LEVER CHARLES JAMES

THE MARTINS OF CRO' MARTIN, VOL. I (OF II)

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Содержание

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TO THE REVEREND MORTIMER O'SULLIVAN, D.D

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

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

Ever sincerely yours,
CHARLES LEVER
Casa Cappoli, Florence, May, 1856

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1872

When I had made my arrangement with my publishers for this new story, I was not sorry for many reasons to place the scene of it in Ireland. One of my late critics, in noticing "Roland Cashel" and "The Daltons," mildly rebuked me for having fallen into doubtful company, and half censured – in Bohemian – several of the characters in these novels. I was not then, still less am I now, disposed to argue the point with my censor, and show that there is a very wide difference between the persons who move in the polite world, with a very questionable morality, and those patented adventurers whose daily existence is the product of daily address. The more one sees of life, the more is he struck by the fact that the mass of mankind is rarely very good or very bad, that the business of life is carried on with mixed motives; the best people being those who are least selfish, and the worst being little other than those who seek their own objects with slight regard for the consequences to others, and even less scruple as to the means.

Any uniformity in good or evil would be the deathblow to that genteel comedy which goes on around us, and whose highest interest very often centres in the surprises we give ourselves by unexpected lines of action and unlooked-for impulses. As this

strange drama unfolded itself before me, it had become a passion with me to watch the actors, and speculate on what they might do. For this Florence offered an admirable stage. It was eminently cosmopolitan; and, in consequence, less under the influence of any distinct code of public opinion than any section of the several nationalities I might have found at home.

There was a universal toleration abroad; and the Spaniard conceded to the German, and the Russian to the Englishman, much on the score of nationality; and did not question too closely a morality which, after all, might have been little other than a conventional habit. Exactly in the same way, however, that one hurries away from the life of a city and its dissipations, to breathe the fresh air and taste the delicious quiet of the country, did I turn from these scenes of splendor, from the crush of wealth, and the conflict of emotion, to that Green Island, where so many of my sympathies were intertwined, and where the great problem of human happiness was on its trial on issues that differed wonderfully little from those that were being tried in gilded salons, and by people whose names were blazoned in history.

Ireland, at the time I speak of, was beginning to feel that sense of distrust and jealousy between the owner and the tiller of the soil which, later on, was to develop itself into open feud. The old ties that have bound the humble to the rich man, and which were hallowed by reciprocal acts of good-will and benevolence, were being loosened. Benefits were canvassed with suspicion,

ungracious or unholy acts were treasured up as cruel wrongs. The political agitator had so far gained the ear of the people, that he could persuade them that there was not a hardship or a grievance of their lot that could not be laid at the door of the landlord. He was taught to regard the old relation of love and affection to the owner of the soil, as the remnants of a barbarism that had had its day, and he was led to believe that whether the tyranny that crushed him was the Established Church or the landlord, there was a great Liberal party ready to aid him in resisting either or both, when he could summon courage for the effort. By what promptings the poor man was brought to imagine that a reign of terror would suffice to establish him in an undisputed possession of the soil, and that the best lease was a loaded musket, it is not either my wish nor my duty here to narrate; I only desire to call my reader's attention to the time itself, as a transition period when the peasant had begun to resent some of the ties that had bound him to his landlord, and had not yet conceived the idea of that formidable conspiracy which issues its death-warrants and never is at a loss for the agents to enforce them. There were at the time some who, seeing the precarious condition of the period, had their grave forebodings of what was to come, when further estrangement between the two classes was accomplished, and the poor man should come to see in the rich only an oppressor and a tyrant. There was not at that time the armed resistance to rents, nor the threatening letter system to which we were afterwards to become accustomed, still less was there the thought that the

Legislature would interfere to legalize the demands by which the tenant was able to coerce his landlord; and for a brief interval there did seem a possibility of reuniting once again, by the ties of benefit and gratitude, the two classes whose real welfare depends on concord and harmony. I have not the shadow of a pretext to be thought didactic, but I did believe that if I recalled in fiction some of the traits which once had bound up the relations of rich and poor, and given to our social system many of the characteristics of the family, I should be reviving pleasant memories if not doing something more.

To this end I sketched the character of Mary Martin. By making the opening of my story date from the time of the Relief Bill, I intended to picture the state of the country at one of the most memorable eras in its history, and when an act of the Legislature assumed to redress inequalities, compose differences, and allay jealousies of centuries' growth, and make of two widely differing races one contented people.

I had not, I own, any implicit faith in Acts of Parliament, and I had a fervent belief in what kindness – when combined with knowledge of Ireland – could do with Irishmen. I have never heard of a people with whom sympathy could do so much, nor the want of it be so fatal. I have never heard of any other people to whom the actual amount of a benefit was of less moment than the mode it was bestowed. I have never read of a race who, in great poverty and many privations, attach a higher value to the consideration that is bestowed on them than to the actual material

boons, and feel such a seemingly disproportioned gratitude for kind words and generous actions.

What might not be anticipated from a revulsion of sentiment in a people like this, to what violence might not this passion for vengeance be carried, if the notion possessed them that they, whom she called her betters, only traded on the weakness of their poverty and the imbecility of their good faith? It was in a fruitful soil of this kind that the agitation now sowed the seeds of distrust and disorder; and with what fatal rapidity the poison reproduced itself and spread, the history of late years is the testimony.

If such traits as I have endeavored to picture in Mary Martin were engaged in the work of benevolence tomorrow, they would be met on every side by discouragement and defeat. The priest would denounce them as a propaganda artfully intended to sap the ancient faith of the people; the agitators would denounce them as the cunning flatteries of political solicitation; the people themselves would distrust them as covering some secret object; and the National Press would be certain to utter its warnings against whatever promised to establish peace or contentment to the land.

I have said already, and I repeat it here, that this character of Mary Martin is purely fictitious; and there is the more need I should say it, since there was once a young lady of this very name, – many traits of whose affection for the people and efforts for their well being might be supposed to have been my original. To my great regret I never had the happiness to have met her;

however, I have heard much of her devotion and her goodness.

I am not sure that some of my subordinate characters were not drawn from life. Mrs. Nelligan, I remember, had her type in a little Galway town I once stopped at, and Dan Nelligan had much in common with one who has since held a distinguished place on the Bench.

Of the terrible epidemic which devastated Ireland, there was much for which I drew on my own experience. Of its fearful ravages in the west, in the wilds of Clare, and that lonely promontory that stretches at the mouth of the Shannon into the Atlantic, I had been the daily witness; and even to recall some of the incidents passingly was an effort of great pain.

Of one feature of the people at this disastrous time, I could not say enough; nor could any words of mine do justice to the splendid heroism with which they bore up, and the noble generosity they showed each other in misfortune. It is but too often remarked how selfish men are made by misery, and how fatal is a common affliction to that charity that cares for others. There was none of this here; I never in any condition or class recognized more traits of thoughtful kindness and self-denial than I did amongst these poor, famished, and forgotten people. I never witnessed in the same perfection, how a widespread affliction could call up a humanity great as itself, and make very commonplace natures something actually heroic and glorious.

Nothing short of the fatal tendency I have to digression, and the watchful care I am bound to bestow against this fault,

prevented me from narrating several incidents with which my own experience had made me acquainted. Foreign as these were to the burden of my tale, it was only by an effort I overcame the temptation to recall them.

If a nation is to be judged by her bearing under calamity, Ireland – and she has had some experiences – comes well through the ordeal. That we may yet see how she will sustain her part in happier circumstances is my hope and my prayer, and that the time be not too far off.

CHARLES LEVER.

Trieste, 1872.

CHAPTER I. CRO' MARTIN

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

If the traveller leaves the old town of Oughterard, and proceeds westward, he enters a wild and dreary region, with few traces of cultivation, and with scarcely an inhabitant. Bare, bleak mountains, fissured by many a torrent, bound plains of stony surface, – here and there the miserable hut of some "cottier," with its poor effort at tillage, in the shape of some roods of wet potato land, or the sorry picture of a stunted oat crop, green even in the late autumn. Gradually, however, the scene becomes less dreary. Little patches of grass land come into view, generally skirting some small lake; and here are to be met with droves of those wild Connemara ponies for which the district is so celebrated; a stunted hardy race, with all the endurance and courage that beseem a mountain origin. Further on, the grateful sight of young timber meets the eye, and large

enclosures of larch and spruce fir are seen on every favorable spot of ground. And at length, on winding round the base of a steep mountain, the deep woods of a rich demesne appear, and soon afterwards a handsome entrance-gate of massive stone, with armorial bearings above it, announces the approach to Cro' Martin Castle, the ancient seat of the Martins.

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

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

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

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

It was early on a calm morning of the late autumn that the silent courtyard of the castle resounded with the sharp quick tramp of a horse, suddenly followed by a loud shrill whistle, as a young girl, mounted upon a small but highly bred horse, galloped

up to one of the back entrances. Let us employ the few seconds in which she thus awaited, to introduce her to the reader. Somewhat above the middle size, and with a figure admirably proportioned, her face seemed to blend the joyous character of happy girlhood with a temperament of resolute action. The large and liquid hazel eyes, with their long dark fringes, were almost at variance with the expression of the mouth, which, though finely and beautifully fashioned, conveyed the working of a spirit that usually followed its own dictates, and as rarely brooked much interference.

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

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

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

"Look to the mare, Barny," said she, jumping off; "and remind me, if I forget it, to fine you all, for not having fed and watered before six o'clock. Yes, I 'll do it; I said so once before, and you 'll see I 'll keep my word. Is it because my uncle goes a few weeks to the seaside, that you are to neglect your duty? Hackett, I shall

want to see the colts presently; go round to the straw-yard and wait till I come; and, Graft, let us have a look at the garden, for my aunt is quite provoked at the flowers you have been sending her lately."

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

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

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

"I 'll have it done, that 's all, Mr. Graft; and you 'll have one man less to do it with. I 'll go over the hothouse after

breakfast," said she, smiling to herself at the satisfaction with which he evidently heard this short reprieve. Nor was he himself more anxious to escape censure than was she to throw off the ungracious office of inflicting it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Faix, you 're your father's daughter all over," said Catty, with a look first at *her*, and then at a water-colored sketch which occupied a place over the chimney, and represented a fair-haired,

handsome boy of about ten years of age.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

cheeked boy that used to, and mayhap still may, hang over your fireplace. – Guastalla, May, 1808."

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

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

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

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

The young girl leaned her head on her hand, and appeared to have fallen into a deep train of thought; for she never noticed old Catty's remarks, nor, indeed, seemed conscious of her presence for some time. "Catty," said she, at length, and in a voice of unusually calm earnestness, "never talk to me of these things; they only fret me; they set me a thinking of Heaven knows what longings, – for a home that should be more like a real home

than this, though God knows my uncle is all that I could wish in kindness and affection; but – but – "

She stopped, and her lip quivered, and her eyes grew heavy-looking; and then, with a kind of struggle against her emotions, she added gayly, "Come and show me the dairy, Catty. I want to see all those fine things in Wedgewood-ware that you got while we were away, and then we 'll have a peep at the calves, and by that time it will be the hour for my levee."

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

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

attitude and grouping, their faces all turned towards the window where she was standing.

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

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

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

Nor would a follower of Lavater have argued too favorably of

the prosperity of Irish regeneration, in beholding that array of faces, – low-browed, treacherous-looking, and almost savagely cruel, as many of them were in expression. There was not, indeed, as often is to be remarked amongst the peasant class of many countries, a look of stupid, stolid indifference; on the contrary, their faces were intensely, powerfully significant, and there was stamped upon them that strange mixture of malignant drollery and sycophancy that no amount of either good or adverse fortune ever entirely subdues in their complex natures.

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

all the ingenuity of their crafty minds found congenial occupation in ascribing this or that motive to every attempt to better their condition.

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

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

Nothing short of actual, tangible benefits could compensate them for what they scrupled not to think was downright cruelty; nor was it till after months of steady perseverance on her part that her system could be said to have attained any success. Many of the most wretched declined to seek relief on the conditions thus imposed. Some went as actual rebels, to show their friends and neighbors how they would resist such intolerance; others, again, professed that they only went out of curiosity. Strange and incomprehensible people, who can brave every ill of poverty, endure famine and fever and want, and yet will not bow the head to a mere matter of form, nor subject themselves to the very least restriction when a passion or a caprice stands opposed to it! After about eighteen months of hard persistence the system began at length to work; the refractory spirits had either refrained from coming or had abandoned the opposition; and now a semblance of order pervaded the motley assemblage. Whenever the slightest deviation from the ritual occurred, a smart tap of a small ivory ruler on the table imposed silence; and they who disregarded the warning were ordered to move by, unattended to. Had a stranger been permitted, therefore, to take a peep at these proceedings, he would have been astonished at the rapidity with which complaints were heard, and wants redressed; for, with an instinct thoroughly native, Mary Martin appreciated the cases which came before her, and rarely or never confounded the appeal of real suffering with the demands of fictitious sorrow. Most of those who came were desirous of tickets for Dispensary aid; for sickness has its

permanent home in the Irish cabin, and fever lurks amidst the damp straw and the smoky atmosphere of the poor peasant's home. Some, however, came for articles of clothing, or for aid to make and repair them; others for some little assistance in diet, barley for a sick man's drink, a lemon or an orange to moisten the parched lips of fever; others, again, wanted leave to send a grandchild or a niece to the school; and, lastly, a few privileged individuals appeared to claim their weekly rations of snuff or tobacco, – little luxuries accorded to old age, – comforts that solaced many a dreary hour of a joyless existence. Amongst all the crowded mass there was not one whom Mary had not known and visited in their humble homes. Thoroughly conversant with their condition and their necessities, she knew well their real wants; and if one less hopeful than herself might have despaired to render any actual relief to such widespread misery, she was sanguine enough to be encouraged by the results before her, small and few as they were, to think that possibly the good time was yet to come when such efforts would be unneeded, and when Ireland's industry, employed and rewarded, would more than suffice for all the requirements of her humble poor.

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

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

"Catty Honan," cried Mary, with a gesture to enforce silence. "Catty, your granddaughter never comes to the school now that

she has got leave. What's the reason of that?"

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

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

"Two ounces of tea for the Widow Jones."

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

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

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

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

"'T is that same would be the savin' of me, Miss Mary," said a cunning-eyed little woman, with a tattered straw bonnet on her head, and a ragged shawl over her.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The Widow Hannigan."

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

"What 's this, Widow Hannigan?"

"'T is a picture Mickey made of you, miss, when you was out riding that day with the hounds; he saw you jumping a stone wall."

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

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

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

"Yes, they would, any one of them; but I 'll not permit it; and

what's more, widow, if it occur again, I 'll withdraw the leave I gave to fish with a rod.

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

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

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

Mary Martin set herself stoutly to combat this practice, including, as it does, one of the most hopeless features of the national character. To inculcate habits of self-reliance she was often driven, in violation of her own feelings, to favor those

who least needed assistance, but whose efforts to improve their condition might serve as an example. With a people who are such consummate actors she was driven into simulation herself, and paraded sentiments of displeasure and condemnation when her very heart was bursting with pity and compassion. No wonder was it, then, that she rejoiced when this painful task was completed, and she found herself in the more congenial duty of looking over the "young stock," and listening to old Barny's predictions about yearlings and two-year-olds.

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

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

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

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

If Mary was heart and soul devoted to her object, – if she

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

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

A solitary cabin or two stood in the midst of the wild, bleak plain, and by these she paused for a few minutes. The watchful

eyes that followed her as she went, and the muttered blessings that were wafted after her, proclaimed what her mission had been, and showed how she had for a brief space thrown a gleam of sunshine over the darksome gloom of some sad existence.

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

CHAPTER II. KILKIERAN BAY

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

Under the shelter of a massive rock, which formed the northern boundary of the little bay, stood one building of more pretension. It was a handsome bathing-lodge, with a long veranda towards the sea, and an effort, not very successful, however, at a little flower-garden in front. The spacious bay-windows,

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

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

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

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

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

evening I have mentioned, and to a small select party of whom I now desire to introduce my reader.

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

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

Then there was Miss Busk, a very tall, thin, ghostly personage, with a pinkish nose and a pinched lip, but whose manners were deemed the very type of high breeding, for she courtesied or bowed at almost minute intervals during an "Evening," and had a variety of personal reminiscences of the Peerage. She was of "an

excellent family," Mrs. Cronan always said; and though reduced by circumstances, she was the Swan and Edgar of Oughterard, – "was company for the Queen herself."

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

Joseph Nelligan was a tall, pale young fellow who, though only just passed twenty-two, looked several years older; the serious, thoughtful expression of his face giving the semblance of age. His head was large and massively shaped, and the temples were strong and square, deeply indented at the sides, and throwing the broad, high forehead into greater prominence; dark eyes, shaded by heavy, black eyebrows, lent an almost scowling character to a face which, regular in feature, was singularly calm and impassive-looking. His voice was deep, low, and sonorous, and though strongly impressed with the intonation of his native province, was peculiarly soft, and, to Irish ears, even musical. He was, however, remarkably silent; rarely or never conversed, as his acquaintances understood conversation, and only when roused by

some theme that he cared for, or stimulated by some assertion that he dissented from, was he heard to burst forth into a rapid flow of words, uttered as though under the impulse of passion, and of which, when ended, he seemed actually to feel ashamed himself.

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

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

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

In the very midst of these triumphs, young Nelligan arrived at his father's house in Oughterard, to enjoy the gratification his success had diffused at home, and rest himself after his severe labors. Little as old Pat Nelligan of his neighbors knew of University honors, or the toil which won them, there was enough in the very publicity of his son's career to make him a proud man. He at least knew that Joe had beaten them all; that none could hold a candle to him; "that for nigh a century such answering had not been heard on the bench." This was the expression of

a Dublin journal, coupled with the partisan regret that, by the bigoted statutes of the college, genius of such order should be denied the privilege of obtaining a fellowship.

If young Nelligan retired, half in pride, half in bashful-ness, from the notice of society in Dublin, he was assuredly little disposed to enter into the gayeties and dissipations of a small country-town existence. The fulsome adulation of some, the stupid astonishment of others, but, worse than either, the vulgar assumption that his success was a kind of party triumph, – a blow dealt by the plebeian against the patrician, the Papist against the Protestant, – shocked and disgusted him, and he was glad to leave Oughterard and accompany his mother to the seaside. She was an invalid of some years' standing, – a poor, frail, simple-hearted creature, who, after a long, struggling life of hardship and toil, saw herself in affluence and comfort, and yet could not bring her mind to believe it true. As little could she comprehend the strange fact of Joe's celebrity; of his name figuring in newspapers, and his health being drunk at a public dinner in his native town. To her he was invaluable; the very tenderest of nurses, and the best of all companions. She did n't care for books, even those of the most amusing kind; but she loved to hear the little gossip of the place where the neighbors passed the evening; what topics they discussed; who had left and who had arrived, and every other little incident of their uneventful lives. Simple and easy of execution as such an office might have been to a kindred spirit, to Joseph Nelligan it proved no common labor. And certain it is

that the mistakes he committed in names, and the blunders he fell into as regarded events, rather astonished his mother, and led that good lady to believe that Trinity College must not have been fertile in genius when poor Joe was regarded as one of the great luminaries of his time. "Ah," would she say, "if he had his father's head it would be telling him! but, poor boy, he remembers nothing!"

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

The success of an evening party is not always proportionate to the means employed to secure it. Very splendid *salons*, costly furniture, and what newspapers call "all the delicacies of the season," are occasionally to be found in conjunction with very dull company; while a great deal of enjoyment and much social pleasure are often to be met with where the material resources have been of the fewest and most simple kind. On the present occasion there was a great deal of laughing, and a fair share

of love-making; some scolding at whist, and an abundance of scandal, at least of that cut-and-thrust-at character which amuses the speakers themselves, and is never supposed to damage those who are the object of it. All the company who had frequented the port – as Kilkieran was called – during the season were passed in review, and a number of racy anecdotes interchanged about their rank, morals, fortune, and pretensions. A very general impression seemed to prevail that in the several points of climate, scenery, social advantages, and amusements, Kilkieran might stand a favorable comparison with the first watering-places, not alone of England, but the Continent; and after various discursive reasons why its fame had not equalled its deserts, there was an almost unanimous declaration of opinion that the whole fault lay with the Martins; not, indeed, that the speakers were very logical in their arguments, since some were heard to deplore the change from the good old times, when everybody was satisfied to live anywhere and anyhow, when there was no road to the place but a bridle-path, not a loaf of bread to be had within twelve miles, no post-office; while others eloquently expatiated on all that might have been, and yet was not done.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

laughing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Faith, and he's much altered from what he was when a boy, if any one rules him," said the captain. "I was at school with him and his twin-brother Barry. I remember the time when one of them had to wear a bit of red ribbon in his button-hole to distinguish him from the other. They were the born images of each other, – that is, in looks; for in real character they were n't a bit like. Godfrey was a cautious, quiet, careful chap that looked

after his pocket-money, and never got into scrapes; and Barry was a wasteful devil that made the coin fly, and could be led by any one. I think he 'd have given his life for his brother any day. I remember once when Godfrey would n't fight a boy, – I forget what it was about; Barry stole the bit of ribbon out of his coat, and went up and fought in his place; and a mighty good thrashing he got, too."

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

"So it was, doctor; you're right there," broke in the Captain; "and they say that Martin bears a grudge against you to this day."

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

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

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

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

"The young gentleman knows more about *cubic* sections, it appears, than of what goes on in his own town," said the

Captain. “Why, sir, your father is the most independent man in all Oughterard; and if I know Godfrey Martin, he ‘d give a thousand guineas this night to have him out of it.”

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

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

“And without a servant!” exclaimed Miss Busk.

“Indeed, you may well make the remark, ma’am,” said Mrs. Cronan. “The young lady was brought up in a fashion that was n’t practised in my time!”

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

“Maybe she came round by the strand,” said the doctor; “if she

did, I don't think there 's one here would like to have followed her."

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

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

""T was down at Mrs. Nelligan's, ma'am, Miss Mary was," said Mrs. Cronan's maid, who had been despatched special to make inquiry on the subject.

"At my mother's!" exclaimed Joseph, reddening, without knowing in the least why. And now a new diversion occurred, while all discussed every possible and impossible reason for

this singular fact, since the family at the "Nest" maintained no intercourse whatever with their neighbors, not even seeming, by any act of their lives, to acknowledge their very existence.

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

solitary little cabin where his mother lived.

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

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

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

"Of, course, my dear, it's very unlike what you 're used to up in Dublin, though I believe that Captain Bodkin, when he goes

there, always dines with the Lord-Lieutenant; and Miss Busk, I know, is second cousin to Ram of Swainestown, and there is nothing better than that in Ireland. I say this between ourselves, for your father can't bear me to talk of family or connections, though I am sure I was always brought up to think a great deal about good blood; and if my father was a Finnerty, my mother was a Moore of Crockbawn, and her family never looked at her for marrying my father."

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

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

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

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

"What was that?" asked the young man, roused by the

increased anxiety of her manner.

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

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

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

"Miss Martin!" echoed Joe.

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

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

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

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

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

"Did n't I, then? And did n't she say, if there were any such oppression as could throw obstacles in the way of deserving merit, she heartily hoped it might prove powerless; and then

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

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

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

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

"To be sure, and why not?" said Mrs. Nelligan. "There 's no

reason why *you* should be taking up old quarrels against the Martins; for *my* part, I never knew the country so pleasant as it used to be long ago, when we used to get leave to go picnicking on the grounds of Cro' Martin, up to the Hermitage, as they called it; and now the gates are locked and barred like a jail, and nobody allowed in without a ticket."

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

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

CHAPTER III. AN AUTUMN MORNING IN THE WEST

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

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

midst of death-like desolation.

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

Mr. Martin himself was no unworthy "pendant" to this portrait. He was tall and stately, with a lofty forehead, and temples finely and well fashioned; while full, deep-set blue eyes of the very sternest determination, and a mouth, every line of which betrayed firmness, gave the character to a face that also could expand into the most genial good-fellowship, and become at times the symbol of a pleasant and convivial Irish gentleman. In his youth he had been a beau of the Court of Versailles. Scandal had even coupled his name with that of Marie

Antoinette; and more truthful narratives connected him with some of the most extravagant adventures of that profligate and brilliant period. After a career of the wildest dissipation and excess, he had married, late in life, the daughter of the Earl of Exmere, one of the proudest and poorest names in the British Peerage. Two or three attempts to shine in the world of London, – not as successful as they were expected to have proved, – an effort at ascendancy in Irish political life, also a failure, coupled with disappointment on the score of an only brother, who had married beneath him, and was reputed to have "lost himself," seemed to have disgusted Godfrey Martin with the world, and he had retired to his lonely mansion in the west, which now for eighteen years he had scarcely quitted for a single day.

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

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

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

finds us unprepared."

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

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

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

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

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

"And perfectly right."

"Perfectly wrong to give it to him."

"A fool if he married without it."

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

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

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

"What's this balderdash here from the 'Galway Indicator'? 'The haughty and insolent, aye, and ignorant aristocracy will have to swallow a bitter draught erelong; and such petty despots as

Martin of Cro' Martin will learn that the day is gone by for their ascendancy in this county.'

"They tell me we have a law of libel in the land; and yet see how this scoundrel can dare to drag me by name before the world; and I 'll wager a thousand pounds I 'd fail to get a verdict against him if I prosecuted him to-morrow," said Martin, as he dashed the newspaper to the ground, and stamped his foot upon it. "We are constantly reading diatribes about absentee landlords, and the evils of neglected property; but I ask, what inducements are there held out to any gentleman to reside on his estate, if every petty scribbler of the press can thus attack and assail him with impunity?"

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

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

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

"How is she to do it, though?" exclaimed he, hurriedly; "the sea is breaking clear over the piers of the harbor. I can only see one man in the boat. What rashness! what folly! There, look, they're standing out to sea again!" And now, throwing open the window, Martin stepped out on the rocks, over which the white foam flashed by like snow. "What are they at, Peter? What are

they trying to do?" cried he to an old fisherman, who, with the coil of a net he was just mending on his arm, had now come down to the shore to watch the boat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Sure no boat could get out to sea with this wind, sir,"

remonstrated the old man, mildly; "she'd never leave the surf if she had forty men at her!"

"Then what's to be done?"

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

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

of rendering aid, the utmost the fishermen could do was to clear a path amongst them for the skiff to pass, as with lightning speed she flitted by and drove her bow high up on the hard beach.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Martin winced impatiently under the remark, but never lifted

his eyes from the newspaper.

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

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

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

"And Dublin, madam?"

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

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

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

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

"Yes, but there was, though," said she, quickly. "If we had n't

set all sail on her, she 'd have been pooped to a certainty; and I can tell you I was in a rare fright, too."

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV. MAURICE SCANLAN, ATTORNEY-AT-LAW

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

Maurice Scanlan was a sporting attorney, and from the group of game cocks neatly painted on the hind panel, to the wiry, well-bred, and well-looking screws before him, all was indicative of the man. The conveyance was high and red-wheeled; the nags were a chestnut and a gray; he drove them without winkers or bearing-reins, wearing his white hat a very little on ope side, and gracefully tilting his elbow as he admonished the wheeler with the "crop" of his whip. He was a good-looking, showy, vulgar, self-sufficient kind of fellow, with consummate shrewdness in all

business transactions, only marred by one solitary weak point, – an intense desire to be received intimately by persons of a station above his own, and to seem, at least, to be the admitted guest of very fashionable society. It was not a very easy matter to know if this Lord-worship of his was real, or merely affected, since, certainly, the profit he derived from the assumption was very considerable, and Maurice was intrusted with a variety of secret-service transactions, and private affairs for the nobility, which they would never have dreamed of committing to the hands of their more recognized advisers.

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

As an electioneering agent he was unequalled. It was precisely the sphere in which his varied abilities were best exercised; and

it was, besides, an arena in which he was proud of figuring.

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

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

With the little borough of Oughterard he had become so identified that his engagement was regarded as one of the first elements of success. Hitherto, indeed, the battle had been always an easy one. The Liberal party – as they pleasantly assumed to style themselves – had gone no further in opposition than an occasional burst of intemperate language, and an effort – usually a failure – at a street row during the election. So little of either energy or organization had marked their endeavors, that the great leader of the day had stigmatized their town with terms of heavy censure, and even pronounced them unworthy of the cause. An emissary, deputed to report upon the political state

of the borough, had described the voters as mere dependants on the haughty purse-proud proprietor of Cro' Martin, who seemed, even without an effort, to nominate the sitting member.

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

Mr. Martin himself cared very little for politics; had he even cared more, he would not have sacrificed to them one jot of that indolent, lazy, apathetic existence which alone he seemed to prize. He was rather grateful than otherwise to Lord Kilmorris

for taking upon him the trouble of a contest, if there should be such a thing. His greatest excuse through life, at least to himself, had ever been that he was "unprepared." He had been in that unhappy state about everything since he was born, and so, apparently, was he destined to continue to the very last. With large resources, he was never prepared for any sudden demand for money. When called on for any exertion of mind or body, when asked to assist a friend or rescue a relation from difficulty, he was quite unprepared; and so convinced was he that this was a fatality under which he labored, that no sooner had he uttered the expression than he totally absolved himself from every shadow of reproach that might attach to his luke-warmness.

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

That such an insolent possibility could be, was only demonstrated to him in that morning's newspaper. To be called a despot was bad enough, but a petty despot, – and to be told that such despotism was already doomed – aroused in him a degree of indignation all the more painful that the

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

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

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

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

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

"All right," said Scanlan, giving a finishing touch to the tie of his cravat, and then gracefully bestowing his person

into an easy-chair. To common observation he looked perfectly unconcerned in every gesture, and yet no man felt less at his ease at that moment than Mr. Maurice Scanlan; and though the cause involves something like a secret, the reader shall know it. Mr. Scanlan had seen a good deal of the world – that is, of *his* world. He had mixed with barristers and solicitors, "Silk Gowns," masters in Chancery, and even puisne judges had he come into contact with; he had mingled in turf experiences with certain sporting lords and baronets, swapped horses, and betted and handicapped with men of fortune; he had driven trotting-matches, and ridden hurdle-races against young heirs to good estates, and somehow always found himself not inferior in worldly craft and address to those he came in contact with, – nay, he even fancied that he was occasionally rather a little more wide awake than his opponents; and what with a little blustering here, a little blarney there, a dash of mock frankness to this man, or an air of impulsive generosity to the other, – an accommodating elasticity, in fact, that extended to morals, manners, and principles, – he found that he was, as he himself styled it, "a fair match with equal weights for anything going." There was but one individual alone in presence of whom he in reality felt his own inferiority deeply and painfully; strange to say, that was Miss Martin! At first sight this would seem almost unintelligible. She was not either a haughty beauty, presuming on the homage bestowed upon her by high and distinguished admirers, nor was she any greatly gifted and

cultivated genius dominating over lesser intelligences by the very menace of her acquirements. She was simply a high-spirited, frank, unaffected girl, whose good breeding and good sense seemed alike instinctive, and who read with almost intuition the shallow artifices by which such natures as Scanlan's impose upon the world. She had seen him easily indolent with her uncle, obsequiously deferential to my Lady, all in the same breath, while the side-look of tyranny he could throw a refractory tenant appeared just as congenial to his nature.

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

While he waited for her coming, he took a leisurely survey of the room. The furniture, less costly and rich than at Cro' Martin, was all marked by that air of propriety and comfort so observable in rich men's houses. There were the hundred appliances of ease and luxury that show how carefully the most trifling inconveniences are warded off, and the course of daily life rendered as untroubled as mere material enjoyments can secure. Scanlan sighed deeply, for the thought crossed his mind how was a girl brought up in this way ever to stoop to ally her fortune to a man like him? Was it, then, possible that he nourished such a presumption? Even so. Maurice was of an aspiring turn; he had succeeded in twenty things that a dozen

years past he had never dared to dream of. He had dined at tables and driven with men whose butlers and valets he once deemed very choice company; he had been the guest at houses where once his highest ambition had been to see the interior as a matter of curiosity. "Who could say where he might be at last?" Besides this, he knew from his own knowledge of family matters that she had no fortune, that her father was infinitely more likely to leave debts than an inheritance behind him, and that her uncle was the last man in the world ever to think of a marriage-portion for one he could not afford to part with. There was, then, no saying what turn of fortune might present him in an admissible form as a suitor. At all events, there was no rival in the field, and Maurice had seen many a prize won by a "walk over" purely for want of a competitor in the race.

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

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

"That would be most unfortunate after your coming so far on account of it," said she, half archly, while she seated herself on

a sofa at some distance from him.

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

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

"That 's it, Miss Mary; and Lord Kilmorris writes me to say that he 'll be over next week, and hopes he 'll find all his friends here as well disposed towards him as ever."

"Has he written to my uncle?" asked Mary, hastily.

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

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

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

make out my meaning."

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

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

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

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

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

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

very angry."

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

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

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

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

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

Scanlan nodded an affirmative.

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

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

"If you won't read it, then, perhaps you will permit me to do so. It's very short, too, for he says at the end he will write more fully to-morrow." Mr. Scanlan here muttered over several lines of the epistle, until he came to the following: "I am relieved from any embarrassment I should have felt at breaking with the Martins by reflecting over the altered conditions of party, and the new aspect politics must assume by the operations of the

Emancipation Act. The old ways and traditions of the Tories must be abandoned at once and forever; and though Martin in his life of seclusion and solitude will not perceive this necessity, we here all see and admit it. I could, therefore, no longer represent his opinions, since they would find no echo in the House. To stand for the borough I must stand on my own views, which, I feel bold to say, include justice to both of the contending factions."

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

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

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

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

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

to my uncle, and as early as may be."

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER V. A STUDIO AND AN ARTIST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And what were *you*, Terry?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Does n't she, by jingo!" exclaimed the artist, who with difficulty caught himself in time before he placed his hand on

the supposed seat of his injuries.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mary sat down to compose her thoughts in quiet, for Mr.

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

moment almost overpowered with emotion. But a moment back and she bewailed her isolation and friendlessness; and see, here were hundreds who would have resigned life in her behalf. Still, as the boats receded, the wind bore to her ears the welcome sounds; and as she heard them, her heart seemed to expand and swell with generous thoughts and good wishes, while along her cheeks heavy tears were rolling.

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

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

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

"The Abdication of Charles V., Miss Martin," said he, proudly. "This is the fourteenth time I have depicted it; and never, I am bound to say, with more favorable 'studies.' Your uncle is fine; my Lady gorgeous; I don't say what I 'd like of another lovely and gifted individual; but even down to that old rogue of a butler

that would insist on taking snuff through the bars of his helmet, they were all grand, miss, – positively grand!" Seeing that she appeared to bestow some attention to him, Mr. Crow went on: "You see, miss, in the beginning of a great effort of this kind there is no progress made at all. The sitters keep staring at one another, each amused at some apparent absurdity in costume or attitude; and then, if you ask them to call up a look of love, hate, jealousy, or the like, it's a grin you get, – a grin that would shame a hyena. By degrees, however, they grow used to the situation; they 'tone down,' as one might say, and learn to think less of themselves, and be more natural. It was sheer fatigue, downright exhaustion, and nothing else, was making your uncle so fine; and if he could have been kept on low diet, – I did n't like to mention it, though I often wished it, – I 'd have got a look of cadaverous madness into his face that would have astonished you."

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

"This is the Queen," continued he; "she's crying, – as well she might; she doesn't rightly know whether the old fellow's out of his mind or not; she has her misgivings, and she does n't half like that old thief of a Jesuit that's whispering in the King's ear. This was to be you, Miss Martin; you were betrothed to one of the young princes; but somehow you weren't quite right in your head,

and you are looking on rather more amused, you perceive, than in any way moved; you were holding up your beautiful petticoat, all covered with gold and precious stones, as much as to say, 'Ain't I fine this morning?' when you heard the herald's trumpet announce the Prince of Orange; and there he is, – or there he ought to be, – coming in at the door. There's a chap pulling the curtain aside; but I suppose, now," added he, with a sigh, "we 'll never see the Prince there!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"A young gentleman left this packet, Miss Mary, and said it

was for you," said a servant, presenting a small sealed enclosure. Mary Martin blushed deeply, and she opened the parcel, out of which fell her own glove, with a card.

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

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

Simpson – or as he was more generally known, Simmy Crow – was neither a Michael Angelo nor a Raffaelle; but he was a simple-minded, honest-hearted creature, whose life had been

a long hand-to-hand fight with fortune. Originally a drawing-master in some country academy, the caprice – for it was little else – of a whimsical old lady had sent him abroad to study; that is, sent him to contemplate the very highest triumphs of genius with a mind totally unprepared and uncultivated, to gaze on the grandest conceptions without the shadow of a clew to them, and to try and pick up the secrets of art when he stood in utter ignorance of its first principles. The consequence was, he went wild in the enthusiasm of his admiration; he became a passionate worshipper at the shrine, but never essayed to be priest at the altar. Disgusted and dispirited by his own miserable attempts, he scarcely ever touched a pencil, but roved from city to city, and from gallery to gallery, entranced, – enchanted by a fascination that gradually insinuated itself into his very being, and made up the whole aim and object of his thoughts. This idolatry imparted an ecstasy to his existence that lifted him above every accident of fortune. Poor, hungry, and ill-clad, he still could enter a gallery or a church, sit down before a Guido or a Rembrandt, and forget all, save the glorious creation before him. By the sudden death of his patroness, he was left, without a shilling, hundreds of miles from home. Humble as his requirements were, he could not supply them; he offered to teach, but it was in a land where all have access to the best models; he essayed to copy, but his efforts were unsalable. To return home to his country was now his great endeavor; and after innumerable calamities and reverses, he did arrive in England, whence he made his way to Ireland, poorer

than he had quitted it.

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

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

ceased to have a belief that any other story than these could be the subject of high art.

Happy as he now was, he never ceased to feel that his position exposed him to many an ungenerous suspicion.

"They 'll say I 'm humbugging this old lady," was the constant self-reproach he kept repeating. "I know well what they 'll think of me; I think I hear the sneering remarks as I pass." And so powerfully had this impression caught hold of him, that he vowed, come what would of it, he 'd set out on his travels again, and face the cold stern world, rather than live on what seemed to be the life of a flatterer and a sycophant. He could not, however, endure the thought of leaving his "Abdication" unfinished, and he now only remained to complete this great work. "Then I 'm off," said he; "and then they 'll see if poor Simmy Crow was the fellow they took him for." Better thoughts on this theme were now passing through his mind, from which at last he aroused himself to proceed with his picture. Once at work, his spirits rose; hopes flitted across his brain, and he was happy. His own creations seemed to smile benignly on him, too, and he felt towards them like a friend, and even talked with them, and confided his secret thoughts to them. In this pleasant mood we shall leave him, then; nor shall we linger to listen to the avowals he is making of his upright intentions, nor his willingness to bear the hardest rubs of fortune, so that none can reproach him for a mean subserviency.

CHAPTER VI. A DASH OF POLITICS

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

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

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

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

"Do nothing, then," added he, sulkily.

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

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

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

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

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

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

is strong in him!" muttered he, half to himself, but loud enough to be heard by his niece.

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

"Is Scanlan engaged for him?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Far from it," said she, affectionately. "I was only laughing at that quiet little nook you retire to whenever you ought to be up and doing. Unprepared you say. Not a bit of it. Indisposed, indolent, unwilling, indifferent, any of these you like; but with a mind so full of its own good resources, and as ready to meet every contingency as any one's, don't say you are unprepared. Come, now, bear with me this once, dearest uncle, and don't be angry

if I throw myself, like a rock or sandbank, betwixt you and your harbor of refuge. But I hear Mr. Scanlan's voice, and so I shall leave you. Be resolute, uncle, determined, and – 'prepared'!" And with a gesture half menace and half drollery, she left the room as the attorney entered it.

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

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

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

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

"Come, come, none of this balderdash with me, Master Maurice. Has he bought the fellows already, or, rather, have you

bought them? Out with it, man! What will he give? Name the sum, and let us treat the matter in a business-like way."

Scanlan sat down and laughed heartily for some minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"In fact," broke in Martin, "swear by this new creed that Lord Kilmorris has sent you a sketch of in his letter! Then I 'll tell you what, sir – I 'd send the borough and all in it to the – "

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

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

"I often said to those who would emancipate the Catholics, 'Are you prepared to change places with them? You have been in the ascendant a good many years, are you anxious now to try

what the other side of the medal looks like? for, if not, leave them as they are.' Well, they did n't believe me; and maybe now my prophecy is nigh its accomplishment."

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

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

"If you 'll not support Lord Kilmorris – "

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

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

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

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

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

"I'm glad of it; I'm heartily glad of it," said Martin, calmly reseating himself. "I'm glad there is not another fellow in this county your equal in impudence! Aye, Mr. Scanlan, you heard

me quite correctly. I saw many a change going on amongst us, and I foresaw many more; but that a Martin of Cro' Martin should be taught his political duty by Maurice Scanlan, and that that duty consisted in a beggarly alliance with the riff-raff of a county town, – that was, indeed, a surprise for which I was in no wise prepared."

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

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

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

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

"I promised Mrs. Cronan, sir – "

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

CHAPTER VII. A COLLEGE COMPETITOR

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

Although Irish by birth, and connected with Ireland by ties of family and fortune, he had passed all his life in England, his father having repaired to that country after the Union, exchanging the barren honor of a seat for an Irish borough for a snug Treasury appointment. His son had very early given proof of superior capacity. At Rugby he was distinguished as a scholar; and in his opening life at Oxford his talents won high praise for him. Soon after his entrance, however, he had fallen into a fast set, – of hunting, tandem-driving, and occasionally hard-drinking men, – in whose society he learned to forget all his aim

for college success, and to be far more anxious for distinction as a whip or a stroke-oar than for all the honors of scholarship. At first he experienced a sense of pride in the thought that he could hold his own with either set, and take the lead in the examination-hall as easily as he assumed the first place in the social meeting. A few reverses, however, taught him that his theory was a mistake, that no amount of ability will compensate for habits of idleness and dissipation, and that the discursive efforts of even high genius will be ever beaten by the steady results of patient industry. Partly indifferent to what had once been his great ambition, partly offended by his failures, Massingbred threw himself entirely into the circle of his dissipated companions, and became the very head and front of all their wildest excesses. An absurd exploit, far more ludicrous than really culpable, procured his rustication; a not less ridiculous adventure drove him from Cambridge; and he had at last arrived in Dublin, somewhat tamed down by his experiences, and half inclined to resume his long-abandoned desire for college distinction.

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

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

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

It was all grievously slow. Dublin itself was a poor affair. He had few acquaintances, the theatres were bad, and public amusements there were none. His fellow-students, too, stood aloof from him. It was not that he was richer, better dressed, rode blood horses, dined at Morris-son's, wore kid gloves, and carried scented pocket-handkerchiefs. It was not that he had a certain air of puppyism as he wended his way across the courts, or sauntered elegantly into chapel. They could have forgiven any or all of these better than one of his offendings, which was his accent. Strange as it may seem, his English voice and English pronunciation were

the most unpopular things about him, and many a real defect in his character might have met a more merciful construction had he given no initial "H" to "humble," and evinced a more generous confusion about his "wills" and "snails."

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

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

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

That was exactly what he did not, however. Young Massingbred regarded a college distinction as no evidence whatever of a man's attainments. He had seen stupid fellows win

the prize for which clever ones strove in vain; but, at all events, he regarded such successes as contributing in nothing to the great race of life, and had even a theory that such early efforts were often the very means of exhausting the energies that should be exerted for the high rewards of the world. Besides this, he felt a pleasure in manfully showing that he was above a petty jealousy, and fairly owning himself beaten in a fair struggle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nelligan was silent.

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

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

"I see it all, Nelligan. My foolish affectation of laughing at all principle has disgusted you; but the truth is, I don't feel it: I do not. I own frankly that the bought patriot is a ruined man, and there is a moral Nemesis over every fellow that sells himself; I don't mean to say but that many who did so did n't make the best bargain their brains were worth, and my father for one; he was a man of fair average abilities, – able to say his commonplaces like

his neighbors, – and naturally felt that they would sound as well in England as in Ireland; I don't think he had a single conviction on any subject, so that he really sold a very unsalable article when he vended himself. But there were others, – your Governor, for instance; come, now, tell me about him; you are so devilish close, and I want to hear all about your family. You won't; well, I'll give you one chance more, and then – "

"What then?" asked Nelligan, breathlessly.

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

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

Nelligan's shame was now an agony. It had never occurred to him in his life to feel ashamed of his station or that of his family, for the simple reason that he had never made pretension to anything higher or more exalted. The distinctions at which he aimed were those attainable by ability; social successes were triumphs he never dreamed of. But now came the thought of how he should stand in his friend's esteem, when the fact was revealed that he was the son of very humble parents, all whose ways, thoughts, and habits would be apt themes for ridicule and sarcasm. Over and over again had Massingbred annoyed him by the disparaging tone in which he canvassed "small people,"

the sneering depreciation in which he held all their doings, and the wholesale injustice by which he classed their sentiments with their good manners. It was the one feature of his friend's character that gave a check to his unbounded esteem for him. Had he not possessed this blemish, Nelligan would have deemed him nearly faultless.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"For the simple reason, my boy, that I know and feel how the cleverness which imposes upon others has never imposed upon myself. The popular error of a man's being able to do fifty things which he has not done from idleness, apathy, carelessness, and so on, never yet deceived me, because I know well that when

a fellow has great stuff in him it will come out, whether he likes or not. You might as well say that the grapes in a wine-vat could arrest their own process of fermentation, as that a man of real genius – and mind, I am now speaking of no other – could suppress the working of his intelligence, and throw his faculties into torpor. The men who do nothing are exactly the men who can do no better. Volition, energy, the strong impulse for action, are part and parcel of every really great intellect; and your 'mute, inglorious Milton' only reminds me of the artist who painted his canvas all red to represent the passage of the Egyptians through the Red Sea. Believe me, you must take all untried genius in the same scale of credit as that by which you have fancied the chariots and horsemen submerged in the flood. They are there, if you like; and if you don't – "

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

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

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

"I have no right to speak of these subjects, because I

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

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

It was just at this very moment that an incident occurred to display this habit of his mind in its full force. His father, by employing much private influence and the aid of powerful friends, had succeeded in obtaining for him the promise of a

most lucrative civil appointment in India. It was one of those situations which in a few years of very moderate labor secure an ample fortune for the possessor. Mr. Massingbred had forgotten but one thing in all the arrangement of this affair, which was to apprise his son of it beforehand, and make him, as it were, a part of the plot. That one omission, however, was enough to secure its failure.

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

"J. M."

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

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

Little momentary bursts of energy would drive him now and then to his books, and for a week or two he would work really hard; when a change as sudden would come over him, and he would relapse into his former apathy. Thus was it that he had lived for some time after the term had come to an end, and

scarcely a single student lingered within the silent courts. Perhaps the very solitude was the great charm of the place; there was that in his lonely, unfriended, uncompanionable existence that seemed to feed the brooding melancholy in which he indulged with all the ardor of a vice. He liked to think himself an outcast and forgotten. It was a species of flattery that he addressed to his own heart when he affected to need neither sympathy nor affection. Still his was not the stuff of which misanthropy is fashioned, and he felt acutely the silence of his friend Nelligan, who had never once written to him since they parted.

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

What a dangerous hypothesis it is when we assume to act for another; how magnanimously do we rise above all meaner motives, and only think of what is generous and noble; how completely we discard every possible contingency that could

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

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

CHAPTER VIII. SOME KNOTTY POINTS THAT PUZZLED JOE NELLIGAN

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

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

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

"Have you breakfasted?" said Scanlan.

"Yes, an hour ago."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Who is it you want, man?"

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

"Three days ago?"

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

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

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

practical joke."

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

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

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

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

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

"Indeed, and they're not worthy the name, sir. Flood, mayhap, is like, but he's hard and stiff, and out of drawing; and Lord Clare is worse. It's in the Low Countries you 'd see portraits, real portraits! men that look down on you out of the canvas, as if *you* were the intruder there, and that *they* were waiting to know what brought you. A sturdy old Burgomaster, for instance, with a red-brown beard and a fierce pair of eyes, standing up firm as a rock on a pair of legs that made many a drawbridge tremble as he walked home to dinner on the Grand Canal, at Rotterdam, after finishing some mighty bargain for half a spice island, or paying a million of guilders down as a dowry for that flaxen-haired, buxom damsel in the next frame. Look at the dimples

in her neck, and mark the folds in her satin. Is n't she comely, and calm, and haughty, and house-wifery, all together? Mind her foot, it isn't small, but see the shape of it, and the way it presses the ground – ay, just so – my service to you; but you are one there 's no joking with, even if one was alone with you." And he doffed his hat, and bowed obsequiously as he spoke.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Who said this?" cried Joe, eagerly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

you think, then, that he would possibly waive ceremony – '"

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

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

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

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

"Mr. Martin presents his respects to Mr. Joseph Nelligan, and will feel happy if – excusing the want of formal introduction –

Mr. Nelligan will admit him to the honor of acquaintance, and give him the pleasure of his society at dinner, to-morrow, at seven o'clock. Mr. Martin does not hesitate to say that to accept this unceremonious proposal will be felt as a very great favor indeed by him and his family."

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

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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.