forehead—his only good feature—and the pair of silver spectacles that glimmered under it, and his small hooked nose and stern mouth.

''Tis a mean countenance,' said the General, talking him over when the company had dispersed.

'No countenance,' said Miss Becky, decisively, '*could* be mean with such a forehead.'

The fact is—if they had cared to analyze—the features, taken separately, with that one exception, were insignificant; but the face was singular, with its strange pallor, its intellectual mastery, and sarcastic decision.

The General, who had accidentally omitted the ceremony—in those days essential—now strutted up to introduce them.

'Mr. Dangerfield, will you permit me to present my good friend and officer, Lieutenant Puddock. Lieutenant Puddock, Mr. Dangerfield—Mr. Dangerfield, Lieutenant Puddock.'

And there was a great deal of pretty bowing, and each was the other's 'most obedient,' and declared himself honoured; and the conventional parenthesis ended, things returned to their former course.

Puddock only perceived that Mrs. Sturk was giving Dangerfield a

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rambling sort of account of the people of Chapelizod. Dangerfield, to do him justice, listened attentively. In fact, he had led her upon that particular theme, and as easily and cleverly kept her close to the subject. For he was not a general to manœuvre without knowing first how the ground lay, and had an active, inquiring mind, in which he made all sorts of little notes.

So Mrs. Sturk prattled on, to her own and Mr. Dangerfield's content, for she was garrulous when not under the eye of her lord, and always gentle, though given to lamentation, having commonly many small hardships to mention. So, quite without malice or retention, she poured out the gossip of the town, but not its scandal. Indeed, she was a very harmless, and rather sweet, though dolorous little body, and was very fond of children, especially her own, who would have been ruined were it not that they quailed as much as she did before Sturk, on whom she looked as by far the cleverest and most awful mortal then extant, and never doubted that the world thought so to. For the rest, she preserved her dresses, which were not amiss, for an interminable time, her sheets were always well-aired, her maids often saucy, and she often in tears, but Sturk's lace and fine-linen were always forthcoming in exemplary order; she rehearsed the catechism with the children, and loved Dr. Walsingham heartily, and made more raspberry jam than any other woman of her means in Chapelizod, except, perhaps, Mrs. Nutter, between whom and herself there were points of resemblance, but something as nearly a feud as could subsist between their harmless natures. Each believed the other matched with a bold bad man, who was always scheming something—they never quite understood what—against her own peerless lord; each, on seeing the other, hoping that Heaven would defend the right and change the hearts of her enemies, or, at all events confound their politics; and each, with a sort of awful second-sight, when they viewed one another across the street, beholding her neighbour draped in a dark film of thunder-cloud, and with a sheaf of pale lightning, instead of a fan flickering in her hand.

When they came down to dinner, the gallant Captain Cluffe contrived to seat himself beside Aunt Becky, to whom the rogue commended himself by making a corner on his chair, next hers, for that odious greedy little brute, 'Fancy,' and by a hundred other adroit and amiable attentions. And having a perfect acquaintance with all her weak points—as everybody had who lived long in Chapelizod—he had no difficulty in finding topics to interest her, and in conversing acceptably thereupon. And, indeed, whenever he was mentioned for some time after, she used to remark, that Captain Cluffe was a very conversable and worthy young (!) man.

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In truth, that dinner went swiftly and pleasantly over for many of the guests. Gertrude Chattesworth was placed between the enamoured Puddock and the large-eyed, handsome, mysterious Mervyn. Of course, the hour flew with light and roseate wings for him. Little Puddock was in great force, and chatted with energy, and his theatrical lore, and his oddities, made him not unamusing. So she smiled on him more than usual, to make amends for the frowns of the higher powers, and he was as happy as a prince and as proud as a peacock, and quite tipsy with his success.

It is not always easy to know what young ladies like best or least, or quite what they are driving at; and Cluffe, from the other side of the table, thought, though Puddock *was* an agreeable fellow, and exerting himself uncommonly (for Cluffe, like other men not deep in the *literæ humaniores*, had a sort of veneration for 'book-learning,' under which category he placed Puddock's endless odds and ends of play lore, and viewed the little Lieutenant himself accordingly with some awe as a man of parts and a scholar, and prodigiously admired his verses, which he only half understood); he fancied, I say, although Puddock was unusually entertaining, that Miss Gertrude would have been well content to exchange him for the wooden lay-figure on which she hung her draperies when she sketched, which might have worn his uniform and filled his chair, and spared her his agreeable conversation, and which had eyes and saw not, and ears and heard not. In short, the cunning fellow fancied he saw, by many small signs, a very decided preference on her part for the handsome and melancholy, but evidently eloquent stranger. Like other cunning fellows, however, Cluffe was not always right; and right or wrong, in his own illusions, if such they were, little Puddock was, for the time, substantially blessed.

The plump and happy Lieutenant, when the ladies had flown away to the drawing-room and their small tea-cups, waxed silent and sentimental, but being a generous rival, and feeling that he could afford it, made a little effort, and engaged Mervyn in talk, and found him pleasantly versed in many things of which he knew little, and especially in the Continental stage and drama, upon which Puddock heard him greedily; and the General's bustling talk helped to keep the company merry, and he treated them to a bottle of the identical sack of which his own father's wedding posset had been compounded! Dangerfield, in a rather harsh voice, but agreeably and intelligently withal, told some rather pleasant stories about old wines and curious wine fanciers; and Cluffe and Puddock, who often sang together, being called on by the General, chanted a duet rather prettily, though neither, separately, had much of a voice. And the incorrigible Puddock, apropos of a

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piece of a whale once eaten by Dangerfield, after his wont, related a wonderful receipt—'a weaver surprised.' The 'weaver' turned out to be a fish, and the 'surprising' was the popping him out of ice into boiling water, with after details, which made the old General shake and laugh till tears bedewed his honest cheeks. And Mervyn and Dangerfield, as much surprised as the weaver, both looked, each in his own way, a little curiously at the young warrior who possessed this remarkable knowledge.

And the claret, like the general's other wines, was very good, and Dangerfield said a stern word or two in its praise, and guessed its vintage, to his host's great elation, who, with Lord Castlemallard, began to think Dangerfield a very wonderful man.

Dr. Sturk alone, sipped his claret silently; looking thoughtfully a good deal at Dangerfield over the way, and when spoken to, seemed to waken up, but dropped out of the conversation again; though this was odd, for he had intended giving Dangerfield a bit of his mind as to what might be made of the Castlemallard estates, and by implication letting in some light upon Nutter's mismanagement.

When Dr. Sturk had come into the drawing-room before dinner, Dangerfield was turning over a portfolio in the shade beyond the window, and the evening sun was shining strongly in his own face; so that during the ceremony of introduction he had seen next to nothing of him, and then sauntered away to the bow window at the other end, where the ladies were assembled, to make his obeisance.

But at the dinner-table, he was placed directly opposite, with the advantage of a very distinct view; and the face, relieved against the dark stamped leather hangings on the wall, stood out like a sharply-painted portrait, and produced an odd and unpleasant effect upon Sturk, who could not help puzzling himself then, and for a long time after, with unavailing speculations about him.

The grim white man opposite did not appear to trouble his head about Sturk. He eat his dinner energetically, chatted laconically, but rather pleasantly. Sturk thought he might be eight-and-forty, or perhaps six or seven-and-fifty—it was a face without a date. He went over all his points, insignificant features, high forehead, stern countenance, abruptly silent, abruptly speaking, spectacles, harsh voice, harsher laugh, something sinister perhaps, and used for the most part when the joking or the story had a flavour of the sarcastic and the devilish. The image, as a whole, seemed to Sturk to fill in the outlines of a recollection, which yet was *not* a recollection. He could not seize it; it was a decidedly unpleasant impression of having seen him before, but where he could not bring to mind. 'He got me into

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some confounded trouble some time or other,' thought Sturk, in his uneasy dream; 'the sight of him is like a thump in my stomach. Was he the sheriff's deputy at Chester, when that rascally Jew-tailor followed me? Dangerfield—Dangerfield—Dangerfield—no; or could it be that row at Taunton? or the custom-house officer—let me see—1751; no, he was a taller man—yes, I remember him; it is *not* he. Or was he at Dick Luscome's duel?' and he lay awake half the night thinking of him; for he was not only a puzzle, but there was a sort of suspicion of danger and he knew not what, throbbing in his soul whenever his reverie conjured up that impenetrable, white scoffing face.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH THE GENTLEMEN FOLLOW THE LADIES.

HAVING had as much claret as they cared for, the gentlemen fluttered gaily into the drawing-room, and Puddock, who made up to Miss Gertrude, and had just started afresh, and in a rather more sentimental vein, was a good deal scandalized and put out by the General's reciting, with jolly emphasis, and calling thereto his daughter's special attention, his receipt for 'surprising a weaver,' which he embellished with two or three burlesque improvements of his own, which Puddock, amidst his blushes and confusion, allowed to pass without a protest. Aunt Rebecca was the only person present who pointedly refused to laugh; and with a slight shudder and momentary elevation of her eyes, said, 'wicked and unnatural cruelty!' at which sentiment Puddock used his pocket-handkerchief in rather an agitated manner.

''Tis a thing I've never done myself—that is, I've never seen it done,' said little Puddock, suffused with blushes, as he pleaded his cause at the bar of humanity—for those were the days of Howard, and the fair sex had taken up the philanthropist. 'The—the—receipt—'tis you see, a thing I happened to meet—and—and just read it in the—in a book—and the—I—a——'

Aunt Becky, with her shoulders raised in a shudder, and an agonized and peremptory 'there, there, *there*,' moved out of hearing in dignified disgust, to the General's high entertainment, who enjoyed her assaults upon innocent Puddock, and indeed took her attacks upon himself, when executed with moderation, hilariously enough—a misplaced good-humour which never failed to fire Aunt Becky's just resentment.

Indeed, the General was so tickled with this joke that he kept it

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going for the rest of the evening, by sly allusions and mischievous puns. As for instance, at supper, when Aunt Rebecca was deploring the miserable depression of the silk manufacture, and the distress of the poor Protestant artisans of the Liberty, the General, with a solemn wink at Puddock, and to that officer's terror came out with—

'Yet, who knows, Lieutenant Puddock, but the weavers, poor fellows, may be surprised, you know, by a sudden order from the Court, as happened last year.'

But Aunt Rebecca only raised her eyebrows, and, with a slight toss of her head, looked sternly at a cold fowl on the other side. But, from some cause or other—perhaps it was Miss Gertrude's rebellion in treating the outlawed Puddock with special civility that evening, Miss Becky's asperity seemed to acquire edge and venom as time proceeded. But Puddock rallied quickly. He was on the whole very happy, and did not grudge Mervyn his share of the talk, though he heard him ask leave to send Miss Gertrude Chattesworth a portfolio of his drawings made in Venice, to look over, which she, with a smile, accepted—and at supper, Puddock, at the General's instigation, gave them a solo, which went off pretty well, and, as they stood about the fire after it, on a similar pressure, an imitation of Barry in Othello; and upon this, Miss Becky, who was a furious partizan of Smock-alley Theatre and Mossop against Barry, Woodward, and the Crow-street play-house, went off again. Indeed, this was a feud which just then divided the ladies of all Dublin, and the greater part of the country, with uncommon acrimony.

'Crow-street was set up,' she harangued, 'to ruin the old house in the spirit of covetousness, *you* say' (Puddock had not said a word on the subject;) 'well, covetousness, we have good authority for saying, is idolatry—nothing less—*idolatry*, sir,—you need not stare.' (Puddock certainly did stare.) 'I suppose you *once* read your Bible, sir. But every sensible man, woman, child, and infant, sir, in the kingdom knows it was malice; and malice, Holy Writ says, is *murder*—but I forgot, that's perhaps no very great objection with Lieutenant Puddock.'

And little Puddock flushed up, and his round eyes grew rounder and rounder, as she proceeded, every moment; and he did not know what to say—for it had not struck him before that Messrs. Barry's and Woodward's theatrical venture might be viewed in the light of idolatry or murder. So, dumbfoundered as he was, he took half of Lord Chesterfield's advice in such cases, that is, he forgot the smile, but he made a very low bow, and, with this submission, the combat (*si rixa est*) subsided.

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Dangerfield had gone away some time—so had Mervyn—Sturk and his wife went next, and Cluffe and Puddock, who lingered as long as was decent, at last took leave. The plump Lieutenant went away very happy, notwithstanding the two or three little rubs he had met with, and a good deal more in love than ever. And he and his companion were both thoughtful, and the walk home was quite silent, though very pleasant.

Cluffe was giving shape mentally to his designs upon Miss Rebecca's £20,000 and savings. He knew she had had high offers in her young days, and refused; but those were passed and gone—and gray hairs bring wisdom—and women grow more practicable as the time for action dwindles—and she was just the woman to take a fancy—and 'once the maggot bit,' to go any honest length to make it fact. And Cluffe knew that he had the field to himself, and that he was a well-made, handsome, agreeable officer—not so young as to make the thing absurd, yet young enough to inspire the right sort of feeling. To be sure, there were a few things to be weighed. She was, perhaps—well she *was*—eccentric. She had troublesome pets and pastimes—he knew them all—was well stricken in years, and had a will of her own—that was all. But, then, on the other side was the money—a great and agreeable arithmetical fact not to be shaken—and she could be well-bred when she liked, and a self-possessed, dignified lady, who could sail about a room, and courtesy, and manage her fan, and lead the conversation, and do the honours, as Mrs. Cluffe, with a certain air of *haut ton*, and in an imposing way, to Cluffe's entire content, who liked the idea of overawing his peers.

And the two warriors, side by side, marched over the bridge, in the star-light, and both, by common consent, halted silently, and wheeled up to the battlement; and Puddock puffed a complacent little sigh up the river toward Belmont; and Cluffe was a good deal interested in the subject of his contemplation, and in fact, the more he thought of it, the better he liked it.

And they stood, each in his reverie, looking over the battlement toward Belmont, and hearing the hushed roll of the river, and seeing nothing but the deep blue, and the stars, and the black outline of the trees that overhung the bridge, until the enamoured Cluffe, who liked his comforts, and knew what gout was, felt the chill air, and remembered suddenly that they had stopped, and ought to be in motion toward their beds, and so he shook up Puddock, and they started anew, and parted just at the Phœnix, shaking hands heartily like two men who had just done a good stroke of business together.

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CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH MR. DANGERFIELD VISITS THE CHURCH OF CHAPELIZOD, AND ZEKIEL IRONS GOES A-FISHING.

EARLY next morning Lord Castlemallard, Dangerfield, and Nutter rode into Chapelizod, plaguey dusty, having already made the circuit of that portion of his property which lay west of the town. They had poked into the new mills and the old mills, and contemplated the quarries, and lime-kilns, and talked with Doyle about his holding, and walked over the two vacant farms, and I know not all besides. And away trotted his lordship to his breakfast in town. And Dangerfield seeing the church door open, dismounted and walked in, and Nutter did likewise.

Bob Martin was up in the gallery, I suppose, doing some good, and making a considerable knocking here and there in the pews, and walking slowly with creaking shoes. Zekiel Irons, the clerk, was down below about his business, at the communion table at the far end, lean, blue-chinned, thin-lipped, stooping over his quarto prayer books, and gliding about without noise, reverent and sinister. When they came in, Nutter led the way to Lord Castlemallard's pew, which brought them up pretty near to the spot where grave Mr. Irons was prowling serenely. The pew would soon want new flooring, Mr. Dangerfield thought, and the Castlemallard arms and supporters, a rather dingy piece of vainglory, overhanging the main seat on the wall, would be nothing the worse of a little fresh gilding and paint.

'There was a claim—eh—to one foot nine inches off the eastern end of the pew, on the part of—of the family—at Inchicore, I think they call it,' said Dangerfield, laying his riding-whip like a rule along the top, to help his imagination—'Hey—that would spoil the pew.'

'The claim's settled, and Mr. Langley goes to the other side of the aisle,' said Nutter, nodding to Irons, who came up and laid his long clay-coloured fingers on the top of the pew-door, and one long, thin foot on the first step, and with half-closed eyes, and a half bow, he awaited their pleasure.

'The Langley family had *this* pew,' said Dangerfield, with a side nod to that next his lordship's.

'Yes, sir,' said Irons, with the same immutable semblance of a smile, and raising neither his head nor his eyes.

'And who's got it now?'

'His reverence, Dr. Walsingham.'

And so it came out, that having purchased Salmonfalls, the Rector

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had compromised the territorial war that was on the point of breaking out among his parishioners, by exchanging with that old coxcomb, Langley, the great square pew over the way, that belonged to that house, for the queer little crib in which the tenant of Inchicore had hitherto sat in state; and so there was peace, if not good will, in the church.

'Hey—let's see it,' said Dangerfield, crossing the aisle, with Irons at his heels, for he was a man that saw everything for himself, that ever so remotely concerned him or his business.

'We buried Lord ——,' (and the title he spoke very low) 'in the vault here, just under where you stand, on Monday last, by night,' said Irons, very gently and grimly, as he stood behind Dangerfield.

A faint galvanic thrill shot up through the flagging and his firmly planted foot to his brain, as though something said, 'Ay, here I am!'

'Oh! indeed?' said Dangerfield, dryly, making a little nod, and raising his eyebrows, and just moving a little a one side—''Twas a nasty affair.'

He looked up, with his hands in his breeches' pockets, and read a mural tablet, whistling scarce audibly the while. It was not reverent, but he was a gentleman; and the clerk standing behind him, retained his quiet posture, and that smile, that yet was not a smile, but a sort of reflected light—was it patience, or was it secret ridicule? —you could not tell; and it never changed, and somehow it was provoking.

'And some persons, I believe, had an unpleasant duty to do there,' said Dangerfield, abruptly, in the middle of his tune, and turning his spectacles fully and sternly on Mr. Irons.

The clerk's head bent lower, and he shook it; and his eyes, but for a little glitter through the eyelashes, seemed to close.

''Tis a pretty church, this—a pretty town, and some good families in the neighbourhood,' said Dangerfield, briskly; 'and I dare say some trout in the river—hey?—the stream looks lively.'

'Middling, only—poor gray troutlings, sir—not a soul cares to fish it but myself,' he answered.

'You're the clerk—eh?'

'At your service, sir.'

'*Dublin* man?—or'——

'Born and bred in Dublin, your honour.'

'Ay—well! Irons—you've heard of Mr. Dangerfield—Lord Castlemallard's agent—I am he. Good morning, Irons;' and he gave him half-a-crown, and he took another look round; and then he and Nutter went out of the church, and took a hasty leave of one another,

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and away went Nutter on his nag, to the mills. And Dangerfield, just before mounting, popped into Cleary's shop, and in his grim, laconic way, asked the proprietor, among his meal-bags and bacon, about fifty questions in less than five minutes. 'That was one of Lord Castlemallard's houses—eh—with the bad roof, and manure-heap round the corner?'—and, 'Where's the pot-house they call the Salmon House?—doing a good business—eh?' and at last—'I'm told there's some trout in the stream. Is there any one in the town who knows the river, and could show me the fishing?—Oh, the clerk! and what sort of fish is *he*—hey?—Oh! an honest, worthy man, is he? Very good, sir. Then, perhaps, Mr. a—perhaps, sir, you'll do me the favour to let one of your people run down to his house, and say Mr. Dangerfield, Lord Castlemallard's agent, who is staying, you know, at the Brass Castle, would be much obliged if he would bring his rod and tackle, and take a walk with him up the river, for a little angling, at ten o'clock!'

Jolly Phil Cleary was deferential, and almost nervous in his presence. The silver-haired, grim man, with his mysterious reputation for money, and that short decisive way of his, and sudden cynical chuckle, inspired a sort of awe, which made his wishes, where expressed with that intent, very generally obeyed; and, sure enough, Irons appeared, with his rod, at the appointed hour, and the interesting anglers—Piscator and his 'honest scholar,' as Isaac Walton hath it—set out side by side on their ramble, in the true fraternity of the gentle craft.

The clerk had, I'm afraid, a shrew of a wife—shrill, vehement, and fluent. 'Rogue,' 'old miser,' 'old sneak,' and a great many worse names, she called him. Good Mrs. Irons was old, fat, and ugly, and she knew it; and that knowledge made her natural jealousy the fiercer. He had learned, by long experience, the best tactique under fire: he became actually taciturn; or, if he spoke, his speech was laconic and enigmatical; sometimes throwing out a proverb, and sometimes a text; and sometimes when provoked past endurance, spouting mildly a little bit of meek and venomous irony.

He loved his trout-rod and the devious banks of the Liffey, where saturnine and alone, he filled his basket. It was his helpmate's rule, whenever she did not know to a certainty precisely what Irons was doing, to take it for granted that he was about some mischief. Her lodger, Captain Devereux, was her great resource on these occasions, and few things pleased him better than a stormy visit from his hostess in this temper. The young scapegrace would close his novel, and set down his glass of sherry and water (it sometimes smelt very like

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brandy, I'm afraid). To hear her rant, one would have supposed, who had not seen him, that her lank-haired, grimly partner was the prettiest youth in the county of Dublin, and that all the comely lasses in Chapelizod and the country round were sighing and setting caps at him; and Devereux, who had a vein of satire, and loved even farce, enjoyed the heroics of the fat old slut.

'Oh! what am I to do, Captain, jewel?' she bounced into the room, with flaming face and eyes swelled, and the end of her apron, with which she had been swobbing them, in her hand, while she gesticulated with her right; 'there, he's off again to Island Bridge,—the owdacious sneak! It's all that dirty huzzy's doing. I'm not such a fool, but I know how to put this and that together, though he thinks I don't know of his doings; but I'll be even with you, Meg Partlet, yet—you trollop;' and all this was delivered in renewed floods of tears, and stentorian hysterics, while she shook her fat red fist in the air, at the presumed level of Meg's beautiful features.

'Nay, madam,' said the gay captain; 'I prithee, weep not; the like discoveries, as you have read, have been made in Rome, Salamanca, Ballyporeen, Babylon, Venice, and fifty other famous cities.' He always felt in these interviews, as if she and he were extemporizing a burlesque—she the Queen of Crim Tartary, and he an Archbishop in her court—and would have spoken blank verse, only he feared she might perceive it, and break up the conference.

'And what's that to the purpose?—don't I know they're the same all over the world—nothing but brutes and barbarians.'

'But suppose, madam, he has only gone up the river, and just taken his rod'—

'Oh! rod, indeed. I know where he wants a rod, the rascal!'

'I tell you, madam,' urged the chaplain, 'you're quite in the wrong. You've discovered after twenty years' wedlock that your husband's—a man! and you're vexed; would you have him anything else?'

'You're all in a story,' she blubbered maniacally; 'there's no justice, nor feeling, nor succour for a poor abused woman; but I'll do it—I will. I'll go to his reverence—don't try to persuade me—the Rev. Hugh Walsingham, Doctor of Divinity, and Rector of Chapelizod (she used to give him at full length whenever she threatened Zekiel with a visitation from that quarter, by way of adding ponderosity to the menace)—I'll go to him straight—don't think to stop me—and we'll see what he'll say;' and so she addressed herself to go.

'And when you see him, madam, ask the learned doctor—don't ask me—believe the rector of the parish—he'll tell you, that it hath prevailed from the period at which Madam Sarah quarrelled with saucy

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Miss Hagar; that it hath prevailed among all the principal nations of antiquity, according to Pliny, Strabo, and the chief writers of antiquity; that Juno, Dido, Eleanor Queen of England, and Mrs. Partridge, whom I read of here (and he pointed to the open volume of Tom Jones), each made, or thought she made, a like discovery.' And the captain delivered this slowly, with knitted brow and thoughtful face, after the manner of the erudite and simple Doctor.

'Pretty partridges, indeed! and nice game for a parish clerk!' cried the lady, returning. 'I wonder, so I do, when I look at him, and think of his goings on, how he can have the assurance to sit under the minister, and look the congregation in the face, and tune his throat, and sing the blessed psalms.'

'You are not to wonder, madam; believe the sage, who says, *omnibus hoc vitium est cantoribus*.'

Devereux knew of old that the effect of Latin on Mrs. Irons was to heighten the inflammation, and so the matron burst into whole chapters of crimination, enlivened with a sprinkling of strong words, as the sages of the law love to pepper their indictments and informations with hot adverbs and well-spiced parentheses, 'falsely,' 'scandalously,' 'maliciously,' and *suadente diabolo*, to make them sit warm on the stomachs of a loyal judge and jury, and digest easily.

The neighbours were so accustomed to Mrs. Irons' griefs, that when her voice was audible, as upon such occasions it was, upon the high road and in the back gardens, it produced next to no sensation; everybody had heard from that loud oracle every sort of story touching Irons which could well be imagined, and it was all so thoroughly published by the good lady, that curiosity on the subject was pretty well dead and gone, and her distant declamation rattled over their heads and boomed in their ears, like the distant guns and trumpets on a review day, signifying nothing.

And all this only shows what every man who has ruralized a little in his lifetime knows, more than in theory, that the golden age lingers in no corner of the earth, but is really quite gone and over everywhere, and that peace and *prisca fides* have not fled to the nooks and shadows of deep valleys and bowery brooks, but flown once, and away to heaven again, and left the round world to its general curse. So it is even in pretty old villages, embowered in orchards, with hollyhocks and jessamine in front of the houses, and primeval cocks and hens pecking and scraping in the street, and the modest river dimpling and simpering among osiers and apple trees, and old ivied walls close by—you sometimes hear other things than lowing herds, and small birds singing, and purling streams; and shrill accents and voluble

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rhetoric will now and then trouble the fragrant air, and wake up the dim old river-god from his nap.

As to Irons, if he was all that his wife gave out, he must have been a mighty sly dog indeed; for on the whole, he presented a tolerably decent exterior to society. It is said, indeed, that he liked a grave tumbler of punch, and was sardonic and silent in his liquor; that his gait was occasionally a little queer and uncertain, as his lank figure glided home by moonlight, from the 'Salmon House;' and that his fingers fumbled longer than need be with the latch, and his tongue, though it tried but a short and grim 'bar'th door, Marjry,' or 'gi' me can'le, wench,' sometimes lacked its cunning, and slipped and kept not time. There were, too, other scandals, such as the prying and profane love to shoot privily at church celebrities. Perhaps it was his reserve and sanctity that provoked them. Perhaps he was, in truth, though cautious, sometimes indiscreet. Perhaps it was fanciful Mrs. Irons' jealous hullabaloos and hysterics that did it—I don't know—but people have been observed, *apropos* of him, to wink at one another, and grin, and shake their heads, and say: 'the nearer the church, you know'—and 'he so ancient, too! but 'tis an old rat that won't eat cheese,' and so forth.

Just as Mrs. Irons whisked round for the seventh time to start upon her long threatened march to Dr. Walsingham's study to lay her pitiful case before him, Captain Devereux, who was looking toward the 'Phœnix,' saw the truant clerk and Mr. Dangerfield, turn the corner together on their return.

'Stay, madam, here comes the traitor,' said he; 'and, on my honour, 'tis worse than we thought; for he has led my Lord Castlemallard's old agent into mischief too—and Meg Partlet has had two swains at her feet this morning; and, see, the hypocrites have got some trout in their basket, and their rods on their shoulders—and look, for all the world, as if they had only been fishing—sly rogues!'

'Well, it's all one,' said Mrs. Irons, gaping from the other window, and sobering rapidly; 'if 'tisn't to-day, 'twill be to-morrow, I suppose; and at any rate 'tis a sin and shame to leave any poor crature in this miserable taking, not knowing but he might be drownded—or worse—dear knows it would not be much trouble to tell his wife when the gentleman wanted him—and sure for any honest matter I'd never say against it.'

Her thoughts were running upon Dangerfield, and what 'compliment' he had probably made her husband at parting; and a minute or two after this, Devereux saw her, with her ridinghood on, trudging up to the "Salmon House" to make inquisition after the same.'

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CHAPTER XXI.

RELATING AMONG OTHER THINGS HOW DOCTOR TOOLE WALKED UP TO THE TILED HOUSE; AND OF HIS PLEASANT DISCOURSE WITH MR. MERVYN.

DR. STURK's spirits and temper had not become more pleasant lately. In fact he brooded more, and was more savage at home than was at all agreeable. He used to go into town oftener, and to stay there later; and his language about Toole and Nutter, when there was none but submissive little Mrs. Sturk by, was more fierce and coarse than ever. To hear him, then, one would have supposed that they were actually plotting to make away with him, and that in self-defence he must smite them hip and thigh. Then, beside their moral offensiveness, they were such 'idiots,' and 'noodles,' and botching and blundering right and left, so palpably to the danger and ruin of their employers, that no man of conscience could sit easy and see it going on; and all this simply because he had fixed his affections upon the practice of the one, and the agency of the other. For Sturk had, in his own belief, a genius for business of every sort. Every body on whom his insolent glance fell, who had any sort of business to do, did it wrong, and was a 'precious disciple,' or a 'goose,' or a 'born jack-ass,' and excited his scoffing chuckle. And little Mrs. Sturk, frightened and admiring used to say, while he grinned and muttered, and tittered into the fire, with his great shoulders buried in his baloon-backed chair, his heels over the fender and his hands in his breeches' pockets—'But, Barney, you know, you're so clever—there's no one like you!' And he was fond of just nibbling at speculations in a small safe way, and used to pull out a roll of bank-notes, when he was lucky, and show his winnings to his wife, and chuckle and swear over them, and boast and rail, and tell her, if it was not for the cursed way his time was cut up with hospital, and field days, and such trumpery regimental duties he could make a fortune while other men were thinking of it; and he very nearly believed it. And he was, doubtless, clear-headed, though wrong-headed, too, at times, and very energetic; but his genius was for pushing men out of their places to make way for himself.

But with all that he had the good brute instincts too, and catered diligently for his brood, and their 'dam'—and took a gruff unacknowledged pride in seeing his wife well dressed—and had a strong liking for her—and thanked her in his soul for looking after things so well; and thought often about his boys, and looked sharply after their edu-

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cation; and was an efficient and decisive head of a household; and had no vices nor expensive indulgences; and was a hard but tolerably just man to deal with.

All this time his uneasiness and puzzle about Dangerfield continued, and, along with other things, kept him awake often to unseasonable hours at night. He did not tell Mrs. Sturk. In fact, he was a man who, though on most occasions he gave the wife of his bosom what he called 'his mind' freely enough, yet did not see fit to give her a great deal of his confidence.

Dangerfield had his plans too. Who has not? Nothing could be more compact and modest than his household. He had just a housekeeper and two maids, who looked nearly as old, and a valet, and a groom, who slept at the 'Phœnix,' and two very pretty horses at livery in the same place. All his appointments were natty and complete, and his servants, every one, stood in awe of him; for no lip or eye-service would go down with that severe, prompt, and lynx-eyed gentleman. And his groom, among the coachmen and other experts at the 'Salmon House,' used to brag of his hunters in England; and his man, of his riches, and his influence with Lord Castlemallard.

In England, Dangerfield, indeed, spent little more money than he did in Chapelizod, except in his stable; and Lord Castlemallard, who admired his stinginess, as he did everything else about him, used to say: 'He's a wonder of the world! How he retains his influence over all the people he knows without ever giving one among them so much as a mutton-chop or a glass of sherry in his house, I can't conceive. *I* couldn't do it, I know.' But he had ultimate plans, if not of splendour, at least of luxury. His tastes, and perhaps some deeper feelings, pointed to the continent, and he had purchased a little paradise on the Lake of Geneva, where was an Eden of fruits and flowers, and wealth of marbles and coloured canvas, and wonderful wines maturing in his cellars, and aquaria for his fish, and ice-houses and baths, and I know not what refinements of old Roman Villa-luxury beside—among which he meant to pass the honoured evening of his days; with just a few more thousands, and, as he sometimes thought, perhaps a wife. He had not quite made up his mind; but he had come to the time when a man must forthwith accept matrimony frankly, or, if he be wise, shake hands with bleak celibacy, and content himself for his earthly future with monastic jollity and solitude.

It is a maxim with charitable persons—and no more than a recognition of a great constitutional axiom—to assume, in the absence of proof to the contrary, that every British subject is an honest man. Now, if we had gone to Lord Castlemallard for his character—and

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who more competent to give him one—we know very well what we should have heard about Dangerfield; and, on the other hand, we have never found him out—have we, kind reader?—in a shabby action or unworthy thought; and, therefore, it leaves upon our mind an unpleasant impression about that Mr. Mervyn, who arrived in the dark, attending upon a coffin as mysterious as himself, and now lives solitarily in the haunted house near Ballyfermot, that the omniscient Dangerfield should follow him, when they pass upon the road, with that peculiar stern glance of surprise which seemed to say—'Was ever such audacity conceived? Is the man mad?'

But Dangerfield did not choose to talk about him—if indeed he had anything to disclose—though the gentlemen at the Club pressed him often with questions, which, however, he quietly parried, to the signal vexation of active little Dr. Toole, who took up and dropped, in turn, all sorts of curious theories about the young stranger. Lord Castlemallard knew all about him, too, but his lordship was high and huffy, and hardly ever in Chapelizod, except on horseback, and two or three times in the year at a grand dinner at the Artillery mess. And when Mervyn was mentioned he always talked of something else, rather imperiously, as though he said, 'You'll please to observe that upon that subject I don't choose to speak.' And as for Dr. Walsingham, when he thought it right to hold his tongue upon a given matter, thumb-screws could not squeeze it from him.

In short, our friend Toole grew so feverish under his disappointment that he made an excuse of old Tim Molloy's toothache to go up in person to the 'Tiled House,' in the hope of meeting the young gentleman, and hearing something from him (the servants, he already knew, were as much in the dark as he) to alleviate his distress. And, sure enough, his luck stood him in stead; for, as he was going away, having pulled out old Molloy's grinder to give a colour to his visit, who should he find upon the steps of the hall-door but the pale, handsome young gentleman himself.

Dr. Toole bowed low, and grinned with real satisfaction, reminded him of their interview at the 'Phœnix,' and made by way of apology for his appearance at the 'Tiled House,' a light and kind allusion to poor old Tim, of whose toothache he spoke affectionately, and with water in his eyes—for he half believed for the moment what he was saying—declared how he remembered him when he did not come up to Tim's knee-buckle, and would walk that far any day, and a bit further too, he hoped, to relieve the poor old boy in a less matter. And finding that Mr. Mervyn was going toward Chapelizod, he begged him not to delay on his account, and accompanied him down the

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Ballyfermot road, entertaining him by the way with an inexhaustible affluence of Chapelizod anecdote and scandal, at which the young man stared a good deal, and sometimes even appeared impatient; but the Doctor did not perceive it, and rattled on; and told him moreover, everything about himself and his belongings with a minute and voluble frankness, intended to shame the suspicious reserve of the stranger. But nothing came; and being by this time grown bolder, he began a more direct assault, and told him, with a proper scorn of the village curiosity, all the theories which the Chapelizod gossips had spun about him.

'And they say, among other things, that you're not—a—in fact—there's a mystery—a something—about your birth, you know,' said Toole, in a tone implying pity and contempt for his idle townsfolk.

'They lie, then!' cried the young man, stopping short, more fiercely than was pleasant, and fixing his two great lurid eyes upon the cunning little face of the Doctor; and, after a pause, 'Why can't they let me and my concerns alone, sir?'

'But there's no use in saying so, *I* can tell you,' exclaimed little Toole, recovering his feet in an instant. 'Why, I suppose there isn't so tattling, prying, lying, scandalous a little colony of Christians on earth; eyes, ears, and mouths all open, sir; heads busy, tongues wagging; lots of old maids, by Jove; ladies' women, and gentlemen's gentlemen, and drawers and footmen; club talk, sir, and mess-table talk, and talk on band days, talk over cards, talk at home, sir—talk in the streets—talk—talk; by Jupiter Tonans! 'tis enough to bother one's ears, and make a man envy Robinson Crusoe!'

'So I do, sir, if we were rid of his parrot,' answered Mervyn; and with a dry 'I wish you a good morning, Doctor—Doctor—a—*sir*'—turned sharply from him up the Palmerstown-road.

'Going to Belmont,' murmured little Toole, with his face a little redder than usual, and stopping in an undignified way for a moment at the corner to look after him. 'He's close—plaguy close; and Miss Rebecca Chattesworth knows nothing about him neither—I wonder does she though—and doesn't seem to care even. He's not there for nothing though. *Some* one makes him welcome, depend on't,' and he winked to himself. 'A plaguey high stomach, too, by Jove. I bet you fifty, if he stays here three months, he'll be at swords or pistols with some of our hot-bloods. And whatever his secret is—and I dare say 'tisn't worth knowing—the people here will ferrit it out at last, I warrant you. There's small good in making all the fuss he does about it; if he knew but all, there's no such thing as a secret here—hang the one have *I*, I know, just because there's no use in trying. The

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whole town knows when I've tripe for dinner, and where I have a patch or a darn. And when I got the fourteen pigeons at Darkey's-bridge, the birds were not ten minutes on my kitchen table when old Widow Foote sends her maid and her compliments, as she knew my pie-dish only held a dozen, to beg the two odd birds. Secret, indeed!' and he whistled a bar or two contemptuously, which subsided into dejected silence, and he muttered 'I wish I knew it,' and walked over the bridge gloomily; and he roared more fiercely on smaller occasions than usual at his dogs on the way home, and they squalled oftener and louder.

Now, for some reason or other, Dangerfield had watched the growing intimacy between Mervyn and Miss Gertrude Chattesworth with an evil eye. He certainly did know something about this Mr. Mervyn, with his beautiful sketches, and his talk about Italy, and his fine music. And his own spectacles had carefully surveyed Miss Chattesworth, and she had passed the ordeal satisfactorily. And Dangerfield thought, 'These people can't possibly suspect the actual state of the case, and who and what this gentleman is *to my certain knowledge;* and 'tis a pity so fine a young lady should be sacrificed for want of a word spoken in season.' And when he had decided upon a point, it was not easy to make him stop or swerve.

CHAPTER XXII.

TELLING HOW MR. MERVYN FARED AT BELMONT, AND OF A PLEASANT LITTLE DEJEUNER BY THE MARGIN OF THE LIFFEY.

Now it happened that on the very same day, the fashion of Dr. Walsingham's and of Aunt Rebecca's countenances were one and both changed towards Mr. Mervyn, much to his chagrin and puzzle. The Doctor, who met him near his own house on the bridge, was something distant in manner, and looked him in the face with very grave eyes, and seemed sad, and as if he had something on his mind, and laid his hand upon the young man's arm, and addressed himself to speak; but glancing round his shoulder, and seeing people astir, and that they were under observation, he reserved himself.

That both the ladies of Belmont looked as if they had heard some strange story, each in her own way. Aunt Rebecca received the young man without a smile, and was unaccountably upon her high horse, and said some dry and sharp things, and looked as if she could say more, and coloured menacingly, and, in short, was odd, and very nearly impertinent. And Gertrude, though very gentle and kind,

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seemed also much graver, and looked pale, and her eyes larger and more excited, and altogether like a brave young lady who had fought a battle without crying. And Mervyn saw all this and pondered on it, and went away soon; the iron entered into his soul.

Aunt Rebecca was so occupied with her dogs, squirrels, parrots, old women, and convicts, that her eyes being off the cards, she saw little of the game; and when a friendly whisper turned her thoughts that way, and it flashed upon her that tricks and honours were pretty far gone, she never remembered that she had herself to blame for the matter, but turned upon her poor niece with 'Sly creature!' and so forth. And while owing to this inattention, Gertrude had lost the benefit of her sage Aunt Rebecca's counsels altogether, her venerable but frisky old grandmother—Madam Nature—it was to be feared, might have profitted by the occasion to giggle and whistle her own advice in her ear, and been indifferently well obeyed. I really don't pretend to say—maybe there was nothing, or next to nothing in it; or if there was, Miss Gertrude herself might not quite know. And if she did suspect she liked him, ever so little, she had no one but Lilias Walsingham to tell; and I don't know that young ladies are always quite candid upon these points. Some, at least, I believe, don't make confidences until their secrets become insupportable. However, Aunt Rebecca was now wide awake, and had trumpeted a pretty shrill reveiller. And Gertrude had started up, her elbow on the pillow, and her large eyes open; and the dream, I suppose, was shivered and flown, and something rather ghastly at her side.

Coming out of church, Dr. Walsingham asked Mervyn to take a turn with him in the Park—and so they did—and the Doctor talked with him seriously and kindly on that broad plateau. The young man walked darkly beside him, and they often stopped outright. When, on their return, they came near the Chapelizod gate, and Parson's lodge, and the duck-pond, the Doctor was telling him that marriage is an affair of the heart—also a spiritual union—and, moreover, a mercantile partnership—and he insisted much upon this latter view—and told him what and how strict was the practice of the ancient Jews, the people of God, upon this particular point. Dr. Walsingham had made a love-match, was the most imprudent and open-handed of men, and always preaching to others against his own besetting sin. To hear him talk, indeed, you would have supposed he was a usurer. Then Mr. Mervyn, who looked a little pale and excited, turned the Doctor about, and they made another little circuit, while he entered somewhat into his affairs and prospects, and told him something about an appointment in connexion with the

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Embassy at Paris, and said he would ask him to read some letters about it; and the Doctor seemed a little shaken; and so they parted in a very friendly but grave way.

When Mervyn had turned his back upon Belmont, on the occasion of the unpleasant little visit I mentioned just now, the ladies had some words in the drawing-room.

'I have *not* coquetted, madam,' said Miss Gertrude, haughtily.

'Then I'm to presume you've been serious; and I take the liberty to ask how far this affair has proceeded?' said Aunt Rebecca, firmly, and laying her gloved hand and folded fan calmly on the table.

'I really forget,' said the young lady, coldly.

'Has he made a declaration of love?' demanded the Aunt, the two red spots on her cheeks coming out steadily, and helping the flash of her eyes.

'Certainly not,' answered the young lady, with a stare of haughty surprise that was quite unaffected.

At the pleasant luncheon and dance on the grass that the officers gave, in that pretty field by the river, half-a-dozen of the young people had got beside the little brook that runs simpering and romping into the river just there. Women are often good-natured in love matters where rivalry does not mix, and Miss Gertrude, all on a sudden, found herself alone with Mervyn. Aunt Becky, from under the ash trees at the other end of the field, with great distinctness, for she was not a bit near-sighted, and considerable uneasiness, saw their *tête-à-tête*. It was out of the question getting up in time to prevent the young people speaking their minds if so disposed, and she thought she perceived that in the young man's bearing, which looked like a pleading and eagerness, and 'Gertrude's put out a good deal—I see by her plucking at those flowers—but my head to a China orange—the girl won't think of him. She's not a young woman to rush into a horrible folly, hand-over-head,' thought Aunt Becky; and then she began to think they were talking very much at length indeed, and to regret that she had not started at once from her post for the place of meeting; and one, and two, and three minutes passed, and perhaps some more, and Aunt Becky began to grow wroth, and was on the point of marching upon them, when they began slowly to walk towards the group who were plucking bunches of woodbine from the hedge across the little stream, at the risk of tumbling in, and distributing the flowers among the ladies, amidst a great deal of laughing and gabble. Then Miss Gertrude made Mr. Mervyn rather a haughty and slight salutation, her Aunt thought, and so dismissed

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him; he, too, made a bow, but a very low one, and walked straight off to the first lady he saw.

This happened to be mild little Mrs. Sturk, and he talked a good deal to her, but restlessly, and, as it seemed, with a wandering mind; and afterwards he conversed, with an affectation of interest—it was only that—Aunt Becky, who observed him with some curiosity, thought—for a few minutes with Lilias Walsingham; and afterwards he talked with an effort, and so much animation and such good acceptance, [though it was plain, Aunt Becky said, that he did not listen to one word she said,] to the fair Magnolia, that O'Flaherty had serious thoughts of horsewhipping him when the festivities were over—for, as he purposed informing him, his 'ungentlemanlike intherfarence.'

'He has got his quietus,' thought Aunt Becky, with triumph; 'this brisk, laughing carriage, and heightened colour, a woman of experience can see through at a glance.'

Yes, all this frisking and skipping is but the hypocrisy of bleeding vanity—*hæret lateri*—they are just the flush, wriggle, and hysterics of suppressed torture.

Then came her niece, cold and stately, with steady eye and a slight flush, and altogether the air of the conscientious young matron who has returned from the nursery, having there administered the discipline; and so she sat down beside her aunt, serene and silent, and, the little glow passed away, pale and still.

'Well, he *has* spoken?' said her aunt to her, in a sharp aside.

'Yes,' answered the young lady, icily.

'And has had his answer?'

'Yes—and I beg, Aunt Rebecca, the subject may be allowed to drop.' The young lady's eyes encountered her aunt's so directly, and were so fully charged with the genuine Chattesworth lightning, that Miss Rebecca, unused to such demonstrations, averted hers, and with a slight sarcastic inclination, and, 'Oh! your servant, young lady,' beckoned with her fan grandly to little Puddock, who was hovering with other designs in the vicinity, and taking his arm, though he was not forgiven, but only employed—a distinction often made by good Queen Elizabeth—marched to the marquee, where, it was soon evident, the plump Lieutenant was busy in commending, according to their merits, the best bits of the best *plats* on the table.

'So dear Aunt Becky has forgiven Puddock,' said Devereux, who was sauntering up to the tent between O'Flaherty and Cluffe, and little suspecting that he was descanting upon the intended Mrs. Cluffe—'and they are celebrating the reconciliation over a jelly and a pupton. I love Aunt Rebecca, I tell you—I don't know what we

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should do without her. She's impertinent, and often nearly insupportable; but isn't she the most placable creature on earth? I venture to say I might kill you, Lieutenant O'Flaherty—of course, with your permission, sir—and she'd forgive me to-morrow morning! And she really does princely things—doesn't she? She set up that ugly widow—what's her name?—twice in a shop in Dame-street, and gave two hundred pounds to poor Scamper's orphan, and actually pensions that old miscreant, Wagget, who ought to be hanged—and never looks for thanks or compliments, or upbraids her ingrates with past kindnesses. She's noble—Aunt Becky's every inch a gentleman!'

By this time they had reached the tent, and the hearty voice of the General challenged them from the shade, as he fillipped a little chime merrily on his empty glass.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHICH CONCERNS THE GRAND DINNER AT THE KING'S HOUSE, AND WHO WERE THERE, AND SOMETHING OF THEIR TALK, REVERIES, DISPUTES, AND GENERAL JOLLITY.

It was about this time that the dinner-party at the King's House came off. Old Colonel and Mrs. Strafford were hospitable, if not very entertaining, and liked to bring their neighbours together, without ceremony, round a saddle of mutton and a gooseberry pie, and other such solid comforts; and then, hey for a round game!—for the young people, Pope Joan, or what you please, in the drawing-room, with lots of flirting and favouritism, and a jolly little supper of broiled bones and whipt cream, and toasts and sentiments, with plenty of sly allusions and honest laughter all round the table. But twice or thrice in the year the worthy couple made a more imposing gathering at the King's House, and killed the fatted calf, and made a solemn feast to the big wigs and the notables of Chapelizod, with just such a sprinkling of youngsters as sufficed to keep alive the young people whom they brought in their train. There was eating of venison and farced turkeys, and other stately fare; and they praised the Colonel's claret, and gave the servants their 'vails' in the hall, and drove away in their carriages, with flambeaux and footmen, followed by the hearty good-night of the host from the hall-door steps, and amazing the quiet little town with their rattle and glare.

Dinner was a five o'clock affair in those days, and the state parlour was well filled. There was old Bligh from the Magazine—I take the

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guests in order of arrival—and the Chattesworths, and the Walsinghams; and old Dowager Lady Glenvarlogh—Colonel Strafford's cousin—who flashed out in the evening sun from Dublin in thunder and dust and her carriage-and-four, bringing her mild little country niece, who watched her fat painted aunt all the time of dinner, with the corners of her frightened little eyes, across the table; and spoke sparingly, and ate with diffidence; and Captain Devereux was there; and the next beau who appeared was—of all men in the world—Mr. Mervyn! and Aunt Becky watched, and saw with satisfaction, that he and Gertrude met as formally and coldly as she could have desired. And then there was an elaborate macaroni, one of the Lord Lieutenant's household,—Mr. Beauchamp; and last, Lord Castlemallard, who liked very well to be the chief man in the room, and dozed after dinner serenely in that consciousness, and loved to lean back upon his sofa in the drawing-room, and gaze in a dozing, smiling, Turkish reverie, after Gertrude Chattesworth and pretty Lilias, whom he admired; and when either came near enough, he would take her hand and say—'Well, child, how do you do?—and why don't you speak to your old friend? You charming rogue, you know I remember you no bigger than your fan. And what mischief have you been about—eh? What mischief have you been about, I say, young gentlewoman? Turning all the pretty fellows' heads, I warrant you—eh!—turning their heads?' And he used to talk this sort of talk very slowly, and to hold their hands all the while, and even after this talk was exhausted, and grin sleepily, and wag his head, looking with a glittering, unpleasant gaze in their faces all the time. But at present we are all at dinner, in the midst of the row which even the best bred people, assembled in sufficient numbers, will make over that meal.

Devereux could not help seeing pretty Lilias over the way, who was listening to handsome Mervyn, as it seemed, with interest, and talking also her pleasant little share. He was no dunce, that Mervyn, nor much of a coxcomb, and certainly no clown, Devereux thought; but as fine a gentleman, to speak honestly, and as handsome, as well dressed, and as pleasant to listen to, with that sweet low voice and piquant smile, as any. Besides he could draw, and had more yards of French and English verses by rote than Aunt Becky owned of Venetian lace and satin ribbons, and was more of a scholar than he. He? *He!*—why—'he?' what the deuce had Devereux to do with it—was he vexed?—A fiddlestick! He began to flag with Miss Ward, the dowager's niece, and was glad when the refined Beauchamp, at her other side, took her up, and entertained her with Lady Carrickmore's.

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ball and the masquerade, and the last levee, and the withdrawing-room. There are said to have been persons who could attend to half a dozen different conversations going on together, and take a rational part in them all, and indulge, all the time, in a distinct consecutive train of thought beside. I dare say, Mr. Morphy, the chess-player, would find no difficulty in it. But Devereux was not by any means competent to the feat, though there was one conversation, perhaps, the thread of which he would gladly have caught up and disentangled. So the talk at top and bottom and both sides of the table, with its cross-readings, and muddle, and uproar, changed hands, and whisked and rioted, like a dance of Walpurgis, in his lonely brain.

What he heard, on the whole, was very like this—'hubble-bubble-rubble-dubble—the great match of shuttlecock played between the gentlemen of the north and those of hubble-bubble—the Methodist persuasion; but—ha-ha-ha!—a squeeze of a lemon—rubble-dubble—ha-ha-ha!—wicked man—hubble-bubble—force-meat balls and yolks of eggs—rubble-dubble—musket balls from a steel cross-bow—upon my—hubble-bubble—throwing a sheep's eye—ha-ha-ha—rubble-dubble—at the two remaining heads on Temple Bar—hubble-bubble—and the Duke left by his will—rubble-dubble—a quid of tobacco in a brass snuff-box—hubble-bubble—and my Lady Rostrevor's very sweet upon—rubble-dubble—old Alderman Wallop of Johns'-lane—hubble-bubble—ha-ha-ha!—from Jericho to Bethany, where David, Joab, and—rubble-dubble—the whole party upset in the mud in a chaise marine—and—hubble-bubble—shake a little white pepper over them—and—rubble-dubble—his name is Solomon—hubble-bubble—ha-ha-ha!—the poor old thing dying of cold, and not a stitch of clothes to cover her nakedness—rubble-dubble—play or pay, on Finchly common—hubble-bubble—most melancholy truly—ha-ha-ha!—rubble-dubble—and old Lady Ruth is ready to swear she never—hubble-bubble—served High Sheriff for the county of Down in the reign of Queen Anne—rubble-dubble—and Dr. and Mrs. Sturk—hubble-bubble—Secretaries of State in the room of the Duke of Grafton and General Conway—rubble-dubble—venerable prelate—ha-ha-ha!—hubble-bubble—filthy creature—hubble-bubble-rubble-dubble.'

All this did not make him much wiser or merrier. Love has its fevers, its recoveries, and its relapses. The patient—nay even his nurse and his doctor, if he has taken to himself such officers in his distress—may believe the malady quite cured—the passion burnt out—the flame extinct—even the smoke quite over, when a little chance puff of rivalry blows the white ashes off, and, lo! the old liking is

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still smouldering. But this was not Devereux's case. He remembered when his fever—not a love one—and his leave of absence at Scarborough, and that long continental tour of hers with Aunt Rebecca and Gertrude Chattesworth, had carried the grave, large-eyed little girl away, and hid her from his sight for more than a year, very nearly *two* years, the strange sort of thrill and surprise with which he saw her again—tall and slight, and very beautiful—no, not *beautiful*, perhaps, if you go to rule and compass, and Greek trigonometrical theories; but there was an indescribable prettiness in all her features and movements, and looks, higher, and finer, and sweeter than all the canons of statuary will give you.

How prettily she stands! how prettily she walks! what a sensitive, spirited, clear-tinted face it is! This was pretty much the interpretation of his reverie, as Colonel Strafford's large and respectable party obligingly vanished for a while into air. Is it sad? I think it *is* sad—I don't know—and how sweetly and how drolly it lighted up; at that moment he saw her smile—the pleasant mischief in it—the dark violet glance—the wonderful soft dimple in chin and cheek—the little crimson mouth, and its laughing coronet of pearls—and then all earnest again, and still so animated! What feminine intelligence and character there is in that face!—'tis pleasanter to me than conversation—'tis a fairy tale, or—or a dream, it's so interesting—I never know, you see what's coming—Is not it wonderful? What is she talking about now?—what does it signify?—she's so strangely beautiful—she's like those Irish melodies, I can't reach all their meaning; I only know their changes keep me silent, and are playing with my heart-strings.

Devereux's contemplation of the animated *tête-à-tête*, for such, in effect, it seemed to him at the other side of the table, was, however, by no means altogether pleasurable. He began to think Mervyn conceited; there was a 'provoking probability of succeeding' about him, and altogether something that was beginning to grow offensive and odious.

'She knows well enough I like her,' so his liking said in confidence to his vanity, and even *he* hardly overheard them talk; 'better a great deal than I knew it myself, till old Strafford got together this confounded stupid dinner-party (he caught Miss Chattesworth glancing at him with a peculiar look of inquiry). Why the plague did he ask *me* here? it was Puddock's turn, and he likes venison and compots, and—and—but 'tis like them—the women fall in love with the man who's in love with himself, like Narcissus yonder—and they can't help it—not they—and what care I?—hang it! I say, what is't to

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me?—and yet—if she were to leave it—what a queer unmeaning place Chapelizod would be!'

'And what do you say to that, Captain Devereux?' cried the hearty voice of old General Chattesworth, and, with a little shock, the Captain dropped from the clouds into his chair, and a clear view of the larded fowl before him, and his own responsibilities and situation—

'Some turkey!' he said, awaking, and touching the carving-knife and fork, with a smile and a bow; and he mingled once more in the business and bustle of life.

And soon there came in the general talk and business one of those sudden lulls which catch speakers unawares, and Mr. Beauchamp was found saying—

'I saw her play on Thursday, and, upon my honour, the Bellamy is a mockery, a skeleton and a spectacle.'

'That's no reason,' said Aunt Becky, who, as usual, had got up a skirmish, and was firing away in the cause of Mossop and Smock-alley play-house; 'why she would be fraudulently arrested in her own chair, on her way to the play-house, by the contrivance of the rogue Barry, and that wicked mountebank, Woodward.'

'You're rather hard upon them, madam,' said Mrs. Colonel Strafford, who stood up for Crow-street, with a slight elevation of her chin.

'Very true, indeed, Mistress Chattesworth,' cried the Dowager, overlooking Madam Strafford's parenthesis, and tapping an applause with her fan, and, at the same time, rewarding the champion of Smock-alley, for she was one of the faction, with one of her large, painted smiles, followed by a grave and somewhat supercilious glance at the gentleman of the household; 'and I don't believe *they*, at least, can think her a spectacle, and—a—the like, or they'd hardly have conspired to lock her in a sponging-house, while she should have been in the play-house. What say you, Mistress Chattesworth?'

'Ha, ha! no truly, my lady; but you know she's unfortunate, and a stranger, and the good people in this part of the world improve so safe an opportunity of libelling a friendless gentlewoman.'

This little jet of vitriol was intended for the eye of the Castle beau; but he, quite innocent of the injection, went on serenely—

'So they do, upon my honour, madam, tell prodigious naughty tales about her: yet upon my life I do pity her from my soul: how that fellow Calcraft, by Jove—she says you know, she's married to him, but we know better—he has half broken her heart, and treated her with most refined meanness, as I live; in the green-room, where she looks an infinity worse than on the stage, she told me'—

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'I dare say,' said Aunt Becky, rather stiffly, pulling him up; for though she had fought a round for poor George Anne Bellamy for Mossop's sake, she nevertheless had formed a pretty just estimate of that faded, good-natured, and insolvent demirep, and rather recoiled from any anecdotes of her telling.

'And Calcraft gave her his likeness in miniature,' related the macaroni, never minding; 'set round with diamonds, and, will you believe it? when she came to examine it, they were not brilliants, but rose-diamonds—despicable fellow!'

Here the talk began to spring up again in different places, and the conversation speedily turned into what we have heard it before, and the roar and confusion became universal, and swallowed up what remained of poor George Anne's persecutions.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN WHICH TWO YOUNG PERSONS UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER BETTER, PERHAPS, THAN EVER THEY DID BEFORE, WITHOUT SAYING SO.

And now the ladies, with their gay plumage, have flown away like foreign birds of passage, and the jolly old priests of Bacchus, in the parlour, make their libations of claret; and the young fellows, after a while, seeing a gathering of painted fans, and rustling hoops, and fluttering laces, upon the lawn, and a large immigration of hilarious neighbours besides, and two serious fiddlers, and a black fellow with a tambourine preparing for action, and the warm glitter of the western sun among the green foliage about the window, could stand it no longer, but stole away, notwithstanding a hospitable remonstrance and a protest from old Strafford, to join the merry muster.

'The young bucks will leave their claret,' said Lord Castlemallard; 'and truly 'tis a rare fine wine, Colonel, a mighty choice claret truly (and the Colonel bowed low, and smiled a rugged purple smile in spite of himself, for his claret *was* choice), all won't do when Venus beckons—when she beckons—ha, ha—all won't do, sir—at the first flutter of a petticoat, and the invitation of a pair of fine eyes—fine eyes, Colonel—by Jupiter, they're off—you can't keep 'em—I say your wine won't keep 'em—they'll be off, sir—peeping under the hoods, the dogs will—and whispering their wicked nonsense, Dr. Walsingham—ha, ha—and your wine, I say—your claret, Colonel, won't hold 'em—'twas once so with us—eh, General?—ha! ha! and we must forgive 'em now.'

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And he shoved round his chair lazily, with a left-backward wheel, so as to command the window, for he liked to see the girls dance, the little rogues!—with his claret and his French rappee at his elbow; and he did not hear General Chattesworth, who was talking of the new comedy called the 'Clandestine Marriage,' and how 'the prologue touches genteelly on the loss of three late geniuses—Hogarth, Quin, and Cibber—and the epilogue is the picture of a polite company;' for the tambourine and the fiddles were going merrily, and the lasses and lads in motion.

Aunt Becky and Lilias were chatting just under those pollard oziers by the river. She was always gentle with Lilly, and somehow unlike the pugnacious Aunt Becky, whose attack was so spirited and whose thrust so fierce; and when Lilly told a diverting little story—and she was often very diverting—Aunt Becky used to watch her pleasant face, with such a droll, good-natured smile; and she used to pat her on the cheek, and look so glad to see her when they met, and often as if she would say—'I admire you a great deal more, and I am a great deal fonder of you than you think; but you know brave stoical Aunt Becky can't say all that—it would not be in character, you know.' And the old lady knew how good she was to the poor, and she liked her spirit, and candour, and honour—it was so uncommon, and somehow angelic, she thought. 'Little Lilly's so true!' she used to say; and perhaps there was there a noble chord of sympathy between the young girl, who had no taste for battle, and the daring Aunt Becky.

I think Devereux liked her for liking Lilly—he thought it was for her own sake. Of course, he was often unexpectedly set upon and tomahawked by the impetuous lady; but the gay Captain put on his scalp again, and gathered his limbs together, and got up in high good humour, and shook himself and smiled, after his dismemberment, like one of the old soldiers of the Walhalla—and they were never the worse friends.

So, turning his back upon the fiddles and tambourine, Gipsy Devereux sauntered down to the river-bank, and to the oziers, where the ladies are looking down the river, and a blue bell, not half so blue as her own deep eyes, in Lilias's fingers; and the sound of their gay talk came mixed with the twitter and clear evening songs of the small birds. By those same oziers, that see so many things, and tell no tales, there will yet be a parting. But its own sorrow suffices to the day. And now it is a summer sunset, and all around dappled gold and azure, and sweet, dreamy sounds; and Lilias turns her pretty head, and sees him;—and oh! was it fancy, or did he see just a little flushing of the colour on her cheek—and her lashes seemed to

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drop a little, and out came her frank little hand. And Devereux leaned on the paling there, and chatted his best sense and nonsense, I dare say; and they laughed and talked about all sorts of things; and he sang for them a queer little snatch of a ballad, of an enamoured Captain, the course of whose true love ran not smooth:—

The river ran between them,
  And she looked upon the stream,
And the soldier looked upon her
  As a dreamer on a dream.
'Believe me—oh! believe,'
  He sighed, 'you peerless maid;
    My honour is pure,
    And my true love sure,
Like the white plume in my hat,
  And my shining blade.'

The river ran between them,
  And she smiled upon the stream,
Like one that smiles at folly—
  A dreamer on a dream.
'I do not trust your promise,
  I will not be betrayed;
    For your faith is light,
    And your cold wit bright,
Like the white plume in your h
  And your shining blade.'

The river ran between them,
  And he rode beside the stream,
And he turned away and parted,
  As a dreamer from his dream.
And his comrade brought his message,
  From the field where he was laid—
    Just his name to repeat,
    And to lay at her feet
The white plume from his hat
  And his shining blade.*

And he sang it in a tuneful and plaintive tenor, that had power to make rude and ridiculous things pathetic; and Aunt Rebecca thought he was altogether very agreeable. But it was time she should see what Miss Gertrude was about; and Devereux and Lilly were such very old friends that she left them to their devices.

'I like the river,' says he; 'it has a soul, Miss Lily, and a character. There are no river *gods*, but nymphs. Look at that river, Miss Lilias; what a girlish spirit. I wish she would reveal herself; I could lose my heart to her, I believe—if, indeed, I could be in love with anything, you know. Look at the river—is not it feminine? it's sad and it's merry, musical and sparkling—and oh, so deep!'

* These little verses have been several times set to music, and last and very sweetly, by Miss Elizabeth Philp.

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Always changing, yet still the same. 'Twill show you the trees, or the clouds, or yourself, or the stars; and it's so clear and so dark, and so sunny, and—so cold. It tells everything, and yet nothing. It's so pure, and so playful, and so tuneful, and so coy, yet so mysterious and *fatal*. I sometimes think, Miss Lilias, I've seen this river spirit; and she's like—very like you!'

And so he went on; and she was more silent and more a listener than usual. I don't know all that was passing in pretty Lilias's fancy—in her heart—near the hum of the waters and the spell of that musical voice. Love speaks in allegories and a language of signs; looks and tones tell his tale most truly. So Devereux's talk held her for a while in a sort of trance, melancholy and delightful. There must be, of course, the affinity—the rapport—the what you please to call it—to begin with—it matters not how faint and slender; and then the spell steals on and grows. See how the poor little woodbine, or the jessamine, or the vine, will lean towards the rugged elm, appointed by Virgil, in his epic of husbandry (I mean no pun) for their natural support—the elm, you know it hath been said, is the gentleman of the forest;—see all the little tendrils turn his way silently, and cling, and long years after, maybe, clothe the broken and blighted tree with a fragrance and beauty not its own. Those feeble feminine plants, are, it sometimes seems to me, the strength and perfection of creation—strength perfected in weakness; the ivy, green among the snows of winter, and clasping together in its true embrace the loveless ruin; and the vine that maketh glad the heart of man amidst the miseries of life. I must not be mistaken, though, for Devereux's talk was only a tender sort of trifling, and Lilias had said nothing to encourage him to risk more; but she now felt sure that Devereux liked her—that, indeed, he took a deep interest in her—and somehow she was happy.

And little Lily drew towards the dancers, and Devereux by her side—not to join in the frolic; it was much pleasanter talking. But the merry thrum and gingle of the tambourine, and vivacious squeak of the fiddles, and the incessant laughter and prattle of the gay company were a sort of protection. And perhaps she fancied that within that pleasant and bustling circle, the discourse, which was to her so charming, might be longer maintained. It was music heard in a dream—strange and sweet—and might never come again.

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CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH THE SUN SETS, AND THE MERRY-MAKING IS KEPT UP BY CANDLE-LIGHT IN THE KING'S HOUSE, AND LILY RECEIVES A WARNING WHICH SHE DOES NOT COMPREHEND.

DR. TOOLE, without whom no jollification of any sort could occur satisfactorily in Chapelizod or the country round, was this evening at the 'King's House,' of course, as usual, with his eyes about him and his tongue busy; and at this moment he was setting Cluffe right about Devereux's relation to the title and estates of Athenry. His uncle Roland Lord Athenry was, as everybody knew, a lunatic—Toole used to call him Orlando Furioso; and Lewis, his first cousin by his father's elder brother—the heir presumptive—was very little better, and reported every winter to be dying. He spends all his time—his spine being made, it is popularly believed, of gristle—stretched on his back upon a deal board, cutting out paper figures with a pair of scissors. Toole used to tell them at the Club, when alarming letters arrived about the health of the noble uncle and his hopeful nephew——the heir apparent—'That's the gentleman whose backbone's made of jelley—eh, Puddock? Two letters come, by Jove, announcing that Dick Devereux's benefit is actually fixed for the Christmas holidays, when his cousin undertakes to die for positively the last time, and his uncle will play in the most natural manner conceivable, the last act of "King Lear."' In fact, this family calamity was rather a cheerful subject among Devereux's friends; and certainly Devereux had no reason to love that vicious, selfish old lunatic, Lord Athenry, who in his prodigal and heartless reign, before straw and darkness swallowed him, never gave the boy a kind word or gentle look, and owed him a mortal grudge because he stood near the kingdom, and wrote most damaging reports of him at the end of the holidays, and despatched those letters of Bellerophon by the boy's own hand to the schoolmaster, with the natural results.

When Aunt Rebecca rustled into the ring that was gathered round about the fiddles and tambourine, she passed Miss Magnolia very near, with a high countenance, and looking straight before her, and with no more recognition than the tragedy queen bestows upon the painted statue on the wing by which she enters. And Miss Mag followed her with a titter and an angry flash of her eyes. So Aunt Rebecca made up to the little hillock—little bigger than a good tea-cake—on which the Dowager was perched in a high-backed chair, smiling over the dancers with a splendid benignity, and beating time with her fat short

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foot. And Aunt Becky told Mrs. Colonel Strafford, standing by, she had extemporized a living Watteau, and indeed it *was* a very pretty picture, or Aunt Becky would not have said so; and 'craning' from this eminence she saw her niece coming leisurely round, not in company of Mervyn.

That interesting stranger, on the contrary, had by this time joined Lilias and Devereux, who had returned toward the dancers, and was talking again with Miss Walsingham. Gertrude's beau was little Puddock, who was all radiant and supremely blest. But encountering rather a black look from Aunt Becky as they drew near, he deferentially surrendered the young lady to the care of her natural guardian, who forthwith presented her to the Dowager; and Puddock, warned off by another glance, backed away, and fell, unawares, helplessly into the possession of Miss Magnolia, a lady whom he never quite understood, and whom he regarded with a very kind and polite sort of horror.

So the athletic Magnolia instantly impounded the little Lieutenant, and began to rally him, in the sort of slang she delighted in, with plenty of merriment and malice upon his *tendre* for Miss Chattesworth, and made the gallant young gentleman blush and occasionally smile, and bow a great deal, and take some snuff.

'And here comes the Duchess of Belmont again,' said the saucy Miss Magnolia, seeing the stately approach of Aunt Becky, as it seemed to Puddock, through the back of her head. I think the exertion and frolic of the dance had got her high blood up into a sparkling state, and her scorn and hate of Aunt Rebecca was more demonstrative than usual. 'Now you'll see how she'll run against poor little simple me, just because I'm small. And *this* is the way they dance it,' cried she, in a louder tone; and capering backward with a bounce, and an air, and a grace, she came with a sort of a courtesy, and a smart bump, and a shock against the stately Miss Rebecca; and whisking round with a little scream and a look of terrified innocence, and with her fingers to her heart, to suppress an imaginary palpitation, dropped a low courtesy, crying—

'I'm blest but I thought 'twas tall Burke, the gunner.'

'You might look behind before you spring backward, young gentlewoman,' said Aunt Becky, with a very bright colour.

'And you might look before you before you spring forward, old gentlewoman,' replied Miss Mag, just as angry.

'Young ladies used to have a respect to decorum,' Aunt Becky went on.

'So they prayed me to tell you, madam,' replied the young lady, with a very meek courtesy, and a very crimson face.

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Yes, Miss Mac—Mag—madam—it used to be so,' rejoined Aunt Rebecca, ''twas part of my education, at least, to conduct myself in a polite company like a civilized person.'

'"I wish I could see it," says blind Hugh;' Magnolia retorted, 'but 'twas a good while ago, madam, and you've had time to forget.'

'I shall acquaint your mother, Mrs.—Mug—Mag—Macnamara, with your pretty behaviour to-morrow,' said Miss Rebecca.

'To-morrow's a new day, and mother may be well enough then to hear your genteel lamentation; but I suppose you mean to-morrow come never,' answered Magnolia, with another of her provoking meek courtesies.

'Oh, this is Lieutenant Puddock,' said Aunt Becky, drawing off in high disdain, 'the bully of the town. Your present company, sir, will find very pretty work, I warrant, for your sword and pistols; Sir Launcelot and his belle!'

'Do you like a belle or beldame best, Sir Launcelot?' inquired Miss Mag, with a mild little duck to Puddock.

'You'll have your hands pretty full, sir, ha, ha, ha!' and with scarlet cheeks, and a choaking laugh, away sailed Aunt Rebecca.

'Choak chicken, there's more a-hatching,' said Miss Mag, in a sort of aside, and cutting a flic-flac with a merry devilish laugh, and a wink to Puddock. That officer, being a gentleman, was a good deal disconcerted, and scandalized—too literal to see, and too honest to enjoy, the absurd side of the combat.

'Twas an affair of a few seconds, like two frigates crossing in a gale, with only opportunity for a broadside or two; and when the Rebecca Chattesworth sheered off, it can't be denied, her tackling was a good deal more cut up, and her hull considerably more pierced, than those of the saucy Magnolia, who sent that whistling shot and provoking cheer, in her majestic wake.

'I see you want to go, Lieutenant Puddock—Lieutenant O'Flaherty, I promised to dance this country dance with you; don't let me keep *you*, Ensign Puddock,' said Miss Mag in a huff, observing little Puddock's wandering eye and thoughts.

'I—a—you see, Miss Macnamara, truly you were so hard upon poor Miss Rebecca Chattesworth, that I fear I shall get into trouble, unless I go and make my peace with her,' lisped the little Lieutenant, speaking the truth, as was his wont, with a bow and a polite smile, and a gentle indication of beginning to move away.

'Oh, is that all? I was afraid you were sick of the mulligrubs, with eating chopt hay; you had better go back to her at once if she wants you, for if you don't with a good grace, she'll very likely come

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and take you back by the collar,' and Miss Mag and O'Flaherty joined in a derisive hee-haw! to Puddock's considerable confusion, who bowed and smiled again, and tried to laugh, till the charming couple relieved him by taking their places in the dance.

When I read this speech about the 'mulligrubs,' in the old yellow letter which contains a lively account of the skirmish, my breath was fairly taken away, and I could see nothing else for more than a minute; and so soon as I was quite myself again, I struck my revising pen across the monstrous sentence, with uncompromising decision, referring it to a clerical blunder, or some unlucky transposition, and I wondered how any polite person could have made so gross a slip. But see how authentication waits upon truth! Three years afterwards, I picked up in the parlour of the 'Cat and Fiddle,' on the Macclesfield-road, in Derbyshire, a scrubby old duodecimo, which turned out to be an old volume of Dean Swift's works; well, I opened in the middle of 'Polite Conversation,' and there, upon my honour, the second sentence I read was, '*Lady Smart*,' (mark *that*—'LADY!') 'What, you are sick of the mulligrubs, with eating chopt hay?' So my good old yellow letter-writer ('I.,' or 'T.' Tresham, I can't decide which he signs himself)—*you* were, no doubt, exact here as in other matters, and *I* was determining the probable and the impossible, unphilosophically, by the *rule* of my own time. And my poor Magnolia, though you spoke some years—thirty or so—later than my Lady Smart, a countess for aught I know, you are not so much to blame. Thirty years! what of that? Don't we, to this hour, more especially in rural districts, encounter among the old folk, every now and then, one of honest Simon Wagstaff's pleasantries, which had served merry ladies and gentlemen so long before that charming compiler, with his 'Large Table Book,' took the matter in hands. And I feel, I confess, a queer sort of a thrill, not at all contemptuous—neither altogether sad, nor altogether joyous—but something pleasantly regretful, whenever one of those quaint and faded old servants of the mirth of so many dead and buried generations, turns up in my company.

And now the sun went down behind the tufted trees, and the blue shades of evening began to deepen, and the merry company flocked into the King's House, to dance again and drink tea, and make more love, and play round games, and joke, and sing songs, and eat supper under old Colonel Strafford's snug and kindly roof-tree.

Dangerfield, who arrived rather late, was now in high chat with Aunt Becky. She rather liked him, and had very graciously accepted a gray parrot and a monkey, which he had deferentially presented, a step which called forth, to General Chattesworth's consternation, a

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cockatoo from Cluffe, who felt the necessity of maintaining his ground against the stranger, and wrote off by the next packet to London, in a confounded passion, for he hated wasting money, about a pellican he had got wind of. Dangerfield also entered with much apparent interest into a favourite scheme of Aunt Becky's, for establishing, between Chapelizod and Knockmaroon, a sort of retreat for discharged gaol-birds of her selection, a colony, happily for the character and the silver spoons of the neighbourhood, never eventually established.

It was plain he was playing the frank, good fellow, and aiming at popularity. He had become one of the Club. He played at whist, and only smiled, after his sort, when his partner revoked, and he lost like a gentleman. His talk was brisk, and hard, and caustic—that of a Philistine who had seen the world and knew it. He had the Peerage by rote, and knew something out-of-the-way, amusing or damnable about every person of note you could name; and his shrewd gossip had a bouquet its own, and a fine cynical flavour, which secretly awed and delighted the young fellows. He smiled a good deal. He was not aware that a smile did not quite become him. The fact is, he had lost a good many side-teeth, and it was a hollow and sinister disclosure. He would laugh, too, occasionally; but his laugh was not rich and joyous, like General Chattesworth's, or even Tom Toole's cozy chuckle, or old Doctor Walsingham's hilarious ha-ha-ha! He did not know it; but there was a cold hard ring in it, like the crash and jingle of broken glass. Then his spectacles, shining like ice in the light, never removed for a moment—never even pushed up to his forehead—he eat in them, drank in them, fished in them, joked in them—he prayed in them, and, no doubt, slept in them, and would, it was believed, be buried in them—heightened that sense of mystery and mask which seemed to challenge curiosity and defy scrutiny with a scornful chuckle.

In the meantime, the mirth, and frolic, and flirtation were drawing to a close. The dowager, in high good humour, was conveyed down stairs to her carriage by Colonel Strafford and Lord Castlemallard, and rolled away, with blazing flambeaux, like a meteor, into town. There was a breaking-up and leave-taking, and parting jokes on the door-steps; and as the ladies, old and young, were popping on their mantles in the little room off the hall, and Aunt Becky and Mrs. Colonel Strafford were exchanging a little bit of eager farewell gossip beside the cabinet, Gertrude Chattesworth—by some chance she and Lilias had not had an opportunity of speaking that evening—drew close to her, and she took her hand and said 'Good night, dear Lily,'

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and glanced over her shoulder, still holding Lily's hand; and she looked very pale and earnest, and said quickly, in a whisper:

'Lily, darling, if you knew what I could tell you, if I dare, about Mr. Mervyn, you would cut your hand off rather than allow him to talk to you, as, I confess, he *has* talked to me, as an admirer, and knowing what I know, and with my eye upon him—Lily—*Lily*—I've been amazed by him to-night. I can only *warn* you now, darling, to beware of a great danger.'

''Tis no danger, however, to me, Gertrude, dear,' said Lily, with a pleasant little smile. 'And though he's handsome, there's something, is there not, *funeste* in his deep eyes and black hair; and the dear old man knows something strange about him, too; I suppose 'tis all the same story.'

'And he has not told you,' said Gertrude, looking down with a gloomy face, at her fan.

'No; but I'm so curious, I know he will, though he does not like to speak of it; but you know, Gerty, I love a horror, and I know the story's fearful, and I feel uncertain whether he's a man or a ghost; but see, Aunt Rebecca and Mistress Strafford are kissing.'

'Good night, dear Lily, and remember!' said pale Gertrude without a smile, looking at her, for a moment, with a stedfast gaze, and then kissing her with a hasty and earnest pressure. And Lily kissed her again, and so they parted.

CHAPTER XXVI.

RELATING HOW THE BAND OF THE ROYAL IRISH ARTILLERY PLAYED, AND, WHILE THE MUSIC WAS GOING ON, HOW VARIOUSLY DIFFERENT PEOPLE WERE MOVED.

TWICE a week the band of the Royal Irish Artillery regaled all comers with their music on the parade-ground by the river; and, as it was reputed the best in Ireland, and Chapelizod was a fashionable resort, and a very pretty village, embowered in orchards, people liked to drive out of town on a fine autumn day like this, by way of listening, and all the neighbours showed there, and there was quite a little fair for an hour or two.

Mervyn, among the rest, was there, but for scarce ten minutes, and, as usual, received little more than a distant salutation, coldly and gravely returned, from Gertrude Chattesworth, to whom Mr. Beauchamp, whom she remembered at the Straffords' dinner, addicted himself a good deal. That demigod appeared in a white surtout, with

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a crimson cape, a French waistcoat, his hair *en papillote*, a feather in his hat, a *couteau de chasse* by his side, with a small cane hanging to his button, and a pair of Italian greyhounds at his heels; and he must have impressed Tresham prodigiously; for I observe no other instance in which he has noted down costume so carefully. Little Puddock, too, was hovering near, and his wooing made uncomfortable by Aunt Becky's renewed severity, as well as by the splendour of 'Mr. Redheels,' who was expending his small talk and *fleuerets* upon Gertrude. Cluffe, moreover, who was pretty well in favour with Aunt Rebecca, and had been happy and prosperous, had his little jealousies too to plague him, for Dangerfield, with his fishing-rod and basket, no sooner looked in, with his stern front and his remarkable smile, than Aunt Becky, seeming instantaneously to forget Captain Cluffe, and all his winning ways, and the pleasant story, to the point of which he was just arriving, in his best manner, left him abruptly, and walked up to the grim pescator del onda, with an outstretched hand; and a smile of encouragement, and immediately fell into confidential talk with him.

'The minds of anglers,' says the gentle Colonel Robert Venables, 'be usually more calm and composed than many others; when he hath the worst success he loseth but a hook or line, or perhaps what he never possessed, a fish; and suppose he should take nothing, yet he enjoyeth a delightful walk by pleasant rivers, in sweet pastures, amongst odoriferous flowers, which gratify his senses and delight his mind; and if example, which is the best proof, may sway anything, I know no sort of men less subject to melancholy than anglers.' It was only natural, then, that Dangerfield should be serene and sunny.

Aunt Becky led him a little walk twice or thrice up and down. She seemed grave, earnest, and lofty, and he grinned and chatted after his wont energetically, to stout Captain Cluffe's considerable uneasiness and mortification. He had seen Dangerfield the day before, through his field-glass, from the high wooded grounds in the park, across the river, walk slowly for a good while under the poplars in the meadow at Belmont, beside Aunt Becky, in high chat; and there was something particular and earnest in their manner, which made him uncomfortable then. And fat Captain Cluffe's gall rose and nearly choked him, and he cursed Dangerfield in the bottom of his corpulent, greedy soul, and wondered what fiend had sent that scheming old land-agent three hundred miles out of his way, on purpose to interfere with his little interests, as if there were not plenty of—of—well!—rich old women—in London. And he bethought him of the price of the cockatoo and the probable cost of the pelican,

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rejoinders to Dangerfield's contributions to Aunt Rebecca's menagerie, for those birds were not to be had for nothing; and Cluffe, who loved money as well, at least, as any man in his Majesty's service, would have seen the two tribes as extinct as the dodo, before he would have expended sixpence upon such tom-foolery, had it not been for Dangerfield's investments in animated nature. 'The hound! as if two could not play at that game.' But he had an uneasy and bitter presentiment that there were birds of paradise, and fifty other cursed birds beside, and that in this costly competition Dangerfield could take a flight beyond and above him; and he thought of the flagitious waste of money, and cursed him for a fool again. Aunt Becky had said, he thought, something in which 'to-morrow' occurred, on taking leave of Dangerfield. 'To-morrow!' What to-morrow? She spoke low and confidentially, and seemed excited and a little flushed, and very destraite when she came back. Altogether, he felt as if Aunt Rebecca was slipping through his fingers, and would have liked to take that selfish old puppy, Dangerfield, by the neck and drown him out of hand in the river. But, notwithstanding the state of his temper, he knew it might be his only chance to shine pre-eminently at that moment in amiability, wit, grace, and gallantry, and, though it was up-hill work, he did labour uncommonly.

When Mr. Dangerfield's spectacles gleamed through the crowd upon Dr. Sturk, who was thinking of other things beside the music, the angler walked round forthwith, and accosted that universal genius. Mrs. Sturk felt the Doctor's arm, on which she leaned, vibrate for a second with a slight thrill—an evidence in that hard, fibrous limb of what she used to call 'a start'—and she heard Dangerfield's voice over his shoulder. And the Surgeon and the Grand Vizier were soon deep in talk, and Sturk brightened up, and looked eager and sagacious, and important, and became very voluble, and impressive, and, leaving his lady to her own devices, with her maid and children, he got to the other side of the street, where Nutter, with taciturn and black observation, saw them busy pointing with cane and finger and talking briskly as they surveyed together Dick Fisher's and Tom Tresham's tenements, and the Salmon House; and then beheld them ascend the steps of Tresham's door, and overlook the wall on the other side toward the river, and point this way and that along the near bank, as it seemed to Nutter discussing detailed schemes of alteration and improvement. Sturk actually pulled out his pocket-book and pencil, and then Dangerfield took the pencil, and made notes of what he read to him, on the back of a letter; and Sturk looked eager and elated, and Dangerfield frowned and looked impressed, and nodded again and

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again. *Diruit ædificat, mutat quadrata rotundis*, under his very nose—he unconsulted! It was such an impertinence as Nutter could ill digest. It was a studied slight, something like a public deposition, and Nutter's jealous soul seethed secretly in a hellbroth of rage and suspicion.

I mentioned that Mistress Sturk felt in that physician's arm the telegraphic thrill with which the brain will occasionally send an invisible message of alarm from the seat of government to the extremities; and as this smallest of all small bits of domestic gossip did innocently escape me, the idle and good-natured reader will, I hope, let me say out my little say upon the matter, in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCERNING THE TROUBLES AND THE SHAPES THAT BEGAN TO GATHER ABOUT DOCTOR STURK.

It was just about that time that our friend, Dr. Sturk, had two or three odd dreams that secretly acted disagreeably upon his spirits. His liver he thought was a little wrong, and there was certainly a little light gout sporting about him. His favourite 'pupton' at mess, disagreed with him; so did his claret, and hot suppers as often as he tried them, and that was, more or less, nearly every night in the week. So he was, perhaps, right in ascribing these his visions to the humours, the spleen, the liver, and the juices. Still they sat uncomfortably upon his memory, and helped his spirits down, and made him silent and testy, and more than usually formidable to poor, little, quiet, hard-worked Mrs. Sturk.

Dreams! What talk can be idler? And yet haven't we seen grave people and gay listening very contentedly at times to that wild and awful sort of frivolity; and I think there is in most men's minds, sages or zanies, a secret misgiving that dreams may have an office and a meaning, and are perhaps more than a fortuitous concourse of symbols, in fact, the language which good or evil spirits whisper over the sleeping brain.

There was an ugly and ominous consistency in these dreams which might have made a less dyspeptic man a little nervous. Tom Dunstan, a sergeant whom Sturk had prosecuted and degraded before a court-martial, who owed the Doctor no good-will, and was dead and buried in the church-yard close by, six years ago, and whom Sturk had never thought about in the interval—made a kind of resurrection now, and was with him every night, figuring in these dreary

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visions and somehow in league with a sort of conspirator-in-chief, who never shewed distinctly, but talked in scoffing menaces from outside the door, or clutched him by the throat from behind his chair, and yelled some hideous secret into his ear, which his scared and scattered wits, when he started into consciousness, could never collect again. And this fellow, with whose sneering cavernous talk—with whose very knock at the door or thump at the partition-wall he was as familiar as with his own wife's voice, and the touch of whose cold convulsive hand he had felt so often on his cheek or throat, and the very suspicion of whose approach made him faint with horror, his dreams would not present to his sight. There was always something interposed, or he stole behind him, or just as he was entering and the door swinging open, Sturk would awake—and he never saw him, at least in a human shape.

But one night he thought he saw, as it were, his sign or symbol. As Sturk lay his length under the bed-clothes, with his back turned upon his slumbering helpmate, he was, in the spirit, sitting perpendicularly in his great balloon-backed chair, at his writing-table, in the window of the back one-pair-of-stairs chamber which he called his library, where he sometimes wrote prescriptions, and pondering over his pennyweights, his Roman numerals, his guttæ and pillulæ, his ℥s, his ʒs, his ℈s, and the other arabesque and astrological symbols of his mystery, he looked over his pen into the church-yard, which inspiring prospect he thence commanded.

Thus, as out of the body sat our recumbent Doctor in the room underneath the bed in which his snoring idolon lay, Tom Dunstan stood beside the table, with the short white threads sticking out on his blue sleeve, where the stitching of the stripes had been cut through on that twilight parade morning when the Doctor triumphed, and Tom's rank, fortune, and castles in the air, all tumbled together in the dust of the barrack pavement; and so, with his thin features and evil eye turned sideways to Sturk, says he, with a stiff salute—'A gentleman, sir, that means to dine with you,' and there was the muffled knock at the door which he knew so well, and a rustling behind him. So the Doctor turned him about quickly with a sort of chill between his shoulders, and perched on the back of his chair sat a portentous old quizzical carrion-crow, the antediluvian progenitor of the whole race of carrion-crows, monstrous, with great shining eyes, and head white as snow, and a queer human look, and the crooked beak of an owl that opened with a loud grating 'caw' close in his ears; and with a 'bo-o-oh!' and a bounce that shook the bed and made poor Mrs. Sturk jump out of it, and spin round in the cur-

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tain, Sturk's spirit popped back again into his body which sat up wide awake that moment.

It is not pretended that at this particular time the Doctor was a specially good sleeper. The contrary stands admitted; and I don't ask you, sagacious reader, to lay any sort of stress upon his dreams; only as there came a time when people talked of them a good deal over the fireside in Chapelizod, and made winter's tales about them, I thought myself obliged to tell you that such things were.

He did not choose to narrate them to his brother-officers, and to be quizzed about them at mess. But he opened his budget to old Dr. Walsingham, of course, only as a matter to be smiled at by a pair of philosophers like them. But Dr. Walsingham, who was an absent man, and floated upon the ocean of his learning serenely and lazily, drawn finely and whimsically, now hither, now thither, by the finest hair of association, glided complacently off into the dim region of visionary prognostics and warnings, and reminded him how Joseph dreamed, and Pharaoh, and Benvenuto, Cellini's father, and St. Dominick's mother, and Edward II. of England, and dodged back and forward among patriarchs and pagans, and modern Christians, men and women, not at all suspecting that he was making poor Sturk, who had looked for a cheerful, sceptical sort of essay, confoundedly dismal and uncomfortable.

And, indeed, confoundedly distressed he must have been, for he took his brother-chip, Tom Toole, whom he loved not, to counsel upon his case—of course, strictly as a question of dandelion, or gentian, or camomile flowers; and Tom, who, as we all know, loved him reciprocally, frightened him as well as he could, offered to take charge of his case, and said, looking hard at him out of the corner of his cunning, resolute, little eye, as they sauntered in the Park—

'But I need not tell *you*, my good sir, that physic is of small avail, if there is any sort of—a—a—vexation, or—or—in short—a—a—*vexation*, you know, on your mind.'

'A—ha, ha, ha!—what? Murdered my father, and married my grandmother?' snarled Sturk, sneeringly, amused or affecting to be so, and striving to laugh at the daisies before his toes as he trudged along, with his hands in his breeches' pockets. 'I have not a secret on earth, sir. 'Tis not a button to me, sir, who talks about me; and I don't owe a guinea, sir, that is, that I could not pay to-morrow, if I liked it; and there's nothing to trouble me—nothing, sir, except this dirty, little, gouty dyspepsy, scarce worth talking about.

Then came a considerable silence; and Toole's active little mind, having just made a note of this, tripped off smartly to half-a-dozen

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totally different topics, and he was mentally tippling his honest share of a dozen of claret, with a pleasant little masonic party at the Salmon-leap on 'Sunday next;' and was just going to charm them with his best song, and a new verse of his own compounding, when Sturk in a moment dispersed the masons, and brought him back, by the ear, at a jump, from the Salmon-leap, with a savage—

'And I'd like to know, sir, who the deuce, or, rather, what the—— (*plague*, we'll say) could put into your head, sir, to suppose any such matter?'

But this was only one of Sturk's explosions, and he and little Toole parted no better and no worse friends than usual, in ten minutes more, at the latter's door-step.

So Toole said to Mrs. T. that evening—

'Sturk owes money, mark my words, sweetheart. Remember, *I* say it—he'll cool his heels in a prison, if he's no wiser than of late, before a twel'month. Since the beginning of February he has lost—just wait a minute, and let me see—ay, that £150 by the levanting of old Tom Farthingale; and, I had it to-day from little O'Leary, who had it from Jim Kelly, old Craddock's conducting clerk, he's bit to the tune of three hundred more by the failure of Larkin, Brothers, and Hoolaghan. You see a little bit of usury under the rose is all very well for a vulgar dog like Sturk, if he knows the town, and how to go about it; but hang it, he knows nothing. Why, the turnpike-man, over the way, would not have taken old Jos. Farthingale's bill for fippence—no, nor his bond neither; and he's stupid beside—but he can't help that, the hound!—and he'll owe a whole year's rent only six weeks hence, and he has not a shilling to bless himself with. Unfortunate devil—I've no reason to like him—but, truly, I do pity him.'

Saying which Tom Toole, with his back to the fire, and a look of concern thrown into his comic little mug, and his eyebrows raised, experienced a very pleasurable glow of commiseration.

Sturk, on the contrary, was more than commonly silent and savage that evening, and sat in his drawing-room, with his fists in his breeches' pockets, and his heels stretched out, lurid and threatening, in a gloomy and highly electric state. Mrs. S. did not venture her usual 'would my Barney like a dish of tea?' but plied her worsted and knitting-needles with mild concentration, sometimes peeping under her lashes at Sturk, and sometimes telegraphing faintly to the children if they whispered too loud—all cautious pantomime—*nutu signisque loquuntur*.

Sturk was incensed by the suspicion that Tom Toole knew some-

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thing of his losses, 'the dirty, little, unscrupulous spy and tattler.' He was confident, however, that he could not know their extent. It was certainly a hard thing, and enough to exasperate a better man than Sturk, that the savings of a shrewd, and, in many ways, a self-denying life, should have been swept away, and something along with them, by a few unlucky casts in little more than twelve months. And he such a clever dog, too! the best player, all to nothing, driven to the wall by a cursed obstinate run of infernal luck. And he used to scowl, and grind his teeth, and nearly break the keys and shillings in his gripe in his breeches' pocket, as imprecations, hot and unspoken, coursed one another through his brain. Then up he would get, and walk sulkily to the brandy-flask and have a dram, and feel better, and begin to count up his chances, and what he might yet save out of the fire; and resolve to press vigorously for the agency, which he thought Dangerfield, if he wanted a useful man, could not fail to give him; and he had hinted the matter to Lord Castlemallard, who, he thought, understood and favoured his wishes. Yes; that agency would give him credit and opportunity, and be the foundation of his new fortunes, and the saving of him. A precious, pleasant companion, you may suppose, he was to poor little Mrs. Sturk, who knew nothing of his affairs, and could not tell what to make of her Barney's eccentricities.

And so it was, somehow, when Dangerfield spoke his greeting at Sturk's ear, and the Doctor turned short round, and saw his white frizzed hair, great glass eyes, and crooked, short beak, quizzical and sinister, close by, it seemed for a second as if the 'caw' and the carrion-crow of his dream was at his shoulder; and, I suppose, he showed his discomfiture a little, for he smiled a good deal more than Sturk usually did at a recognition.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN WHICH MR. IRONS RECOUNTS SOME OLD RECOLLECTIONS ABOUT THE PIED HORSE AND THE FLOWER DE LUCE.

It was so well known in Chapelizod that Sturk was poking after Lord Castlemallard's agency that Nutter felt the scene going on before his eyes between him and Dangerfield like a public affront. His ire was that of a phlegmatic man, dangerous when stirred, and there was no mistaking, in his rigid, swarthy, countenance, the state of his temper.

Dangerfield took an opportunity, and touched Nutter on the shoulder, and told him frankly, in effect, though *he* wished things to

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go on as heretofore, Sturk had wormed himself into a sort of confidence with Lord Castlemallard.

'Not confidence, sir—*talk*, if you please,' said Nutter, grimly.

'Well, into talk,' acquiesced Dangerfield; 'and by Jove, I've a hard card to play, you see. His lordship will have me listen to Doctor Sturk's talk, such as it is.'

'He has no talk in him, sir, you mayn't get from any other impudent dunderhead in the town,' answered Nutter.

'My dear sir, understand me. I'm your friend,' and he placed his hand amicably upon Nutter's arm; but Lord Castlemallard has, now and then, a will of his own, I need not tell you; and somebody's been doing you an ill turn with his lordship; and you're a gentleman, Mr. Nutter, and I like you, and I'll be frank with you, knowing 'twill go no further. Sturk wants the agency. You have *my* good-will. *I* don't see why he should take it from you; but—but—you see his lordship takes odd likings, and he won't always listen to reason.'

Nutter was so shocked and exasperated, that for a moment he felt stunned, and put his hand toward his head.

'I think, sir,' said Nutter, with a stern, deliberate oath, 'I'll write to Lord Castlemallard this evening, and throw up his agency; and challenge Sturk, and fight him in the morning.'

'You must not resign the agency, sir; his lordship is whimsical; but you have a friend at court. I've spoken in full confidence in your secrecy; and should any words pass between you and Dr. Sturk, you'll not mention my name; I rely, sir, on your honour, as you may on my good-will;' and Dangerfield shook hands with Nutter significantly, and called to Irons, who was waiting to accompany him, and the two anglers walked away together up the river.

Nutter was still possessed with his furious resolution to fling down his office at Lord Castlemallard's feet, and to call Sturk into the lists of mortal combat. One turn by himself as far as the turnpike, however, and he gave up the first, and retained only the second resolve. Half-an-hour more, and he had settled in his mind, that there was no need to punish the meddler that way; and so he resolved to bide his time—a short one.

In the meanwhile Dangerfield had reached one of those sweet pastures, by the river's bank, which, as we have read, delight the simple mind of the angler, and his float was already out, and bobbing up and down on the ripples of the stream; and the verdant valley, in which he and his taciturn companion stood side by side resounded, from time to time, with Dangerfield's strange harsh laughter; the cause of which Irons did not, of course, presume to ask.

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There is a church-yard cough—I don't see why there may not be a church-yard laugh. In Dangerfield's certainty there was an omen—a glee that had nothing to do with mirth; and more dismaying, perhaps, than his sternest rebuke. If a man is not a laugher by nature, he had better let it alone. The bipeds that love mousing and carrion have a chant of their own, and nobody quarrels with it. We respect an owl or a raven, though we mayn't love him, while he sticks to his croak or to-whoo. 'Tisn't pleasant, but quite natural and unaffected, and we acquiesce. All we ask of these gentlemanlike birds is, that they mistake not their talent—affect not music; or if they do, that they treat not us to their queer warblings.

Irons, with that never-failing phantom of a smile on his thin lips, stood a little apart, with a gaff and landing-net, and a second rod, and a little bag of worms, and his other gear, silent, except when spoken to, or sometimes to suggest a change of bait, or fly, or a cast over a particular spot; for Dangerfield was of good Colonel Venables' mind, that 'tis well in the lover of the gentle craft to associate himself with 'some honest, expert angler, who will freely and candidly communicate his skill unto him.'

Dangerfield was looking straight at his float; but thinking of something else. Whenever Sturk met him at dinner, or the club, the Doctor's arrogance and loud lungs failed him, and he fell for a while into a sort of gloom and dreaming; and when he came slowly to himself, he could not talk to anyone but the man with the spectacles; and in the midst of his talk he would grow wandering and thoughtful, as if over some half-remembered dream; and when he took his leave of Dangerfield it was with a lingering look and a stern withdrawal, as if he had still a last word to say, and he went away in a dismal reverie. It was natural, that with his views about the agency, Sturk should regard him with particular interest. But there was something more here, and it did not escape Dangerfield, as, indeed, very little that in anywise concerned him ever did.

'Clever fellow, Doctor Sturk,' said the silver spectacles, looking grimly at the float. 'I like him. You remember him, you say, Irons?'

'Ay, sir,' said Blue-chin; 'I never forget a face.'

'Par nobile,' sneered the angler quietly. 'In the year '45, eh?—go on.'

'Ay, sir; he slept in the "Pied Horse," at Newmarket, and was in all the fun. Next day he broke his arm badly, and slept there in the closet off Mr. Beauclerc's room that night under laudanum, and remained ten days longer in the house. Mr. Beauclerc's chamber was

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the "flower de luce." Barnabas Sturk, Esq.—When I saw him here, half the length of the street away, I knew him and his name on the instant. I never forget things.'

'But he don't remember you?'

'No,' smiled Blue-chin, looking at the float also.

'Two-and-twenty years. How came it he was not summoned?'

'He was under laudanum, and could tell nothing.'

'Ay,' said the spectacles, 'ay,' and he let out some more line. 'That's deep.'

'Yes, sir; a soldier was drownded in that hole.'

'And Dr. Toole and Mr. Nutter don't love him—both brisk fellows, and have fought.'

Blue-chin smiled on.

'Very clever dog—needs be sharp though, or he'll come to—ha!' and a gray trout came splashing and flickering along the top of the water upon the hook, and Irons placed the net in Dangerfield's outstretched hand, and the troutling was landed, to the distant music of 'God save the King,' borne faintly on the air, by which the reader perceives that the band were now about to put up their instruments, and the gay folk to disperse. And at the same moment, Lord Castle-mallard was doing old General Chattesworth the honour to lean upon his arm, as they walked to and fro upon the parade-ground by the river's bank, and the General looked particularly grand and thoughtful, and my lord was more than usually gracious and impressive, and was saying:—

''Tis a good match every way: he has good blood in his veins, sir, the Dangerfields of Redminster; and you may suppose he's rich, when he was ready to advance Sir Sedley Hicks thirty-five thousand pounds on mortgage, and to my certain knowledge has nearly as much more out on good securities; and he's the most principled man I think I ever met with, and the cleverest dog, I believe, in these kingdoms; and I wish you joy, General Chattesworth.'

And he gave the General snuff out of his box, and shook hands, and said something very good, as he got into his carriage, for he laughed a good deal, and touched the General's ribs with the point of his gloved finger; and the General laughed too, moderately, and was instantaneously grave again, when the carriage whirled away.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

SHOWING HOW POOR MRS. MACNAMARA WAS TROUBLED AND HAUNTED TOO, AND OPENING A BUDGET OF GOSSIP.

SOME score pages back, when we were all assembled at the King's House, my reader, perhaps, may not have missed our fat and consequential, but on the whole, good-natured acquaintance, Mrs. Macnamara; though, now I remember, he *did* overhear the gentle Magnolia, in that little colloquy in which she and Aunt Becky exchanged compliments, say, in substance, that she hoped that amiable parent might be better next day. She was not there, she was not well. Of late Mrs. Macnamara had lost all her pluck, and half her colour, and some even of her fat. She was like one of those portly dowagers in Numbernips' select society of metamorphosed turnips, who suddenly exhibited sympathetic symptoms of failure, grew yellow, flabby, and wrinkled, as the parent bulb withered and went out of season. You would not have known her for the same woman.

A tall, pale female, dressed in black satin and a black velvet riding-hood, had made her two visits in a hackney-coach; but whether these had any connexion with the melancholy change referred to, I don't, at this moment say. I know that they had a very serious bearing upon after events affecting persons who figure in this true history. Whatever her grief was she could not bring herself to tell it. And so her damask cheek, and portly form, and rollicking animal spirits, continued to suffer.

The Major found that her mind wandered at piquet. Toole also caught her thinking of something else in the midst of his best bits of local scandal; and Magnolia several times popped in upon her large mother in tears. Once or twice Toole thought, and he was right, that she was on the point of making a disclosure. But her heart failed her, and it came to nothing. The little fellow's curiosity was on fire. In his philosophy there was more in everything than met the eye, and he would not believe Magnolia, who laughed at him, that she did not know all about it.

On this present morning poor Mrs. Macnamara had received a note, at which she grew pale as the large pat of butter before her, and she felt quite sick as she thrust the paper into her pocket, and tried to smile across the breakfast table at Magnolia, who was rattling away as usual, and the old Major who was chuckling at her impudent mischief over his buttered toast aud tea.

'Why, mother dear,' cried Mag, suddenly, 'what the plague ails

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your pretty face? Did you ever see the like? It's for all the world like a bad batter-pudding! I lay a crown, now, that was a bill. Was it a bill? Come, now, Mullikins (a term of endearment for mother). Show us the note. It is too bad, you poor dear, old, handsome, bothered angel, you should be fretted and tormented out of your looks and your health, by them dirty shopkeepers' bills, when a five-pound note, I'm certain sure, i'd pay every mother's skin o' them, and change to spare!' And the elegant Magnolia, whose soiclainet and Norwich crape petticoat were unpaid for, darted a glance of reproach full upon the Major's powdered head, the top of which was cleverly presented to receive it, as he swallowed in haste his cup of tea, and rising suddenly, for his purse had lately suffered in the service of the ladies, and wanted rest—

'"Tis nothing at all but that confounded egg,' he said, raising that untasted delicacy a little towards his nose. 'Why the divil will you go on buying our eggs from that dirty old sinner, Poll Delany?' And he dropped it from its cup plum into the slop-basin.

'A then maybe it was,' said poor Mrs. Mac, smiling as well as she could; 'but I'm better.'

'No you're not, Mullikins,' interposed Magnolia, impatiently. 'There's Toole crossing the street, will I call him up?'

'Not for the world, Maggy darling. I'd have to pay him, and where's the money to come from?'

The Major did not hear, and was coughing besides; and recollecting that he had a word for the Adjutant's ear, took his sword off the peg where it hung, and his cocked-hat, and vanished in a twinkling.

'Pay Toole, indeed! nonsense, mother,' and up went the window.

'Good-morrow to your nightcap, Doctor!'

'And the top of the morning to you, my pretty Miss chattering Mag, up on your perch there,' responded the physician.

'And what in the world brings you out this way at breakfast time, and where are you going—oh! goosy, goosy, gander, where do you wander?'

'Up stairs, if you let me,' said Toole, with a flourish of his hand, and a gallant grin, 'and to my lady's chamber.'

'And did you hear the news?' demanded Miss Mag.

The Doctor glanced over his shoulder, and seeing the coast clear, he was by this time close under the little scarlet geranium pots that stood on the window-sill.

'Miss Chattesworth, eh?' he asked, in a sly, low tone.

'Oh, bother her, no. Do you remember Miss Anne Majorybanks, that lodged in Doyle's house, down there, near the mills, last summer,

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with her mother, the fat woman with the poodle, and the—don't you know?'

'Ay, ay; she wore a flowered silk tabby sacque, on band days,' said Toole, who had an eye and a corner in his memory for female costume, 'a fine showy—I remember.'

'Well, middling: that's she.'

'And what of her?' asked Toole, screwing himself up as close as he could to the flower-pots.

'Come up and I'll tell you,' and she shut down the window, and beckoned him slily, and up came Toole all alive.

Miss Magnolia told her story in her usual animated way, sometimes dropping her voice to a whisper, and taking Toole by the collar, sometimes rising to a rollicking roar of laughter, while the little Doctor stood by, his hands in his breeches' pockets, making a pleasant jingle with his loose change there, with open mouth and staring eyes, and a sort of breathless grin all over his ruddy face. Then came another story, and more chuckling.

'And what about that lanky long may-pole, Gerty Chattesworth, the witch?—not that any one cares tuppence if she rode on a broom to sweep the cobwebs off the moon, only a body may as well know, you know,' said Miss Mag, preparing to listen.

'Why, by Jupiter! they say—but d'ye mind, I don't know, and faith I don't believe it—but they do say she's going to be married to —who do you think now?' answered Toole.

'Old Colonel Bligh, of the Magazine, or Dr. Walsingham, may be,' cried Mag, with a burst of laughter; 'no young fellow would be plagued with her, I'm certain.'

'Well, ha, ha! you *are* a conjuror, Miss Mag, to be sure. He's *not* young—you're right there—but then, he's rich, he is, by Jove! there's no end of his—well, what do you say now to Mr. Dangerfield?'

'Dangerfield! Well,' (after a little pause) 'he's ugly enough and old enough too, for the matter of that; but he's as rich as a pork-pie; and if he's worth half what they say, you may take my word for it, when he goes to church it won't be to marry the steeple.'

And she laughed again scornfully and added—

''Twas plain enough from the first, the whole family laid themselves out to catch the old quiz and his money. Let the Chattesworths alone for scheming, with all their grand airs. Much I mind them! Why, the old sinner was not an hour in the town when he was asked over the way to Belmont, and Miss dressed out there like a puppet, to simper and flatter the rich old land agent, and butter him

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up—my Lord Castlemallard's bailiff—if you please, ha, ha, ha! and the Duchess of Belmont, that ballyrags every one round her, like a tipsy old soldier, as civil as six, my dear sir, with her "oh, Mr. Dangerfield, this," and her "dear Mr. Dangerfield, that," and all to marry that long, sly huzzy to a creature old enough to be her grandfather, though she's no chicken neither. Faugh! filthy!' and Miss Magnolia went through an elegant pantomine of spitting over her shoulder into the grate.

Toole thought there was but one old fellow of his acquaintance who might be creditably married by a girl young enough to be his granddaughter, and that was honest Arthur Slowe; and he was going to insinuate a joke of the sort; but perceiving that his sly preparatory glance was not pleasantly responded to, and that the stalworth nymph was quite in earnest, he went off to another topic.

The fact is that Toole knew something of Miss Mag's plans, as he did of most of the neighbours' beside. Old Slowe was, in certain preponderating respects, much to be preferred to the stalworth Fireworker, Mr. Lieutenant O'Flaherty. And the two gentlemen were upon her list. Two strings to a bow is a time-honoured provision. Cupid often goes so furnished. If the first snap at the critical moment, should we bow-string our precious throttles with the pieces? Far be it from us! Let us waste no time in looking foolish; but pick up the gray-goose shaft that lies so innocently at our feet among the daisies; and it's odds but the second plants it 'i' the clout.' The lover, the hero of the piece, upon whose requited passion and splendid settlements the curtain goes down, is a *role* not always safely to be confided to the genius and discretion of a single performer. Take it that the captivating Frederick Belville, who is announced for the part is, along with his other qualifications, his gallantry, his grace, his ringlets, his pathetic smile, his lustrous eyes, his plaintive tenor, and five-and-twenty years—a little bit of a rip—rather frail in the particular of brandy and water, and so, not quite reliable. Will not the prudent manager provide a substitute respectably to fill the part, in the sad event of one of those sudden indispositions to which Belville is but too liable? It may be somewhat 'fat and scant of breath,' ay, and scant of hair and of teeth too. But though he has played Romeo thirty years ago, the perruquier, and the dentist, and the rouge-pot, and the friendly glare of the foot-lights will do wonders; and Podgers—steady fellow!—will be always at the right wing, at the right moment, know every line of his author, and contrive to give a very reasonable amount of satisfaction to all parties concerned. Following this precedent, then, that wise virgin, Miss Magnolia, and her saga-

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cious mamma, had allotted the role in question to Arthur Slowe, who was the better furnished for the part, and on the whole, the stronger 'cast.' But failing him, Lieutenant O'Flaherty was quietly, but unconsciously, as the phrase is, 'under-studying' that somewhat uncertain gentleman.

'And the General's off to Scarborough,' said Toole.

'Old Chattesworth! I thought it was to Bath.'

'Oh, no, Scarborough; a touch of the old rheum, and stomach. I sent him there; and he's away in the Hillsborough packet for Holyhead this morning, and Colonel Strafford's left in command.'

'And my Lady Becky Belmont's superseded,' laughed Miss Magnolia, derisively.

'And who do you think's going to make the grand tour? from Paris to Naples, if you please, and from Naples to Rome, and up to Venice, and home through Germany, and deuce knows where beside; you'll not guess in a twel'-month,' said Toole, watching her with a chuckle.

'Devereux, maybe,' guessed the young lady.

'No 'tisn't,' said Toole, delighted; 'try again!'

'Well, 'tis, let me see. Some wild young rogue, with a plenty of money, I warrant, if I could only think of him—come, don't keep me all day—who the plague is he, Toole?' urged the young lady, testily.

'Dan Loftus,' answered Toole, 'ha, ha, ha, ha!'

'Dan Loftus!—the grand tour—why, where's the world running to? Oh, ho, ho, ho, hoo! what a macaroni!' and they laughed heartily over it, and called him 'travelled monkey,' and I know not what else.

'Why, I thought Dr. Walsingham designed him for his curate; but what in the wide world brings Dan Loftus to foreign parts—"To dance and sing for the Spanish King, and to sing and dance for the Queen of France?"'

'Hey! Dan's got a good place, I can tell you—travelling tutor to the hopeful young lord that is to be—Devereux's cousin. By all the Graces, ma'am, 'tis the blind leading the blind. I don't know which of the two is craziest. Hey, diddle-diddle—by Jupiter, such a pair—the dish ran away with the spoon; but Dan's a good creature, and we'll—we'll miss him. I like Dan, and he loves the rector—I like him for that; where there's gratitude and fidelity, Miss Mag, there's no lack of other virtues, I warrant you—and the good Doctor has been a wonderful loving friend to poor Dan, and God bless him for it, say I, and amen.'

'And amen with all my heart,' said Miss Mag, gaily; 'tis an inno-

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cent creature—poor Dan; though he'd be none the worse of a little more lace to his hat, and a little less Latin in his head. But see here, Doctor, here's my poor old goose of a mother (and she kissed her cheek) as sick as a cat in a tub.'

And she whispered something in Toole's wig, and they both laughed uproariously.

'I would not take five guineas and tell you what she says,' cried Toole.

'Don't mind the old blackguard, mother dear?' screamed Magnolia, dealing Æsculapius a lusty slap on the back; and the cook at that moment knocking at the door, called off the young lady to the larder, who cried over her shoulder as she lingered a moment at the door—'Now, send her something, Toole, for my sake, to do her poor heart good. Do you mind—for faith and troth the dear old soul is sick and sad; and I won't let that brute, Sturk, though he does wear our uniform, next or near her.'

'Well, 'tisn't for me to say, eh?—and now she's gone,—just let me try.' And he took her pulse.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCERNING A CERTAIN WOMAN IN BLACK.

And Toole, holding her stout wrist, felt her pulse and said—'Hem—I see—and'——

And so he ran on with half-a-dozen questions, and at the end of his catechism said, bluntly enough—

'I tell you what it is Mrs. Mack, you have something on your mind, my dear madam, and till it's off, you'll never be better.'

Poor Mrs. Mack opened her eyes, and made a gesture of amazed disclaimer, with her hands palm upwards. It was all affectation.

'Pish!' said Toole, who saw the secret almost in his grasp; 'don't tell me, my dear madam—don't you think I know my business by this time o' day. I tell you again you'd better ease your mind—or take my word for it you'll be sorry too late. How would you like to go off like poor old Peggy Slowe—eh? There's more paralysis, apoplexy, heart-diseases, and lunacy, caused in one year by that sort of silly secrecy and moping, than by—hang it! My dear madam,' urged Toole, breaking into a bold exhortation on seeing signs of confusion and yielding in his fat patient—'you'd tell me all that concerns your health, and know that Tom Toole would put his hand in the fire before he'd let a living soul hear a symptom of your case; and here's some paltry little folly or trouble that I would not—as I'm a gentle-

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man—give a halfpenny to hear, and you're afraid to tell me—though until you do, neither I, nor all the doctors in Europe, can do you a ha'porth o' good.'

'Sure I've nothing to tell, Doctor dear,' whimpered poor Mrs. Mack, dissolving into her handkerchief.

'Look ye—there's no use in trying to deceive a doctor that knows what he's about.' Toole was by this time half mad with curiosity. 'Don't tell me what's on your mind, though I'd be sorry you thought I wasn't ready and anxious to help you with my best and most secret services; but I confess, my dear ma'am, I'd rather not hear—reserve it for some friend who has your confidence—but 'tis plain from the condition you're in'—and Toole closed his lips hard, and nodded twice or thrice—'you have not told either the Major or your daughter; and tell it you must to *some* one, or take the consequences.'

'Oh; Dr. Toole, I *am* in trouble—and I'd like to tell you; but won't you—won't you promise me now, on your solemn honour, if I do, you won't tell a human being,' blubbered the poor matron.

'Conscience, honour, veracity, ma'am—but why should I say any more—don't you know me, my dear Mrs. Mack?' said Toole in a hot fidget, and with all the persuasion of which he was master.

'Indeed, I do—and I'm in great trouble—and sometimes think no one can take me out of it,' pursued she.

'Come, come, my dear madam, is it money?' demanded Toole.

'Oh! no—it's—'tis a dreadful—that is, there *is* money in it—but oh! dear Doctor Toole, there's a frightful woman, and I don't know what to do; and I sometimes thought you might be able to help me—you're so clever—and I was going to tell you, but I was ashamed—there now, it's out,' and she blubbered aloud.

'*What's* out? said Toole, irritated. 'I can't stop here all day, you know; and if you'd rather I'd go, say so.'

'Oh no, but the Major, nor Maggy does not know a word about it; and so, for your life, don't tell them; and—and—here it is.'

And from her pocket she produced a number of the *Freeman's Journal*, five or six weeks old and a great deal soiled.

'Read it, read it, Doctor dear, and you'll see.'

'Read all this! thank you, ma'am; I read it a month ago,' said the Doctor gruffly.

'Oh! no—this—only there—you see—*here*,' and she indicated a particular advertisement, which we here reprint for the reader's instruction; and thus it ran—

'"MARY MATCHWELL'S most humble Respects attend the Nobility and Gentry. She has the Honour to acquaint them that she transacts all

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Business relative to Courtship and Marriage, with the utmost Dispatch and Punctuality. She has, at a considerable Expense, procured a complete List of all the unmarried Persons of both Sexes in this Kingdom, with an exact Account of their Characters, Fortunes, Ages, and Persons. Any Lady or Gentleman, by sending a Description of the Husband or Wife they would chuse, shall be informed where such a One is to be had, and put in a Method for obtaining him, or her, in the speediest Manner, and at the smallest Expense. Mrs. Matchwell's Charges being always proportioned to the Fortunes of the Parties, and not to be paid till the Marriage takes Place. She hopes the Honour and Secrecy she will observe in her Dealings, will encourage an unfortunate Woman, who hath experienced the greatest Vicissitudes of Life, as will be seen in her Memoirs which are shortly to be published under the Title of 'Fortune's Football.' All Letters directed to M. M., and sent Post paid to the Office where this Paper is published, shall be answered with Care."'

'Yes, yes, I remember that—a cheating gipsy—why, it's going on still—I saw it again yesterday, I think—a lying jade!—and this is the rogue that troubles you?' said Toole with his finger on the paragraph, as the paper lay on the table.

'Give it to me, Doctor, dear. I would not have them see it for the world—and—and—oh! Doctor—sure you wouldn't tell.'

'Augh, bother!—didn't I swear my soul, ma'am; and do you think I'm going to commit a perjury about "Mary Matchwell"—phiat!'

Well, with much ado, and a great circumbendibus, and floods of tears, and all sorts of deprecations and confusions, out came the murder at last.

Poor Mrs. Mack had a duty to perform by her daughter. Her brother was the best man in the world; but what with 'them shockin' forfitures' in her father's time, (a Jacobite grand-uncle had forfeited a couple of town-lands, value £37 per annum, in King William's time, and to that event, in general terms, she loved to refer the ruin of her family), and some youthful extravagances, his income, joined to hers, could not keep the dear child in that fashion and appearance her mother had enjoyed before her, and people without pedigree or solid pretension of any sort, looked down upon her, just because they had money (she meant the Chattesworths), and denied her the position which was hers of right, and so seeing no other way of doing the poor child justice, she applied to 'M. M.'

'To find a husband for Mag, eh?' said Toole.

'No, no. Oh, Dr. Toole, 'twas—'twas for *me*,' sobbed poor Mrs. Mack. Toole stared for a moment, and had to turn quickly about, and admire some shell-work in a glass box over the chimney-piece very closely, and I think his stout short back was shaking tremulously as he did so; and, when he turned round again, though his face was extraordinarily grave, it was a good deal redder than usual.

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'Well, my dear madam, and where's the great harm in that, when all's done,' said Toole.

'Oh, Doctor, I had the unpardonable *wake*ness, whatever come over me, to write her two letters on the subject, and she'll print them, and expose me, unless,'—here she rolled herself about in an agony of tears, and buried her fat face in the back of the chair.

'Unless you give her money, I suppose,' said Toole. 'There's what invariably comes of confidential communications with female enchanters and gipsies! And what do you propose to do?'

'I don't know—what can I do? She got the £5 I borrowed from my brother, and he can't lend me more; and I can't tell him what I done with that; and she has £3 10s. I—I raised on my best fan, and the elegant soiclainet, you know—I bought it of Knox & Acheson, at the Indian Queen, in Dame-street;' and his poor patient turned up her small tearful blue eyes imploringly to his face, and her good-natured old features were quivering all over with tribulation.

'And Mag knows nothing of all this?' said Toole.

'Oh, not for the wide world,' whispered the matron, in great alarm. 'Whisht! is that her coming?'

'No; there she is across the street talking to Mrs. Nutter. Listen to me: I'll manage that lady, Mrs. Mary—what's her name?—Matchwell. I'll take her in hands, and—whisper now.'

So Toole entered into details, and completed an officious little conspiracy; and the upshot of it was that Mrs. Mack, whenever M. M. fixed a day for her next extortionate visit, was to apprise the Doctor, who was to keep in the way; and, when she arrived, the good lady was just to send across to him for some 'peppermint drops,' upon which hint Toole himself would come slily over, and place himself behind the arras in the bedroom, whither, for greater seclusion and secrecy, she was to conduct the redoubted Mary Matchwell, who was thus to be overheard, and taken by the clever Doctor in the act; and then and there frightened not only into a surrender of the documents, but of the money she had already extracted, and compelled to sign such a confession of her guilt as would effectually turn the tables, and place her at the mercy of the once more happy Macnamara.

The Doctor was so confident, and the scheme, to the sanguine Celtic imagination of the worthy matron, appeared so facile of execution and infallible of success, that I believe she would at that moment have embraced, and even kissed, little Toole, in the exuberance of her gratitude, had that learned physician cared for such fooleries.

The fact is, however, that neither the Doctor nor his patient quite understood Mrs. Matchwell or her powers, nor had the least inkling of

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the marvellous designs that were ripening in her brain, and involving the fate of more than one of the good easy people of Chapelizod, against whom nobody dreamed a thunderbolt was forging.

So the Doctor, being a discreet man, only shook her cordially by the hand, at his departure, patting her encouragingly at the same time, on her fat shoulder, and with a sly grin and a wink, and a wag of his head—offering to 'lay fifty,' that between them 'they'd be too hard for the witch.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

BEING A SHORT HISTORY OF THE GREAT BATTLE OF BELMONT THAT LASTED FOR SO MANY DAYS, WHEREIN THE BELLIGERENTS SHOWED SO MUCH CONSTANCY AND VALOUR, AND SOMETIMES ONE SIDE AND SOMETIMES T'OTHER WAS VICTORIOUS.

So jolly old General Chattesworth was away to Scarborough, and matters went by no means pleasantly at Belmont; for there was strife between the ladies. Dangerfield—cunning fellow—went first to Aunt Becky with his proposal; and Aunt Becky liked it—determined it should prosper, and took up and conducted the case with all her intimidating energy and ferocity. But Gertrude's character had begun to show itself of late in new and marvellous lights, and she fought her aunt with cool, but invincible courage; and why should she marry, and above all, why marry that horrid, grim old gentleman, Mr. Dangerfield. No, she had money enough of her own to walk through life in maiden meditation, fancy free, without being beholden to anybody for a sixpence. Why, Aunt Rebecca herself had never married, and was she not all the happier of her freedom? Aunt Rebecca tried before the General went away, to inflame and stir him up upon the subject. But he had no capacity for coercion. She almost regretted she had made him so very docile. He would leave the matter altogether to his daughter. So Aunt Rebecca, as usual, took, as we have said, the carriage of the proceedings.

Since the grand eclaircissement had taken place between Mervyn and Gertrude Chattesworth, they met with as slight and formal a recognition as was possible, consistently with courtesy. Puddock had now little to trouble him upon a topic which had once cost him some uneasiness, and Mervyn acquiesced serenely in the existing state of things, and seemed disposed to be 'sweet upon' pretty Lilias Walsingham, if that young lady had allowed it; but her father had dropped hints about his history and belongings which surrounded him

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in her eyes with a sort of chill and dismal halo. There was something funeste and mysterious even in his beauty; and her spirits faltered and sank in his presence. Something of the same unpleasant influence, too, or was it fancy, she thought his approach seemed now to exercise upon Gertrude also, and that she, too, was unaccountably chilled and darkened by his handsome, but ill-omened presence.

Aunt Becky was not a woman to be soon tired, or even daunted. The young lady's resistance put her upon her mettle, and she was all the more determined, that she suspected her niece had some secret motive for rejecting a partner in some respects so desirable.

Sometimes, it is true, Gertrude's resistance flagged; but this was only the temporary acquiescence of fatigue, and the battle was renewed with the old spirit on the next occasion, and was all to be fought over again. At breakfast there was generally, as I may say, an affair of picquets, and through the day a dropping fire, sometimes rising to a skirmish; but the social meal of supper was generally the period when, for the most part, these desultory hostilities blazed up into a general action. The fortune of war as usual shifted. Sometimes Gertrude left the parlour, and effected a retreat to her bed-room. Sometimes it was Aunt Rebecca's turn to slam the door, and leave the field to her adversary. Sometimes, indeed, Aunt Becky thought she had actually finished the exhausting campaign, when her artillery had flamed and thundered over the prostrate enemy for a full half hour unanswered; but when, at the close of the cannonade, she marched up, with drums beating and colours flying, to occupy the position and fortify her victory, she found, much to her mortification, that the foe had only, as it were, lain down to let her shrapnels and canister fly over, and the advance was arrested with the old volley and hurrah. And there they were—not an inch gained—peppering away at one another as briskly as ever, with the work to begin all over again.

'You think I have neither eyes nor understanding; but I can see, young lady, as well as another; ay, madam, I've eyes, and some experience too, and 'tis my simple duty to my brother, and to the name I bear, not to mention *you*, niece, to prevent, if my influence or authority can do it, the commission of a folly which, I can't but suspect, may possibly be meditated, and which, even you, niece, would live very quickly to repent.'

Gertrude did not answer; she only looked a little doubtfully at her aunt, with a gaze of deep, uneasy inquiry. That sort of insinuation seemed to disconcert her. But she did not challenge her aunt to define her meaning; and the attack was soon renewed at another point.

When Gertrude walked down to the town, to the King's House, or

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even to see Lily, at this side of the bridge, Dominick, the footman, was ordered to trudge after her—a sort of state she had never used in her little neighbourly rambles—and Gertrude knew that her aunt catechised that confidential retainer daily. Under this sort of management, the haughty girl winced and fretted, and finally sulked, grew taciturn and sarcastic, and shut herself up altogether within the precincts of Belmont.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NARRATING HOW LIEUTENANT PUDDOCK AND CAPTAIN DEVEREUX BREWED A BOWL OF PUNCH, AND HOW THEY SANG AND DISCOURSED TOGETHER.

If people would only be content with that which is, let well alone, and allow to-day to resemble yesterday, and to-morrow to-day, the human race would be much fatter at no greater cost, and sleep remarkably well. But so it is that the soul of man can no more rest here than the sea or the wind. We are always plotting against our own repose, and as no man can stir in a crowd without disturbing others, it happens that even the quietest fellows are forced to fight for their *status quo*, and sometimes, though they would not move a finger or sacrifice a button for the chance of 'getting on,' are sulkily compelled to cut capers like the rest. Nature will have it so, and has no end of resources, and will not suffer even the sluggish to sit still, but if nothing else will do, pins a cracker to their skirts, in the shape of a tender passion, or some other whim, and so sets them bouncing in their own obese and clumsy way, to the trouble of others as well as their own discomfort. It is a hard thing, but so it is; the comfort of absolute stagnation is nowhere permitted us. And such, so multifarious and intricate our own mutual dependencies, that it is next to impossible to marry a wife, or to take a house for the summer at Brighton, or to accomplish any other entirely simple, good-humoured, and selfish act without affecting, not only the comforts, but the reciprocal relations of dozens of other respectable persons who appear to have nothing on earth to say to us or our concerns. In this respect, indeed, society resembles a pyramid of potatoes, in which you cannot stir one without setting others, in unexpected places, also in motion. Thus it was, upon very slight motives, the relations of people in the little world of Chapelizod began to shift and change considerably, and very few persons made a decided move of any sort without affecting or upsetting one or more of his neighbours.

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Among other persons unexpectedly disturbed just now was our friend Captain Devereux. The letter reached him at night. Little Puddock walked to his lodgings with him from the club, where he had just given a thplendid rethitation from Shakespeare, and was, as usual after such efforts, in a high state of excitement, and lectured his companion, for whom, by the bye, he cherished a boyish admiration, heightened very considerably by his not quite understanding him, upon the extraordinary dramatic capabilities and versatilities of Shakespeare's plays, which, he said, were not half comprehended.

'It was only on Tuesday—the night, you know, I fired the pistol at the robbers, near the dog-house, through the coach-window, returning all alone from Smock-alley Theatre. I was thinking, upon my honour, if I had your parts, my dear Devereux, and could write, as I know you can, I'd make a variation upon every play of Shakespeare, that should be strictly moulded upon it, and yet in no respect recognisable.'

'Ay, like those Irish airs that will produce tears or laughter, as they are played slow or quick; or minced veal, my dear Puddock, which the cook can dress either savoury or sweet at pleasure; or Aunt Rebecca, that produces such different emotions in her different moods, and according to our different ways of handling her, is scarce recognisable in some of them, though still the same Aunt Becky,' answered Devereux, knocking at Irons' door.

'No, but seriously, by sometimes changing an old person to a young, sometimes a comical to a melancholy, or the reverse, sometimes a male for a female, or a female for a male—I assure you, you can so entirely disguise the piece, and yet produce situations so new and surprising——'

'I see, by all the gods at once, 'tis an immortal idea! Let's take Othello—I'll set about it to-morrow—to-night, by Jove! A gay young Venetian nobleman, of singular beauty, charmed by her tales of "anthropophagites and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," is seduced from his father's house, and married by a middle-aged, somewhat hard-featured black woman, Juno, or Dido, who takes him away—not to Cyprus—we must be original, but we'll suppose to the island of Stromboli—and you can have an eruption firing away during the last act. There Dido grows jealous of our hero, though he's as innocent as Joseph; and while his valet is putting him to bed he'll talk to him and prattle some plaintive little tale how his father had a man called Barbarus. And then, all being prepared, and his bed-room candle put out, Dido enters, looking unusually grim, and smothers him with a pillow in spite of his cries and affecting entreaties, and—— By Jupiter! here's a letter—from Bath, too.'

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He had lighted the candles, and the letter with its great red eye of a seal, lying upon the table, transfixed his wandering glance, and smote somehow to his heart with an indefinite suspense and misgiving.

'With your permission, my dear Puddock?' said Devereux, before breaking the seal; for in those days they grew ceremonious the moment a point of etiquette turned up. Puddock gave him leave, and he read the letter.

'From my aunt,' he said, throwing it down with a discontented air; and then he read it once more, thought for a while, and put it into his pocket. 'The countess says I must go, Puddock. She has got my leave from the General; and hang it—there's no help for it—I can't vex her, you know. Indeed, Puddock, I *would* not vex her. Poor old aunt—she has been mighty kind to me—no one knows how kind. So I leave to-morrow.'

'Not to stay away!' exclaimed Puddock, much concerned.

'I don't know, dear Puddock. I know no more than the man in the moon what her plans are. Lewis, you know, is ordered by the doctors to Malaga; and Loftus—honest dog—I managed that trifle for him—goes with him; and the poor old lady, I suppose, is in the vapours, and wants me—and that's all. And Puddock, we must drink a bowl of punch together—you and I—or something—anything—what you please.'

And so they sat some time longer, and grew very merry and friendly, and a little bit pathetic in their several ways. And Puddock divulged his secret but noble flame for Gertrude Chattesworth, and Devereux sang a song or two, defying fortune, in his sweet, sad tenor; and the nymph who skipt up and down stairs with the kettle grew sleepy at last; and Mrs. Irons rebelled in her bed, and refused peremptorily to get up again, to furnish the musical topers with rum and lemons, and Puddock, having studied his watch—I'm bound to say with a slight hiccough and supernatural solemnity—for about five minutes, satisfied himself it was nearly one o'clock, and took an affecting, though soldier-like leave of his comrade, who, however, lent him his arm down the stairs, which were rather steep; and having with difficulty dissuaded him from walking into the clock, the door of which was ajar, thought it his duty to see the gallant little Lieutenant home to his lodgings; and so in the morning good little Puddock's head ached. He had gone to bed with his waistcoat and leggings on—and his watch was missing and despaired of till discovered, together with a lemon, in the pocket of his surtout, hanging against the wall; and a variety of other strange arrangements came to light, with not one of which could Puddock connect himself.

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Indeed, he was 'dithguthted' at his condition; and if upon the occasion just described he had allowed himself to be somewhat 'intoxicated with liquor,' I must aver that I do not recollect another instance in which this worthy little gentleman suffered himself to be similarly overtaken. Now and then a little 'flashy' he might be, but nothing more serious—and rely upon it, this was no common virtue in those days.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN WHICH CAPTAIN DEVEREUX'S FIDDLE PLAYS A PRELUDE TO 'OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY.'

THERE was some little undefinable coolness between old General Chattesworth and Devereux. He admired the young fellow, and he liked good blood in his corps, but somehow he was glad when he thought he was likely to go. When old Bligh, of the Magazine, commended the handsome young dog's good looks, the General would grow grave all at once, and sniff once or twice, and say, 'Yes, a good-looking fellow certainly, and might make a good officer, a mighty good officer, but he's wild, a troublesome dog.' And, lowering his voice, 'I tell you what, Colonel, as long as a young buck sticks to his claret, it is all fair; but hang it, you see, I'm afraid he likes other things, and he won't wait till after dinner—this between ourselves, you know. 'Tis not a button to me, by Jupiter, what he does or drinks, off duty; but hang it, I'm afraid some day he'll break out; and once or twice, in a friendly way, you know, I've had to speak with him, and, to say truth, I'd rather he served under any one else. He's a fine young fellow, 'tis a pity there should be anything wrong, and it would half break my heart to have to take a public course with him; not, you know, that it has ever come to anything like that—but—but I've heard things—and—and he must pull up, or he'll not do for the service.' So, though the thing did not amount to a scandal, there was a formality between Devereux and his commanding officer, who thought he saw bad habits growing apace, and apprehended that ere long disagreeable relations might arise between them.

Lord Athenry had been no friend to Devereux in his nonage, and the good-natured countess, to make amends, had always done her utmost to spoil him, and given him a great deal more of his own way, as well as of plum-cake, and Jamaica preserves, and afterwards a great deal more money, than was altogether good for him. Like many a worse person, she was a little bit capricious, and a good deal

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selfish; but the young fellow was handsome. She was proud of his singularly good looks, and his wickedness interested her, and she gave him more money than to all the best public charities to which she contributed put together. Devereux, indeed, being a fast man, with such acres as he inherited, which certainly did not reach a thousand mortgaged pretty smartly, and with as much personal debt beside, of the fashionable and refined sort, as became a young buck of bright though doubtful expectations—and if the truth must be owned, sometimes pretty nearly pushed into a corner—was beholden, not only for his fun, but, occasionally for his daily bread and even his liberty, to those benevolent doles.

He did not like her peremptory summons; but he could not afford to quarrel with his bread and butter, nor to kill by undutiful behaviour the fair, plump bird, whose golden eggs were so very convenient, I don't know whether there may not have been some slight signs in the hand-writing—in a phrase, perhaps, or in the structure of the composition, which a clever analysis might have detected, and which only reached him vaguely, with a foreboding that he was not to see Chapelizod again so soon as usual when this trip was made. And, in truth, his aunt had plans. She designed his retirement from the Royal Irish Artillery, and had negociated an immediate berth for him on the Staff of the Commander of the Forces, and a prospective one in the household of Lord Townshend; she had another arrangement 'on the anvil' for a seat in Parliament, which she would accomplish, if that were possible; and finally a wife. In fact, her ladyship had encountered old General Chattesworth at Scarborough only the autumn before, and they had had, in that gay resort, a good deal of serious talk, (though serious talk with the good countess never lasted very long), between their cards and other recreations, the result of which was, that she began to think, with the good General, that Devereux would be better where one unlucky misadventure would not sully his reputation for life. Besides, she thought Chapelizod was not safe ground for a young fellow so eccentric, perverse, and impetuous, where pretty faces were plentier than good fortunes, and at every tinkling harpsichord there smiled a possible *mesalliance*. In the town of Chapelizod itself, indeed, the young gentleman did not stand quite so high in estimation as with his aunt, who thought nothing was good or high enough for her handsome nephew, with his good blood and his fine possibilities. The village folk, however, knew that he was confoundedly dipped; that he was sometimes alarmingly pestered by duns, and had got so accustomed to hear that his uncle, the Earl, was in his last sickness, and his cousin, the next heir, dead, when another

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week disclosed that neither one nor the other was a bit worse than usual, that they began to think that Devereux's turn might very possibly never come at all. Besides, the townspeople had high notions of some of their belles, and not without reason. There was Miss Gertrude Chattesworth, for instance, with more than fourteen thousand pounds to her fortune, and Lilias Walsingham, who would inherit her mother's money, and the good rector's estate of twelve hundred a-year beside, and both with good blood in their veins, and beautiful princesses too. However, in those days there was more parental despotism than now. The old people kept their worldly wisdom to themselves, and did not take the young into a scheming partnership; and youth and beauty, I think, were more romantic, and a great deal less venal.

Such being the old countess's programme—a plan, according to her lights, grand and generous, she might have dawdled over it, for a good while, for she did not love trouble. It was not new; the airy castle had been some years built, and now, in an unwonted hurry, she wished to introduce the tenant to the well-aired edifice, and put him in actual possession. For a queer little attack in her head, which she called a fainting fit, and to which nobody dared afterwards to make allusion, and which she had bullied herself and everybody about her into forgetting, had, nevertheless, frightened her confoundedly. And when her helpless panic and hysterics were over, she silently resolved, if the thing were done, then 'twere well 'twere done quickly.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN WHICH LILIAS HEARS A STAVE OF AN OLD SONG AND THERE IS A LEAVE-TAKING BESIDE THE RIVER.

DEVEREUX's move was very sudden, and the news did not reach the Elms till his groom had gone on to Island-bridge with the horses, and he himself, booted and spurred, knocked at the door. The Doctor was not at home; he had ridden into Dublin. Of course it was chiefly to see him he had gone there.

'And Miss Walsingham?'

She was also out; no, not in the garden. John thought maybe at old Miss Chattesworth's school; or, Sally said, maybe at Belmont; they did not know.

Devereux looked into the large room at the right hand of the hall, with the fair sad portrait of Lilias's young mother smiling from the wall. Like *her*, too—and the tall glasses of flowers—and the harpsichord open, with the music she would play, just as usual, that evening,

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he supposed; and he stood at the door, looking round the room, booted and spurred, as I have said, with his cocked-hat held to his breast, in a reverie. It was not easy for old Sally to guess what was passing in his mind, for whenever he was sad he smiled, but with the somewhat of bitter in his smile, and when he suffered he used to joke.

Just at that moment Lilias Walsingham was walking along the high street of the village to the King's House, and stopping to say a good-natured little word to old Jenny Creswell, was overtaken by mild Mrs. Sturk, who was walking her little menagerie into the Park.

'And oh! dear Miss Walsingham, did you hear the news?' she said; 'Captain Devereux is gone to England, and I believe we shan't see him here again.'

Lilias felt that she grew pale, but she patted one of the children on the head, and smiled, and asked him some foolish little question.

'But why won't you listen, dear Miss Lilias? You don't hear, I think,' said Mrs. Sturk.

'I do hear, indeed; when did he go?' she asked, coldly enough.

'About half an hour ago,' Mrs. Sturk thought: and so, with a word or two more, and a kissing of hands, the good lady turned, with her brood, up the Park lane, and Lily walked on to pay her visit to Mrs. Colonel Strafford, feeling all the way a strange pang of anger and disappointment.

'To think of his going away without taking leave of my father!'

And when she reached the hall-door of the King's House for a moment she forgot what she had come for, and was relieved to find that good Mrs. Strafford was in town.

There was then, I don't know whether there is not now, a little path leading by the river bank from Chapelizod to Island-bridge, just an angler's foot-path, devious and broken, but withal very sweet and pretty. Leaving the King's House, she took this way home, and as she walked down to the river bank, the mortified girl looked down upon the grass close by her feet, and whispered to the daisies as she went along—'No, there's no more kindness nor friendliness left in the world; the people are all cold creatures now, and hypocrites; and I'm glad he's gone.'

She paused at the stile which went over the hedge just beside an old fluted pier, with a grassgrown urn at top, and overgrown with a climbing rose-tree, just such a study as a young lady might put in her album; and then she recollected the long letter from old Miss Wardle that Aunt Becky had sent her to read, with a request, which from that quarter was a command, that she should return it by six o'clock, for Aunt Becky, even in matters indifferent, liked to name

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hours, and nail people sharp and hard to futile appointments and barren punctualities.

She paused at the stile; she liked the old pier; its partner next the river was in fragments, and the ruin and the survivor had both been clothed by good Mrs. Strafford—who drew a little, and cultivated the picturesque—with the roses I have mentioned, besides woodbine and ivy. She had old Miss Wardle's letter in her hand, full, of course, of shocking anecdotes about lunatics, and the sufferings of Fleet prisoners, and all the statistics, and inquiries, and dry little commissions, with which that worthy lady's correspondence abounded. It was open in her hand, and rustled sharp and stiffly in the air, but it was not inviting just then. From that point it was always a pretty look down or up the river; and her eyes followed with the flow of its waters towards Inchichore. She loved the river; and in her thoughts she wondered why she loved it—so cold, so unimpressible—that went shining and rejoicing away into the sea. And just at that moment she heard a sweet tenor, with a gaiety somehow pathetic, sing not far away the words she remembered—

'And she smiled upon the stream,
Like one that smiles at folly,
A dreamer on a dream.'

Devereux was coming—it was his playful salutation. Her large eyes dropped to the ground with the matchless blush of youth. She was strangely glad, but vexed at having changed colour; but when he came up with her, in the deep shadow thrown by the old pier, with its thick festooneries, he could not tell, he only knew she looked beautiful.

'My dreams take wing, but my follies will not leave me. And you have been ill, Miss Lilias?'

'Oh, nothing; only a little cold.'

'And I am going—I only knew last night—really going away.' He paused; but the young lady did not feel called upon to say anything, and only allowed him to go on. In fact, she was piqued, and did not choose to show the least concern about his movements. 'And I've a great mind, now that I'm departing this little world;' and he glanced, it seemed to her, regretfully towards the village; 'to put you down, Miss Lily, if you will allow it, in my codicil for a legacy'—

She laughed a pleasant little careless laugh. How ill-natured! but, oh! wasn't it musical.

'Then, I suppose, if you were not to see me for some time, or maybe for ever, the village folks won't break their hearts after Dick Devereux?'

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And the Gipsy Captain smiled, and his eyes threw a soft violet shadow down upon her; and there was that in his tone which for a moment touched her with a strange reproach, like a bar of sweet music.

But little Lily was spirited; and if *he*, so early a friend, could go away without bidding good-bye, why he should not suppose *she* cared.

'Break our hearts? Not all, perhaps; but of course I—the parson's daughter—I should, and old Moore, the barber, and Pat Moran, the hackney coachman, and Mrs. Irons your fat landlady, you've been so very good to all of us, you know.'

'Well,' he interrupted, 'I've left my white surtout to Moran; a hat, let me see, and a pair of buckles to Moore; and my glass and china to dear Mrs. Irons.'

'Hat—buckles—surtout—glass—china—gone! Then it seems to me your earthly possessions are pretty nearly disposed of, and your worldly cares at an end.'

'Yes; very nearly, but not quite,' he laughed. 'I have one treasure left—my poor monkey; he's a wonderful fellow—he has travelled half over the world, and is a perfect fine gentlemen—and my true comrade until now. Do you think Dr. Walsingham, of his charity, would give the poor fellow free quarters at the Elms?'

She was going to make answer with a jest, satirically; but her mood changed quickly. It was, she thought, saucy of Captain Devereux to fancy that she should care to have his pet; and she answered a little gravely—

'I can't say indeed; had you cared to see him, you might have asked him; but, indeed, Captain Devereux, I believe you're jesting.'

'Faith! madam, I believe I am; or, it does not much matter—dreaming perhaps. There's our bugle!' And the sweet sounds quivered and soared through the pleasant air. 'How far away it sounds already; ours are sweet bugles—the sweetest bugles to my ear in the wide world. Yes, dreaming. I said I had but one treasure left,' he continued, with a fierce sort of tenderness that was peculiar to him: 'and I did not mean to tell you, but I will. Look at that, Miss Lily, 'tis the little rose you left on your harpsichord this morning. I stole it: 'tis mine; and Richard Devereux would die rather than lose it to another.'

So then, after all, he had been at the Elms; and she had wronged him.

'Yes, dreaming,' he continued, in his old manner; 'and 'tis time I were awake, awake and on the march.'

'You are, then, really going?' she said, so that no one would have guessed how strangely she felt at that moment.

'Yes, really going,' he said, quite in his own way; 'Over the hills

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and far away; and so, I know, you'll first wish your old friend, God speed.'

'I do, indeed.'

'And then you'll shake hands, Miss Lily, as in old times.'

And out came the frank little hand, and he looked on it, with a darkling smile, as it lay in his own sinewy but slender grasp; and she said with a smile—'Good-bye.'

She was frightened lest he should possibly say more than she knew how to answer.

'And somehow it seems to me, I have a great deal to say.'

'And I've a great deal to read, you see;' and she just stirred old Miss Wardle's letter, that lay open in her hand, with a smile just the least in the world of comic distress.

'A great deal,' he said.

'And farewell, again,' said Lilias.

'Farewell! dear Miss Lily.'

And then, he just looked his old strange look upon her; and he went: and she dropped her eyes upon the letter. He had got into the far meadow, where the path makes a little turn round the clump of poplars, and hides itself. Just there he looked over his shoulder, a last look it might be, the handsome strange creature that had made so many of her hours pass so pleasantly; he that was so saucy with every one else, and so gentle with her; of whom, she believed, she might make anything, a hero or a demigod! She knew a look would call him back—back, maybe, to her feet; but she could not give that little sign. There she stood, affecting to read that letter, one word of which she did not see. 'She does not care; but—but there's no one like her. No—she does not care.' He thought; and she let him think it: but her heart swelled to her throat, and she felt as if she could have screamed, 'Come back—my only love—my darling—without you I must die!' But she did not raise her head. She only read on, steadily, old Miss Wardle's letter—over and over—the same half-dozen lines. And when, after five minutes more, she lifted up her eyes, the hoary poplars were ruffling their thick leaves in the breeze—and he gone; and the plaintive music came mellowed from the village, and the village and the world, seemed all on a sudden empty for her.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

IN WHICH AUNT BECKY AND DOCTOR TOOLE, IN FULL BLOW, WITH DOMINICK, THE FOOTMAN, BEHIND THEM, VISIT MISS LILY AT THE ELMS.

AFTER such leave-takings, especially where something like a revelation takes place, there sometimes supervenes, I'm told, a sort of excitement before the chill and ache of separation sets in. So, Lily, when she went home, found that her music failed her, all but the one strange little air, 'The river ran between them;' and then she left the harpsichord and went into the garden through the glass door, but the flowers had only half their interest, and the garden was solitary, and she felt restless, as if she were going to make a journey, or looking for strange news; and then she bethought her again of Mrs. Colonel Strafford, and that she might have, by this time, returned from Dublin, and there was some little interest about the good old lady, even in this, that she had just returned by the same road that he had gone away by, that she might have chanced to see him as he passed; that at least she might happen to speak of him, and to know something of the likelihood of his return, or even to speculate about him; for now any talk in which his name occurred was interesting, though she did not know it quite herself. So she went down to the King's House, and did find old Mrs. Strafford at home: and after an entertaining gossip about some 'rich Nassau damask,' at Haughton's in the Coombe, that had taken her fancy mightily, and how she had chosen a set of new Nankeen plates and fine oblong dishes at the Music Hall, and how Peter Raby, the watchman, was executed yesterday morning, in web worsted breeches, for the murder of Mr. Thomas Fleming, of Thomas-street, she did come at last to mention Devereux; and she said that the Colonel had received a letter from General Chattesworth, 'who, by-the-bye,' and then came a long parenthesis, very pleasant, you may be sure, for Lily to listen to; and the General, it appeared, thought it most likely that Devereux would not return to Chapelizod, and the Royal Irish Artillery; and then she went on to other subjects, and Lily staid a long time, thinking she might return to Devereux, but she did not mention him again. So home went little Lily more pensive than she came.

It was near eight o'clock, when who should arrive at the door, and flutter the crows in the old elms with an energetic double knock, but Aunt Rebecca, accompanied by no less a personage than Dr. Toole, in full costume, and attended by old Dominick, the footman.

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The Doctor was a little bit ruffled and testy, for having received a summons from Belmont, he had attended in full blow, expecting to prescribe for Aunt Rebecca or Miss Gertrude, and found, instead, that he was in for a barren and benevolent walk of half a mile on the Inchicore road, with the energetic Miss Rebecca, to visit one of her felonious pensioners who lay sick in his rascally crib. It was not the first time that the jolly little Doctor had been entrapped by the good lady into a purely philanthropic excursion of this kind. But he could not afford to mutiny, and vented his disgust in blisters and otherwise drastic treatment of the malingering scoundrels whom he served out after his kind for the trouble and indignity they cost him.

'And here we are, Lily dear, on our way to see poor dear Pat Doolin, who, I fear, is not very long for this world. Dominick!—he's got a brain fever, my dear.'

The Doctor said 'pish!' inaudibly, and Aunt Becky went on.

'You know the unhappy creature is only just out of prison, and if ever mortal suffered unjustly, he's the man. Poor Doolan's as innocent as you or I, my dear, or sweet little Spot, there;' pointing her fan like a pistol at that interesting quadruped's head. 'The disgrace has broken his heart, and that's at the bottom of his sickness. I wish you could hear him speak, poor dear wretch—Dominick!' and she had a word for that domestic in the hall.

'Hear him speak, indeed!' said Toole, taking advantage of her momentary absence. 'I wish you could, the drunken blackguard. King Solomon could not make sense of it. She gave that burglar, would you believe it, ma'am? two guineas, by Jupiter! the first of this month—and whiskey only sixpence a pint—and he was drunk without intermission of course, day and night for a week after. Brain fever, indeed, 'tis just as sweet a little fit of delirium tremens, my dear madam, as ever sent an innocent burglar slap into bliss;' and the word popped out with a venomous hiss and an angry chuckle.

'And so, my dear,' resumed Aunt Becky, marching in again; 'good Doctor Toole—our good Samaritan, here—has taken him up, just for love, and the poor man's fee—his blessing.'

The Doctor muttered something about 'taking him up,' but inarticulately, for it was only for the relief of his own feelings.

'And now, dear Lilias, we want your good father to come with us, just to pray by the poor fellow's bedside; he's in the study, is he?'

'No, he was not to be home until to-morrow-morning.'

'Bless me!' cried Aunt Becky, with as much asperity as if she had said something different; 'and not a soul to be had to comfort a dying wretch in your father's parish—yes, he's dying; we want a

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minister to pray with him, and here we've a Flemish account of the rector. This tells prettily for Dr. Walsingham!'

'Dr. Walsingham's the best rector in the whole world, and the holiest man and the noblest,' cried brave little Lily, standing like a deer at bay, with her wild shy eyes looking full in Aunt Becky's, and a flush in her cheeks, and the beautiful light of truth beaming like a star from her forehead. And for a moment it looked like battle; but the old lady smiled a kind of droll little smile, and gave her a little pat on the cheek, saying with a shake of her head, 'saucy girl!'

'And you,' said Lily, throwing her arms about her neck, 'are my own Aunt Becky, the greatest darling in the world!' And so, as John Bunyan says, 'the water stood in their eyes,' and they both laughed, and then they kissed, and loved one another the better. That was the way their little quarrels used always to end.

'Well Doctor, we must only do what we can,' said Aunt Becky, looking gravely on the physician; 'and I don't see why *you* should not read—you can lend us a prayer-book, darling—just a collect or two, and the Lord's Prayer—eh?'

'Why, my dear ma'am, the fellow's howling about King Lewis and the American Indians, Dominick says, and ghosts and constables, and devils, and worse things, madam, and—pooh—punch and laudanum's his only chance; don't mind the prayer-book, Miss Lily—there's no use in it, Mistress Chattesworth! I give you my honour, ma'am, he could not make head or tale of it.'

In fact, the Doctor was terrified lest Aunt Rebecca should compel him to officiate, and he was thinking how the fellows at the Club, and the Aldermen of Skinner's-alley, would get hold of the story, and treat the subject less gravely than was desirable.

So Aunt Becky, with Lily's leave, called in Dominick, to examine him touching the soundness of Pat Doolan's mind, and the honest footman had no hesitation in pronouncing him wholly *non compos*.

'Pleasant praying with a chap like that, by Jove, as drunk as an owl, and as mad as a March hare! my dear ma'am,' whispered Toole to Lilias.

'And, Lily dear, there's poor Gertrude all alone—'twould be good natured in you to go up and drink a dish of tea with her; but, then, you're cold—you're afraid?

She was not afraid—she had been out to-day—and it had done her all the good in the world, and it was very good of Aunt Becky to think of it, for she was lonely too; and so off went the elder Miss Chattesworth, with her Doctor and Dominick, in their various moods, on their mission of mercy; and Lily sent into the town for the two

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chairmen, Peter Brian and Larry Foy, the two-legged ponies, as Toole called them.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

NARRATING HOW MISS LILIAS VISITED BELMONT, AND SAW A STRANGE COCKED-HAT IN THE SHADOW BY THE WINDOW.

AT that time, in every hall of gentility, there stood a sedan-chair, the property of the lady of the house; and by the time the chairmen had arrived and got the poles into their places, and trusty John Tracy had got himself into his brown surtout, trimmed with white lace, and his cane in his hand—(there was no need of a lantern, for the moon shone softly and pleasantly down)—Miss Lilias Walsingham drew her red riding hood about her pretty face, and stepped into the chair; and so the door shut, the roof closed in, and the young lady was fairly under weigh. She had so much to think of, so much to tell about her day's adventure, that before she thought she had come half the way, they were flitting under the shadows of the poplars that grew beside the avenue; and, through the window, she saw the hospitable house spreading out its white front as they drew near, and opening its wings to embrace her.

The hall-door stood half open, though it had been dark some time; and the dogs came down with a low growl, and plenty of sniffing, which forthwith turned into a solemn wagging of tails, for they were intimate with the chairmen, and with John Tracy, and loved Lilias too. So she got out in the hall, and went into the little room at the right, and opening the door of the inner and larger one—there was no candle there, and 'twas nearly dark—saw Gertrude standing by the window which looked out on the lawn toward the river. That side of the house was in shade, but she saw that the window was thrown up, and Gertrude, she thought, was looking toward her, though she did not move, until she drew nearer, wondering why she did not approach, and then, pausing in a kind of unpleasant doubt, she heard a murmured talking, and plainly saw the figure of a man, with a cloak, it seemed, wrapped about him, and leaning from outside, against the window-sill, and, as she believed, holding Gertrude's hand.

The thing that impressed her most was the sharp outline of the cocked-hat, with the corners so peculiarly pinched in, and the feeling that she had never seen that particular hat before in the parish of Chapelizod.

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Lily made a step backward, and Gertrude instantly turned round, and seeing her, uttered a little scream.

'"Tis I, Gertrude, darling — Lily—Lily Walsingham,' she said, perhaps as much dismayed as Gertrude herself; 'I'll return in a moment.'

She saw the figure, outside, glide hurriedly away by the side of the wall.

'Lily—Lily, darling, no, don't go—I did not expect you;' and Gertrude stopped suddenly, and then as suddenly said—

'You are very welcome, Lily;' and she drew the window down, and there was another pause before she said—'Had not we better go up to the drawing-room, and—and—Lily darling, you're very welcome. Are you better?'

And she took little Lily's hand, and kissed her.

Little Lilias all this time had said nothing, so entirely was she disconcerted. And her heart beat fast with a kind of fear; and she felt Gertrude's cold hand tremble she fancied in her's.

'Yes, darling, the drawing-room, certainly,' answered Lily. And the two young ladies went upstairs holding hands, and without exchanging another word.

'Aunt Becky has gone some distance to see a sick pensioner; I don't expect her return before an hour.'

'Yes—I know—and she came, dear Gertrude, to see me; and I should not have come, but that she asked me, and—and——'

She stopped, for she was speaking apologetically, like an intruder, and she was shocked to feel what a chasm on a sudden separated them, and oppressed with the consciousness that their old mutual girlish confidence was dead and gone; and the incident of the evening, and Gertrude's changed aspect, and their changed relations, seemed a dreadful dream.

Gertrude looked so pale and wretchedly, and Lily saw her eyes, wild and clouded, once or twice steal toward her with a glance of such dark alarm and inquiry, that she was totally unable to keep up the semblance of their old merry gossiping talk, and felt that Gertrude read in her face the amazement and fear which possessed her.

'Lily, darling, let us sit near the window, far away from the candles, and look out; I hate the light.'

'With all my heart,' said Lily. And two paler faces than theirs, that night, did not look out on the moonlight prospect.

'I hate the light, Lily,' repeated Gertrude, not looking at her companion, but directly out through the bow-window upon the dark outline of the lawn and river bank and the high grounds on the other

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side. 'I hate the light—yes, I hate the light, because my thoughts are darkness—yes, my thoughts are darkness. No human being knows me; and I feel like a person who is *haunted*. Tell me what you saw when you came into the parlour just now.'

'Gertrude, dear, I ought not to have come in so suddenly.'

'Yes, 'twas but right—'twas but kind in you, Lily—right and kind—to treat me like the open-hearted and intimate friend that, heaven knows, I was to you, Lily, all my life. I think—at least, I think—till lately—but you were always franker than I—and truer. You've walked in the light, Lily, and that's the way to peace. I turned aside, and walked in mystery; and it seems to me I am treading now the valley of the shadow of death. Waking and talking, I am, nevertheless, in the solitude and darkness of the grave. And what did you see, Lily—I know you'll tell me truly—when you came into the parlour, as I stood by the window?'

'I saw, I think, the form of a man in a cloak and hat, as I believe, talking with you in whispers, Gertrude, from without.'

'The form of a man, Lily—you're right—not a man, but the form of a man,' she continued, bitterly; 'for it seems to me sometimes it can be no human fascination that has brought me under the tyranny in which I can scarce be said to breathe.'

After an interval she said—

'It will seem incredible. You've heard of Mr. Dangerfield's proposal, and you've heard how I've received it. Well, listen.'

'Gertrude, dear!' said Lily, who was growing frightened.

'I'm going,' interrupted Miss Chattesworth, 'to tell you my strange, if you will, but not guilty—no, *not* guilty—secret. I'm no agent now, but simply passive in the matter. But you must first pledge me your sacred word that neither to my father nor to yours, nor to my aunt, nor to any living being, will you ever reveal what I'm about to tell you, till I have released you from your promise.'

Did ever woman refuse a secret? Well, Lily wavered for a moment. But then suddenly stooping down, and kissing her, she said:

'No, Gertrude, darling—you'll not be vexed with me—but you must not tell me your secret. You have excuses such as I should not have—you've been drawn into this concealment, step by step, unwillingly; but, Gertrude, darling, I must not hear it. I could not look Aunt Becky in the face, nor the kind General, knowing that I was——'

She tried to find a word.

'*Deceiving* them, Lily,' said Gertrude, with a moan.

'Yes, Gertrude, darling.' And she kissed her again. 'And it might

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be to your great hurt. But I thank you all the same from my heart for your confidence and love; and I'm gladder than you'll ever know, Gerty, that they are still the same.' And thus the two girls kissed silently and fervently, and poor Gertrude Chattesworth wept uncomplainingly, looking out upon the dark prospect.

'And you'll tell me, darling, when you're happier, as you soon will be?' said Lily.

'I will—I will indeed. I'm sometimes happier—sometimes quite happy—but I'm very low to-night, Lily,' answered she.

Then Lily comforted and caressed her friend. And I must confess she was very curious, too, and nothing but a terror of possessing a secret under such terms, withheld her from hearing Gertrude's confession. But on her way home she thanked Heaven for her resolution, and was quite sure that she was happier and better for it.

They were roused by Aunt Becky's knock at the hall-door, and her voice and Dominick's under the window.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SHOWING HOW SOME OF THE FEUDS IN CHAPELIZOD WAXED FIERCER, AND OTHERS WERE SOLEMNLY CONDONED.

By this time little Dr. Toole had stepped into the Club, after his wont, as he passed the Phœnix. Sturk was playing draughts with old Arthur Slowe, and Dangerfield, erect and grim, was looking on the game, over his shoulder. Toole and Sturk were more distant and cold in their intercourse of late, though this formality partook of their respective characters. Toole used to throw up his nose, and raise his eyebrows, and made his brother mediciner a particularly stiff, and withal scornful reverence when they met. Sturk, on the other hand, made a short, surly nod—'twas little more—and, without a word, turned on his heel, with a gruff pitch of his shoulder towards Toole.

The fact was, these two gentlemen had been very near exchanging pistol shots, or sword thrusts, only a week or two before; and all about the unconscious gentleman who was smiling in his usual pleasant fashion over the back of Sturk's chair. So Dangerfield's little dyspepsy had like to have cured one or other of the village leeches, for ever and a day, of the heart-ache and all other aches that flesh is heir to. For Dangerfield commenced with Toole; and that physician, on the third day of his instalment, found that Sturk had stept in and taken his patient bodily out of his hands.

'I've seen one monkey force open the jaws of his brother, resolutely

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introduce his fingers, pluck from the sanctuary of his cheek, the filbert he had just stowed there for his private nutrition and delight, and crunch and eat it with a stern ecstasy of selfishness, himself; and I fancy that the feelings of the quadrumanous victim, his jaws aching, his pouch outraged, and his bon-bouche in the miscreant's mouth, a little resembles those of the physician who has suffered so hideous a mortification as that of Toole.

Toole quite forgave Dangerfield. That gentleman gave him to understand that *his* ministrations were much more to his mind than those of his rival. But—and this was conveyed in strict confidence—this change was put upon him by a—a—in fact a nobleman—Lord Castlemallard—with whom, just now, Dr. Sturk can do a great deal; 'and you know I can't quarrel with my Lord. It has pained me, I assure you, very much; and to say truth, whoever applied to him to interfere in the matter, was, in my mind, guilty of an impertinence, though, as you see, I can't resent it.'

'*Whoever* applied? 'tis pretty plain,' repeated Toole, with a vicious sneer. 'The whispering, undermining—and as stupid as the Hill of Howth. I wish you safe out of his hands, sir.'

And positively, only for Aunt Becky, who was always spoiling this sort of sport, and who restrained the gallant Toole by a peremptory injunction, there would have been, in Nutter's unfortunate phrase, 'wigs on the green,' next day.

So these gentlemen met on the terms, I've described; and Nutter's antipathy also, had waxed stronger and fiercer. And indeed, since Dangerfield's arrival, and Sturk's undisguised endeavours to ingratiate himself with Lord Castlemallard, and push him from his stool, they had by consent ceased to speak to one another. When Sturk met Nutter, he, being of superior stature, looked over his head at distant objects; and when Nutter encountered Sturk, the little gentleman's dark face grew instantaneously darker—first a shade—then another shadow—then the blackness of thunder overspread it; and not only did he speak not a word to Sturk, but seldom opened his lips, while that gentleman remained in the room.

On the other hand, if some feuds grew blacker and fiercer by time, there were others which were Christianly condoned; foremost among which was the mortal quarrel between Nutter and O'Flaherty. On the evening of their memorable meeting on the Fifteen Acres, Puddock dined out, and O'Flaherty was too much exhausted to take any steps toward a better understanding. But on the night following, when the Club had their grand supper in King William's parlour, it was arranged with Nutter that a gentlemanlike reconciliation was

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to take place; and accordingly, about nine o'clock, at which time Nutter's arrival was expected, Puddock, with the pomp and gravity becoming such an occasion, accompanied by O'Flaherty, big with his speech, entered the spacious parlour.

When they came in there was a chorus of laughter ringing round, with a clapping of hands, and a Babel of hilarious applause; and Tom Toole was seen in the centre, sitting upon the floor, hugging his knees, with his drawn sword under his arm, his eyes turned up to the ceiling, and a contortion so unspeakably ludicrous upon his queer little face, as was very near causing little Puddock to explode in an unseemly burst of laughter.

Devereux, sitting near the door, luckily saw them as they entered, and announced them in a loud tone—'Lieutenant Puddock, gentlemen, and Lieutenant Fireworker O'Flaherty.' For though Gipsy Devereux loved a bit of mischief, he did not relish it, when quite so serious, as the Galwegian Fireworker was likely to make any sort of trifling on a point so tender as his recent hostilities on the Fifteen Acres.

Toole bounded to his feet in an instant, adjusting his wig and eyeing the new comers with intense but uneasy solemnity, which produced some suppressed merriment among the company.

It was well for the serenity of the village that O'Flaherty was about to make a little speech—a situation which usually deprived him of half his wits. Still, with the suspicion of conscious weakness, he read something affecting himself in the general buzz and countenance of the assembly; and said to Devereux, on purpose loud enough for Toole to hear—'Ensign Puddock and myself would be proud to know what was the divarting tom-foolery going on upon the floor, and for which we arrived unfortunately a little too leet?'

'Tom-foolery, sir, is an unpleasant word!' cried the little Doctor, firing up, for he was a game-cock.

'Tom Toolery he means,' interposed Devereux, 'the pleasantest word, on the contrary, in Chapelizod. Pray, allow me to say a word a degree more serious. I'm commissioned, Lieutenant Puddock and Lieutenant O'Flaherty' (a bow to each), 'by Mr. Mahony, who acted the part of second to Mr. Nutter, on the recent occasion, to pray that you'll be so obliging as to accept his apology for not being present at this, as we all hope, most agreeable meeting. Our reverend friend, Father Roach, whose guest he had the honour to be, can tell you more precisely the urgent nature of the business on which he departed.'

Father Roach tried to stop the Captain with a reproachful glance, but that unfeeling officer fairly concluded his sentence notwithstand-

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ing, with a wave of his hand and a bow to the cleric; and sitting down at the same moment, left him in possession of the chair.

The fact was, that at an unseemly hour that morning three bailiffs —for the excursion was considered hazardous—introduced themselves by a stratagem into the Reverend Father's domicile, and nabbed the high-souled Patrick Mahony, as he slumbered peacefully in his bed, to the terror of the simple maid who let them in. Honest Father Roach was for showing fight on behalf of his guest. On hearing the row and suspecting its cause—for Pat had fled from the kingdom of Kerry from perils of the same sort—his Reverence jumped out of bed with a great pound on the floor, and not knowing where to look for his clothes in the dark, he seized his surplice, which always lay in the press at the head of his bed, and got into it with miraculous speed, whisking along the floor two pounds and a half of Mr. Fogarty's best bacon, which the holy man had concealed in the folds of that sacred vestment, to elude the predatory instincts of the women, and from which he and Mr. Mahony were wont to cut their jovial rashers.

The shutter of poor Mahony's window was by this time open, and the gray light disclosed the grimly form of Father Roach, in his surplice, floating threateningly into the chamber. But the bailiffs were picked men, broad-shouldered and athletic, and furnished with active-looking shillelaghs. Veni, vidi, victus sum! a glance showed him all was lost.

'My blessin' an you, Peg Finigan! and was it you let them in?' murmured his Reverence, with intense feeling.

'At whose suit?' inquired the generous outlaw, sitting up among the blankets.

'Mrs. Elizabeth Woolly, relict and administhrathrix of the late Mr. Timotheus Woolly, of High-street, in the city of Dublin, tailor,' responded the choragus of the officers.

'Woolly—I was thinkin' so,' said the captive. 'I wisht I *had* her by the wool, bad luck to her!'

So away he went, to the good-natured ecclesiastic's grief, promising, nevertheless, with a disconsolate affectation of cheerfulness, that all should be settled, and he under the Priest's roof-tree again before night.

'I don't—exactly—know the nature of the business, gentlemen,' said Father Roach, with considerable hesitation.

'*Urgent*, however, it *was*—wasn't it?' said Devereux.

'Urgent—well; *certainly*—a—and——'

'And a summons there was no resisting—from a lady—eh? You said so, Father Roach,' persisted Devereux.

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'A—from a leedy—a—yes—certainly,' replied he.

'A *widow*—is not she?' inquired Devereux.

'A widda, undoubtedly,' said the Priest.

'Thay no more thir,' said little Puddock, to the infinite relief of the reverend father, who flung another look of reproach at Devereux, and muttered his indignation to himself. 'I'm perfectly satisfied; and so I venture to thay, is Licutenant O'Flaherty——'

'Is not he going to say something to Nutter?' inquired Devereux.

'Yes,' whispered Puddock, 'I hope he'll get through it. I—I wrote a few sentences myself; but he's by no means perfect—in fact, between ourselves, he's a somewhat slow study.'

'Suppose you purge his head again, Puddock?' Puddock did not choose to hear the suggestion; but Nutter, in reply to a complimentary speech from Puddock, declared, in two or three words, his readiness to meet Licutenant O'Flaherty half-way; 'and curse me, sir, if I know, at this moment, what I did or said to offend him.'

Then came a magnanimous, but nearly unintelligible speech from O'Flaherty, prompted by little Puddock, who, being responsible for the composition, was more nervous during the delivery of that remarkable oration, than the speaker himself; and 'thuffered indethcribably' at hearing his periods mangled; and had actually to hold O'Flaherty by the arm, and whisper in an agony—'not yet—*curthe* it—not yet'—to prevent the incorrigible Fireworker from stretching forth his bony red hand before he had arrived at that most effective passage which Puddock afterwards gave so well in private for Dick Devereux, beginning, 'and thus I greet——'

Thus was there a perfect reconciliation, and the gentlemen of the club, Toole included, were more than ever puzzled to understand the origin of the quarrel, for Puddock kept O'Flaherty's secret magnificently, and peace prevailed in O'Flaherty's breast until nearly ten months afterwards, when Cluffe, who was talking of the American war, asked O'Flaherty, who was full of volunteering, how he would like a 'clean shave with an Indian scalping knife,' whereupon O'Flaherty stood erect, and having glowered about him for a moment, strode in silence from the room, and consulted immediately with Puddock on the subject, who, after a moment's reflection, found it no more than chance meddley.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DREAMS AND TROUBLES, AND A DARK LOOK-OUT.

So there was no feud in the club worth speaking of but those of which Dr. Sturk was the centre; and Toole remarked this night that Sturk looked very ill—and so, in truth, he did; and it was plain, too, that his mind was not in the game, for old Slowe, who used not to have a chance with him, beat him three times running, which incensed Sturk, as small things will a man who is in the slow fever of a secret trouble. He threw down the three shillings he had lost with more force than was necessary, and muttering a curse, clapped on his hat and took up a newspaper at another table, with a rather flushed face. He happened to light upon a doloreus appeal to those 'whom Providence had blessed with riches,' on behalf of a gentleman 'who had once held a commission under his Majesty, and was now on a sudden by some unexpected turns of fortune, reduced, with his unhappy wife and five small children, to want of bread, and implored of his prosperous fellow-citizens that charitable relief which, till a few months since, it was his custom and pleasure to dispense to others.' And this stung him with a secret pang of insecurity and horror. Trifles affected him a good deal now. So he pitched down the newspaper and walked across to his own house, with his hands in his pockets, and thought again of Dangerfield, and who the deuce he could be, or whether he had really ever, anywhere —in the body or in the spirit—encountered him, as he used to feel with a boding vagueness he had done. And then those accursed dreams: he was not relieved as he expected by disclosing them. The sense of an ominous meaning pointing at him in all their grotesque images and scenery, still haunted him.

'Parson Walsingham, with all his reading,' his mind muttered, as it were, to itself, 'is no better than an old woman; and that knave and buffoon, Mr. Apothecary Toole, looked queer, the spiteful dog, just to disquiet me. I wonder at Dr. Walsingham, though. A sensible man would have laughed me into spirits. On my soul, I think he believes in dreams.' And Sturk laughed within himself scornfully. It was all affectation, and addressed strictly to himself, who saw through it all; but still he practised it. 'If these infernal losses had not come to spoil my stomach, I should not have remembered them, much less let them haunt me this way, like a cursed file of ghosts. I'll try gentian to-morrow.'

Everything and everyone was poking at the one point of his secret fears. Dr. Walsingham preached a sermon upon the text, 'remember

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the days of darkness for they are many.' It went over the tremendous themes of death and judgment in the rector's own queer, solemn, measured way, and all the day after rang in Sturk's ear as the drums and fifes in the muffled peal of the dead march used to do long ago, before his ear grew familiar with its thrilling roll. Sermons usually affected Sturk no more than they did other military gentlemen. But he was in a morbid state; and in this one or two terms or phrases, nothing in themselves, happened to touch upon a sensitive and secret centre of pain in the Doctor's soul.

For instance, when he called death 'the great bankruptcy' which would make the worldly man, in a moment, the only person in his house not worth a shilling, the preacher glanced unconsciously at a secret fear in the caverns of Sturk's mind, that echoed back the sonorous tones and grisly theme of the Rector with a hollow thunder.

There was a time when Sturk, like other shrewd, bustling fellows, had no objection to hear who had an execution in his house, who was bankrupt, and who laid by the heels; but now he shrunk from such phrases. He hated to think that a clever fellow was ever absolutely beggared in the world's great game. He turned his eye quickly from the *Gazette*, as it lay with other papers on the Club table; for its grim pages seemed to look in his face with a sort of significance, as if they might some day or other have a small official duty to perform by him; and when an unexpected bankruptcy was announced by Cluffe or Toole in the Club-room, it made his ear ring like a slap, and he felt sickish for half an hour after.

One of that ugly brood of dreams which haunted his nights, borrowed, perhaps, a hint from Dr. Walsingham's sermon. Sturk thought he heard Toole's well-known, brisk voice, under his windows, exclaim, 'What is the dirty beggar doing there? faugh!—he smells all over like carrion—ha, ha, ha!' and looking out, in his dream, from his drawing-room window, he saw a squalid mendicant begging alms at his hall-door. 'Hollo, you, sir; what do you want there!' cried the Surgeon, with a sort of unaccountable antipathy and fear. 'He lost his last shilling in the great bankruptcy, in October,' answered Dunstan's voice behind his ear; and in the earth-coloured face which the beggar turned up towards him, Sturk recognised his own features—'Tis I'—he gasped out with an oath, and awoke in a horror, not knowing where he was. 'I—I'm dying.'

'October,' thought Sturk—'bankruptcy. 'Tis just because I'm always thinking of that infernal bill, and old Dyle's renewal, and the rent.'

Indeed, the Surgeon had a stormy look forward, and the navigation

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of October was so threatening, awful, and almost desperate, as he stood alone through the dreadful watches at the helm, with hot cheek and unsteady hand, trusting stoically to luck, and hoping against hope, that rocks would melt, and the sea cease from drowning, that it was almost a wonder he did not leap overboard, only for the certainty of a cold head and a quiet heart, and one deep sleep.

And, then, he used to tot up his liabilities for that accursed month, near whose yawning verge he already stood; and then, think of every penny coming to him, and what might be rescued and wrung from runaways and bankrupts whose bills he held, and whom he used to curse in his bed, with his fists and his teeth clenched, when poor little Mrs. Sturk, knowing nought of this danger, and having said her prayers, lay sound asleep by his side. Then he used to think, if he could only get the agency in time it would set him up—he could borrow £200 the day after his appointment; and he must make a push and extend his practice. It was ridiculous, that blackguard little Toole carrying off the best families in the neighbourhood, and standing in the way of a man like him; and Nutter, too—why, Lord Castlemallard knew as well as he did, that Nutter was not fit to manage the property, and that *he was*—and Nutter without a child or anyone, and *he* with seven! and he counted them over mentally with a groan. 'What was to become of them?' Then Nutter would be down upon him, without mercy, for the rent; and Dangerfield, if, indeed he cared to do it [curse it, he trusted nobody], could not control him; and Lord Castlemallard, the selfish profligate, was away in Paris, leaving his business in the hands of that bitter old botch, who'd go any length to be the ruin of him.

Then he turned over the chances of borrowing a hundred pounds from the General—as he did fifty times every day and night, but always with the same result—'No; curse him, he's as weak as water—petticoat government—he'll do nothing without his sister's leave, and she hates me like poison;' and then he thought—'it would not be much to ask Lord Castlemallard—there's still time—to give me a month or two for the rent, but if the old sneak thought I owed twopence, I might whistle for the agency, and besides, faith!—I don't think he'd interfere.'

Then the clock down stairs would strike 'three,' and he felt thankful, with a great sigh, that so much of the night was over, and yet dreaded the morning.

And then he would con over his chances again, and think which was most likely to give him a month or two. Old Dyle—'Bah; he's a stone, he would not give me an hour. Or Carny, curse him, unless

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Lucas would move him. And, no, Lucas is a rogue, selfish beast: he owes me his place; and I don't think he'd stir his finger to snatch me from perdition. Or Nutter—Nutter, indeed!—why that fiend has been waiting half the year round to put in his distress the first hour he can.'

And then Sturk writhed round on his back, as we may suppose might St. Anthony on his gridiron, and rolled his eye-balls up toward the dark bed, and uttered a dismal groan, and thought of the three inexorable fates, Carny, Nutter, and Dyle, who at that moment held among them the measure, and the thread, and the shears of his destiny: and standing desperately in the dark at the verge of the abyss, he mentally hurled the three ugly spirits together into his bag, and flung them whirling through the mirk into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TELLING HOW LILIAS WALSINGHAM FOUND TWO LADIES AWAITING HER ARRIVAL AT THE ELMS.

When Lilias Walsingham, being set down in the hall at the Elms, got out and threw back her hood, she saw two females sitting there, who rose, as she emerged, and bobbed a courtesy each. The elder was a slight thin woman of fifty or upwards, dark of feature, but with large eyes, the relics of early beauty. The other, a youthful figure, an inch or two taller, slim and round, and showing only a pair of eyes, large and dark as the others, looking from under her red hood, earnestly and sadly as it seemed, upon Miss Walsingham.

'Good evening, good neighbours,' said Miss Lily in her friendly way; 'the master is in town, and won't return till to-morrow; but may be you wish to speak to me?'

''Tis no place for the like of yous,' said old John Tracy, gruffly, for he knew them, with the privilege of an old servant. 'If you want to see his Raverence, you must come in the morning.'

'But it may be something, John, that can't wait, and that I can do,' said Lily.

'And, true for you, so it is, my lady,' said the elder woman, with another bob; 'an' I won't delay you, ma'am, five minutes, if you plaze, an' its the likes of you,' she said, in a shrewish aside, with a flash of her large eyes upon John Tracy, 'that stands betune them that's willin' to be good and the poor—so yes do, saucepans and bone-polishers, bad luck to yes.'

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The younger woman plucked the elder by the skirt; but Lily did not hear. She was already in the parlour.

'Ay, there it is,' grinned old John, with a wag of his head.

And so old Sally came forth and asked the women to step in, and set chairs for them, while Lily was taking off her gloves and hood by the table.

'You'll tell me first who you are,' said Lily, 'my good woman—for I don't think we've met before—and then you will say what I can do for you.'

'I'm the Widdy Glynn, ma'am, at your sarvice, that lives beyant Palmerstown, down by the ferry, af its playsin' to you; and this is my little girl, ma'am, av you plaze. Nan, look up at the lady, you slut.'

She did not need the exhortation, for she was, indeed, looking at the lady, with a curious and most melancholy gaze.

'An' what I'm goin' to say, my lady, if you plase, id best be said alone;' and the matron glanced at old Sally, and bobbed another courtesy.

'Very well,' said Miss Washingham. 'Sally, dear, the good woman wants to speak with me alone; so you may as well go and wait for me in my room.'

And so the young lady stood alone in presence of her two visitors, whereupon, with a good many courtesies, and with great volubility, the elder dame commenced—

''Tis what we heerd, ma'am, that Captain Devereux, of the Artillery here, in Chapelizod, ma'am, that's gone to England, was coortin' you my lady; and I came here with this little girl, ma'am, if you plaze, to tell you, if so be it's thrue, ma'am, that there isn't this minute, a bigger villian out iv gaol—who brought my poor little girl there to disgrace and ruin, ma'am?'

Here Nan Glynn began to sob into her apron.

''Twas you, Richard Devereux, that promised her marriage—with his hand on the Bible, on his bended knee. 'Twas you, Richard Devereux, you hardened villian—yes, ma'am, that parjured scoundrel—(don't be cryin', you fool)—put that ring there, you see, on her finger, Miss, an' a priest in the room, an' if ever man was woman's husband in the sight of God, Richard Devereux is married to Nan Glynn, poor an' simple as she stands there.'

'Stop, mother,' sobbed Nan, drawing her back by the arm; 'don't you see the lady's sick.'

'No—no—not anything; only—only shocked,' said poor Lilias, as white as marble, and speaking almost in a whisper; 'but I can't say

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Captain Devereux ever spoke to me in the way you suppose, that's all. I've no more to say.'

Nan Glynn, sobbing and with her apron still to her eyes, was gliding to the door, but her mother looked, with a coarse sort of cunning in her eye, steadily at the poor young lady, in some sort her victim, and added more sternly—

'Well, my lady, 'tis proud I am to hear it, an' there's no harm done at any rate; an' I thought 'twas only right I should tell you the thruth, and give you this warnin', my lady; an' here's the atturney's writin', ma'am—if you'll plaze to read it—Mr. Bagshot, iv Thomas-street—sayin' if you'll be plazed to look at it—that 'tis a good marriage, an' that if he marries any other woman, gentle or simple, he'll take the law iv him in my daughter's cause, the black, parjured villian, an' transport him, with a burnt hand, for bigamany; an' 'twas only right my lady, as the townspeople was talking, as if it was as how he was thryin' to invagle you, Miss, the desaver, for he'd charum the birds off the trees, the parjurer; and I'll tell his Raverence all about it when I see him, in the morning—for 'tis only right he should know. Wish the lady good-night, Nan, you slut—an' the same from myself, ma'am.'

And, with another courtesy, the Glynns of Palmerstown withdrew.

CHAPTER XL.

OF A MESSENGER FROM CHAPELIZOD VAULT WHO WAITED IN THE TYLED HOUSE FOR MR. MERVYN.

MERVYN was just about this time walking up the steep Ballyfermot road. It was then a lonely track, with great bushes and hedge-rows overhanging it; and as other emotions subsided, something of the chill and excitement of solitude stole over him. The moon was wading through flecked masses of cloud. The breath of night rustled lightly through the bushes, and seemed to follow her steps with a strange sort of sigh and a titter. He stopped and looked back under the branches of an old thorn, and traced against the dark horizon the still darker outline of the ivied church tower of Chapelizod, and thought of the dead that lay there, and of all that those sealed lips might tell, and old tales of strange meetings on moors and desolate places with departed spirits, flitted across his brain; and the melancholy rush of the night air swept close about his ears, and he turned and walked more briskly toward his own gloomy quarters, passing the church-yard of Ballyfermot on his right. There were plenty of

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head-stones among the docks and nettles: some short and some tall, some straight and some slanting back, and some with a shoulder up, and a lonely old ash-tree still and dewy in the midst, glimmering cold among the moveless shadows; and then at last he sighted the heavy masses of old elm, and the pale, peeping front of the 'Tyled House,' through the close and dismal avenue of elm, he reached the front of the mansion. There was no glimmer of light from the lower windows, not even the noiseless flitting of a bat over the dark little court-yard. His key let him in. He knew that his servants were in bed. There was something cynical in his ree-raw independence. It was unlike what he had been used to, and its savagery suited with his bitter and unsociable mood of late.

But his step sounding through the hall, and the stories about the place of which he was conscious. He battled with his disturbed foolish sensations, however, and though he knew there was a candle burning in his bed-room, he turned aside at the foot of the great stair, and stumbled and groped his way into the old wainscoted back-parlour, that looked out, through its great bow window, upon the haunted orchard, and sat down in its dismal solitude.

He ruminated upon his own hard fate—the meanness of mankind—the burning wrongs, as he felt confident, of other times, Fortune's inexorable persecution of his family, and the stygian gulf that deepened between him and the object of his love; and his soul darkened with a fierce despair, and with unshaped but evil thoughts that invited the tempter.

The darkness and associations of the place were unwholesome, and he was about to leave it for the companionship of his candle, but that, on a sudden, he thought he heard a sound nearer than the breeze among the old orchard trees.

This was the measured breathing of some one in the room. He held his own breath while he listened—'One of the dogs,' he thought, and he called them quietly; but no dog came. 'The wind, then, in the chimney;' and he got up resolutely, designing to open the half-closed shutter. He fancied as he did so that he heard the respiration near him, and passed close to some one in the dark.

With an unpleasant expectation he threw back the shutters, and unquestionably he did see, very unmistakably, a dark figure in a chair; so dark, indeed, that he could not discern more of it than the rude but undoubted outline of a human shape; and he stood for some seconds, holding the open shutter in his hand, and looking at it with more of the reality of fear than he had, perhaps, ever experienced before. Pale Hecate now, in the conspiracy, as it seemed,

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withdrew on a sudden the pall from before her face, and threw her beams full upon the figure. A slim, tall shape, in dark clothing, and, as it seemed, a countenance he had never beheld before—black hair, pale features, with a sinister-smiling character, and a very blue chin, and closed eyes.

Fixed with a strange horror, and almost expecting to see it undergo some frightful metamorphosis, Mervyn stood gazing on the cadaverous intruder.

'Hallo! who's that?' cried Mervyn sternly.

The figure opened his eyes, with a wild stare, as if he had not opened them for a hundred years before, and rose up with an uncertain motion, returning Mervyn's gaze, as if he did not know where he was.

'Who are you?' repeated Mervyn.

The phantom seemed to recover himself slowly, and only said: 'Mr. Mervyn?'

'Who are you, sir?' cried Mervyn, again.

'Zekiel Irons,' he answered.

'Irons! what *are* you, and what business have you here, sir?' demanded Mervyn.

'The Clerk of Chapelizod,' he continued, quietly and remarkably sternly, but a little thickly, like a man who had been drinking.

Mervyn now grew angry.

'The Clerk of Chapelizod—here—sleeping in my parlour! What the devil, sir, do you mean?'

'Sleep—sir—sleep! There's them that sleeps with their eyes open, sir—you know who they may be; there's some sleeps sound enough, like me and you; and some that's sleep-walkers,' answered Irons; and his enigmatical talk somehow subdued Mervyn, for he said more quietly—

'Well, what of all this, sirrah?'

'A message,' answered Irons. The man's manner, though quiet, was dogged, and somewhat savage.

'Give it me, then,' said Mervyn, expecting a note, and extending his hand.

'I've nothing for your hand, sir, 'tis for your ear,' said he.

'From whom, then, and what?' said Mervyn, growing impatient again.

'I ask your pardon, Mr. Mervyn, I have a good deal to do, back and forward, sometimes early, sometimes late, in the church—Chapelizod Church—all alone, sir; and I often think of you, when I walk over the south-side vault.'

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'What's your message, I say, sir, and who sends it,' insisted Mervyn.

'Your father,' answered Irons.

Mervyn looked with a black and wild sort of inquiry on the clerk—was he insane or what?—and seemed to swallow down a sort of horror, before his anger rose again.

'You're mistaken—my father's dead,' he said, in a fierce but agitated undertone.

'He's dead, sir—yes,' said his saturnine visitor, with the same faint smile and cynical quietude.

'Speak out, sirrah; whom do you come from?'

'The late Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Dunoran.' He spoke, as I have said, a little thickly, like a man who had drunk his modicum of liquor.

'You've been drinking, and you dare to mix my—my father's name with your drunken dreams and babble—you wretched sot!'

A cloud passed over the moon just then, and Irons darkened, as if about to vanish, like an offended apparition. But it was only for a minute, and he emerged in the returning light, and spoke—

'A naggin of whiskey, at the Salmon House, to raise my heart before I came here. I'm not drunk—that's sure.' He answered, quite unmoved, like one speaking to himself.

'And—why—what can you mean by speaking of him?' repeated Mervyn, unaccountably agitated.

'I speak *for* him, sir, by your leave. Suppose he greets you with a message—and you don't care to hear it?'

'You're mad,' said Mervyn, with an icy stare, to whom the whole colloquy began to shape itself into a dream.

'Belike *you're* mad, sir,' answered Irons, in a grim, ugly tone, but with face unmoved; 'Twas not a light matter brought me here—a message—there—well!—your right honourable father, that lies in lead and oak, without a name on his coffin-lid, would have you to know that what he said was—as it should be—and I can prove it——'

'What?—he said *what?*—what is it?—what can you prove? Speak out, sirrah!' and his eyes shone white in the moonlight, and his hand was advanced towards Irons' throat, and he looked half beside himself, and trembling all over.

'Put down your hand or you hear no more from me,' said Irons, also a little transformed.

Mervyn silently lowered his hand clenched by his side, and, with compressed lips, nodded an impatient sign to him.

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'Yes, sir, he'd have you to understand he never did it, and I can prove it—*but I won't!*'

That moment, something glittered in Mervyn's hand, and he strode toward Irons, overturning a chair with a crash.

'I have you—come on and you're a dead man,' said the clerk, in a hoarse voice, drawing into the deep darkness toward the door, with the dull gleam of a pistol-barrel just discernible in his extended hand.

'Stay—don't go,' cried Mervyn, in a piercing voice; 'I conjure—I implore—whatever you are, come back—see, I'm unarmed,' (and he flung his sword back toward the window).

'You young gentlemen, are always for drawing upon poor bodies—how would it have gone if I had not looked to myself, sir, and come furnished?' said Irons, in his own level tone.

'I don't know—I don't *care*—I don't care if I were dead. Yes, yes, 'tis true, I almost wish he had shot me.'

'Mind, sir, you're on honour,' said the clerk, in his old tone, as he glided slowly back, his right hand in his coat pocket, and his eye with a quiet suspicion fixed upon Mervyn, and watching his movements.

'I don't know what or who you are, but if ever you knew what human feeling is—I say, if you are anything at all capable of compassion, you will kill me at a blow rather than trifle any longer with the terrible hope that has been my torture—I believe, my insanity all my life.'

'Well, sir,' said Irons, mildly, and with that serene suspicion, of a smile on his face, 'if you wish to talk to me you must take me different; for, to say truth, I was nearer killing you that time than you were aware, and all the time I mean you no harm! and yet, if I thought you were going to say to anybody living, Zekiel Irons, the clerk, was here on Tuesday night, I believe I'd shoot you now.'

'You wish your visit secret: well, you have my honour, no one living shall hear of it,' said Mervyn. 'Go on.'

'I've little to say, your honour; but, first, do you think your servants heard the noise, just now?'

'The old woman's deaf, and her daughter dare not stir after nightfall. You need fear no interruption.'

'Ay, I know; the house is haunted, they say, but dead men tell no tales. 'Tis the living I fear. I thought it would be darker—the clouds broke up strangely, 'tis as much as my life's worth me to be seen near this Tyled House; and never you speak to me nor seem to know me when you chance to meet me, do you mind, sir? I'm bad enough myself, but there's some that's worse.'

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'Tis agreed, there shall be no recognition,' answered Mervyn.

'There's them watching me that can see in the clouds, or the running waters, what you're thinking of a mile away, that can move as soft as ghosts, and can grip as hard as hell, when need is. So be patient for a bit—I gave you the message—I tell you 'tis true; and as to my proving it at present, I can, you see, and I can't; but the hour is coming, only be patient, and swear, sir, upon your soul and honour, that you won't let me come to perdition by reason of speaking the truth.'

'On my soul and honour, I mean it,' answerved Mervyn. 'Go on.'

'Nor ever tell, high or low, rich or poor, man, woman, or child, that I came here; because—no matter.'

'That I promise too; for Heaven's sake, go on.'

'If you please, sir, no, not a word more till the time comes,' answered Irons; 'I'll go as I came.' And he shoved up the window-sash and got out lightly upon the grass, and glided away among the gigantic old fruit-trees, and was lost before a minute.

Perhaps he came intending more. He had seemed for a while to have made up his mind, Mervyn thought, to a full disclosure, and then he hesitated, and, on second thoughts, drew back. Barren and tantalizing, however, as was this strange conference, it was yet worth worlds, as indicating the quarter from which information might ultimately be hoped for.

CHAPTER XLI.

IN WHICH THE RECTOR COMES HOME, AND LILY SPEAKS HER MIND, AND TIME GLIDES ON, AND AUNT REBECCA CALLS AT THE ELMS.

NEXT morning, punctual at the early breakfast-hour of those days, the cheery voice of the old Rector was heard at the garden rails that fronted the house, and out ran Tom Clinton, from the stable-yard, and bid his 'Raverence,' with homely phrase, and with a pleasant grin, 'welcome home,' and held his bridle and stirrup, while the Parson, with a kind smile, and half a dozen inquiries, and the air of a man who, having made a long journey and a distant sojourn, expands on beholding old faces and the sights of home again; he had been away, to be sure, only one night and a part of a day, but his heart clave to his home and his darling; and Lilias ran to the garden gate to meet him, with her old smile and greeting, it seemed fonder and more tender than ever, and then they kissed and hugged and kissed again, and he patted her cheek and thought she looked a little pale,

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but would not say anything just then that was not altogether cheerful; and so they stepped up the two or three yards of gravel walk—she at his right side, with her right hand in his and her left clinging by his arm, and nestling close by his side, and leading him up to the house like a beloved captive.

And so at breakfast he narrated all his adventures, and told who were at the dinner party, and described two fine ladies' dresses—for the Doctor had skill in millinery, though it was as little known as Don Quixote's talent for making bird-cages and tooth-picks, confided, as we remember, in one of his conversations with honest Sancho, under the cork trees. He told her his whole innocent little budget of gossip, in his own simple, pleasant way; and his little Lily sat looking on her beloved old man, and smiling, but saying little, and her eyes often filling with tears; and he looked when he chanced to see it—wistfully and sadly for an instant, but he made no remark.

And sometime after, as she happened to pass the study-door, he called her—'Little Lily, come here.' And in she came; and there was the Doctor, all alone and erect before his bookshelves, plucking down a volume here, and putting up one there, and—

'Shut the door, little Lily,' said he gently and cheerily, going on with his work. 'I had a letter, yesterday evening, my darling, from Captain Devereux, and he tells me that he's very much attached to you; and I don't wonder at his being in love with little Lily—he could not help it.' And he laughed fondly, and was taking down a volume that rather stuck in its place, so he could not turn to look at her; for, the truth was, he supposed she was blushing, and could not bear to add to her confusion; and he, though he continued his homely work, and clapped the sides of his books together, and blew on their tops, and went so simply and plainly to the point, was flushed and very nervous himself; for, though he thought of her marriage at some time or another as a thing that was to be, still it had seemed a long way off. And now, now it was come, and little Lily was actually going to be married—going away—and her place would know her no more; and her greeting and her music would be missed in the evening, and the garden lonely, and the Elms dark, without Lily.

'And he want's to marry my little Lily, if she'll have him. And what does my darling wish me to say to him;' and he spoke very cheerily.

'My darling, *you're* my darling; and your little Lily will never, never leave you. She'll stay.' And here the little speech stopped, for she was crying, with her arms about his neck; and the old man

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cried, too, and smiled over her, and patted her gracious head, with a little trembling laugh, and said, 'God bless you, my treasure.'

'Well, little Lily, will you have him?' he said, after a little pause.

'No, my darling, no!' she answered, still crying.

'You *won't* have him?'

'No—no—never!'

'Well, little Lily, I won't answer his letter to-day; there's no hurry, you know. And, if you are of the same mind to-morrow, you can just say you wish me to write.'

'Change, I can't; my answer will always be the same—always the same.'

And she kissed him again, and went toward the door; but she turned back, drying her eyes, with a smile, and said—

'No, your little Lily will stay with her darling old man, and be a pleasant old maid, like Aunt Becky: and I'll play and sing your favourite airs, and Sally and I will keep the house; and we'll be happier in the Elms, I'm determined, than ever we were—and won't you call me, darling, when you're going out?'

So little Lily ran away, and up stairs; and as she left the study and its beloved tenant, at every step the air seemed to darken round her, and her heart to sink. And she turned the key in her door, and threw herself on the bed; and, with her face to the pillow, cried as if her heart would break.

So the summer had mellowed into autumn, and the fall of the leaf, and Devereux did not return; and, it was alleged in the club, on good authority, that he was appointed on the staff of the Commander of the Forces; and Puddock had a letter from him, dated in England, with little or no news in it; and Dr. Walsingham had a long epistle from Malaga, from honest Dan Loftus, full of Spanish matter for Irish history, and stating, with many regrets, that his honourable pupil had taken ill of a fever. And this bit of news speedily took wind, and was discussed with a good deal of interest, and some fun, at the club; and the odds were freely given and taken upon the event.

The politics of Belmont were still pretty much in the old position. The General had not yet returned, and Aunt Rebecca and Gertrude fought pitched battles, as heretofore, on the subject of Dangerfield. That gentleman had carried so many points in his life by simply waiting, that he was nothing daunted by the obstacles which the caprice of the young lady presented to the immediate accomplishment of his plans. And those which he once deliberately formed, were never abandoned for trifles.

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So when Aunt Becky and Miss Gertrude at length agreed on an armistice—the conditions being that the question of Mr. Dangerfield's bliss or misery was to stand over for judgment until the General's return, which could not now be deferred more than two or three weeks—the amorous swain, on being apprised of the terms by Aunt Rebecca, acquiesced with alacrity, in a handsome, neat, and gallant little speech, and kissed Aunt Rebecca's slender and jewelled hand, with a low bow and a grim smile, all which she received very graciously.

Of course, Dangerfield knew pretty well how matters stood; he was not a man to live in a dream; facts were his daily bread. He knew to a month how old he was, and pretty exactly how time had dealt with his personal charms. He had a very exact and cynical appreciation of the terms on which Miss Chattesworth would—if at all—become and continue to be his wife. But he wanted her—she suited him exactly, and all he needed to make his kingdom sure, when he had obtained her, was his legal rights. He was no Petruchio; neither was it his theory to rule by love. He had a different way. Without bluster, and without wheedling, he had the art of making those who were under his rule perfectly submissive; sooner or later they all came to fear him as a child does a spectre. He had no misgivings about the peace of his household.

In the meantime Gertrude grew happier and more like herself, and Aunt Rebecca had her own theories about the real state of that young lady's affections, and her generally unsuspected relations with others.

Aunt Rebecca called at the Elms to see Lilias Walsingham, and sat down beside her on the sofa.

'Lily, child, you're not looking yourself. I'll send you some drops. You must positively nurse yourself. I'm almost sorry I did not bring Dr. Toole.'

'Indeed I'm glad you did not, Aunt Becky; I take excellent care of myself. I have not been out for three whole days.'

'And you must not budge, darling, while this east wind continues. D'ye mind? And what do you think, my dear, I do believe I've discovered the secret reason of Gertrude's repugnance to Mr. Dangerfield's most advantageous offer.'

'Oh, indeed!' said Lily, becoming interested.

'Well, I suppose you suspected she *had* a secret?' said Aunt Rebecca.

'I can only say, dear Aunt Becky, she has not told it to *me*.'

'Now, listen to me, my dear,' said Aunt Becky, laying her fan upon Lily's arm. 'So sure as you sit there, Gertrude likes somebody, and I think I shall soon know who he is. Can you conjecture, my dear?'

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And Aunt Rebecca paused, looking, Lilias thought, rather pale, and with a kind of smile too.

'No,' said Lilias; 'no, I really can't.'

'Well, maybe when I tell you I've reason to think he's one of our officers here. Eh? Can you guess?' said Aunt Becky, holding her fan to her mouth, and looking straight before her.

It was now Lily's turn to look pale for a moment, and then to blush so much that her ears tingled, and her eyes dropped to the carpet. She had time to recover, though, for Aunt Becky, as I've said, was looking straight before her, a little pale, awaiting the result of Lily's presumed ruminations. A moment satisfied her it could not be Devereux, and she was soon quite herself again.

'An officer! no, Aunt Becky—there certainly is Captain Cluffe, who always joins your party when you and Gertrude go down to hear the band, and Lieutenant Puddock, too, who does the same—but you know——'

'Well, my dear, all in good time. Gertrude's very secret, and proud too; but I shall know very soon. I've ascertained, my dear, that an officer came under the window the other evening, and sang a verse of a French chanson, from the meadow, in a cloak, if you please, with a guitar. I could name his name, my dear——'

'Do pray tell me,' said Lily, whose curiosity was all alive.

'Why—a—not yet, my dear,' answered Aunt Becky, looking down; 'there are—there's a reason—but the affair, I may tell you, began, in earnest, on the very day on which she refused Mr. Mervyn. But I forgot you did not know *that* either—however, you'll never mention it.' And she kissed her cheek, calling her 'my wise little Lily.'

'And, my dear, it has been going on so regularly ever since, with, till very lately, so little disguise, that I only wonder everybody doesn't see it as plain as I do myself; and Lily, my dear,' continued Aunt Rebecca, energetically, rising from the sofa, as some object caught her eye through the glass-door in the garden, 'your beautiful roses are all trailing in the mud. What on earth is Hogan about? and there, see, just at the door, a boxful of nails!—I'd nail his ear to the wall if he were mine,' and Aunt Rebecca glanced sharply through the glass, this way and that, for the offending gardener, who, happily, did not appear. Then off went Aunt Becky to something else; and in a little time remembered the famous academy in Martin's-row, and looking at her watch, took her leave in a prodigious hurry, and followed by Dominick, in full livery, and two dogs, left Lilias again to the society of her own sad thoughts.

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CHAPTER XLII.

IN WHICH DR. STURK TRIES THIS WAY AND THAT FOR A REPRIEVE ON THE EVE OF EXECUTION.

So time crept on, and the day arrived when Sturk must pay his rent, or take the ugly consequences. The day before he spent in Dublin financiering. It was galling and barren work. He had to ask favours of fellows whom he hated, and to stand their refusals, and pretend to believe their lying excuses, and appear to make quite light of it, though every failure stunned him like a blow of a bludgeon; and as he strutted jauntily off with a bilious smirk, he was well nigh at his wits' end. It was dark as he rode out by the low road to Chapelizod —crest-fallen, beaten—scowling in the darkness through his horse's ears along the straight black line of road, and wishing, as he passed the famous Dog-house, that he might be stopped and plundered, and thus furnished with a decent excuse for his penniless condition, and a plea in which all the world would sympathize for a short indulgence— and, faith! he did not much care if they sent a bullet through his harrassed brain. But the highwaymen, like the bankers, seemed to know, by instinct, that he had not a guinea, and declined to give him even the miserable help he coveted.

When he got home he sent down for Cluffe to the Phœnix, and got him to take Nutter, who was there also, aside, and ask him for a little time, or to take a part of the rent. Though the latter would not have helped him much; for he could not make out ten pounds just then, were it to save his life. But Nutter only said—

'The rent's not mine; I can't give it or lose it; and Sturk's not safe. Will *you* lend it? *I* can't.'

This brought Cluffe to reason. He had opened the business, like a jolly companion, in a generous, full-blooded way.

'Well, by Jove, Nutter, I can't blame you; for you see, between ourselves, I'm afraid 'tis as you say. We of the Royal Irish have done, under the rose, you know, all we can; and I'm sorry the poor devil has run himself into a scrape; but, hang it, we must have a conscience; and if you think there's a risk of losing it, why I don't see that I can press you.'

The reader must not suppose when Cluffe said, 'we of the Royal Irish,' in connection with some pecuniary kindness shown to Sturk, that that sensible Captain had given away any of his money to the Surgeon; but Sturk, in their confidential conference, had hinted some-

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thing about a 'helping hand,' which Cluffe coughed off, and mentioned that Puddock had lent him fifteen pounds the week before.

And so he had, though little Puddock was one of the poorest officers in the corps. But he had no vices, and husbanded his little means carefully, and was very kindly and off-hand in assisting to the extent of his little purse a brother in distress, and never added advice when so doing—for he had high notions of politeness—or, in all his life, divulged any of these little money transactions.

Sturk stood at his drawing-room window, with his hat on, looking towards the Phœnix, and waiting for Cluffe's return. When he could stand the suspense no longer, he went down and waited at his door-steps. And the longer Cluffe stayed the more did Sturk establish himself in the conviction that the interview had prospered, and that his ambassador was coming to terms with Nutter. He did not know that the entire question had been settled in a minute-and-a-half, and that Cluffe was at that moment rattling away at backgammon with his arch-enemy, Toole, in a corner of the club parlour.

It was not till Cluffe, as he emerged from the Phœnix, saw Sturk's figure stalking in the glimpses of the moon, under the village elm, that he suddenly recollected and marched up to him. Sturk stood, with his face and figure mottled over with the shadows of the moving leaves and the withered ones dropping about him, his hands in his pockets, and a crown-piece—I believe it was his last available coin just then—shut up fast and tight in his cold fingers, with his heart in his mouth, and whistling a little to show his unconcern.

'Well,' said Sturk, 'he won't, of course?'

Cluffe shook his head.

'Very good—I'll manage it another way,' said Sturk, confidently. 'Good night;' and Sturk walked off briskly towards the turnpike.

'He might have said "thank you," I think,' Cluffe said, looking after him with a haughty leer—'mixing myself up in his plaguy affairs, and asking favours of fellows like Nutter.' But just then, having reached the corner next the Phœnix, Sturk hesitated, and Cluffe, thinking he might possibly turn back and ask him for money, turned on his heel, and, like a prudent fellow, trudged rapidly off to his lodgings.

Toole and O'Flaherty were standing in the doorway of the Phœnix, observing the brief and secret meeting under the elm.

'That's Sturk,' said Toole.

O'Flaherty grunted acquiescence.

Toole watched attentively till the gentlemen separated, and then,

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glancing on O'Flaherty from the corner of his eye, with a knowing smile 'tipped him the wink,' as the phrase went in those days.

'An affair of honour?' said O'Flaherty, squaring himself. He smelt powder in everything.

'More like an affair of *dis*honour,' said Toole, buttoning his coat, 'He's been "kiting" all over the town. Nutter can distrain for his rent to-morrow, and Cluffe called him outside the bar to speak with him; put that and that together, sir.' And home went Toole.

Sturk, indeed, had no plan, and was just then incapable of forming any. He changed his route, not knowing why, and posted over the bridge, and a good way along the Inchicore road; and then turned about and strode back again and over the bridge, without stopping, and on towards Dublin; and suddenly the moon shone out, and he recollected how late it was growing, and so turned about and walked homeward.

As he passed by the row of houses looking across the road towards the river, from Mr. Irons' hall-door step, a well-known voice accosted him—

'A thweet night, Doctor—the moon tho thilver bright—the air tho thoft!'

It was little Puddock, whose hand and face were raised toward the sweet regent of the sky.

'Mighty fine night,' said Sturk, and he paused for a second. It was Puddock's way to be more than commonly friendly and polite with any man who owed him money; and Sturk, who thought, perhaps rightly, that the world of late had been looking cold and black upon him, felt, in a sort of way, thankful for the greeting and its cordial tone.

'A night like this,' pursued the little Lieutenant, 'my dear sir, brings us under the marble balconies of the palace of the Capulets, and sets us repeating "on such a night sat Dido on the wild seabanks" —you remember—"and with a willow wand, waved her love back to Carthage,"—or places us upon the haunted platform, where buried Denmark revisits the glimpses of the moon. My dear Doctor, 'tis wonderful—isn't it—how much of our enjoyment of Nature we owe to Shakespeare—'twould be a changed world with us, Doctor, if Shakspeare had not written——" Then there was a little pause, Sturk standing still.

'God be wi' ye, Lieutenant,' said he, suddenly taking his hand. 'If there were more men like you there would be fewer broken hearts in the world.' And away went Sturk.

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CHAPTER XLIII.

SHOWING HOW CHARLES NUTTER'S BLOW DESCENDED, AND WHAT PART THE SILVER SPECTACLES BORE IN THE CRISIS.

In the morning the distress and keepers were in Sturk's house.

We must not be too hard upon Nutter. 'Tis a fearful affair, and no child's play, this battle of life. Sturk had assailed him like a beast of prey; not Nutter, to be sure, only Lord Castlemallard's agent. Of that functionary his wolfish instinct craved the flesh, bones, and blood. Sturk had no other way to live and grow fat. Nutter or he must go down. The little fellow saw his great red maw and rabid fangs at his throat. If he let him off, he would devour him, and lie in his bed, with his cap on, and his caudles and cordials all round, as the wolf did by Little Red Riding Hood's grandmamma; and with the weapon which had come to hand—a heavy one too,—he was going with Heaven's help, to deal him a brainblow.

When Sturk heard in the morning that the blow was actually struck, he jumped out of bed, and was taken with a great shivering fit, sitting on the side of it. Little Mrs. Sturk, as white as her night-cap with terror, was yet decisive in emergency, and bethought her of the brandy bottle, two glasses from which the Doctor swallowed before his teeth gave over chattering, and a more natural tint returned to his blue face.

'Oh! Barney, dear, are we ruined?' faltered poor little Mrs. Sturk.

'Ruined, indeed!' cried Sturk, with an oath, 'Come in here.' He thought his study was on the same floor with his bed-room, as it had been in old times in their house in Limerick, ten or twelve years before.

'That's the nursery, Barney, dear,' she said thinking, in the midst of the horror, like a true mother, of the children's sleep.

Then he remembered, and ran down to the study, and pulled out a sheaf of bills and promissory notes, and renewals thereof, making a very respectable show.

'Ruined, indeed!' he cried, hoarsely, talking to his poor little wife in the tones and with the ferocity which the image of Nutter, with which his brain was filled, called up. 'Look, I say, here's one fellow owes me that—and that—and that—and there—there's a dozen in that by another—there's two more sets there pinned together—and here's an account of them all—two thousand two hundred—and—you may say, three hundred—two thousand three hundred—owed me here; and that miscreant won't give me a day.'

'Is it the rent, Barney?'

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'The rent? To be sure; what else should it be?' shouted the Doctor, with a stamp.

And so pale little Mrs. Sturk stole out of the room, as her lord with bitter mutterings pitched his treasure of bad bills back again into the escritoire; and she heard him slam the study door and run down stairs to browbeat and curse the men in the hall, for he had lost his head somewhat, between panic and fury. He was in his stockings and slippers, with an old flowered silk dressing-gown, and nothing more but his shirt, and looked, they said, like a madman. One of the fellows was smoking, and Sturk snatched the pipe from his mouth, and stamped it to atoms on the floor, roaring at them to know what the —— brought them there; and without a pause for an answer, thundered, 'And I suppose you'll not let me take my box of instruments out of the house—mind, it's worth fifty pounds; and curse me, if one of our men dies for want of them in hospital, I'll indict you both, and your employer along with you, for *murder!*" And so he railed on, till his voice failed him with a sort of choking, and there was a humming in his ears, and a sort of numbness in his head, and he thought he was going to have a fit; and then up the stairs he went again, and into his study, and resolved to have Nutter out—and it flashed upon him that he'd say, 'pay the rent first;' and then—what next? why he'd post him all over Dublin, and Chapelizod, and Leixlip, where the Lord Lieutenant and Court were.

And down he sat to a sheet of paper, with his left hand clenched on the table, and his teeth grinding together, as he ransacked his vocabulary for befitting terms; but alas, his right hand shook so that his penmanship would not do, in fact, it half frightened him. 'By my soul! I believe something bad has happened me,' he muttered, and propped up his window, and looked out, half dreaming over the church-yard on the park beyond, and the dewy overhanging hill, all pleasantly lighted up in the morning sun.

While this was going on, little Mrs. Sturk, who on critical occasions took strong resolutions promptly, made a wonderfully rapid toilet, and let herself quietly out of the street door. She had thought of Dr. Walsingham; but Sturk had lately, in one of his imperious freaks of temper, withdrawn his children from the good Doctor's catechetical class, and sent him besides, one of his sturdy, impertinent notes—and the poor little woman concluded there was no chance there. She knew little of the Rector—of the profound humility and entire placability of that noble soul.

Well, she took the opposite direction, and turning her back on the town, walked at her quickest pace toward the Brass Castle. It was

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not eight o'clock yet, but the devil had been up betimes and got through a good deal of his day's work, as we have seen. The poor little woman had made up her mind to apply to Dangerfield. She had liked his talk at Belmont, where she had met him; and he inquired about the poor, and listened to some of her woful tales with a great deal of sympathy; and she knew he was very rich, and that he appreciated her Barney, and so she trudged on, full of hope, though I don't think many people who knew the world better would have given a great deal for her chance.

Dangerfield received the lady very affably, in his little parlour, where having already despatched his early meal, he was writing letters. He looked hard at her when she came in, and again when she sat down; and when she had made an end of her long and dismal tale, he opened a sort of strong box, and took out a thin quarto and read, turning the leaves rapidly over.

'Ay, here we have him—Chapelizod—Sturk, Barnabas—Surgeon, R.I.A., assignee of John Lowe—hey! one gale day, as you call it, only!—September. How came that? Rent, £40. Why, then, he owes a whole year's rent, £40, ma'am. September, and his days of grace have expired. He ought to have paid it.'

Here there came a dreadful pause, during which nothing was heard but the sharp ticking of his watch on the table.

'Well, ma'am,' he said, 'when a thing comes before me, I say yes or no promptly. I like your husband, and I'll lend him the amount of his rent.'

Poor little Mrs. Sturk jumped up in an ecstasy, and then felt quite sick, and sat down almost fainting, with a deathlike smile.

'There's but one condition I attach, that you tell me truly, my dear ma'am, whether you came to me directly or indirectly at his suggestion.'

No, indeed, she had not; it was all her own thought; she had not dared to mention it to him, lest he should forbid her, and now she should be almost afraid to tell him where she had been.

'He'll not be very angry, depend on't, my good madam; you did wisely in coming to me. I respect your sense and energy; and should you hereafter stand in need of a friendly office, I beg you'll remember one who is disposed to help you.'

Then he sat down and wrote with a flying pen—

'MY DEAR SIR,—I have just learned from Mrs. Sturk that you have an immediate concern for forty pounds, to which, I venture to surmise, will be added some fees, etc. I take leave, therefore, to send herewith fifty guineas, which I trust will suffice for this troublesome

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affair. We can talk hereafter about repayment. Mrs. Sturk has handed me a memorandum of the advance.

'Your very obedient, humble servant,

'GILES DANGERFIELD.

'The Brass Castle, Chapelizod,
'2nd October, 1767.'

Then poor little Mrs. Sturk was breaking out into a delirium of gratitude. But he put his hand upon her arm kindly, and with a little bow and an emphasis, he said—

'Pray, not a *word*, my dear madam. Just write a line;' and he slid his desk before her with a sheet of paper on it; 'and say Mr. Dangerfield has this day handed me a loan of fifty guineas for my husband, Doctor Barnabas Sturk. Now sign, if you please, and add the date. Very good!'

'I'm afraid you can hardly read it—my fingers tremble a little,' said Mrs. Sturk, with a wild little deprecatory titter, and for the first time very near crying.

''Tis mighty well,' said Dangerfield, politely; and he accompanied the lady with the note and fifty guineas, made up in a little roleau, fast in her hand, across his little garden, and with—'A fine morning truly,' and 'God bless you, madam,' and one of his peculiar smiles, he let her out through his little wicket on the high road. And so away went Mrs. Sturk, scarce feeling the ground under her feet; and Giles Dangerfield, carrying his white head very erect, with an approving conscience, and his silver spectacles flashing through the leaves of his lilacs and laburnums, returned to his parlour.

Mrs. Sturk, who could hardly keep from running, glided along at a wonderful rate, wondering now and then how quickly the whole affair —so awful as it seemed to her in magnitude—was managed. Dangerfield had neither hurried her nor himself, and yet he despatched the matter and got her away in less than five minutes.

In little more than a quarter of an hour after, Dr. Sturk descended his door-steps in full costume, and marched down the street and passed the artillery barrack, from his violated fortress, as it were, with colours flying, drums beating, and ball in mouth. He paid the money down at Nutter's table, in the small room at the Phœnix, where he sat in the morning to receive his rents, eyeing the agent with a fixed smirk of hate and triumph, and telling down each piece on the table with a fierce clink that had the ring of a curse in it. Little Nutter met his stare of suppressed fury with an eye just as steady and malign, and a countenance

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blackened by disappointment. Not a word was heard but Sturk's insolent tone counting the gold at every clang on the table.

Nutter shoved him a receipt across the table, and swept the gold into his drawer.

'Go over, Tom,' he said to the bailiff, in a stern low tone, 'and see the men don't leave the house till the fees are paid.'

And Sturk laughed a very pleasant laugh, you may be sure, over his shoulder at Nutter, as he went out at the door.

When he was gone Nutter stood up, and turned his face toward the empty grate. I have seen some plain faces once or twice look so purely spiritual, and others at times so infernal, as to acquire in their homeliness a sort of awful grandeur; and from every feature of Nutter's dark wooden face was projected at that moment a supernatural glare of baffled hatred that dilated to something almost sublime.

CHAPTER XLIV.

RELATING HOW, IN THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT, A VISION CAME TO STURK, AND HIS EYES WERE OPENED.

STURK's triumph was only momentary. He was in ferocious spirits, indeed, over the breakfast-table, and bolted quantities of buttered toast and eggs, swallowed cups of tea, one after the other, almost at a single gulp, all the time gabbling with a truculent volubility, and every now and then a thump, which made his spoon jingle in his saucer, and poor, little Mrs. Sturk start, and whisper, 'Oh, my dear!' But after he had done defying and paying off the whole world, and showing his wife, and half convincing himself, that he was the cleverest and finest fellow alive, a letter was handed to him, which reminded him, in a dry, short way, of those most formidable and imminent dangers that rose up, apparently insurmountable before him; and he retired to his study to ruminate again, and chew the cud of bitter fancy, and to write letters and tear them to pieces, and, finally, as was his wont, after hospital hours, to ride into Dublin, to bore his attorney with barren inventions and hopeless schemes of extrication.

Sturk came home that night with a hang-dog and jaded look, and taciturn and half desperate. But he called for whiskey, and drank a glass of that cordial, and brewed a jug of punch in silence, and swallowed glass after glass, and got up a little, and grew courageous and flushed, and prated away, rather loud and thickly with a hiccough now and then, and got to sleep earlier than usual.

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Somewhere among the 'small hours' of the night he awoke suddenly, recollecting something.

'I have it,' cried Sturk, with an oath, and an involuntary kick at the foot-board, that made his slumbering helpmate bounce.

'What is it, Barney, dear?' squalled she, diving under the bedclothes, with her heart in her mouth.

'It's like a revelation,' cried Sturk, with another oath; and that was all Mrs. Sturk heard of it for some time. But the Surgeon was wide awake, and all alive about it, whatever it was. He sat straight up in the bed, with his lips energetically compressed, and his eyebrows screwed together, and his shrewd, hard eyes rolling thoughtfully over the curtains, in the dark, and now and then an ejaculation of wonder, or a short oath, would slowly rise up, and burst from his lips, like a great bubble from the fermentation.

Sturk's brain was in a hubbub. He had fifty plans, all jostling and clamouring together, like a nursery of unruly imps—'Take *me*'—'No, take *me*'—'No, *me*!' He had been dreaming like mad, and his sensorium was still all alive with the images of fifty phantasmagoria, filled up by imagination and conjecture, and a strange, painfully-sharp remembrance of things past—all whirling in a carnival of roystering but dismal riot—masks and dice, laughter, maledictions, and drumming, fair ladies, tipsy youths, mountebanks, and assassins; tinkling serenades, the fatal clang and rattle of the dice-box, and long-drawn, distant screams.

There was no more use in Sturk's endeavours to reduce all this to order, than in reading the Riot Act to a Walpurgis gathering. So he sat muttering unconscious ejaculations, and looking down, as it were, from his balcony, waiting for the uproar to abate; and when the air did clear and cool a little, there was just one face that remained impassive, and serenely winked before his eyes.

When things arrived at this stage, and he had gathered his recollections about him, and found himself capable of thinking, being a man of action, up he bounced and struck a light, vaulted into his breeches, hauled on his stockings, hustled himself into his roquelaure, and, candle in hand, in slippered feet, glided, like a ghost, down stairs to the back drawing-room, which, as we know, was his study.

The night was serene and breathless. The sky had cleared, and the moonlight slept mistily on the soft slopes of the park. The landscape was a febrifuge, and cooled and quieted his brain as he stood before it at his open window, in solitary meditation. It was not till his slowly wandering eye lighted on the church-yard, with a sort of slight shock, that he again bestirred himself.

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There it lay, with its white tombstones and its shadows spread under him seeming to say—'Ay, here I am; the narrow goal of all your plans. Not one of the glimmering memorials you see that does not cover what once was a living world of long-headed schemes, chequered remembrances, and well-kept secrets. Here lie your brother plotters, all in bond, only some certain inches below; with their legs straight and their arms by their sides, as when grim Captain DEATH called the stern word "attention!" with their sightless faces and unthinking foreheads turned up to the moon. Dr. Sturk, there are lots of places for you to choose among—suit yourself—here—or here—or maybe here.'

And so Sturk closed the window and remembered his dream, and looked out stealthily but sternly from the door, which was ajar, and shut it sharply, and with his hands in his breeches' pockets, took a quick turn to the window; his soul had got into harness again, and he was busy thinking. Then he snuffed the candle, and then quickened his invention by another brisk turn; and then he opened his desk, and sat down to write a note.

'Yes,' said he to himself, pausing for a minute, with his pen in his fingers, ''tis as certain as that I sit here.'

Well, he wrote the note. There was a kind of smile on his face, which was paler than usual all the while; and he read it over, and threw himself back in his chair, and then read it over again, and did not like it, and tore it up.

Then he thought hard for a while, leaning upon his elbow; and took a couple of great pinches of snuff, and snuffed his candle again, and, as it were, snuffed his wits, and took up his pen with a little flourish, and dashed off another, and read it, and liked it, and gave it a little sidelong nod, as though he said, 'You'll do;' and, indeed, considering all the time and thought he spent upon it, the composition was no great wonder, being, after all, no more than this:—

'DEAR SIR,—Will you give me the honour of a meeting at my house this morning, as you pass through the town? I shall remain within till noon; and hope for some minutes' private discourse with you.

'Your most obedient, very humble servant,

'BARNABAS STURK.'

Then he sealed it with a great red seal, large enough for a patent almost, impressed with the Sturk arms—a boar's head for crest, and a flaunting scroll, with 'Dentem fulmineum cave' upon it. Then he

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peeped again from the window to see if the gray of the morning had come, for he had left his watch under his bolster, and longed for the time of action.

Then up stairs went Sturk; and so, with the note, like a loaded pistol, over the chimney, he popped into bed, where he lay awake in agitating rumination, determined to believe that he had seen the last of those awful phantoms—those greasy bailiffs—that smooth, smirking, formidable attorney; and—curse him—that bilious marshal's deputy, with the purplish, pimply tinge about the end of his nose and the tops of his cheeks, that beset his bed in a moving ring—this one pushing out a writ, and that rumpling open a parchment deed, and the other fumbling with his keys, and extending his open palm for the garnish. Avaunt! He had found out a charm to rout them all, and they shan't now lay a finger on him—a short and sharp way to clear himself; and so I believe he had.

CHAPTER XLV.

CONCERNING A LITTLE REHEARSAL IN CAPTAIN CLUFFE'S LODGING, AND A CERTAIN CONFIDENCE BETWEEN DR. STURK AND MR. DANGERFIELD.

MRS. STURK, though very quiet, was an active little body, with a gentle, anxious face. She was up and about very early, and ran down to the King's House, to ask Mrs. Colonel Strafford, who was very kind to her, and a patroness of Sturk's, to execute a little commission for her in Dublin, as she understood she was going into town that day, and the Doctor's horse had gone lame, and was in the hands of the farrier. So the good lady undertook it, and offered a seat in her carriage to Dr. Sturk, should his business call him to town. The carriage would be at the door at half-past eleven.

And as she trotted home—for her Barney's breakfast-hour was drawing nigh—whom should she encounter upon the road, just outside the town, but their grim spectacled benefactor, Dangerfield, accompanied by, and talking in his usual short way to Nutter, the arch enemy, who, to say truth, looked confoundedly black; and she heard the silver spectacles say, ''Tis, you understand, my own thoughts *only* I speak, Mr. Nutter.'

The fright and the shock of seeing Nutter so near her, made her salutation a little awkward; and she had, besides an instinctive consciousness that they were talking about the terrible affair of yesterday. Dangerfield on meeting her, bid Nutter good morning

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suddenly, and turned about with Mrs. Sturk, who had to slacken her pace a little, for the potent agent chose to walk rather slowly.

'A fine morning after all the rain, madam. How well the hills look,' and he pointed across the Liffey with his cane; 'and the view down the river,' and he turned about, pointing towards Inchicore.

I believe he wanted to see how far Nutter was behind them. He was walking in the opposite direction, looking down on the kerb-stones of the footpath, and touching them with his cane, as if counting them as he proceeded. Dangerfield nodded, and his spectacles in the morning sun seemed to flash two sudden gleams of lightning after him.

'I've been giving Nutter a bit of my mind, madam, about that procedure of his. He's very angry with me, but a great deal more so with your husband, who has my sympathies with him; and I think I'm safe in saying he's likely soon to have an offer of employment under my Lord Castlemallard, if it suits him.'

And he walked on, and talked of other things in short sentences, and parted with Mrs. Sturk with a grim brief kindness at the door, and so walked with his wiry step away towards the Brass Castle, where his breakfast awaited him, and he disappeared round the corner of Martin's-row.

'And which way was he going when you met him and that—that *Nutter*?' demanded Sturk, who was talking in high excitement, and not being able to find an epithet worthy of Nutter, made it up by his emphasis and his scowl. She told him.

'H'm! then, he can't have got my note yet!'

She looked at him in a way that plainly said, 'what note?' but Sturk said no more, and he had trained her to govern her curiosity.

As Dangerfield passed Captain Cluffe's lodgings, he heard the gay tinkle of a guitar, and an amorous duet, not altogether untunefully sung to that accompaniment; and he beheld little Lieutenant Puddock's back, with a broad scarlet and gold ribbon across it, supporting the instrument on which he was industriously thrumming, at the window, while Cluffe, who was emitting a high note, with all the tenderness he could throw into his robust countenance, and one of those involuntary distortions which in amateurs will sometimes accompany a vocal effort, caught the eye of the cynical wayfarer, and stopped short with a disconcerted little cough and a shake of his chops, and a grim, rather red nod, and 'Good morning, Mr. Dangerfield.' Puddock also saluted, still thrumming a low chord or two as he did so, for he was not ashamed, like his stout playmate, and saw nothing incongruous in their early minstrelsy.

The fact is, these gallant officers were rehearsing a pretty little

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entertainment they designed for the ladies at Belmont. It was a serenade, in short, and they had been compelled to postpone it in consequence of the broken weather; and though both gentlemen were, of course, romantically devoted to their respective objects, yet there were no two officers in his Majesty's service more bent upon making love with a due regard to health and comfort than our friends Cluffe and Puddock. Puddock, indeed, was disposed to conduct it in the true masquerading spirit, leaving the ladies to guess at the authors of that concord of sweet sounds with which the amorous air of night was to quiver round the walls and groves of Belmont; and Cluffe, externally acquiescing, had yet made up his mind, if a decent opportunity presented, to be detected and made prisoner, and that the honest troubadours should sup on a hot broil, and sip some of the absent General's curious Madeira at the feet of their respective mistresses, with all the advantage which a situation so romantic and so private would offer.

So 'tinkle, tinkle, twang, twang, THRUM!' went the industrious and accomplished Puddock's guitar; and the voices of the enamoured swains kept tolerable tune and time; and Puddock would say, 'Don't you think, Captain Cluffe, 'twould perhapth go better if we weren't to try that shake upon A. Do let's try the last two barth without it;' and 'I'm thorry to trouble you, but jutht wonth more, if you pleathe—

> '"But hard ith the chathe my thad heart mutht purthue,
> While Daphne, thweet Daphne, thill flieth from my view."'

Puddock, indeed, had strict notions about rehearsing, and, on occasions like this, assumed managerial airs, and in a very courteous way took the absolute command of Captain Cluffe, who sang till he was purple, and his belts and braces cracked again, not venturing to mutiny, though he grumbled a little aside.

So when Dangerfield passed Cluffe's lodging again, returning on his way into Chapelizod, the songsters were at it still. And he smiled his pleasant smile once more, and nodded at poor old Cluffe, who this time was very seriously put out, and flushed up quite fiercely, and said, almost in a mutiny—

'Hang it, Puddock, I believe you'd keep a fellow singing ballads over the street all day. Didn't you see that cursed fellow, Dangerfield sneering at us—curse him—I suppose he never heard a gentleman sing before; and, by Jove, Puddock, you know you do make a fellow go over the same thing so often it's enough to make a dog laugh.'

A minute after Dangerfield had mounted Sturk's door-steps, and asked to see the Doctor. He was ushered upstairs and into that back drawing-room which we know so well. Sturk rose as he entered.

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'Your most obedient, Mr. Dangerfield,' said the Doctor, with an anxious bow.

'Good morning, sir,' said Dangerfield. 'I've got your note, and am here in consequence; what can I do?'

Sturk glanced at the door, to see it was shut, and then said—

'Mr. Dangerfield, I've recollected a—*something*.'

'You *have?* ho! Well, my good sir?'

'You, I know, were acquainted with—with *Charles Archer?*'

Sturk looked for a moment on the spectacles, and then dropped his eyes.

'Charles Archer,' answered Dangerfield promptly, 'yes, to be sure. But, Charles, you know, got into trouble, and 'tis not an acquaintance you or I can boast of; and, in fact, we must not mention him; and I have long ceased to know anything of him.'

'But, I've just remembered his address; and there's something about his private history which I very well know, and which gives me a claim upon his kind feeling, and he's now in a position to do me a material service; and there's no man living, Mr. Dangerfield, has so powerful an influence with him as yourself. Will you use it in my behalf, and attach me to you by lasting gratitude?'

Sturk looked straight at Dangerfield; and Dangerfield looked at him, quizzically, perhaps a little ashamed, in return; after a short pause—

'I *will*,' said Dangerfield, with a sprightly decision. '*But*, you know, Charles is not a fellow to be trifled with—hey? and we must not mention his name—you understand—or hint where he lives, or anything about him, in short.'

'That's plain,' answered Sturk.

'You're going into town, Mrs. Sturk tells me, in Mrs. Strafford's carriage. Well, when you return this evening, put down in writing what you think Charles can do for you, and I'll take care he considers it.'

'I thank you, sir,' said Sturk, solemnly.

'And hark ye, you'd better go about your business in town—do you see—just as usual; 'twill excite inquiry if you don't; so you must in this and other things proceed exactly as I direct you,' said Dangerfield.

'Exactly, sir, depend on't,' answered Sturk.

'Good day,' said Dangerfield.

'Adieu,' said the Doctor; and they shook hands, gravely.

On the lobby Dangerfield encountered Mrs. Sturk, and had a few pleasant words with her, patting the bull-heads of the children, and

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went down stairs smiling and nodding; and Mrs. Sturk popped quietly into the study, and found her husband leaning on the chimney piece, and swabbing his face with his handkerchief—strangely pale—and looking, as the good lady afterwards said, for all the world as if he had seen a ghost.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CLOSET SCENE, WITH THE PART OF POLONIUS OMITTED.

When Magnolia and the Major had gone out, each on their several devices, poor Mrs. Macnamara called Biddy, their maid, and told her, in a vehement, wheezy, confidential whisper in her ear, though there was nobody by but themselves, and the door was shut.

'Biddy, now mind—d'ye see—the lady that came to me in the end of July—do you remember?—in the black satin—you know?—she'll be here to-day, and we're going down together in her coach to Mrs. Nutter's; but that does not signify. As soon as she comes, bring her in here, into this room—d'ye mind?—and go across that instant minute—d'ye see now?—straight to Dr. Toole, and ask him to send me the peppermint drops he promised me.'

Then she cross-questioned Biddy, to ascertain that she perfectly understood and clearly remembered; and, finally, she promised her half-a-crown if she performed this very simple commission to her mistress's satisfaction, and held her tongue religiously on the subject. She had appraised Toole the evening before, and now poor Mrs. Mack's sufferings, she hoped, were about to be brought to a happy termination by the Doctor's ingenuity. She was, however, very nervous indeed, as the crisis approached; for such a beast as Mary Matchwell at bay was a spectacle to excite a little tremor even in a person of more nerve than fat Mrs. Macnamara.

And what could Mary Matchwell want of a conjuring conference, of all persons in the world, with poor little Mrs. Nutter? Mrs. Mack had done in this respect simply as she was bid. She had indeed no difficulty to persuade Mrs. Nutter to grant the interview. That harmless little giggling creature could not resist the mere mention of of a fortune-teller. Only for Nutter, who set his face against this sort of sham witchcraft, she would certainly have asked him to treat her with a glimpse into futurity at that famous sibyl's house; and now that she had an opportunity of having the enchantress *tête à tête* in her own snug parlour at the Mills, she was in a delightful fuss of mystery and delight.

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Mrs. Mack, indeed, from her own sad experience, felt a misgiving and a pang in introducing the formidable prophetess. But what could she do? She dared not refuse; all she could risk was an anxious hint to poor little Mrs. Nutter, 'not to be telling her *anything*, good, bad, or indifferent, but just to ask hèr what questions she liked, and no more.' Indeed, poor Mrs. Mack was low and feverish about this assignation, and would have been more so but for the hope that her Polonius, behind the arras, would bring the woman of Endor to her knees.

All on a sudden she heard the rumble and jingle of a hackney coach, and the clang of the horses' hoofs pulled up close under her window; her heart bounded and fluttered up to her mouth, and then dropped down like a lump of lead, and she heard a well-known voice talk a few sentences to the coachman, and then in the hall, as she supposed, to Biddy; and so she came into the room, dressed as usual in black, tall, thin, and erect, with a black hood shading her pale face, and the mist and chill of night seemed to enter along with her.

It was a great relief to poor Mrs. Mack, that she actually saw Biddy at that moment run across the street toward Toole's hall-door, and she quickly averted her conscious glance from the light-heeled handmaid.

'Pray take a chair, ma'am,' said Mrs. Mack, with a pallid face, and a low courtesy.

Mistress Matchwell made a faint courtesy in return, and, without saying anything, sat down, and peered sharply round the room.

'I'm glad, ma'am, you had no dust to-day; the rain, ma'am, laid it beautiful.'

The grim woman in black threw back her hood a little, and showed her pale face and thin lips, and prominent black eyes, altogether a grisly and intimidating countenance, with something wild and suspicious in it, suiting by no means ill with her supernatural and malign pretensions.

Mrs. Mack's ear was strained to catch the sound of Toole's approach, and a pause ensued, during which she got up and poured out a glass of port for the lady, and she presented it to her deferentially. She took it, with a nod, and sipped it, thinking, as it seemed, uneasily. There was plainly something more than usual upon her mind. Mrs. Mack thought—indeed, she was quite sure—she heard a little fussing about the bed-room door, and concluded that the Doctor was getting under cover.

When Mrs. Matchwell had set her empty glass upon the table, she glided to the window, and, Mrs. Mack's guilty conscience smote her,

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as she saw her look towards Toole's house. It was only, however, for the coach; and having satisfied herself it was at hand, she said—

'We'll have some minutes quite private, if you please—'tisn't my affair, you know, but yours,' said the weird woman.

There had been ample time for the arrangement of Toole's ambuscade. Now was the moment. The crisis was upon her. But poor Mrs. Mack, just as she was about to say her little say about the front windows, and opposite neighbours, and the privacy of the back bedroom, and to propose their retiring thither, felt a sinking of the heart—a deadly faintness, and an instinctive conviction that she was altogether overmatched, and that she could not hope to play successfully any sort of devil's game with that all-seeing sorceress. She had always thought she was a plucky woman till she met Mistress Mary. Before *her* her spirit died within her—her blood flowed hurriedly back to her heart, leaving her body cold, pale, and damp, and her soul quailing under her gaze.

She cleared her voice twice, and faltered an inquiry, but broke down in panic; and at that moment Biddy popped in her head—

'The Doctor, ma'am, was sent for to Lucan, an' he won't be back, till six o'clock, an' he left no peppermint drops for you, ma'am, an' do you want me, if you plase, ma'am?'

'Go down, Biddy—that'll do,' said Mrs. Mack, growing first pale, and then very red.

Mary Matchwell scented death afar off; for her the air was always tainted with ominous perfumes. Every unusual look or dubious word thrilled her with a sense of danger. Suspicion is the baleful instinct of self-preservation with which the devil gifts his children; and hers never slept.

'*What* doctor?' said Mrs. Matchwell, turning her large, dismal, wicked gaze full on Mrs. Mack.

'Doctor Toole, ma'am.' She dared not tell a literal lie to that piercing, prominent pair of black eyes.

'And why did you send for Doctor O'Toole, ma'am?'

'I did not send for the Doctor,' answered the fat lady, looking down, for she could not stand that glance that seemed to light up all the caverns of her poor soul, and make her lies stand forth self-confessed. 'I did not send for him, ma'am, only for some drops he promised me. I've been very sick—I—I—I'm so miserable.'

And poor Mrs. Mack's nether lip quivered, and she burst into tears.

'You're enough to provoke a saint, Mrs. Macnamara,' said the woman in black, rather savagely, though coldly enough. 'Why you're on the point of fortune, as it seems to me.' Here poor Mrs.

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Mack's inarticulate lamentations waxed more vehement. 'You don't believe it—very well—but where's the use of crying over your little difficulties, ma'am, like a great baby, instead of exerting yourself and thanking your best friend?'

And the two ladies sat down to a murmuring *tête-à-tête* at the far end of the room; you could have heard little more than an inarticulate cooing, and poor Mrs. Mack's sobs, and the stern—

'And is that all? I've had more trouble with you than with fifty reasonable clients—you can hardly be serious—I tell you plainly, you must manage matters better, my good madam; for, frankly, ma'am, *this* won't do.'

With which that part of the conference closed, and Mary Matchwell looked out of the window. The coach stood at the door, the horses dozing patiently, with their heads together, and the coachman, with a black eye, mellowing into the yellow stage, and a cut across his nose—both doing well—was marching across from the public-house over the way, wiping his mouth in the cuff of his coat.

'Put on your riding-hood, if you please, madam, and come down with me in the coach to introduce me to Mrs. Nutter,' said Mrs. Matchwell, at the same time tapping with her long bony fingers to the driver.

'There's no need of that, madam. I said what you desired, and I sent a note to her last night, and she expects you just now; and, indeed, I'd rather not go, madam, if you please.'

''Tis past that now—just do as I tell you, for come you must,' answered Mrs. Matchwell.

As the old woman of Berkley obeyed, and got up and went quietly away with her visitor, though her dead flesh quivered with fear, so poor Mrs. Mack, though loath enough, submitted in silence.

'Now, you look like a body going to be hanged—you do; what's the matter with you, madam? I tell you, you mustn't look that way. Here, take a sup o' this;' and she presented the muzzle of a small bottle like a pistol at her mouth as she spoke—

'There's a glass on the table, if you let me, ma'am,' said Mrs. Mack.

'Glass be ——; here, take a mouthful.'

And she popped it between her lips; and Mrs. Mack was refreshed and her spirit revived within her.

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CHAPTER XLVII.

IN WHICH PALE HECATE VISITS THE MILLS, AND CHARLES NUTTER, ESQ., ORDERS TEA.

Poor Mrs. Nutter, I have an honest regard for her memory. If she was scant of brains, she was also devoid of guile—giggle and raspberry-jam were the leading traits of her character. And though she was slow to believe ill-natured stories, and made, in general, a horrid jumble when she essayed to relate news, except of the most elementary sort; and used to forget genealogies, and to confuse lawsuits and other family feuds, and would have made a most unsatisfactory witness upon any topic on earth, yet she was a ready sympathizer, and a restless but purblind match maker—always suggesting or suspecting little romances, and always amazed when the eclaircissement came off. Excellent for condoling—better still for rejoicing—she would, on hearing of a surprising good match, or an unexpected son and heir, or a pleasantly-timed legacy, go off like a mild little peal of joy-bells, and keep ringing up and down and zig-zag, and to and again, in all sorts of irregular roulades, without stopping, the whole day long, with 'Well, to be sure.' 'Upon my conscience, now, I scarce can believe it.' 'An' isn't it pleasant, though.' 'Oh! the creatures—but it was badly wanted!' 'Dear knows—but I'm glad—ha, ha, ha,' and so on. A train of reflection and rejoicing not easily exhausted, and readily, by simple transposition, maintainable for an indefinite period. And people, when good news came, used to say, 'Sally Nutter will be glad to hear that;' and though she had not a great deal of sense, and her conversation was made up principally of interjections, assisted by little gestures, and wonderful expressions of face; and though when analyzed it was not much, yet she made a cheerful noise, and her company was liked; and her friendly little gesticulation, and her turning up of the eyes, and her smiles and sighs, and her 'whisht a bit,' and 'faith and troth now,' and 'whisper,' and all the rest of her little budget of idiomatic expletives, made the people somehow, along with her sterling qualities, fonder of her than perhaps, having her always at hand, they were quite aware.

So they both entered the vehicle, which jingled and rattled so incessantly and so loud that connected talk was quite out of the question, and Mrs. Macnamara was glad 'twas so; and she could not help observing there was something more than the ordinary pale cast of devilment in Mary Matchwell's face—something she thought, almost

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frightful, and which tempted her to believe in her necromantic faculty.

So they reached Nutter's house, at the mills, a sober, gray-fronted mansion, darkened with tall trees, and in went Mrs. Mack. Little Mrs. Nutter received her in a sort of transport of eagerness, giggle, and curiosity.

'And is she really in the coach now? and, my dear, does she really tell the wonders they say? Mrs. Molly told me—well, now, the most surprising things; and do you actually believe she's a conjuror? But mind you, Nutter must not know I had her here. He can't abide a fortune-teller. And what shall I ask her? I think about the pearl cross—don't you? for I *would* like to know, and then whether Nutter or his enemies—you know who I mean—will carry the day—don't you know? Doctor Sturk, my dear, and—and—but that's the chief question.

Poor Mrs. Mack glanced over her shoulder to see she wasn't watched, and whispered her in haste—

'For mercy sake, my dear, take my advice, and that is, listen to all she tells you, but tell her nothing.'

'To be sure, my dear, that's only common sense,' said Mrs. Nutter.

And Mary Matchwell, who thought they had been quite long enough together, descended from the carriage, and was in the hall before Mrs. Nutter was aware; and the silent apparition overawed the poor little lady, who faltered a 'Good evening, madam—you're very welcome—pray step in.' So in they all trooped to Nutter's parlour.

So soon as little Mrs. Nutter got fairly under the chill and shadow of this inauspicious presence, her giggle subsided, and she began to think of the dreadful story she had heard of her having showed Mrs. Flemming, through a glass of fair water, the apparition of her husband with his face half masked with blood, the day before his murder by the watchmen in John's-lane. When, therefore, this woman of Endor called for water and glasses, and told Mrs. Mack that she must leave them alone together, poor little empty Mrs. Nutter lost heart, and began to feel very queer, and to wish herself well out of the affair; and, indeed, was almost ready to take to her heels and leave the two ladies in possession of the house, but she had not decision for this.

'And mayn't Mrs. Mack stay in the room with us?' she asked, following that good lady's retreating figure with an imploring look.

'By no means.'

This was addressed sternly to Mrs. Mack herself, who, followed by poor Mrs. Nutter's eyes, moved fatly and meekly out of the room.

She was not without her fair share of curiosity, but on the whole,

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was relieved and very willing to go. She had only seen Mary Matchwell take from her pocket and uncase a small oval-shaped steel mirror, which seemed to have the property of magnifying objects; for she saw her cadaverous fingers reflected in it to fully double their natural size, and she had half filled a glass with water, and peered through it askew, holding it toward the light.

Well, the door was shut, and an interval of five minutes elapsed; and all of a sudden two horrible screams in quick succession rang through the house.

Betty, the maid, and Mrs. Mack were in the small room on the other side of the hall, and stared in terror on one another. The old lady, holding Betty by the wrist, whispered a benediction; and Betty crying—'Oh! my dear, what's happened the poor misthress?' crossed the hall in a second, followed by Mrs. Mack. And they heard the door unlocked on the inside as they reached it.

In they came, scarce knowing how, and found poor little Mrs. Nutter flat upon the floor, in a swoon, her white face and the front of her dress drenched with water.

'You've a scent bottle, Mrs. Macnamara—let her smell to it,' said the grim woman in black, coldly, but with a scarcely perceptible gleam of triumph, as she glanced on the horrified faces of the women.

Well, it was a long fainting-fit; but she did come out of it. And when her bewildered gaze at last settled upon Mrs. Matchwell, who was standing darkly and motionless between the windows, she uttered another loud and horrible cry, and clung with her arms round Mrs. Mack's neck, and screamed—

'Oh! Mrs. Mack, *there* she is—*there* she is—*there* she is.'

And she screamed so fearfully and seemed in such an extremity of terror, that Mary Matchwell, in her sables, glided, with a strange sneer on her pale face, out of the room, across the hall, and into the little parlour on the other side, like an evil spirit whose mission was half accomplished, and who departed from her for a season.

'She's here—she's here!' screamed poor little Mrs. Nutter.

'No, dear, no—she's not—she's gone, my dear—indeed, she's gone,' replied Mrs. Mack, herself very much appalled.

'Oh! is she gone—is she—*is* she gone?' cried Mrs. Nutter, staring all round the room, like a child after a frightful dream.

'She's gone, ma'am, dear—she isn't here—by this crass, she's gone!' said Betty, assisting Mrs. Mack, and equally frightened and incensed.

'Oh! oh! Betty, where is he gone? Oh! Mrs. Mack—oh! no—no—never! It can't be—it couldn't. It *is* not he—he never did it.'

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'I declare to you, ma'am, she's not right in her head!' cried poor Betty, at her wits' ends.

'There—*there* now, Sally, darling—*there*,' said frightened Mrs. Mack, patting her on the back.

'There—there—there—I see him,' she cried again. 'Oh! Charley, Charley, sure—sure I didn't see it aright—it was not real.'

'There now, don't be frettin' yourself, ma'am dear,' said Betty.

But Mrs. Mack glanced over her shoulder in the direction in which Mrs. Nutter was looking, and with a sort of shock, not knowing whether it was a bodily presence or a simulacrum raised by the incantations of Mary Matchwell, she beheld the dark features and white eye-balls of Nutter himself looking full on them from the open door.

'Sally—what ails you, sweetheart?' said he, coming close up to her with two swift steps.

'Oh! Charley, 'twas a dream—nothing else—a bad dream, Charley. Oh! say it's a dream,' cried the poor terrified little woman. 'Oh! she's coming—she's coming!' she cried again, with an appalling scream.

'*Who*—what's the matter?' cried Nutter, looking in the direction of his poor wife's gaze in black wrath and bewilderment, and beholding the weird woman who had followed him into the room. As he gazed on that pale, wicked face and sable shape, the same sort of spell which she exercised upon Mrs. Mack and poor Mrs. Nutter seemed in a few seconds to steal over Nutter himself, and fix him in the place where he stood. His mahogany face bleached to sickly boxwood, and his eyes looked like pale balls of stone about to leap from their sockets.

After a few seconds, however, with a sort of a gasp, like a man awaking from a frightful sleep, he said—

'Betty, take the mistress to her room;' and to his wife, 'go sweetheart. Mrs. Macnamara, this must be explained,' he added; and taking her by the hand, he led her in silence to the hall-door, and signed to the driver.

'Oh! thank you, Mr. Nutter,' she stammered; 'but the coach is not mine; it came with that lady who's with Mrs. Nutter.'

He had up to this moved with her like a somnambulist.

'Ay, that lady; and who the devil is she?' and he seized her arm with a sudden grasp, that made her wince.

'Oh! that lady!' faltered Mrs. Mack—'she's—I believe—she's Mrs. Matchwell—the—the lady that advertises her abilities.'

'Hey! I know—the fortune-teller, and go-between,—her!'

She was glad he asked her no more questions, but let her go, and stood in a livid meditation, forgetting to bid her good evening. She did not wait, however, for his courteous dismissal, but hurried away

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towards Chapelizod. The only thing connected with the last half-hour's events that seemed quite clear and real to the scared lady was the danger of being overtaken by that terrible woman, and a dreadful sense of her own share as an accessory in the untold mischief that had befallen poor Mrs. Nutter.

In the midst of her horrors and agitation Mrs. Mack's curiosity was not altogether stunned. She wondered vaguely, as she pattered along, with what dreadful exhibition of her infernal skill Mary Matchwell had disordered the senses of poor little Mrs. Nutter—had she called up a red-eyed, sooty-raven to her shoulder—as old Miss Alice Lee (when she last had a dish of tea with her) told her she had once done before—and made the ominous bird speak the doom of poor Mrs. Nutter from that perch? or had she raised the foul fiend in bodily shape, or showed her Nutter's dead face through the water?

With these images flitting before her brain, she hurried on at her best pace, fancying every moment that she heard the rumble of the accursed coach behind her, and longing to see the friendly uniform of the Royal Irish Artillery, and the familiar house fronts of the cheery little street, and, above all, to hide herself securely among her own household gods.

When Nutter returned to the parlour his wife had not yet left it.

'I'll attend here, go you upstairs,' said Nutter. He spoke strangely, and looked odd, and altogether seemed strung up to a high pitch.

Out went Betty, seeing it was no good dawdling; for her master was resolute and formidable. The room, like others in old-fashioned houses with thick walls had a double door. He shut the one with a stern slam, and then the other; and though the honest maid loitered in the hall, and, indeed, placed her ear very near the door, she was not much the wiser.

There was some imperfectly heard talk in the parlour, and cries, and sobs, and more talking. Then before Betty was aware, the door suddenly opened, and out came Mary Matchwell, with gleaming eyes, and a pale laugh of spite and victory, and threw a look, as she passed, upon the maid that frightened her, and so vanished into her coach.

Nutter disengaged himself from poor Mrs. Nutter's arms, in which he was nearly throttled, while she sobbed and shrieked—

'Oh! Charley, dear—dearest Charley—Charley, darling—isn't it frightful?" and so on.

'Betty, take care of her,' was all he said, and that sternly, like a man quietly desperate, but with a dismal fury in his face.

He went into the little room on the other side of the now darkening hall, and shut the door, and locked it inside. It was partly because

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he did not choose to talk just now any more with his blubbering and shrieking wife. He was a very kind husband, in his way, but a most incapable nurse, especially in a case of hysterics.

He came out with a desk in his hands.

'Moggy,' he said, in a low tone, seeing his other servant-woman in the dusk crossing at the foot of the stairs, 'here, take this desk, leave it in our bedroom—'tis for the mistress; tell her so by-and-bye.'

The wench carried it up; but poor Mrs. Nutter was in no condition to comprehend anything, and was talking quite wildly, and seemed to be growing worse rather than better.

Nutter stood alone in the hall, with his back to the door from which he had just emerged, his hands in his pockets, and the same dreary and wicked shadow over his face.

'So that——Sturk will carry his point after all,' he muttered.

On the hall wainscot just opposite hung his horse-pistols; and when he saw them, and that wasn't for a while—for though he was looking straight at them, he was staring, really, quite through the dingy wooden panel at quite other objects three hundred miles away—when he *did* see them, I say, he growled in the same tone—

'I wish one of those bullets was through my head, so t'other was through his.'

And he cursed him with laconic intensity. Then Nutter slapped his pockets, like a man feeling if his keys and other portable chattels are all right before he leaves his home. But his countenance was that of one whose mind is absent and wandering. And he looked down on the ground, as it seemed in profound and troubled abstraction; and, after a while, he looked up again, and again glared on the cold pistols that hung before him—ready for anything. And he took down one with a snatch and weighed it in his hand, and fell to thinking again; and, as he did, kept opening and shutting the pan with a snap, and so for a long time, and thinking deeply to the tune of that castanet, and at last he roused himself, who knows from what dreams, and hung up the weapon again by its fellow, and looked about him.

The hall-door lay open, as Mary Matchwell had left it. Nutter stood on the door-step, where he could hear faintly, from above stairs, the cries and wails of poor, hysterical Mrs. Nutter. He remained there a good while, during which, unperceived by him, Dr. Toole's pestle-and-mortar-boy, who had entered by the back-way, had taken a seat in the hall. He was waiting for an empty draught-bottle, in exchange for a replenished flask of the same agreeable beverage, which he had just delivered; for physic was one of poor Mrs. Nutter's weak-

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nesses, though, happily, she did not swallow half what came home for her.

When Nutter turned round, the boy—a sharp, tattling vagabond—he knew him well, was reading a printed card he had picked up from the floor, with the impress of Nutter's hob-nailed tread upon it. It was endorsed upon the back, 'For Mrs. Macnamara, with the humble duty of her obedient servant, M. M.'

'What's that, sirrah?' shouted Nutter.

'For Mrs. Nutter, I think, sir,' said the urchin, jumping up with a start.

'Mrs. Nutter?' repeated he—'No—Mrs. Mac—Macnamara,' and he thrust it into his surtout pocket. 'And what brings you here sirrah?' he added savagely; for he thought everybody was spying after him now, and, as I said, he knew him for a tattling young dog—he had taken the infection from his master, who had trained him.

'Here, woman,' he cried to Moggy, who was passing again, 'give that pimping rascal his —— answer; and see, sirrah, if I find you sneaking about the place again, I'll lay that whip across your back.'

Nutter went into the small room again.

'An' how are ye, Jemmie—how's every inch iv you?' inquired Moggy of the boy, when his agitation was a little blown over.

'I'm elegant, thank ye,' he answered; 'an' what's the matther wid ye all. I cum through the kitchen, and seen no one.'

'Och? didn't you hear? The poor mistress—she's as bad as bad can be.' And then began a whispered confidence, broken short by Nutter's again emerging, with the leather belt he wore at night on, and a short back-sword, called a *coutteau de chasse*, therein, and a heavy walking-cane in his hand.

'Get tea for me, wench, in half an hour,' said he, this time quite quietly, though still sternly, and without seeming to observe the quaking boy, who, at first sight, referred these martial preparations to a resolution to do execution upon him forthwith; 'you'll find me in the garden when it's ready.'

And he strode out, and pushing open the wicket door in the thick garden hedge, and, with his cane shouldered, walked with a quick, resolute step down towards the pretty walk by the river, with the thick privet hedge and the row of old pear trees by it. And that was the last that was heard or seen of Mr. Nutter for some time.

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CHAPTER XLVIII.

SWANS ON THE WATER.

At about half-past six that evening, Puddock arrived at Captain Cluffe's lodgings, and for the last time the minstrels rehearsed their lovelorn and passionate ditties. They were drest 'all in their best,' under that outer covering, which partly for mystery and partly for bodily comfort—the wind, after the heavy rains of the last week, having come round to the east—these prudent troubadours wore.

Though they hardly glanced at the topic to one another, each had his delightful anticipations of the chances of the meeting. Puddock did not value Dangerfield a rush, and Cluffe's mind was pretty easy upon that point from the moment his proposal for Gertrude Chattesworth had taken wind.

Only for that cursed shower the other night, that made it incumbent on Cluffe, who had had two or three sharp little visits of his patrimonial gout, and no notion, of dying for love, to get to his quarters as quickly as might be—he had no doubt that the last stave of their first duet rising from the meadow of Belmont, with that charming roulade—devised by Puddock, and the pathetic twang-twang of his romantic instrument, would have been answered by the opening of the drawing-room window, and Aunt Becky's imperious summons to the serenaders to declare themselves, and come in and partake of supper!

The only thing that at all puzzled him, unpleasantly connected with that unsuccessful little freak of musical love-making, was the fellow they saw getting away from under the open window—the very same at which Lilias Walsingham had unintentionally surprised her friend Gertrude. He had a surtout on, with the cape cut exactly after the fashion of Dangerfield, and a three-cocked hat with very pinched corners, in the French style, which identical hat Cluffe was ready to swear he saw upon Dangerfield's head very early one morning, as he accidentally espied him viewing his peas and tulips in the little garden of the Brass Castle by the river side.

'Twas fixed, in fact, in Cluffe's mind that Dangerfield was the man; and what the plague need had a declared lover of any such clandestine manœuvres. Was it possible that the old scoundrel was, after all, directing his night visits differently, and keeping the Aunt in play, as a reserve, in the event of the failure of his suit to the niece. Plans as gross, he knew, had succeeded; old women were so devilish easily won, and loved money, too, so well sometimes.

These sly fellows agreed that they must not go to Belmont by Chapel-

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izod-bridge, which would lead them through the town, in front of the barrack, and under the very sign-board of the Phœnix. No, they would go by the Knockmaroon-road, cross the river by the ferry, and unperceived, and unsuspected, enter the grounds of Belmont on the further side.

So away went the amorous musicians, favoured by the darkness, and talking in an undertone, and thinking more than they talked, while little Puddock, from under his cloak, scratched a faint little arpeggio and a chord, ever and anon, upon 'the inthrument.'

When they reached the ferry, the boat was tied at the near side, but deuce a ferryman could they see. So they began to shout and hallo, singly, and together, until Cluffe, in much ire and disgust, exclaimed—

'Curse the sot—drunk in some whiskey-shop—the blackguard! That is the way such scoundrels throw away their chances, and help to fill the high roads with beggars and thieves; curse him, I shan't have a note left if we go on bawling this way. I suppose we must go home again.'

'Fiddle-thick!' exclaimed the magnanimous Puddock. 'I pulled myself across little more than a year ago, and 'twas as easy as—as—anything. Get in, an' loose her when I tell you.'

This boat was managed by means of a rope stretched across the stream from bank to bank; seizing which, in both hands, the boatman, as he stood in his skiff, hauled it, as it seemed, with very moderate exertion across the river.

Cluffe chuckled as he thought how sold the rascally boatman would be, on returning, to find his bark gone over to the other side.

'Don't be uneathy about the poor fellow,' said Puddock; 'we'll come down in the morning and make him a present, and explain how it occurred.'

'Explain *yourself*—poor fellow be hanged!' muttered Cluffe, as he took his seat, for he did not part with his silver lightly. 'I say, Puddock,' tell me when I'm to slip the rope.'

The signal given, Cluffe let go, entertaining himself with a little jingle of Puddock's guitar, of which he had charge, and a verse or two of their last song; while the plump little Lieutenant, standing upright, midships in the boat, hauled away, though not quite so deftly as was desirable. Some two or three minutes had passed before they reached the middle of the stream, which was, as Puddock afterwards remarked, 'gigantically thwollen;' and at this point they came to something very like a standstill.

'I say, Puddock, keep her head a little more up the stream, will

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you?' said Cluffe, thinking no evil, and only to show his nautical knowledge.

'It's easy to say keep her head up the stream,' gasped Puddock, who was now labouring fearfully, and quite crimson in the face, tugging his words up with a desperate lisp, and too much out of breath to say more.

The shades of the night and the roar of the waters prevented Cluffe observing these omens aright.

'What the plague are you doing *now?*' cried Cluffe, arresting a decorative passage in the middle, and for the first time seriously uncomfortable, as the boat slowly spun round, bringing what Cluffe called her head—though head and tail were pretty much alike—toward the bank they had quitted.

'Curse you, Puddock, why—what are you going back for? you can't do it.'

'Lend a hand,' bawled Puddock, in extremity. 'I say, help, seize the rope; I say, Cluffe, quick, sir, my arms are breaking.'

There was no exaggeration in this—there seldom was in any thing Puddock said; and the turn of the boat had twisted his arms like the strands of a rope.

'Hold on, Puddock, curse you, I'm coming,' roared Cluffe, quite alive to the situation. 'If you let go, I'm *diddled* but I'll shoot you.'

'Catch the rope, I thay, thir, or 'tith all over!'

Cluffe, who had only known that he was slowly spinning round, and that Puddock was going to commit him to the waves, made a vehement exertion to catch the rope, but it was out of reach, and the boat rocked so suddenly from his rising, that he sat down by mistake again, with a violent plump that made his teeth gnash, in his own place; and the shock and his alarm stimulated his anger.

'Hold on, sir; hold on, you little devil, I say, one minute, here—hold—hollo!'

While Cluffe was shouting these words, and scrambling forward, Puddock was crying—

'Curth it, Cluffe, quick—oh! hang it, I can't thtand it—bleth my *thoul!*'

And Puddock let go, and the boat and its precious freightage, with a horrid whisk and a sweep, commenced its seaward career in the dark.

'Take the oars, sir, hang you!' cried Cluffe.

'There are no oarth,' replied Puddock, solemnly.

'Or the helm.'

'There'th no helm.'

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'And what the devil, sir?' and a splash of cold water soused the silken calves of Cluffe at this moment.

'Heugh! heugh!—and what the devil *will* you do, sir? you don't want to drown me, I suppose?' roared Cluffe, holding hard by the gunwale.

'*You* can thwim, Cluffe; jump in, and don't mind me,' said little Puddock, sublimely.

Cluffe, who was a bit of a boaster, had bragged, one evening at mess, of his swimming, which he said was famous in his school days; 'twas a lie, but Puddock believed it implicitly.

'Thank you!' roared Cluffe. 'Swim, indeed!—buttoned up this way—and—and the gout too.'

'I say, Cluffe, save the guitar, if you can,' said Puddock.

In reply, Cluffe cursed that instrument through his teeth, with positive fury, and its owner; and, indeed, he was so incensed at this unfeeling request, that if he had known where it was, I think he would have gone nigh to smash it on Puddock's head, or at least, like the 'Minstrel Boy,' to tear its chords asunder; for Cluffe was hot, especially when he was frightened. But he forgot—though it was hanging at that moment by a pretty scarlet and gold ribbon about his neck.

'Guitar be *diddled!*' cried he; ''tis gone—where *we*'re going—to the bottom. What devil possessed you, sir, to drown us this way?'

Puddock sighed. They were passing at this moment the quiet banks of the pleasant meadow of Belmont, and the lights twinkled from the bow-window in the drawing-room. I don't know whether Puddock saw them—Cluffe certainly did not.

'Hallo! hallo!—a rope!' cried Cluffe, who had hit upon this desperate expedient for raising the neighbourhood. 'A rope—a rope—hollo! hollo!—a ro-o-o-ope!'

And Aunt Becky, who heard the wild whooping, mistook it for drunken fellows at their diversions, and delivered their sentiments in the drawing-room accordingly.

CHAPTER XLIX.

SWANS IN THE WATER.

'WE'RE coming to something—what's that?' said Puddock, as a long row of black stakes presented themselves at some distance ahead, in the dusky moonlight, slanting across the stream.

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'Tis the salmon-weir!' roared Cluffe with an oath that subsided into something like a sickening prayer.

It was only a fortnight before that a tipsy fellow had been found drowned in the net. Cluffe had lost his head much more than Puddock, though Cluffe had fought duels. But then, he really could not swim a bit, and he was so confoundedly buckled up.

'Sit to the right. Trim the boat, sir!' said little Puddock.

'Trim the devil!' bawled Cluffe, to whom this order of Puddock's, it must be owned a useless piece of marinetism in their situation, was especially disgusting; and he added, looking furiously ahead—''Tisn't the boat I'd trim, I promise you: you—you ridiculous murderer!'

Just then Puddock's end of the boat touched a stone, or a post, or something in the current, and that in which Cluffe sat came wheeling swiftly round across the stream, and brought the gallant Captain so near the bank that, with a sudden jerk, he caught the end of a branch that stretched far over the water, and, spite of the confounded tightness of his toilet, with the energy of sheer terror, climbed a good way; but, reaching a point where the branch forked, he could get no further, though he tugged like a brick. But what was a fat fellow of fifty, laced, and buckled, and buttoned up, like poor Cluffe—with his legs higher up among the foliage than his head and body—to do, and with his right calf caught in the fork of a branch, so as to arrest all progress, and especially as the Captain was plainly too much for the branch, which was drooping toward the water, and emitting sounds premonitory of a smash.

With a long, screaking crash the branch stooped down to the water, and, so soon as the old element made itself acquainted with those parts that reached it first, the gallant Captain, with a sort of sob, redoubled his efforts, and down came the faithless bough, more and more perpendicularly, until his nicely got-up cue and bag, then his powdered head, and finally Captain Cluffe's handsome features, went under the surface. When this occurred, he instantaneously disengaged his legs with a vague feeling that his last struggle above water was over.

His feet immediately touched the bottom; he stood erect, little above his middle, and quite out of the main current, within half-a-dozen steps of the bank, and he found himself—he scarcely knew how—on terra firma, impounded in a little flower-garden, with lilacs and laburnums, and sweet-briars, and, through a window close at hand, whom should he see but Dangerfield, who was drying his hands in a towel; and, as Cluffe stood for a moment, letting the water pour down through his sleeves, he further saw him make some queer little arrangements, and eventually pour out and swallow a glass of brandy,

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and was tempted to invoke his aid on the spot; but some small incivilities which he had bestowed upon Dangerfield, when he thought he cherished designs upon Aunt Rebecca, forbade; and at that moment he spied the little wicket that opened upon the road, and Dangerfield stept close up to the window, and cried sternly—'Who's there?' with his grim spectacles close to the window.

The boyish instinct of 'hide and seek" took possession of Cluffe, and he glided forth from the precincts of the Brass Castle upon the high road, just as the little hall-door was pushed open, and he heard the harsh tones of Dangerfield challenging the gooseberry bushes and hollyhocks, and thrashing the evergreens with his cane.

Cluffe hied straight to his lodging, and ordered a sack posset. Worthy Mrs. Mason eyed him in silent consternation, drenched and dishevelled, wild, and discharging water from every part of his clothing and decorations, as he presented himself without a hat, before her dim dipt candle in the hall.

'I'll take that—that vessel, if you please, sir, that's hanging about your neck,' said the mild and affrighted lady, meaning Puddock's guitar, through the circular orifice of which, under the chords, the water with which it was filled occasionally splashed.

'Oh—eh?—the instrument?—confound it!' and rather sheepishly he got the gay red and gold ribbon over his dripping head, and placing it in her hand without explanation, he said—'A warming-pan as quickly as may be, I beg, Mrs. Mason—and the posset, I do earnestly request. You see—I—I've been nearly drowned—and—and I can't answer for consequences if there be one minute's delay.'

And up he went streaming, with Mrs. Mason's candle, to his bedroom, and dragged off his clinging garments, and dried his fat body, like a man coming out of a bath, and roared for hot water for his feet, and bellowed for the posset and warming-pan, and rolled into his bed, and kept the whole house in motion.

And so soon as he had swallowed his cordial, and toasted his sheets, and with the aid of his man rolled himself in a great blanket, and clapped his feet in a tub of hot water, and tumbled back again into his bed, he bethought him of Puddock, and ordered his man to take his compliments to Captain Burgh and Lieutenant Lillyman, the tenants of the nearest lodging-house, and to request either to come to him forthwith on a matter of life or death.

Lillyman was at home, and came.

'Puddock's drowned, my dear Lillyman, and I'm little better. The ferry boat broke away with us. Do go down to the Adjutant—they ought to raise the salmon nets—I'm very ill myself—very ill, indeed

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—else I'd have assisted; but you know *me*, Lillyman. Poor Puddock —'tis a sad business—but lose no time.'

'And can't he swim?' asked Lillyman, aghast.

'Swim?—ay, like a stone, poor fellow! If he had only thrown himself out, and held by me, hang it, I'd have brought him to shore; but poor Puddock, he lost his head. And I—you see me here—don't forget to tell them the condition you found me in, and—and—now don't lose a moment.'

So off went Lillyman to give the alarm at the barrack.

CHAPTER L.

TREATING OF SOME CONFUSION, IN CONSEQUENCE, IN THE CLUB-ROOM OF THE PHŒNIX AND ELSEWHERE, AND OF A HAT THAT WAS PICKED UP.

When Cluffe sprang out of the boat, he was very near capsizing it and finishing Puddock off-hand, but she righted and shot away swiftly towards the very centre of the weir, over which, in a sheet of white foam, she swept, and continued her route toward Dublin—bottom upward, leaving little Puddock, however, safe and sound, clinging to a post, at top, and standing upon a rough sort of plank, which afforded a very unpleasant footing, by which the nets were visited from time to time.

'Hollo! are you safe, Cluffe?' cried the little Lieutenant, quite firm, though a little dizzy, on his narrow stand, with the sheets of foam whizzing under his feet; what had become of his musical companion he had not the faintest notion, and when he saw the boat hurled over near the sluice, and drive along the stream upside down, he nearly despaired.

But when the Captain's military cloak, which he took for Cluffe himself, followed in the track of the boat, whisking, sprawling, and tumbling, in what Puddock supposed to be the agonies of drowning, and went over the weir and disappeared from view, returning no answer to his screams of 'Strike out, Cluffe! to your right, Cluffe. Hollo! to your right,' he quite gave the Captain over.

'Surrendhur, you thievin' villian, or I'll put the contints iv this gun into yir carcass,' shouted an awful voice from the right bank, and Puddock saw the outline of a gigantic marksman, preparing to fire into his corresponding flank.

'What do you mean, sir?' shouted Puddock, in extreme wrath and discomfort.

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'Robbin' the nets, you spalpeen; if you throw them salmon your hidin' undher your coat into the wather, be the tare-o'-war'——

'What salmon, sir?' interrupted the Lieutenant. 'Why, salmon's not in season, sir.'

'None iv yer flummery, you schamin' scoundhrel; but jest come here and give yourself up, for so sure as you don't, or dar to stir an inch from that spot, I'll blow you to smithereens.'

'Captain Cluffe is drowned, sir; and I'm Lieutenant Puddock,' rejoined the officer.

'Tare-an-ouns, an' is it yerself, Captain Puddock, that's in it?' cried the man. 'I ax yer pardon; but I tuk you for one of thim vagabonds that's always plundherin' the fish. And who in the wide world, Captain jewel, id expeck to see you there, meditatin' in the middle of the river, this time o' night; an' I dunna how in the world you got there, at all, at all, for the planking is carried away behind you since yistherday.'

'Give an alarm, if you please, sir, this moment,' urged Puddock. 'Captain Cluffe has gone over this horrid weir, not a minute since, and is I fear drowned.'

'Dhrownded! och! bloody wars.'

'Yes, sir, send some one this moment down the stream with a rope'—

'Hollo, Jemmy?' cried the man, and whistled through his crooked finger.

'Jemmy,' said he to the boy who presented himself, 'run down to Tom Garret, at the Millbridge, and tell him Captain Cluffe's dhrownded over the weir, and to take the boat-hook and rope—he's past the bridge by this time—ay is he at the King's House—an' if he brings home the corpse alive or dead, before an hour, Captain Puddock here will give him twenty guineas reward.' So away went the boy.

''Tis an unaisy way you're situated yourself, I'm afeard,' observed the man.

'Have the goodness to say, sir, by what meanth if any, I can reach either bank of the river,' lisped Puddock, with dignity.

''Tis thrue for you, Captain, *that's* the chat—how the divil to get you alive out o' the pisition you're in. Can you swim?'

'No, thir.'

'An' how the dickens did you get there?'

'I'd rather hear, sir, how I'm to get away, if you please,' replied Puddock, loftily.

'Are you bare-legged?' shouted the man.

'No, sir,' answered the little officer, rather shocked.

'An' you're there wid shoes on your feet?'

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'Of course, sir,' answered Puddock.

'Chuck them into the water this instant minute,' roared the man.

'Why, there are valuable buckles, sir,' remonstrated Puddock.

'Do you mane to say you'd rather be dhrownded in yer buckles than alive in yer stockin' feet?' he replied.

There were some cross expostulations, but eventually the fellow came out to Puddock. Perhaps the feat was not quite so perilous as he represented; but it certainly was not a pleasant one. Puddock had a rude and crazy sort of banister to cling to, and a rugged and slippery footing; but slowly and painfully, from one post to another, he made his way, and at last jumped on the solid, though not dry land, his life and his buckles safe.

'I'll give you a guinea in the morning, if you come to my quarterth, Mr. —— thir,' and, without waiting a second, away he ran by the footpath, and across the bridge, right into the Phœnix, and burst into the club-room. There were assembled old Arthur Slowe, Tom Trimmer, from Lucan, old Trumble, Jack Collop, Colonel Strafford, and half-a-dozen more members, including some of the officers—O'Flaherty among the number, a little 'flashy with liquor' as the phrase then was.

Puddock stood in the wide opened door, with the handle in his hand. He was dishevelled, soused with water, bespattered with mud, his round face very pale, and he fixed a wild stare on the company. The clatter of old Trimmer's backgammon, Slowe's disputations over the draftboard with Colonel Strafford, Collop's dissertation on the points of that screw of a horse he wanted to sell, and the general buzz of talk, were all almost instantaneously suspended on the appearance of this phantom, and Puddock exclaimed—

'Gentlemen, I'm thorry to tell you, Captain Cluffe ith, I fear, drowned!'

'Cluffe?' 'Drowned?' 'By Jupiter!' 'You don't say so?' and a round of such ejaculations followed this announcement.

Allow me here to mention that I permit my people to swear by all the persons of the Roman mythology. There was a horrible profanity in the matter of oaths in those days, and I found that without changing the form of sentences, and sacrificing idioms, at times, I could not manage the matter satisfactorily otherwise.

'He went over the salmon weir—I saw him—Coyle's weir—headlong, poor fellow! I shouted after him, but he could not anthwer, so pray let's be off, and'——

Here he recognised the Colonel with a low bow and paused. The commanding officer instantaneously despatched Lieutenant Brady, who was there, to order out Sergeant Blakeney and his guard, and any six

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good swimmers in the regiment who might volunteer, with a reward of twenty guineas for whoever should bring in Cluffe alive, or ten guineas for his body; and the fat fellow all the time in his bed sipping sack posset!

So away ran Brady and a couple more of the young fellows at their best pace—no one spared himself on this errand—and little Puddock and another down to the bridge. It was preposterous.

By this time Lillyman was running like mad from Cluffe's lodgings along Martin's row to the rescue of Puddock, who, at that moment with his friends and the aid of a long pole, was poking into a little floating tanglement of withered leaves, turf, and rubbish, under the near arch of the bridge, in the belief that he was dealing with the mortal remains of Cluffe.

Lillyman overtook Toole at the corner of the street just in time to hear the scamper of the men, at double-quick, running down the sweep of the road to the bridge, and to hear the shouting that arose from the parade-ground by the river bank, from the men within the barrack precincts.

Toole joined Lillyman running.

'What the plague's this hubbub and hullo?' he cried.

'Puddock's drowned,' panted Lillyman.

'Puddock! bless us! where?' puffed Toole.

'Hollo! you, sir—have they heard it—is he *drowned?*' cried Lillyman to the sentry outside the gate.

'Dhrownded? yes, sir,' replied the man saluting.

'Is help gone?'

'Yes, sir, Lieutenant Brady, and Sergeant Blakeney, and nine men.'

'Come along,' cried Lilllyman to Toole, and they started afresh. They heard the shouting by the river bank, and followed it by the path round the King's House, passing the Phœnix; and old Colonel Strafford, who was gouty, and no runner, standing with a stern and anxious visage at the door, along with old Trumble, Slowe, and Trimmer, and some of the maids and drawers in the rear, all in consternation.

'Bring me the news,' screamed the Colonel, as they passed.

Lillyman was the better runner. Toole a good deal blown, but full of pluck, was labouring in the rear; Lillyman jumped over the stile, at the river path; and Toole saw an officer who resembled 'poor Puddock,' he thought, a good deal, cross the road, and follow in Lillyman's wake. The Doctor crossed the stile next, and made his best gallop in rear of the plump officer, excited by the distant shouting, and full of horrible curiosity and good-nature.

Nearly opposite Inchicore they fished up an immense dead pig; and

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Toole said, to his amazement, he found Puddock crying over it, and calling it 'my brother!' And this little scene added another very popular novelty to the Doctor's stock of convivial monologues.

Toole, who loved Puddock, hugged him heartily, and when he could get breath, shouted triumphantly after the more advanced party, 'He's found, he's found!'

'Oh, thank Heaven!' cried little Puddock, with upturned eyes; 'but is he really found?'

The Doctor almost thought that his perils had affected his intellect.

'Is he found—are *you* found?' cried the Doctor, resuming that great shake by both hands, which, in his momentary puzzle he had suspended.

'I—a—oh, dear!—I don't quite understand—is he lost? for mercy's sake is Cluffe lost?' implored Puddock.

'Lost in his bedclothes, maybe,' cried Lillyman, who had joined them.

'But he's not—he's *not* drowned?'

'Pish! drowned, indeed! unless he's drowned in the crock of hot water he's clapt his legs into.'

'Where is he—where's Cluffe?'

'Hang it!—he's in bed, in his lodging, drinking hot punch this half-hour.'

'But are you certain?'

'Why, I saw him there myself,' answered Lillyman, with an oath.

Poor little Puddock actually clasped his hands, looked up, and poured forth a hearty almost hysterical, thanksgiving; for he had charged Cluffe's death altogether upon his own soul, and his relief was beyond expression.

In the meantime, the old gentlemen of the club were in a thrilling suspense, and that not altogether disagreeable state of horror in which men chew the cud of bitter fancy over other men's catastrophes. After about ten minutes in came young Spaight.

'Well,' said the Colonel, 'is Cluffe safe, or—eh?'

'Cluffe's safe—only half drowned; but poor Puddock's lost.'

'What!'

'Drowned, I'm afraid.'

'Drowned! who says so?' repeated the Colonel.

'Cluffe—everybody.'

'Why, there it is!' replied the Colonel, with a great oath, breaking through all his customary reserve and stiffness, and flinging his cocked-hat on the middle of the table, piteously, 'A fellow that can't swim a yard *will* go by way of saving a great—a large gentleman, like Captain Cluffe, from drowning, and he's pulled in himself; and so—bless my soul! what's to be done?'

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So the Colonel broke into a lamentation, and a fury, and a wonder. 'Cluffe and Puddock, the two steadiest officers in the corps! He had a devilish good mind to put Cluffe under arrest—the idiots—Puddock—he was devilish sorry. There wasn't a more honourable'—*et cetera*. In fact, a very angry and pathetic funeral oration, during which, accompanied by Doctor Toole, Lieutenant Puddock, in person, entered; and the Colonel stopped short with his eyes and mouth very wide open, and said the Colonel very sternly,

'I—I'm glad to see, sir, you're safe; and—and—I suppose, I shall hear now that *Cluffe's* drowned?' and he stamped the emphasis on the floor.

While all this was going on, some of the soldiers had actually got into Dublin. The tide was in, and the water very high at 'Bloody Bridge.' A hat, near the corner, was whisking round and round, always trying to get under the arch, and always, when on the point, twirled round again into the corner—an image of the 'Flying Dutchman' and hope deferred. A watchman's crozier hooked the giddy thing. It was not a military hat; but they brought it back, and the captive was laid in the guard-room—mentioned by me because we've seen that identical hat before.

CHAPTER LI.

HOW CHARLES NUTTER'S TEA, PIPE, AND TOBACCO-BOX WERE ALL SET OUT FOR HIM IN THE SMALL PARLOUR AT THE MILLS; AND HOW THAT NIGHT WAS PASSED IN THE HOUSE BY THE CHURCH-YARD.

Mrs. Nutter and Mrs. Sturk, the wives of the two men who most hated one another within the vicinage of Chapelizod—natural enemies, holding aloof one from another, and each regarding the other in a puzzled way, with a sort of apprehension and horror, as the familiar of that worst and most formidable of men—her husband—were this night stricken with a common fear and sorrow.

Darkness descended on the Mills and the river—a darkness deepened by the umbrageous trees that grouped about the old grey house in which poor Mrs. Nutter lay so ill at ease. Moggy carried the gingling tray of tea-things into Nutter's little study, and lighted his candles, and set the silver snuffers in the dish, and thought she heard him coming, and ran back again, and returned with the singing 'tea-kitchen,' and then away again, for the thin buttered toast under its china cover, which our ancestors loved.

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Then she listened—but 'twas a mistake—it was the Widow Macan's step, who carried the ten pailfuls of water up from the river to fill the butt in the backyard every Tuesday and Friday, for a shilling a week, and 'a cup o' tay with the girls in the kitchen.'

Then Moggy lighted the fire with the stump of a candle, for the night was a little chill, and she set the small round table beside it, and laid her master's pipe and tobacco-box on it, and listened, and began to wonder what detained him.

So she went out into the sharp still air, and stood on the hall-door step, and listened again. Presently she heard the Widow Macan walking up from the garden with the last pail on her head, who stopped when she saw her, and set down the vessel upon the corner of the clumsy little balustrade by the door-step. So Moggy declared her uneasiness, which waxed greater when Mrs. Macan told her that 'the masther, God bless him, wasn't in the garden.'

She had seen him standing at the river's edge, while she passed and repassed. He did not move a finger, or seem to notice her, and was looking down into the water. When she came back the third or fourth time, he was gone.

At Moggy's command she went back into the garden, though she assured her, solemnly—'twas nansince lookin' there'—and called Mr. Nutter, at first in a deferential and hesitating way; but, emboldened and excited by the silence, for she began to feel unaccountably queer, in a louder and a louder key, till she was certain that he was neither in the garden nor in the orchard, nor anywhere near the house. And when she stopped, the silence seemed awful, and the darkness under the trees closed round her with a supernatural darkness, and the river at the foot of the walk seemed snorting some inarticulate story of horror. So she locked the garden door quickly, looking over her shoulder for she knew not what, and ran faster than she often did along the sombre walk up to the hall door, and told her tale to Moggy, and begged to carry the pail in by the hall-door.

In they came, and Moggy shut the hall-door, and turned the key in it. Perhaps 'twas the state in which the poor lady lay up stairs that helped to make them excited and frightened. Betty was sitting by her bedside, and Toole had been there, and given her some opiate, I suppose, for she had dropped into a flushed snoring sleep, a horrid counterfeit of repose. But she had first had two or three frightful fits, and all sorts of wild, screaming talk between. Perhaps it was the apparition of Mary Matchwell whose evil influence was so horribly attested by the dismal spectacle she had left behind her that predisposed them to panic; but assuredly each anticipated no good from

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the master's absence, and had a foreboding of something bad, of which they did not speak; but only disclosed it by looks, and listening, and long silences. The lights burning in Nutter's study invited them, and there the ladies seated themselves, and made their tea in the kitchen tea-pot, and clapped it on the hob, and listened for sounds from Mrs. Nutter's chamber, and for the step of her husband crossing the little court-yard; and they grew only more nervous from listening, and there came every now and then a little tapping on the window-pane. It was only, I think, a little sprig of the climbing-rose that was nailed by the wall, nodding at every breath, and rapping, like unseen finger-tops, on the glass. But, as small things will, with such folk, under such circumstances, it frightened them confoundedly.

Then, on a sudden, there came a great yell from poor Mrs. Nutter's chamber, and they both stood up very pale. The Widow Macan, with the cup in her hand that she was 'tossing' at the moment, and Moggy, all aghast, invoked a blessing under her breath, and they heard loud cries and sudden volleys of talk, and Biddy's voice, soothing the patient.

Poor Mrs. Nutter had started up, all on a sudden, from her narcotic doze, with a hideous scream that had frightened the women down stairs. Then she cried—

'Where am I?' and 'Oh, the witch—the witch!'

'Oh! no, ma'am, dear,' replied Betty; 'now, aisy, ma'am, darling.'

'I'm going mad.'

'No, ma'am, dear!—there now—sure 'tis poor Betty that's in it—don't be afear'd ma'am.'

'Oh, Betty, hold me—don't go—I'm mad—am I mad?'

Then, in the midst of Betty's consolations, she broke into a flood of tears, and seemed in some sort relieved; and Betty gave her her drops again, and she began to mumble to herself, and so to doze.

At the end of another ten minutes, with a scream, she started up again.

'That's her step—where are you, Betty?' she shrieked, and when Betty ran to the bedside, she held her so hard that the maid was ready to cry out, leering all the time over her shoulder—'Where's Charles Nutter?—I saw him speaking to you.'

Then the poor little woman grew quieter, and by her looks and moans, and the clasping of her hands, and her up-turned eyes, seemed to be praying; and when Betty stealthily opened the press to take out another candle, her poor mistress uttered another terrible scream, crying—

'You wretch! her head won't fit—you can't hide her;' and the

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poor woman jumped out of her bed, shrieking 'Charles, Charles, Charles!'

Betty grew so nervous and frightened, that she fairly bawled to her colleague, Moggy, and told her she would not stay in the room unless she sat up all night with her. So, together they kept watch and ward, and as the night wore on, Mrs. Nutter's slumbers grew more natural and less brief, and her paroxysms of waking terror less maniacal. Still she would waken, with a cry that thrilled them, from some frightful vision, and seem to hear or see nothing aright for a good while after, and muttering to the frightened maids—

'Listen to the knocking—oh;—breathing outside the door—bolt it, Betty—girls, say your prayers—'tis he,' or sometimes, ''tis she.'

And thus this heavy night wore over; and the wind, which began to rise as the hours passed, made sounds full of sad untranslatable meaning in the ears of the watchers.

Poor Mrs. Sturk meanwhile, in the House by the Church-yard, sat listening and wondering, and plying her knitting-needles in the drawing-room. When the hour of her Barney's expected return had passed some time, she sent down to the barrack, and then to the Club, and then on to the King's House, with her service to Mrs. Strafford, to inquire after her spouse. But her first and her second round of inquiries, despatched at the latest minute at which she was likely to find any body out of bed to answer them, were altogether fruitless. And the lights went out in one house after another, and the Phœnix shut its doors, and her own servants were for hours gone to bed; and the little town of Chapelizod was buried in the silence of universal slumber. And poor Mrs. Sturk still sat in her drawing-room, more and more agitated and frightened.

But her missing soldier did not turn up, and Leonora sat and listened hour after hour. No sound of return, not even the solemn clank and fiery snort of the fiend-horse under her window, or the 'ho-lo, ho-la—my life, my love!' of the phantom rider, cheated her with a momentary hope.

Poor Mrs. Sturk! She raised the window a few inches, that she might the better hear the first distant ring of his coming on the road. She forgot he had not his horse that night, and was but a pedestrian. But somehow the night-breeze through the aperture made a wolfish howling and sobbing, that sounded faint and far away, and had a hateful character of mingled despair and banter in it.

She said every now and then aloud, to reassure herself—'what a noise the wind makes to be sure!' and after a while she opened the window wider. But her candle flared, and the flame tossed wildly

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