The Black Prophet: A Tale Of Irish Famine eBook

The Black Prophet: A Tale Of Irish Famine by William Carleton

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Page 1

By William Carleton

CHAPTER I. — Glendhu, or the Black Glen; Scene of Domestic Affection.

Some twenty and odd years ago there stood a little cabin at the foot of a round hill, that very much resembled a cupola in shape, and which, from its position and height, commanded a prospect of singular beauty. This hill was one of a range that ran from north to southwest; but in consequence of its standing, as it were, somewhat out of the ranks, its whole appearance and character as a distinct feature of the country were invested with considerable interest to a scientific eye, especially to that of a geologist. An intersection or abrupt glen divided it from those which constituted the range or group alluded to; through this, as a pass in the country, and the only one for miles, wound a road into an open district on the western side, which road, about half a mile after its entering the glen, was met by a rapid torrent that came down from the gloomy mountains that rose to the left. The foot of this hill, which on the southern side was green and fertile to the top, stretched off and was lost in the rich land that formed the great and magnificent valley it helped to bound, and to which the chasm we have described was but an entrance; the one bearing to the other, in size and position, much the same relation that a small bye-lane in a country town bears to the great leading street which constitutes its principal feature.

Noon had long passed, and the dim sun of a wet autumnal day was sloping down towards the west through clouds and gloom, when a young girl of about twenty-one or twenty-two years of age came out of the cabin we have mentioned, and running up to the top of a little miniature hill or knob that rose beside it, looked round in every direction, as if anxious to catch a glimpse of some one whom she expected. It appeared, however, that she watched in vain; for after having examined the country in every direction with an eye in which might be read a combined expression of eagerness, anger and disappointment, she once more returned to the cabin with a slow and meditating step. This she continued to do from time to time for about an hour and a half, when at length a female appeared approaching, whom she at once recognized.

The situation of this hovel, for such, in fact, it must be termed, was not only strikingly desolate, but connected also with wild and supernatural terrors. From the position of the glen itself, a little within which it stood, it enjoyed only a very limited portion of the sun’s cheering beams. As the glen was deep and precipitous, so was the morning light excluded from it by the northeastern hills, as was that of evening by those which rose between it and the west. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a spot marked by a character of such utter solitude and gloom. Naturally barren, it bore not a single shrub on which a bird could sit or a beast browse,

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and little, of course, was to be seen in it but the bare gigantic projections of rock which shot out of its steep sides in wild and uncouth shapes, or the grey, rugged expanses of which it was principally composed. Indeed, we feel it difficult to say whether the gloom of winter or the summer's heat fell upon it with an air of lonelier desolation. It mattered not what change of season came, the place presented no appearance of man or his works. Neither bird or beast was seen or heard, except rarely, within its dreary bosom, the only sounds it knew being the monotonous murmurs of the mountain torrent, or the wild echoes of the thunder storms that pealed among the hills about it. Silence and solitude were the characteristics which predominated in it and it would not be easy to say whether they were felt more during the gloom of November or the glare of June.

In the mouth of this glen, not far from the cabin we have described, two murders had been committed about twenty years before the period of our narrative, within the lapse of a month. The one was that of a carman, and the other of a man named Sullivan, who also had been robbed, as it was supposed the carman had been, for the bodies of both had been made way with and were never found. This was evident—in the one case by the horse and cart of the carman remaining by the grey stone in question, on which the traces of blood were long visible; and in the other by the circumstance of Sullivan's hat and part of his coat having been found near the cabin in question on the following day, in a field through which his path home lay, and in which was a pool of blood, where his foot-marks were deeply imprinted, as if in a struggle for life and death. For this latter murder a man named Dalton had been taken up, under circumstances of great suspicion, he having been the last person seen in the man's company. Both had been drinking together in the market, a quarrel had originated between them about money matters, blows had been exchanged, and Dalton was heard to threaten him in very strong language. Nor was this all. He had been observed following or rather dogging him on his way home, and although the same road certainly led to the residence of both, yet when his words and manner were taken into consideration, added to the more positive proof that the footmarks left on the place of struggle exactly corresponded with his shoes, there could be little doubt that he was privy to Sullivan's murder and disappearance, as well probably as to his robbery. At all events the glen was said to be haunted by Sullivan's spirit, which was in the habit, according to report, of appearing near the place of murder, from whence he was seen to enter this chasm—a circumstance which, when taken in connection with its dark and lonely aspect, was calculated to impress upon the place the I reputation of being accursed, as the scene of crime and supernatural appearances. We remember having played in it when young, and the feeling we experienced was one of awe and terror, to which might be added, on contemplating the "dread repose" and solitude around us, an impression that we were removed hundreds of miles from the busy ongoings and noisy tumults of life, to which, as if seeking protection, we generally hastened with a strong sense of relief, after having tremblingly gratified our boyish curiosity.

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The young girl in question gave the female she had been expecting any thing but a cordial or dutiful reception. In personal appearance there was not a point of resemblance between them, although the *tout ensemble* of each was singularly striking and remarkable. The girl's locks were black as the raven's wing: her figure was tall and slender, but elastic and full of symmetry. The ivory itself was not more white nor glossy than her skin; her teeth were—bright and beautiful, and her mouth a perfect rosebud. It is unnecessary to say that her eyes we're black and brilliant, for such ever belong to her complexion and temperament; but it in necessary to add, that they were piercing and unsettled, and you felt that they looked into you rather than at you or upon you. In fact, her features were all perfect, yet it often happened that their general expression was productive of no agreeable feeling on the beholder. Sometimes her smile was sweet as that of an angel, but let a single impulse or whim be checked, and her face assumed a character of malignity that made her beauty appear like that which we dream of in an evil spirit.

The other woman, who stood to her in the relation of step-mother, was above the middle size. Her hair was sandy, or approaching to a pale red; her features were coarse, but regular; and her whole figure that of a well-made and powerful woman. In her countenance might be read a peculiar blending of sternness and benignity, each evidently softened down by an expression of melancholy—perhaps of suffering—as if some secret care lay brooding at her heart. The inside of the hovel itself had every mark of poverty and destitution about it. Two or three stools, a pot or two, one miserable standing bed, and a smaller one gathered up under a rug in the corner, were almost all that met the eye on entering it; and simple as these meagre portions of furniture were, they bore no marks of cleanliness or care. On the contrary, everything appeared to be neglected, squalid and filthy—such, precisely, as led one to see at a glance that the inmates of this miserable hut were contented with their wretched state of life, and had no notion whatsoever that any moral or domestic duty existed, by which they might be taught useful notions of personal comfort and self-respect.

"So," said the young woman, addressing her step-mother, as she entered, "you're come back at last, an' a purty time you tuck to stay away!"

"Well," replied the other, calmly, "I'm here now at any rate; but I see you're in one of your tantrums, Sally, my lady. What's wrong, I say? In the mean time don't look as if you'd ait us widout salt."

"An' a bitter morsel you'd be," replied the younger, with a flashing glance—"divil a more so. Here am I, sittin', or running out an' in, these two hours, when I ought to be at the dance in Kilnahushogue, before I go to Barny Gormly's wake; for I promised to be at both. Why didn't you come home in time?"

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“Bekaise, achora, it wasn’t agreeable to me to do so. I’m beginnin’ to got ould an’ stiff, an’ its time for me to take care of myself.”

“Stiffer may you be, then, soon, an’ oulder may you never be, an’ that’s the best I wish you!”

“Aren’t you afeard to talk to me in that way?” said the elder of the two.

“No—not a bit. You won’t flake me now as you used to do. I am able an’ willin’ to give blow for blow at last, thank goodness; an’ will, too, if ever you thry that thrick.”

The old woman gazed at her angrily, and appeared for a moment to meditate an assault. After a pause, however, during which the brief but vehement expression of rising fury passed from her countenance, and her face assumed an expression more of compassion than of anger, she simply said, in a calm tone of voice—

“I don’t know that I ought to blame you so much for your temper, Sarah. The darkness of your father’s sowl is upon yours; his wicked spirit is in you, an’ may Heaven above grant that you’ll never carry about with you, through this unhappy life, the black an’ heavy burden that weighs down his heart! If God hasn’t said it, you have his coorse, or something nearly as bad, before you. Oh! go to the wake as soon as you like, an’ to the dance, too. Find some one that’ll take you off of my hands; that’ll put a house over your head—give you a bit to ait, an’ a rag to put on you; an’ may God pity him that’s doomed to get you! If the woeful state of the country, an’ the hunger an’ sickness that’s abroad, an’ that’s comin’ harder an’ faster on us every day, can’t tame you or keep you down, I dunna what will. I’m sure the black an’ terrible summer we’ve had ought to make you think of how we’ll get over all that’s before us! God pity you, I say again, an’ whatever poor man is to be cursed wid you!”

“Keep your pity for them that wants it,” replied the other, “an’ that’s not me. As for God’s pity, it isn’t yours to give, and even if it was, you stand in need of it yourself more than I do. You’re beginning to praich to us now that you’re not able to bait us; but for your praichments an’ your baitins, may the divil pay you for all alike!—as he will—an’ that’s my prayer.”

A momentary gush of the step-mother’s habitual passion overcame her; she darted at her step-daughter, who sprung to her limbs, and flew at her in return. The conflict at first was brief, for the powerful strength of the elder female soon told. Sarah, however, quickly disengaged herself, and seizing an old knife which lay on a shell that served as a dresser, she made a stab at the very heart of her step-mother, panting as she did it with an exulting vehemence of vengeance that resembled the growlings which a savage beast makes when springing on its prey.

“Ha!” she exclaimed, “you have it now—you have it! Call on God’s pity now, for you’ll soon want it. Ha! ha!”

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The knife, however, owing to the thick layers of cloth with which the dress of the other was patched, as well as to the weakness of the thin and worn blade, did not penetrate her clothes, nor render her any injury whatsoever. The contest was again resumed. Sarah, perceiving that she had missed her aim, once more put herself into a posture to renew the deadly attempt; and the consequence was, that a struggle now took place between them which might almost be termed one for life and death. It was indeed a frightful and unnatural struggle. The old woman, whose object was, if possible, to disarm her antagonist, found all her strength—and it was great—scarcely a match for the murderous ferocity which was now awakened in her. The grapple between them consequently became furious; and such was the terrible impress of diabolical malignity which passion stamped upon the features of this young tigress, that her step-mother's heart, for a moment quailed on beholding it, especially when associated with the surprising activity and strength which she put forth., Her dark and finely-pencilled eye-brows were fiercely knit, as it were, into one dark line; her lips were drawn back, displaying her beautiful teeth, that were now ground together into what resembled the lock of death: her face was pale with over-wrought with resentment, and her deep-set eyes glowed with a wild and flashing fire that was fearful, while her lips were encircled with the white foam of revengeful and deadly determination; and what added most to the terrible expression on her whole face was the exulting smile of cruelty which shed its baleful light over it, resolving the whole contest, as it were, and its object—the murder of her step-mother—into the fierce play of some beautiful vampire that was ravening for the blood of its awakened victim.

After a struggle of some two or three minutes, the strength and coolness of the step-mother at length prevailed, she wrested the knife out of Sarah's hands and, almost at the same moment, stumbled and fell. The other, however, was far from relaxing her hold. On the contrary, she clung to her fiercely, shouting out—

"I won't give you up yet—I love you too well for that—no, no, it's fond of you I'm gettin'. I'll hug you, mother, dear; ay will I, and kiss you too, an' lave my mark behind me!" and, as she spoke, her step-mother felt her face coming in savage proximity to her own.

"If you don't keep away, Sarah," said the other, "I'll stab you. What do you mane, you bloody devil? It is going to tear my flesh with your teeth you are? Hould off! or, as heaven's above us, I'll stab you with the knife."

"You can't," shouted the other; "the knife's bent, or you'd be done for before this. I'll taste your blood for all that!" and, as the words were uttered, the step-mother gave a sudden scream, making at the same time a violent effort to disentangle herself, which she did.

Sarah started to her feet, and flying towards the door, exclaimed with shouts of wild triumphant laughter—

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“Ha, ha, ha! do you feel anything? I was near havin’ the best part of one of your ears—-ha, ha, ha!—but unfortunately I missed it; an’ now look to yourself. Your day is gone, an’ mine is come. I’ve tasted-your blood, an’ I like it—ha, ha, ha!—an’ if as you say it’s kind father for me to be fond o’ blood, I say you had better take care of yourself. And I tell you more: we’ll take care of your fair-haired beauty for you—my father and myself will—an’ I’m told to act against her, an’ I will too; an’ you’ll see what we’ll bring your pet, *Gra Gal* Sullivan, to yet! There’s news for you!”

She then went down to the river which flowed past, in whose yellow and turbid waters —for it was now swollen with rain—she washed the blood from her hands and face with an apparently light heart. Having meditated for some time, she fell a laughing at the fierce conflict that had just taken place, exclaiming to herself—

“Ha, ha, ha! Well now if I had killed her—got the ould knife into her heart—I might lave the counthry. If I had killed her now, throth it ’ud be a good joke, an’ all in a fit of passion, bekase she didn’t come home in time to let me meet him. Well, I’ll go back an’ spake soft to her, for, afther all, she’ll give me a hard life of it.”

She returned; and, having entered the hut, perceived that the ear and cheek of her step-mother were still bleeding.

“I’m sorry for what I did,” she said, with the utmost frankness and good nature. “Forgive me, mother; you know I’m a hasty devil—for a devil’s limb I am, no doubt of it. Forgive me, I say—do now—here, I’ll get something to stop the blood.”

She sprang at the moment, with the agility of a wild cat, upon an old chest that stood in the corner of the hut, exhibiting as she did it, a leg and foot of surpassing symmetry and beauty. By stretching herself up to her full length, she succeeded in pulling down several old cobwebs that had been for years in the corner of the wall; and in the act of doing so, disturbed some metallic substance, which fell first upon the chest, from which it tumbled off to the ground, where it made two or three narrowing circles, and then lay at rest.

“Murdher alive, mother!” she exclaimed, “what is this? Hallo! a tobaccy-box—a fine round tobaccy-box of iron, bedad—an what’s this on it!—let me see; two letthers. Wait till I rub the rust off; or stay, the rust shows them as well. Let me see—P. an’ what’s the other? ay, an’ M. P. M.—arra, what can that be for? Well, devil may care! let it lie on the shelf there. Here now—none of your cross looks, I say—put these cobwebs to your face, an’ they’ll stop the bleedin’. Ha, ha, ha!—well—ha, ha, ha!—but you are a sight to fall in love wid this minute!” she exclaimed, laughing heartily at the blood-stained visage of the other. “You won’t spake, I see. Divil may care then, if you don’t you’ll do the other thing—let it alone: but, at any rate, there’s the cobwebs for you, if you like to put them on; an’ so *bannatht latht*, an’ let that be a warnin’ to you not to raise your hand to me again.

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’A sailor courted a farmer’s daughter
That lived contageous to the isle of Man,’” &c.

She then directed her steps to the dance in Kilnahushogue, where one would actually suppose, if mirth, laughter, and extraordinary buoyancy of spirits could be depended on, that she was gifted, in addition to her remarkable beauty, with the innocent and delightful disposition of an angel.

The step-mother having dressed the wound as well as she could, sat down by the fire and began to ruminate on the violent contest which had just taken place, and in which she had borne such an unfortunate part. This was the first open and determined act of personal resistance which she had ever, until that moment, experienced at her step-daughter’s hands; but now she feared that, if they were to live, as heretofore, under the same roof, their life would be one of perpetual strife—perhaps of ultimate bloodshed—-and that these domestic brawls might unhappily terminate in the death of either. She felt that her own temper was none of the best, and knew that so long as she was incapable of restraining it, or maintaining her coolness under the provocations to which the violent passions of Sarah would necessarily expose her, so long must such conflicts as that which had just occurred take place between them. She began now to fear Sarah, with whose remorseless disposition she was too well acquainted, and came to the natural conclusion, that a residence under the same roof was by no means compatible with her own safety.

“She has been a curse to me!” she went on, unconsciously speaking aloud; “for when she wasn’t able to bate me herself, her father did it for her. The divil is said to be fond of his own; an’ so does he dote on her, bekase she’s his image in everything that’s bad. A hard life I’ll lead between them from this out, espeshially now that she’s got the upper hand of me. Yet what else can I expect or desarve? This load that is on my conscience is worse. Night and day I’m sufferin’ in the sight of God, an’ actin’ as if I wasn’t to be brought in judgment afore him. What am I to do? I wish I was in my grave! But then, agin’, how am I to face death?—and that same’s not the worst; for afther death comes judgment! May the Lord prepare me for it, and guide and direct me how to act! One thing, I know, must be done—either she or I will lave this house; for live undher the same roof wid her I will not.”

She then rose up, looked out of the door a moment, and, resuming her seat, went on with her soliloquy—

“No; he said it was likely he wouldn’t be home to-night. Wanst he gets upon his ould prophecies, he doesn’t care how long he stays away; an’ why he can take the delight he does in prophesyin’ and foretellin’ good or evil, accordin’ as it sarves his purpose, I’m sure I don’t know—espeshially when he only laughs in his sleeve at the people for believin’ him; but what’s that about poor *Gra Gal*

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Sullivan? She threatened her, and spoke of her father, too, as bein' in it. Ah, ah! I must watch him there; an' you, too, my lady divil—for it 'ill go hard wid me if either of you injure a hair of her head. No, no, plaise God!—none of your evil doins or unlucks prophecies for her, so long, any way, as I can presarve her from them. How black the evenin' is gatherin', but God knows that it's the awful saison all out for the harvest—it is that—it is that!"

Having given utterance to these sentiments, she took up the tobacco-box which Sarah had, in such an accidental manner, tumbled out of the wall, and surveying it for some moments, laid it hastily on the chest, and, clasping her hands exclaimed—

"Saviour of life! it's the same! Oh, merciful God, it's thrue! it's thrue!—the very same I seen wid him that evenin': I know it by the broken hinge and the two letthers. The Lord forgive me my sins!—for I see now that do what we may, or hide it as we like, God is above all! Saviour of life, how will this end? an' what will I do?—or how am I to act? But any way, I must hide this, and put it out of his reach."

She accordingly went out, and having ascertained that no person saw her, thrust the box up under the thatch of the roof, in such a way that it was impossible to suspect, by any apparent disturbance of the roof, that it was there; after which, she sat down with sensations of dread that were new to her, and that mingled themselves as strongly with her affections as it was possible for a woman of a naturally firm and undaunted character to feel them.

CHAPTER II. — The Black Prophet Prophesies.

At a somewhat more advanced period of the same evening, two men were on their way from the market-town of Ballynafail, towards a fertile portion of the country, named Aughamuran, which lay in a southern direction from it. One of them was a farmer, of middling, or rather of struggling, circumstances, as was evident from the traces of wear and tear that were visible upon a dress that had once been comfortable and decent, although now it bore the marks of careful, though rather extensive repair. He was a thin placid looking man, with something, however, of a careworn expression in his features, unless when he smiled, and then his face beamed with a look of kindness and goodwill that could not readily be forgotten. The other was a strongly-built man, above the middle size, whose complexion and features were such as no one could look on with indifference, so strongly were they indicative of a twofold character, or, we should rather say, calculated to make a twofold impression. At one moment you might consider him handsome, and at another his countenance filled you with an impression of repugnance, if not of absolute aversion; so stern and inhuman were the characteristics which you read in it. His hair, beard, and eye-brows were an ebon black, as were his eyes; his features were hard

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and massive; his nose, which was somewhat hooked, but too much pointed, seemed as if, while in a plastic state, it had been sloped by a trowel towards one side of his face, a circumstance which, while taken in connection with his black whiskers that ran to a point near his mouth, and piercing eyes, that were too deeply and narrowly set, gave him, aided by his heavy eyebrows, an expression at once of great cruelty and extraordinary cunning. This man, while travelling in the same direction with the other, had suffered himself to be overtaken by him: in such a manner, however, that their coming in contact could not be attributed to any particular design on his part.

“Why, then, *Donnel Dhu*,” said the farmer, “sure it’s a sight for sore eyes to see you in this side of the country; an’ now that I do see you, how are you?”

“Jist the ould six-an’-eight-pence, Jerry; an’ how is the Sullivan blood in you, man alive? good an’ ould blood it is, in troth; how is the family?”

“Why we can’t—hut, what was I goin’ to say?” replied his companion; “we can’t—-complain—ershi—mishi!—why, then, God help us, it’s we that can complain, Donnel, if there was any use in it; but, mavrone, there isn’t; so all I can say is, that we’re jist mixed middlin’, like the praties in a harvest, or hardly that same, indeed, since this woful change that has come on us.”

“Ay, ay,” replied the other; “but if that change has come on you, you know it didn’t come without warnin’ to the counthry; there’s a man livin’ that foretould as much—that seen it comin’—ay, ever since the pope was made prisoner, for that was what brought Bonaparte’s fate—that’s now the cause of the downfall of everything upon him.”

“An’ it was the hard fate for us, as well as for himself,” replied Sullivan, “little he thought, or little he cared, for what he made us suffer, an’ for what he’s makin’ us suffer still, by the come-down that the prices have got.”

“Well, but he’s sufferin’ himself more than any of us,” replied Donnel; “however, that was prophesied too; it’s read of in the ould Chronicles. ‘An eagle will be sick,’ says St. Columbkill, ’but the bed of the sick eagle is not a tree, but a rock; an’ there, he must suffer till the curse of the Father* is removed from him; an’ then he’ll get well, an’ fly over the world.’”

* This is—the Pope, in consequence of Bonaparte having imprisoned him.

“Is that in the prophecy, Donnel?”

“It’s St. Columbian’s words I’m spakin’.”

“Throth, at any rate,” replied Sullivan, “I didn’t care we had back the war prices again; aither that, or that the dear rents were let down to meet the poor prices we have now.

This woeful saison, along wid the low prices and the high rents, houlds out a black and terrible look for the counthry, God help us!”

“Ay,” returned the Black Prophet, for it was he, “if you only knew it.”

“Why, was that, too, prophesied?” inquired Sullivan.

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“Was it? No; but ax yourself is it. Isn’t the Almighty in his wrath, this moment proclaimin’ it through the heavens and the airth? Look about you, and say what is it you see that does not foretel famine—famine—famine! Doesn’t the dark wet day, an’ the rain, rain, rain, foretel it? Doesn’t the rotten’ crops, the unhealthy air, an’ the green damp foretel it? Doesn’t the sky without a sun, the heavy clouds, an’ the angry fire of the West, foretel it? Isn’t the airth a page of prophecy, an’ the sky a page of prophecy, where every man may read of famine, pestilence, an’ death? The airth is softened for the grave, an’ in the black clouds of heaven you may see the death-hearses movin’ slowly along—funeral afther funeral—funeral afther funeral—an’ nothing to folly them but lamentation an’ wo, by the widow an’ orphan—the fatherless, the motherless, an’ the childless—wo an’ lamentation—lamentation an’ wo.”

Donnel Dhu, like every prophecy man of his kind—a character in Ireland, by the way, that has nearly, if not altogether, disappeared—was provided with a set of prophetic declamations suited to particular occasions and circumstances, and these he recited in a voice of high and monotonous recitative, that caused them to fall with a very impressive effect upon the minds and feeling of his audience. In addition to this, the very nature of his subject rendered a figurative style and suitable language necessary, a circumstance which, aided by a natural flow of words, and a felicitious illustration of imagery—for which, indeed, all prophecy-men were remarkable—had something peculiarly fascinating and persuasive to the class of persons he was in the habit of addressing. The gifts of these men, besides, were exercised with such singular delight, that the constant repetition of their oracular exhibitions by degrees created an involuntary impression on themselves, that ultimately rose to a kind of wild and turbid enthusiasm, partaking at once of imposture and fanaticism. Many of them were, therefore, nearly as much the dupes of the delusions that proceeded from their own heated imaginations as the ignorant people who looked upon them as oracles; for we know that nothing at all events so much generates imposture as credulity.

“Indeed, Donnel,” replied Sullivan, “what you say is unfortunately too thrue. Everything we can look upon appears to have the mark of God’s displeasure on it; but if we have death and sickness now, what’ll become of us this time twelve months, when we’ll feel this failure most?”

“I have said it,” replied the prophet; “an’ if my tongue doesn’t tell truth, the tongue that never tells a lie will.”

“And what tongue is that?” asked his companion.

“The tongue of the death-bell will tell it day afther day to every parish in the land. However, we know that death’s before us, an’ the grave, afther all, is our only consolation.”

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“God help us,” exclaimed Sullivan, “if we hadn’t betther and brighter consolation than the grave. Only for the hopes in our Divine Redeemer an’ his mercy, it’s little consolation the grave could give us. But indeed, Donnel, as you say, everything about us is enough to sink the heart within one—an’ no hope at all of a change for the betther. However, God is good, and, if it’s His will that we should suffer, it’s our duty to submit to it.”

The prophet looked around him with a gloomy aspect, and, truth to say, the appearance of everything on which the eye could rest, was such as gave unquestionable indications of wide-spread calamity to the country.

The evening, which was now far advanced, had impressed on it a character of such dark and hopeless desolation as weighed down the heart with a feeling of cold and chilling gloom that was communicated by the dreary aspect of every thing around. The sky was obscured by a heavy canopy of low, dull clouds that had about them none of the grandeur of storm, but lay overhead charged with those wintry deluges which we feel to be so unnatural and alarming in autumn, whose bounty and beauty they equally disfigure and destroy. The whole summer had been sunless and wet—one, in fact, of ceaseless rain which fell, day after day, week after week, and month after month, until the sorrowful consciousness had arrived that any change for the better must now come too late, and that nothing was certain but the terrible union of famine, disease, and death which was to follow. The season, owing to the causes specified, was necessarily late, and such of the crops as were, ripe had a sickly and unthriving look, that told of comparative failure, while most of the fields which, in our autumns, would have been ripe and yellow, were now covered with a thin, backward crop, so unnaturally green that all hope of maturity was out of the question. Low meadows were in a state of inundation, and on alluvial soils the ravages of the floods Were visible in layers of mud and gravel that were deposited over many of the prostrate corn fields. The peat turf lay in oozy and neglected heaps, for there had not been sun enough to dry it sufficiently for use, so that the poor had want of fuel, and cold to feel, as well as want of food itself. Indeed, the appearance of the country, in consequence of this wetness in the firing, was singularly dreary and depressing. Owing to the difficulty with which it burned, or rather wasted away, without light or heat, the eye, in addition to the sombre hue which the absence of the sun cast over all things, was forced to dwell upon the long black masses of smoke which trailed slowly over the whole country, or hung, during the thick sweltering calms, in broad columns that gave to the face of nature an aspect strikingly dark and disastrous, when associated, as it was, with the destitution and suffering of the great body of the people. The general appearance of the crops was indeed deplorable.

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In some parts the grain was beaten down by the rain; in airier situations it lay cut but unsaved, and scattered over the fields, awaiting an occasional glance of feeble sunshine; and in other and richer soils, whole fields, deplorably lodged, were green with the destructive exuberance of a second growth. The season, though wet, was warm; and it is unnecessary to say that the luxuriance of all weeds and unprofitable production was rank and strong, while an unhealthy fermentation pervaded every thing that was destined for food. A brooding stillness, too, lay over all nature; cheerfulness had disappeared, even the groves and hedges were silent, for the very birds had ceased to sing, and the earth seemed as if it mourned for the approaching calamity, as well as for that which had been already felt. The whole country, in fact, was weltering and surging with the wet formed by the incessant overflow of rivers, while the falling cataracts, joined to a low monotonous hiss, or what the Scotch term *sugh*, poured their faint but dismal murmurs on the gloomy silence which otherwise prevailed around.

Such was the aspect of the evening in question: but as the men advanced, a new element of desolation soon became visible. The sun, ere he sank among the dark western clouds, shot out over this dim and miserable prospect a light so angry, yet so ghastly, that it gave to the whole earth a wild, alarming, and spectral hue, like that seen in some feverish dream. In this appearance there was great terror and sublimity, for as it fell on the black shifting clouds, the effect was made still more awful by the accidental resemblance which they bore to coffins, hearses, and funeral processions, as observed by the prophecy-man, all of which seemed to have been lit up against the deepening shades of evening by some gigantic death-light that superadded its fearful omens to the gloomy scenes on which it fell.

The sun, as he then appeared, might not inaptly be compared to some great prophet, who, clothed with the majesty and terror of I an angry God, was commissioned to launch! his denunciations against the iniquities of nations, and to reveal to them, as they lay under the shadow of his wrath, the terrible calamities with which he was about to visit their transgressions.

The two men now walked on in silence for some time, Donnel Dhu having not deemed it necessary to make any reply to the pious and becoming sentiments uttered by Sullivan.

At length the latter spoke.

“Barrin’ what we all know, Donnel, an’ that’s the saison an’ the sufferin’ that’s in it, is there no news stirrin’ at all? Is it thrue that ould Dick o’ the Grange is drawin’ near to his last account?”

“Not so bad as that; but he’s still complainin’. It’s one day up and another day down wid’ him—an’ of coorse his laise of life can’t be long now.”

“Well, well,” responded Sullivan, “it’s not for us to pass judgment on our fellow-creatures; but by all accounts he’ll have a hard reckonin’.”

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“That’s his own affair, you know,” said Donnel Dhu; “but his son, master Richard, or ‘Young Dick,’ as they call him, will be an improvement upon the ould stock.”

“As to that, some says ay, an’ some says no; but I believe myself, that he has, like his father, both good and bad in him; for the ould man, if the maggot bit him, or that if he took the notion, would do one a good turn; an’ if he took a likin’ to you, he’d go any lin’th to sarve you; but, then, you were never sure of him—nor he didn’t himself know this minute what he’d do the next.”

“That’s thrue enough,” replied Donnel Dhu; “but lavin’ him to shift for himself, I’m of opinion that you an’ I are likely to get wet jackets before we’re much oulder. Ha! Did you see that lightnin’? God presarve us! it was terrible—an’—ay, there it is—the thundher! God be about us, thundher at this hour is very fearful. I would give a thrifle to be in my own little cabin, an’ indeed I’m afeard that I won’t be worth the washin’ when I get there, if I can go back sich a night as it’s goin’ to be.”

“The last few years, Donnel, has brought a grievous change,upon me and mine,” replied Sullivan. “The time was, an’ it’s not long since, when I could give you a comfortable welcome as well as a willin’ one; however, thank God, it isn’t come to sich a hard pass wid me yet that I haven’t a roof an’ a bit to ait to offer you; an’ so to sich as it is you’re heartily welcome. Home! oh, you mustn’t talk of home this night. Blood, you know, is thicker than wather, an’ if it was only on your wife Nolly’s account, you should be welcome. Second an’ third cousins by the mother’s side we are, an’ that’s purty strong. Oh, no, don’t talk of goin’ home this night.”

“Well,” replied the other, “I’m thankful to you, Jerry, an’ indeed as the night’s comin’ on so hard and stormy, I’ll accept your kind offer; a mouthful of any thing will do me, an’ a dry sate at your hearth till mornin’.”

“Unfortunately, as I said,” replied Sullivan, “it’s but poor an’ humble treatment I can give you; but if it was betther you should be jist as welcome to it, an’ what more can I say?”

“What more can you say, indeed! I know your good heart, Jerry, as who doesn’t? Dear me, how it’s poorin’ over there towards the south—ha, there it is again, that thundher! Well, thank goodness, we haven’t far to go, at any rate, an’ the shower hasn’t come round this far yet. In the mean time let us step out an’ thry to escape it if we can.”

“Let us cross the fields, then,” said Sullivan, “an’ get up home by the Slang, an’ then behind our garden: to be sure, the ground is in a sad plash, but then it will save a long twist round the road, an’ as you say, we may escape the rain yet.”

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Both accordingly struck off the highway, and took a short path across the fields, while at every step the water spurted up out of the spongy soil, so that they were soon wet nearly to their knees, so thoroughly saturated was the ground with the rain which had incessantly fallen. After toiling thro' plashy fields, they at length went up, as Sullivan had said, by an old unfrequented footpath, that ran behind his garden, the back of which consisted of a thick elder hedge, through which scarcely the heaviest rain could penetrate. At one end of this garden, through a small angle, forming a *cul de sac*, or point, where the hedge was joined by one of white thorn, ran the little obsolete pathway alluded to, and as another angle brought them at once upon the spot we are describing, it would so happen that if any one had been found there when they appeared, it would be impossible to leave it if they wished to do so, without directly meeting them, there being no other mode of egress from it except by the footpath in question.

In that sheltered nook, then, our travellers found a young man about two or three and twenty, holding the unresisting hand of a very beautiful and bashful-looking girl, not more than nineteen, between his. From their position, and the earnestness with which the young peasant addressed her, there could be but little doubt as to the subject matter of their conversation. If a bolt from the thunder which had been rolling a little back among the mountains, and which was still faintly heard in the distance, had fallen at the feet of the young persons in question, it could not have filled them with more alarm than the appearance of Sullivan and the prophet. The girl, who became pale and red by turns, hung her head, then covered her face with her hands; and after a short and ineffectual struggle, burst into tears, exclaiming—

"Oh, my God, it is my father!"

The youth, for he seemed scarcely to have reached maturity, after a hesitating glance at Sullivan, seemed at once to have determined the course of conduct he should pursue. His eye assumed a bold and resolute look—he held himself more erect—and, turning towards the girl, without removing his gaze from her father, he said in a loud and manly tone—

"Dear Mave, it is foolish to be frightened. What have you done that ought to make you aither ashamed or afeared? If there's blame anywhere, it's mine, not yours, and I'll bear it."

Sullivan, on discovering this stolen interview—for such it was—felt precisely as a man would feel, who found himself unexpectedly within the dart of a rattlesnake, with but one chance of safety in his favor and a thousand against him. His whole frame literally shook with the deadly depth of his resentment; and in a voice which fully betrayed its vehemence, he replied—

"Blame! ay, shame an' blame—sin an' sorrow there is an' ought to rest upon her for this unnatural and cursed meetin'! Blame! surely, an' as I stand here to witness her shame,

I tell her that there would not be a just God in Heaven, if she's not yet punished for holdin' this guilty discoorse with the son of the man that has her uncle's blood—my brother's blood—on his hand of murdher—"

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[Illustration: *Page* 785— “It’s false,” replied the young fellow]

“It’s false,” replied the young fellow, with kindling eye; “it’s false, from your teeth to your marrow. I know my father’s heart an’ his thought—an’ I say that whoever charges him with the murder of your brother, is a liar—a false and damnable li—”

He checked himself ere he closed the sentence.

“Jerry Sullivan,” said he, in an altered voice, “I ax your pardon for the words——it’s but natural you should feel as you do; but if it was any other man than yourself that brought the charge of blood against my father, I would thramp upon him where he stands.”

“An’ maybe murdher him, as my poor brother was murdhered. Dalton, I see the love of blood in your eye,” replied Sullivan, bitterly.

“Why,” replied the other, “you have no proof that the man was murdered at all. His body was never found; and no one can say what became of him. For all that any one knows to the contrary, he may be alive still.”

“Begone, sirra,” said Sullivan, in a burst of impetuous resentment which he could not restrain, “if I ever know you to open your lips to that daughter of mine—if the mane crature can be my daughter—I’ll make it be the blackest deed but one that ever a Dalton did; and as for you—go in at wonst—I’ll make you hear me by and by.”

Dalton looked at him once more with a kindling but a smiling eye.

“Speak what you like,” said he—“I’ll curb myself. Only, if you wish your daughter to go in, you had better leave the way and let her pass.”

Mave—for such was her name—with trembling limbs, burning blushes and palpitating heart, then passed from the shady angle where they stood; but ere she did, one quick and lightning glance was bestowed upon her lover, which, brief though it was, he felt as a sufficient consolation for the enmity of her father.

The prophet had not yet spoken; nor indeed had time been given him to do so, had he been inclined. He looked on, however, with’ surprise, which soon assumed the appearance, as well as the reality, of some malignant satisfaction which he could not conceal.

He eyed Dalton with a grin of peculiar bitterness.

“Well,” said he, “it’s the general opinion that if any one knows or can tell what the future may bring about, I can; an’, if my knowledge doesn’t desave me, Dalton, I think, while you’re before me, that I’m lookin’ at a man that was never born to be drowned at any rate. I prophecy that, die when you may, you’ll live to see your own funeral.”

“If you’re wise,” replied the young man, “you’ll not provoke me now Jerry Sullivan may say what he wishes—he’s safe, an he knows why; but I warn you, Donnel Dhu, to take no liberty with me; I’ll not bear it.

“Troth, I don’t blame Jerry Sullivan,” rejoined the prophet. “Of coorse no man would wish to have a son-in-law hanged. It’s in the prophecy that you’ll go to the surgeons yet.”

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“Did you foresee in your prophecies this mornin’ that you’d get yourself well drubbed before night?” asked Dalton, bristling up.

“No,” said the other; “my prophecy seen no one able to do it.”

“You and your prophecy are liars, then,” retorted the other: “an’ in the doom you’re kind enough to give me, don’t be too sure but you meant yourself. There’s more of murdher an’ the gallows in your face than there is in mine. That’s all I’ll say, Donnel. Anything else you’ll get from me will be a blow; so take care of yourself.”

“Let him alone, Donnel,” said Sullivan; “it’s not safe to meddle with one of his name. You don’t know what harm he may do you.”

“I’m not afeard of him,” said the prophet, with a sneer; “he’ll find himself a little mistaken, if he tries his hand. It won’t be for me you’ll hang, my lad.”

The words were scarcely uttered when a terrific blow on the eye, struck with the rapidity of lightning, shot him to the earth, where he lay for about half a minute, apparently insensible. He then got up, and after shaking his head, as if to rid himself of a sense of confusion and stupor, looked at Dalton for some time.

“Well,” said he, “it’s all over now—but the truth is, the fault was my own. I provoked him too much, an’ without any occasion. I’m sorry you struck me, Condy, for I was only jokin’ all the time. I never had ill-will against you; an’ in spite of what has happened, I haven’t now.”

A feeling of generous regret, almost amounting to remorse, instantly touched Dalton’s heart; he seized the hand of Donnel, and expressed his sorrow for the blow he had given him.

“My God,” he exclaimed, “why did I strike you? But sure no one could for a minute suppose that you weren’t in earnest.”

“Well, well,” said the other, “let it be a warnin’ to both of us; to me, in the first place, never to carry a joke too far; and to you, never to allow your passion to get the betther of you, afaird that you might give a blow in anger that you’d have cause to repent of all the days of your life. My eye and cheek is in a frightful state; but no matther, Condy, I forgive you, especially in the hope that you’ll mark my advice.”

Dalton once more asked his pardon, and expressed his unqualified sorrow at what had occurred; after which he again shook hands with Dalton and departed.

Sullivan felt surprised at this rencontre, especially at the nature of its singular termination; he seemed, however, to fall into a meditative and gloomy mood, and observed when Dalton had gone—

“If I ever had any doubt, Donnel, that my poor brother owed his death to a Dalton, I haven’t it now.”

“I don’t blame you much for sayin’ so,” replied Donnel. “I’m sorry myself for what has happened, and especially as you were present. I’m afeard, indeed’, that a man’s life would be but little in that boy’s hands under a fit of passion. I provoked him too much, though.”

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“I think so,” said Sullivan. “Indeed, to tell you the truth, I had as little notion that you wore jokin’ as he had.”

“That’s my drame out last night, at all events,” said Donnel.

“How is that?” asked Sullivan, as they approached the door.

“Why,” said he, “I dreamed that I was lookin’ for a hammer at your house, an’ I thought that you hadn’t one to give me; but your daughter Mave came to me, and said, ‘here’s a hammer for you, Donnel, an’ take care of it, for it belongs to Condy Dalton.’ I thought I took it, an’ the first thing I found myself doin’ was drivin’ a nail in what appeared to be my own coffin. The same dhrame would alarm me but that I know that dhrames goes by contrairies, as I’ve reason to think this will.”

“No man understands these things better than yourself, Donnel,” said Sullivan; “but, for my part, I think there’s a dangerous kick in the boy that jist left us; and I’m much mistaken or the world will hear of it an’ know it yet.”

“Well, well,” said Donnel Dhu, in a very Christian-like spirit, “I fear you’re right, Jerry; but still let us hope for the best.”

And as he spoke, they entered the house.

CHAPTER III. — A Family on the Decline—Omens.

Jerry Sullivan’s house and place had about them all the marks and tokens of gradual decline. The thatch on the roof had begun to get black, and in some places was sinking into rotten ridges; the yard was untidy and dirty; the walls and hedges were broken and dismantled; and the gates were lying about, or swinging upon single hinges. The whole air of the premises was uncomfortable to the spectator, who could not avoid feeling that there existed in the owner either wilful neglect or unsuccessful struggle. The chimneys, from which the thatch had sank down, stood up with the incrustations of lime that had been trowelled round their bases, projecting uselessly out from them; some of the quoins had fallen from the gable; the plaster came off the walls in several places, and the whitewash was sadly discolored.

Inside, the aspect of everything was fully as bad, if not worse. Tables and chairs, and the general furniture of the house, had all that character of actual cleanliness and apparent want of care which poverty superinduces upon the most strenuous efforts of industry. The floor was beginning to break up into holes; tables and chairs were crazy; the dresser, though clean, had a cold, hungry, unfurnished look; and, what was unquestionably the worst symptom of all, the inside of the chimney brace, where formerly the sides and flitches of deep, fat bacon, grey with salt, were arrayed in goodly rows, now presented nothing but the bare and dust-covered hooks, from which they had

depended in happier times. About a dozen of herrings hung at one side of a worn salt-box, and at the other a string of onions that was nearly Stripped, both constituting the principal kitchen, varied, perhaps, with a little buttermilk,—which Sullivan's family were then able to afford themselves with their potatoes.

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We cannot close our description here, however; for sorry we are to say, that the severe traces of poverty were as visible upon the inmates themselves as upon the house and its furniture. Sullivan's family consisted of his eldest daughter, aged nineteen, two growing boys, the eldest about sixteen, and several younger children besides. These last were actually ragged—all of them were scantily and poorly clothed; and if any additional proof were wanting that poverty, in one of its most trying shapes, had come among them, it was to be found in their pale, emaciated features, and in that languid look of care and depression, which any diminution in the natural quantity of food for any length of time uniformly impresses upon the countenance. In fact, the whole group had a sickly and wo-worn appearance, as was evident from the unnatural dejection of the young, who, instead of exhibiting the cheerfulness and animation of youth, now moped about without gayety, sat brooding in corners, or struggled for a warm place nearest to the dull and cheerless fire.

"The day was, Donnel," said Sullivan, whilst he pointed, with a sigh, to the unfurnished chimney, "when we could give you—as I said awhile agone—a betther welcome—in one sense—I mane betther tratement—than we can give you now; but you know the times that is in it, an' you know the down-come we have got, an' that the whole country has got—so you must only take the will for the deed now—to such as we have you're heartily welcome. Get us some dinner, Bridget," he added, turning to his wife; "but, first and foremost, bring that girl into the room here till she hears what I have to say to her; and, Donnel, as you wor a witness to the disgraceful sight we seen a while agone, come in an' hear, too, what I'm goin' to say to her. I'll have no black thraisin in my own family against my own blood, an' against the blood of my loving brother, that was so traicherously shed by that boy's father."

The persons he addressed immediately passed into the cold, damp room as he spoke —Mave, the cause of all this anxiety, evidently in such a state of excitement as was pitiable. Her mother, who, as well as every other member of the family, had been ignorant of this extraordinary attachment, seemed perfectly bewildered by the language of her husband, at whom, as at her daughter, she looked with a face on which might be read equal amazement and alarm.

Mave Sullivan was a young creature, shaped with extraordinary symmetry, and possessed of great natural grace. Her stature was tall, and all her motions breathed; unstudied ease and harmony. In color, her long, abundant hair was beautifully fair—-precisely of that delightful shade which generally accompanies a pale but exquisitely clear and almost transparent complexion. Her face was oblong, and her features so replete with an expression of innocence and youth, as left on the beholder a conviction that she breathed of utter guilelessness and angelic purity itself.

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This was principally felt in the bewitching charm of her smile, which was irresistible, and might turn the heart of a demon into love. All her motions were light and elastic, and her whole figure, though not completely developed, was sufficiently rounded by the fulness of health and youth to give promise of a rich and luxurious maturity. On this occasion she became deadly pale, but as she was one of those whose beauty only assumes a new phase of attraction at every change, her paleness now made her appear, if possible, an object of greater interest.

“In God’s name, Jerry,” asked her mother, looking from father to daughter in a state of much distress, “what is wrong, or what has happened to put you in such a condition? I see by the anger in your eye an’ the whiteness of your cheeks, barrin’ the little red spot in the middle, that something out o’ the way all out has happened to vex you.”

“You may well say so, Bridget,” he replied; “but when I tell you that I came upon that undutiful daughter of ours coortin’ wid the son of the man that murdhered her uncle—my only brother—you won’t be surprised at the state you see me in—coortin’ wid a fellow that Dan M’Gowan here knows will be hanged yet, for he’s jist afther tellin’ him so.”

“You’re ravin’, Jerry,” exclaimed his wife, who appeared to feel the matter as incredible; “you don’t mane to tell me that she’d spake to, or know, or make any freedoms whatsomever wid young Condy Dalton, the son of her uncle’s murdherer? Hut, no, Jerry, don’t say that, at all events—any disgrace but that—death, the grave—or—or anything—but sich an unnatural curse as that would be.”

“I found them together behind the garden not many minutes ago,” replied Sullivan. “Donnel here seen them as well as I did—deny it she can’t; an’ now let her say what brought her there to meet him, or rather what brought him all the way to meet her? Answer me that, you disgrace to the name—answer me at wanst!”

The poor girl trembled and became so weak as to be scarcely able to stand: in fact, she durst not raise her eye to meet that of either parent, but stood condemned and incapable of utterance.

The night had now nearly set in, and one of her little sisters entered with a rush candle in her hand, the light of which, as it fell dimly and feebly on the group, gave to the proceedings a wild and impressive appearance. The prophecy-man, with his dark, stern look, peculiar nose, and black raven hair that fell thickly over his shoulders, contrasted strongly with the fair, artless countenance and beautiful figure of the girl who stood beside him, whilst over opposite them were Sullivan himself and his wife, their faces pale with sorrow, anxiety, and indignation.

“Give me the candle,” proceeded her father; “hand it to me, child, and leave the room; then,” he proceeded, holding it up to a great-coat of frieze which hung against the wall —“there’s his coat—there’s my lovin’ brother’s coat; look upon it now, an’ ax yourself

what do you desarve for meeting against our will an' consint the son of him that has the murdher of the man that owned it on his hands an' on his heart? What do you desarve, I say?"

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The girl spoke not, but the black prophet, struck by the words and the unexpected appearance of the murdered man's coat, started; in a moment, however, he composed himself, and calmly turned his eyes upon Sullivan, who proceeded to address his daughter.

"You have nothing to say, then? You're guilty, an' of coorse you have no excuse to make; however, I'll soon put an end to all this. Bring me a prayerbook. If your book oath can bind you down against ever——"

He could proceed no further. On uttering the last words, his daughter tottered, and would have fallen to the ground, had not Donnel Dhu caught her in his arms. She had, in fact, become almost insensible from excess of shame and over excitement, and, as Donnel carried her towards a bed that was in the corner of the room, her head lay over against his face.

It is unnecessary to say that Sullivan's indignation was immediately lost in alarm. On bringing the candle near her, the first thing they observed were streaks of blood upon Donnel Dhu's face, that gave to it, in connection with the mark of the blow he had received, a frightful and hideous expression.

"What is this?" exclaimed her mother, seizing the candle and holding it to the beautiful features of her trembling daughter, which were now also dabbled with blood. "In God's name, what ails my child? O Mave, Mave, my darlin', what's come over you? Blessed mother of marcy, what blood is this? *Achora, machree*, Mave, spake to! me—to the mother that 'ud go distracted, an' that will, too, if anything's wrong wid you. It was cruel in you, Jerry, to spake to; her so harsh as you did, an' to take her to task before a sthranger in such a cuttin' manner. Saiver of Airth, Mave, darlin', won't you spake to me, to your own mother?"'

"Maybe I did spake to her too severely," said the father, now relenting, "an' if I did, may God forgive me; for sure you know, Bridget, I wouldn't injure a hair of my darlin's head. But this blood! this blood! oh, where did it come from?"

Her weakness, however, proved of but short duration, and their apprehension was soon calmed. Mave looked around her rather wildly, and no sooner had her eyes rested on Donnel Dhu than she shrieked aloud, and turning her face away from him, with something akin to fear and horror, she flung herself into her mother's arms, exclaiming, as she hid her face in her bosom: "Oh save me from that man; don't let! him near me; don't let him touch me. I can't tell why, but I'm deadly afraid of him. What blood is that upon his face? Father, stand between us!"

"Foolish girl!" exclaimed her father, "you don't know what you're sayin'. Of coorse, Donnel, you'll not heed her words for, indeed, she hasn't come to herself yet. But, in God's name, where did this blood come from that's upon you and her?"

“You can’t suppose, Jerry,” said Donnel, “that the poor girl’s words would make me take any notice of them. She has been too much frightened, and won’t know, maybe in a few minutes, that she spoke them at all.”

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“That’s thrue,” said her mother; “but with regard to the blood——”

She was about to proceed, when Mave rose up, and requested to be taken out of the room.

“Bring me to the kitchen,” said she, “I’m afraid; and see this blood, mother.”

Precisely as she spoke, a few drops of blood fell from her nose, which, of course, accounted for its appearance on Donnel’s face, and probably for her terror also at his repulsive aspect.

“What makes you afeard of poor Donnel, asthore?” asked her mother—“a man that wouldn’t injure a hair of your head, nor of one belongin’ to you, an’ never did.”

“Why, when my father,” she returned, “spoke about the coat there, an’ just as Donnel started, I looked at it, an’ seen it movin’, I don’t know why, but I got afeard of him.”

Sullivan held up the candle mechanically, as she spoke, towards the coat, upon which they all naturally gazed; but, whether from its dim flickering light, or the force of imagination, cannot be determined, one thing was certain, the coat appeared actually to move again, as if disturbed by some invisible hand. Again, also, the prophet involuntary started, but only for a single moment.

“Tut,” said he, “it’s merely the unsteady light of the candle; show it here.”

He seized the rushlight from Sullivan, and approaching the coat, held it so close to it, that had there been the slightest possible motion, it could not have escaped their observation.

“Now,” he added, “you see whether it moves or not; but, indeed, the poor girl is so frightened by the great scowldin’ she got, that I don’t wondher at the way she’s in.”

Mrs. Sullivan kept still gazing at the coat, in a state of terror almost equal to that of her daughter.

“Well,” said she, “I’ve often heard it said that one is sometimes to disbelieve their own eyes; an’ only that I known the thing couldn’t happen, I would swear on the althar that I seen it movin’.”

“I thought so myself, too,” observed Sullivan, who also seemed to have been a good deal perplexed and awed by the impression; “but of coorse I agree wid Donnel, that it was the unsteady light of the rush that made us think so; howaniver, it doesn’t matther now; move or no move, it won’t bring him that owned it back to us, so God rest him!—-and now, Bridget, thry an’ get us some-thin’ to ait.”

“Before the girl leaves the room,” said the prophecy man, “let me spake what I think an’ what I know. I’ve lost many a weary day an’ night in studyin’ the further, an’ in lookin’ into what’s to come. I must spake, then, what I think an’ what I know, regardin’ her. I must; for when the feelin’ is on me, I can’t keep the prophecy back.”

“Oh! let me go, mother,” exclaimed the alarmed girl; “let me go; I can’t bear to look at him.”

“One minute, acushla, till you hear what he has to say to you,” and she held her back, with a kind of authoritative violence, as Mave attempted to leave the room.

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“Don’t be alarmed my purty creature,” spoke the prophet; “don’t be alarmed at what I’m goin’ to say to you, an’ about you, for you needn’t. I see great good fortune before you. I see a grand an’ handsome husband at your side, and a fine house to live in. I see stairs, an’ carpets, an’ horses, an’ hounds, an’ yourself, with jewels in your white little ears, an’ silks, an’ satins on your purty figure. That’s a wakin’ dhrame I had, an’ you may all mark my words, if it doesn’t come out thrue; it’s on the leaf, an’ the leaf was open to me. Grandeur an’ wealth is before her, for her beauty an’ her! goodness will bring it all about, an’ so I read it.”

“An’ what about the husband himself?” asked the mother, whose affections caused! her to feel a strong interest in anything that might concern the future interest of her daughter; “can you tell us nothing about his appearance, that we might give a guess at him?”

“No,” replied M’Gowan, for such was the prophet’s name, “not to you; to none but herself can I give the marks an’ tokens that will enable her to know the man that is to be her husband when she sees him; and to herself, in the mornin’, I will, before I go that is if she’ll allow me—for what is written in the dark book ought to be read and expounded. Her beauty an’ her goodness will do it all!”

The man’s words were uttered m a voice so replete with those soft and insinuating tones that so powerfully operate upon the female heart; they breathed, too such an earnest spirit of good will, joined to an evident admiration of the beauty and goodness he alluded to, that the innocent girl, not-withstanding her previous aversion, felt something like gratification at what he said, not on account ol the prospects held out to her, but because of the singular charm and affectionate spirit which breathed in his voice; or, might it not have been that delicate influence of successful flattery which so gently pervades the heart of woman, and soothes that vanity which unconsciously lurks in the very purest and most innocent of the sex? So far from being flattered by his predictions, she experienced a strong sensation of disappointment, because she knew where her affections at that moment rested, and felt persuaded that if she were destined to enjoy the grandeur shadowed out for her, it never could be with him whom she then loved. Notwithstanding all this, she felt her repugnance against the prophet strongly counterbalanced by the strange influence he began to exercise over her; and with this impression she and they passed to the kitchen, where in a few minutes she was engaged in preparing food for him, with a degree of good feeling that surprised herself.

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There is scarcely anything so painful to hearts naturally generous, like those of the Sullivans, as the contest between the shame and exposure of the conscious poverty on the one hand, and the anxiety to indulge in a hospitable spirit on the other. Nobody unacquainted with Ireland could properly understand the distress of mind which this conflict almost uniformly produces. On the present occasion it was deeply felt by this respectable but declining family, and Mave, the ingenuous and kind-hearted girl, felt much of her unaccountable horror of this man removed by its painful exercise. Still her aversion was not wholly overcome, although much diminished; for, ever as she looked at his swollen and disfigured face, and thought of the mysterious motions of the murdered man's coat, she could not avoid turning away her eyes, and wishing that she had not seen him that evening. The scanty meal was at length over; a meal on which many a young eye dwelt with those yearning looks that take their character from the hungry and wolfish spirit which marks the existence of a "hard year," as it is called in our unfortunate country, and which, to a benevolent heart, forms such a sorrowful subject for contemplation. Poor Bridget Sullivan did all in her power to prevent this evident longing from being observed by M'Gowan, by looking significantly, shaking' her head, and knitting her brows, at the children; and when these failed she had recourse to threatening attitudes, and all kinds of violent gestures: and on these proving also unsuccessful, she was absolutely forced to speak aloud—

"Come, childhre, start out now, an' play yourselves; be off, I say, an' don't stand ready to jump down the daicent man's throat wid every bit he aits."

She then drove them abroad somewhere, but as the rain fell heavily the poor creatures were again forced to return, and resume their pitiable watch until the two men had finished their scanty repast.

Seated around the dull and uncomfortable fire, the whole family now forgot the hunger and care for a time, in the wild legends with which M'Gowan entertained them, until the hour of rest.

"We haven't the best bed in the world," observed Sullivan, "nor the best bed-clothes aither, but, as I said before, I wish, for all our sakes, they were betther. You must take your chance with these two slips o' boys to-night as well as you can. If you wish to tumble in now you may; or, may be you'd join us in our prayers. We sthrive, God! help us, to say a Rosary every night; for, afther all, there's nothin' like puttin' oneself! undher the holy protection of the Almighty, blessed be His name! Indeed, this sickness that's goin' is so rife and dangerous that it's good to sthrive to be prepared, as it is indeed, whatever comes, whether hunger or plenty, sickness or health; an' may God keep us prepared always!"

M'Gowan seemed for a moment at a loss, but almost immediately said in reply—

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“You are right, Jerry, but as for me, I say whatever prayers I do say, always by myself; for I can then get my mind fixed upon them betther. I’ll just turn into bed, then, for troth I feel a little stiff and tired; so you must only let me have my own way to-night. To-morrow night I’ll pray double.” He then withdrew to his appointed place of rest, where, after having partially undressed himself, he lay down, and for some time could hear no other sound than the solemn voices of this struggling and afflicted little fold, as they united in offering up their pious and simple act of worship to that Great Being, in whose providential care they felt such humble and confiding trust.

When their devotions were concluded, they quietly, and in a spirit at once of resignation and melancholy, repaired to their respective sleeping places, with the exception of old Sullivan himself, who, after some hesitation, took down the great coat already so markedly alluded to—and exclaiming, partly to those within hearing—

“I don’t know—but still there can’t be any harm in it; sure it’s betther that it should be doin’ some good than hangin’ up there idle, against the wall, such a night as this. Here, Dan, for the first time since I put it up wid my own hands, except to shake the dust off of it, I’m goin’ to turn this big coat to some use. There,” he added, spreading it over them; “let it help to keep you warm to-night—for God knows, you want it, you an’ them poor gorsoons. Your coverin’ is but light, an’ you may hear the downpowrin’ of rain that’s in it; an’ the wind, too, is risin’ fast, every minute—gettin’ so strong, indeed, that I doubt it ‘ill be a storm before it stops; an’ Dan, if it ’udn’t be too much, may be you’d not object to offer up one pather an’ avy for the poor sowl of him that owned it, an’ that was brought to his account so suddenly and so terribly. There,” he added, fixing it upon them; “it helps to keep you warm at any rate; an’ it’s surely betther to have it so employed than hangin’ idle, as I said, against the wall.”

M’Gowan immediately sat up in the bed, and putting down his hands, removed the coat.

“We don’t want it at all,” he replied; “take it away, Jerry—do, for heaven’s sake. The night’s not at all so cowld as you think, an’ we’ll keep one another warm enough wid-out it, never fear.”

“Troth you do want it,” said Sullivan; “for fareer gair, it’s the light coverin’ that’s over you an’ them, poor boys. Heighho, Dan, see what innocence is—poor things, they’re sound already—an’ may God pity them an’ provide for them, or enable me to do it!” And as he looked down upon the sleeping lads, the tears came so abundantly to his eyes, that he was forced to wipe them away. “Keep the coat, Dan,” he added; “you do want it.”

“No,” replied the other. “The truth is, I couldn’t sleep under it. I’m very timersome, an’ a little thing frightens me.”

“Oh,” said Sullivan, “I didn’t think of that: in troth, if you’re timersome, it’s more than the world b’lieves of you. Well, well—I’ll hang it up again; so good night, an’ a sound sleep to you, an’ to every man that has a free conscience in the sight of God!”

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No response was given to this prayer, and his words were followed by a deep and solemn silence, that was only broken occasionally by the heavy pattering of the descending rain, and the fitful gusts of the blast, as they rushed against the house, and sung wildly among the few trees by which it and the garden were enclosed.

Every one knows that a night of wind and storm, if not rising actually to a tempest or hurricane, is precisely that on which sleep is with its deepest influence upon men. Sullivan's family, on that which we are describing, were a proof of this; at least until about the hour of three o'clock, when they were startled by a cry for help, so loud and frightful, that in a moment he and the boys huddled on their dress, and hurried to the bed in which the prophet lay. In a minute or two they got a candle lit; and truly the appearance of the man was calculated to drive fear and alarm into their hearts. They found him sitting in the bed, with his eyes so wild and staring that they seemed straining out of their sockets. His hair was erect, and his mouth half open, and drawn back; while the perspiration poured from him in torrents. His hands were spread, and held up, with their palms outwards, as if in the act of pushing something back that seemed to approach him. "Help," he shouted, "he is comin' on me—he will have me powerless in a minute. He is gaspin' now, as he—Stay back, stay back—here—here, help; it's the murdhered man—he's upon me. Oh!—Oh, God! he's comin' nearer and nearer. Help me—save me!"

Sullivan on holding the candle to his face, perceived that he was still asleep; and suspecting the nature of his dream, he awoke him at once. On seeing a portion of the family about him, he started again, and looked for a moment so completely aghast that he resembled horror personified.

"Who—what—what are you? Oh," he exclaimed, recovering, and striving to compose himself, "ha—Good God! what a frightful drame I had. I thought I was murdherin' a man; murdherin' the"—he paused, and stared wildly about him.

"Murdherin' who?" asked Jerry.

"Murdherin'! eh—ha—why, who talks about murdherin'?"

"Compose yourself," added Sullivan; "you did; but you're frightened. You say you thought you were murdherin' some one; who was it?"

"Yes, yesr" he replied; "it was myself. I thought the murdhered man was—I mean, that the man was murdherin' myself." And he looked with a terrible shudder of fear towards the great coat.

"Hut," said Sullivan, "it was only a drame; compose yourself; why should you be alarmed?—your hand is free of it. So, as I said, compose yourself; put your trust in God, an' recommend yourself to his care."

“It was a terrible drame,” said the other, once more shuddering; “but then it was a drame. Good God; yes! However, I ax pardon for disturbin’ you all, an’ breaking in upon your sleep. Go to bed now; I’m well enough; only jist set that bit of candle by the bed-side for awhile, till I recover, for I did get a fearful fright.”

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He then laid himself down once more, and having wiped the perspiration from his forehead, which was now cadaverous, he bade them good night, and again endeavored to compose himself to rest. In this he eventually succeeded, the candle burning itself out; and in about three-quarters of an hour the whole family were once more wrapped in sound and uninterrupted repose.

The next morning the Sullivan family rose to witness another weary and dismal day of incessant rain, and to partake of a breakfast of thin stirabout, made and served up with that woful ingenuity, which necessity, the mother of invention in periods of scarcity, as well as in matters of a different character, had made known to the benevolent hearted wife of Jerry Sullivan. That is to say, the victuals were made so unsubstantially thin, that in order to impose, if possible, on the appetite, it was deemed necessary to deceive the eye by turning the plates and dishes round and round several times, while the viands were hot, so as by spreading them over a larger surface, to give the appearance of a greater quantity. It is, heaven knows, a melancholy cheat, but one with which the periodical famines of our unhappy country have made our people too well acquainted. Previous, however, to breakfast, the prophet had a private interview with Mave, or the *Gra Gal*, as she was generally termed to denote her beauty and extraordinary power of conciliating affection; *Gra Gal* signifying the fair love, or to give the more comprehensive meaning which it implied, the fair-haired beauty whom all love, or who wins all love. This interview lasted, at least, a quarter of an hour, or it might be twenty minutes, but as the object of it did not then transpire, we can only explain the appearances which followed it, so far at least, as the parties themselves were concerned. The *Gra Gal*, as we shall occasionally call her, seemed pleased, if not absolutely gratified, by the conversation that passed between them. Her eye was elated, and she moved about like one who appeared to have been relieved from some reflection that had embarrassed and depressed her; still it might have been observed that this sense of relief had nothing in it directly affecting the person of the prophet himself, on whom her eyes fell from time to time with a glance that changed its whole expression of satisfaction to one of pain and dislike. On his part there also appeared a calm sedate feeling of satisfaction, under which, however, an eye better acquainted with human nature might easily detect a triumph. He looked, to those who could properly understand him, precisely as an able diplomatist would who had succeeded in gaining a point.

When breakfast was over, and previous to his departure, he brought Jerry Sullivan and his wife out to the barn, and in a tone and manner of much mystery, assuming at the same time that figurative and inflated style so peculiar to him, and also to his rival the Senachie, he thus addressed them—

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“Listen,” said he, “listen, Jerry Sullivan, and Bridget, his wife; a child was born, and a page was written—the moon saw it, and the stars saw it; but the sun did not, for he is dark to fate an’ sees nothing but the face of nature. Do you understand that, Jerry Sullivan, an’ you Bridget, his wife?”

“Well, troth we can’t say we do yet, at all events,” they replied; “but how could we, ye know, if it’s regardin’ prophecy you’re spakin’.”

“Undherstand it!” he replied, contemptuously, “you undherstand it!—no nor Father Philemy Corcoran himself couldn’t undherstand it, barrin’ he fasted and prayed, and refrained from liquor, for that’s the way to get the ray o’ knowledge; at laist it’s, the way I got it first—however, let that pass. As I was sayin’ a child was born and a page was written—and an angel from heaven was sent to Nebbychodanazor, the prophet, who was commanded to write. What will I write? says Nebbychodanazor, the prophet. Write down the fate of a faymale child, by name Mave Sullivan, daughter to Jerry Sullivan and his wife Bridget, of Aughnmurrin. Amin, says the prophet; fate is fate, what’s before is not behind, neither is what’s behind before, and every thing will come to pass that’s to happen. Amin, agin, says the prophet, an’ what am I to write? Grandeur an’ wealth—up stairs and down stairs—silks-an’ satins—an inside car—bracelets, earrings, and Spanish boots, made of Morroccy leather, tanned at Cordovan. Amin, agin, says Nebbychodanazor, the prophet; this is not that, neither is that the other, but every is everything—naither can something be nothing, nor nothing something, to the end of time; and time itself is but cousin jarmin to eternity—as is recorded in the great book of fate, fortune and fatality. Write again, says the angel. What am I to write? At the name of Mabel Sullivan place along wid all the rest, two great paragons of a woman’s life, Marriage and Prosperity—write marriage happy, and prosperity numerous—and so the child’s born, an’ the page written—beauty and goodness, a happy father, and a proud mother—both made wealthy through her means.”

“And so,” he proceeded, dropping the recitative, and resuming his natural voice—

“Be kind and indulgent to your daughter, for she’ll yet live to make all your fortunes. Take care of her and yourself till I sees yez again.”

And without adding another word he departed.

CHAPTER IV. — A Dance, and Double Discovery.

The dance to which Sarah M’Gowan went after the conflict with her step-mother, was but a miserable specimen of what a dance usually is in Ireland. On that occasion, there were but comparatively few assembled; and these few, as may be guessed, consisted chiefly of those gay and frolicsome spirits whom no pressure of distress, nor anything

short of sickness or death, could sober down into seriousness. The meeting, in fact, exhibited a painful union of mirth

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and melancholy. The season brought with it none of that relief to the peasantry which usually makes autumn so welcome. On the contrary, the failure of the potato crop, especially in its quality, as well as that in the grain generally, was not only the cause of hunger and distress, but also of the sickness which prevailed. The poor were forced, as they too often are, to dig their potatoes before they were fit for food; and the consequences were disastrous to themselves in every sense. Sickness soon began to appear; but then it was supposed that as soon as the new grain came in, relief would follow. In this expectation, however, they were, alas! most wofully disappointed. The wetness of the summer and autumn had soured and fermented the grain so lamentably, that the use of it transformed the sickness occasioned by the unripe and bad potatoes into a terrible and desolating epidemic. At the period we are treating of, this awful scourge had just set in, and was beginning to carry death and misery in all their horrors throughout the country. It was no wonder, then, that, at the dance we are describing, there was an almost complete absence of that cheerful and light-hearted enjoyment which is, or at least which was, to be found at such meetings. It was, besides, owing to the severity of the evening, but thinly attended. Such a family had two or three members of it sick; another had buried a fine young woman; a third, an only son; a fourth, had lost the father, and the fifth, the mother of a large family. In fact, the conversation on this occasion was rather a catalogue of calamity and death, than that hearty ebullition of animal spirits which throws its laughing and festive spirits into such assemblies. Two there were, however, who, despite of the gloom which darkened both the dance and the day, contrived to sustain our national reputation for gayety and mirth. One of these was our friend, Sarah, or, as she was better known, Sally M'Gowan, and the other a young fellow named Charley Hanlon, who acted as a kind of gardener and steward to Dick o' the Grange. This young fellow possessed great cheerfulness, and such an everlasting fund of mirth and jocularity, as made him the life and soul of every dance, wake, and merry-meeting in the parish. He was quite a Lothario in his sphere—-a lady-killer—and so general an admirer of the sex, that he invariably made I love to every pretty girl he met, or could lure into conversation. The usual consequences followed. Nobody was such a favorite with the sex in general, who were ready to tear each other's caps about him, as they sometimes actually did; and indeed this is not at all to be wondered at. The fellow was one of the most open, hardy liars that ever lived. Of shame he had heard; but of what it meant, no earthly eloquence could give him the slightest perception; and we need scarcely add, that his assurance was boundless, as were his powers of flattery. It is unnecessary to say, then, that a man so admirably calculated to

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succeed with the sex, was properly appreciated by them, and that his falsehood, flattery, and assurance were virtues which enshrined the vagabond in their hearts. In short, he had got the character of being a rake; and he was necessarily obliged to suffer the agreeable penalty of their admiration and favor in consequence. The fellow besides, was by no means ill-looking, nor ill-made, but just had enough of that kind of face and figure which no one can readily either find fault with or praise.

This gallant and Sally M'Gowan, were in fact, the life of the meeting; and Sally, besides, had the reputation of being a great favorite with him—a circumstance which considerably diminished her popularity with her own sex. She herself felt towards him that kind of wild, indomitable affection, which is as vehement as it is unregulated in such minds as hers. For instance, she made no secret of her attachment to him, but on the contrary, gloried in it, even to her father, who, on this subject, could exercise no restraint whatsoever over her. It is not our intention to entertain our readers with the history of the occurrences which took place at the dance, as they are, in fact, not worth recording. Hanlon, at its close, prepared to see Sally home, as is usual.

"You may come with me near home," she replied; "but I'm not goin' home to-night."

"Why, where the dickens are you goin' then?" he asked.

"To Barny Gorrnly's wake; there 'ill be lots of fun there, too," she replied. "But come—-you can come wid me as far as the turn-up to the house; for I won't go in, nor go home neither, till afther the berril, tomorrow."

"Do you know," said he, rather gravely, "the Grey Stone that's at the mouth of the Black Glen?"

"I ought," said she; "sure that's where the carman was found murdhered."

"The same," added Hanlon. "Well, I must go that far to-night," said he.

"And that's jist where I turn off to the Gormly's."

"So far, then, we'll be together," he replied.

"But why that far only, Charley—eh?"

"That's what you could never guess," said he, "and very few else aither; but go I must, an' go I will. At all events, I'll be company for you in passin' it. Are you never afeard at night, as you go near it?"

"Divil a taste," she replied; "what 'ud I be afeard of? my father laughs at sich things; although," she added, musing, "I think he's sometimes timorous for all that. But I know he's often out at all hours, and he says he doesn't care about ghosts—I know I don't."

The conversation now flagged a little, and Hanlon, who had been all the preceding part of the evening full of mirth and levity, could scarcely force himself to reply to her observations, or sustain any part in the dialogue.

“Why, what the sorra’s comin’ over you?” she asked, as they began to enter into the shadow of the hill at whose foot her father’s cabin stood, and which here, for about two hundred yards, fell across the road. “It is gettin’ afeard you are?”

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“No,” he replied; “but I was given to undherstand last night, that if I’d come this night to the Grey Stone, I’d find out a saicret that I’d give a great deal to know.”

“Very well,” she replied, we’ll see that; an’ now, raise your spirits. Here we’re in the moonlight, thank goodness, such as it is. Dear me, thin, but it’s an awful night, and the wind’s risin’; and listen to the flood, how it roars in the glen below, like a thousand bulls!”

“It is,” he replied; “but hould your tongue now for a little, and as you’re here stop wid me for a while, although I don’t see how I’m likely to come by much knowledge in sich a place as this.”

They now approached the Grey Stone, and as they did the moon came out a little from her dark shrine of clouds, but merely with that dim and feeble light which was calculated to add ghastliness and horror to the wildness and desolation of the place.

Sally could now observe that her companion was exceedingly pale and agitated, his voice, as he spoke, became disturbed and infirm; and as he laid his hand upon the Grey Stone he immediately withdrew it, and taking off his hat he blessed himself, and muttered a short prayer with an earnestness and solemnity for which she could not account. Having concluded it, both stood in silence for a short time, he awaiting the promised information—for which on this occasion he appeared likely to wait in vain;—-and she without any particular purpose beyond her natural curiosity to watch and know the event.

The place at that moment was, indeed, a lonely one, and it was by no means surprising that, apart from the occurrence of two murders, one on, and the other near, the spot where they stood, the neighboring peasantry should feel great reluctance in passing it at night. The light of the moon was just sufficient to expose the natural wildness of the adjacent scenery. The glen itself lay in the shadow of the hill, and seemed to the eye so dark that nothing but the huge outlines of the projecting crags, whose shapes appeared in the indistinctness like gigantic spectres, could been seen; while all around, and where the pale light of! the moon fell, nothing was visible but the muddy gleams of the yellow flood as it rushed, with its hoarse and incessant roar, through a flat country on whose features the storm and the hour had impressed a character of gloom, and the most dismal desolation. Nay, the still appearance of the Grey Stone, or rock, at which they stood, had, when contrasted with the moving elements about them, and associated with the murder committed at its very foot, a solemn appearance that was of itself calculated to fill the mind with awe and terror. Hanlon felt this, as, indeed, his whole manner indicated.

“Well,” said his companion, alluding to the short prayer he had just concluded, “I didn’t expect to see you at your prayers like a voteen this night at any rate. Is it fear that makes you so pious upon our hands? Troth, I doubt there’s a white feather,—a cowardly dhrop—in you, still an’ all.”

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“If you can be one minute serious, Sally, do, I beg of you. I am very much disturbed, I acknowledge, an’ so would you, mabe, if you knew as much as I do.”

“You’re the color of death,” she replied putting her fingers upon his cheek; “—an, my God! is it paspiration I feel such a night as this? I declare to goodness it is. Give me the white pocket-handkerchy that you say Peggy Murray gave you. Where is it?” she proceeded, taking it out of his pocket. “Ah, ay, I have it; stoop a little; take care of your hat; here now,” and while speaking she wiped the cold perspiration from his forehead. “Is this the one she made you a present of, an’ put the letthers on?”

“It is,” he replied, “the very same—but she didn’t make me a present of it, she only hemmed it for me.”

“That’s a lie of you,” she replied, fiercely; “she bought it for you out of her own pocket. I know that much. She tould Kate Duffy so herself, and boasted of it: but wait.”

“Well,” replied Hanlon, anxious to keep down the gust of jealousy which he saw rising, “and if she did, how could I prevent her?”

“What letthers did she put on it?”

“P. and an M.,” he replied, “the two first letthers of my name.”

“That’s another lie,” she exclaimed; “they’re not the two first letthers of your name, but of her own; there’s no M in Hanlon. At any rate, unless you give the same handkerchy to me, I’ll make it be a black business to her.”

“Keep it, keep it, wid all my heart,” he replied, glad to get rid of a topic which at that moment came on him so powerfully and unseasonably. “Do what you like wid it.”

“You say so willingly, now—do you?”

“To be sure I do; an’ you may tell the whole world that I said so, if you like.”

“P. M.—oh, ay, that’s for Peggy Murray—maybe the letthers I saw on the ould tobaccy-box I found in the hole of the wall to-day were for Peggy Murray. Ha! ha! ha! Oh, may be I won’t have a brag over her!”

“What letthers?” asked Hanlon eagerly; “a tobaccy-box, did you say?”

“Ay did I—a tobaccy-box. I found it in a hole in the wall in our house to-day; it tumbled out while I was gettin’ some cobwebs to stop a bleedin’.”

“Was it a good one?” asked Hanlon, with apparent carelessness, “could one use it?”

“Hardly; but no, it’s all rusty, an’ has but one hinge.”

“But one hinge!” repeated the other, who was almost breathless with anxiety; “an’ the letthers—what’s this you say they wor?”

“The very same that’s on your handkerchy,” she replied—“a P. an’ an M.”

“Great God!” he exclaimed, “is this possible! Heavens! What is that? Did you hear anything?”

“What ails you?” she enquired. “Why do you look so frightened?”

“Did you hear nothing?” he again asked.

“Ha! ha!—hear!” she replied, laughing—“hear; I thought I heard something like a groan; but sure ’tis only the wind. Lord! what a night! Listen how the wind an’ storm growls an’ tyrannizes and rages down in the glen there, an’ about the hills. Faith there’ll be many a house stripped this night. Why, what ails you? Afther all, you’re but a hen-hearted divil, I doubt; sorra thing else.”

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Hanlon made her no reply, but took his hat off, and once more offered up a short prayer, apparently in deep and most extraordinary excitement.

“I see,” she observed, after he had concluded, “that you’re bent on your devotions this night; and the devil’s own place you’ve pitched upon for them.”

“Well, now,” replied Hanlon, “I’ll be biddin’ you good-night; but before you go, promise to get me that tobaccy-box you found; it’s the least you may give it to me for Peggy Murray’s handkerchy.”

“Hut,” returned Sally, “it’s not worth a thraneen; you couldn’t use it even if you had it; sure it’s both rusty and broken.”

“No matther for that,” he replied; “I want to play a thrick on Peggy Murray wid it, so as to have a good laugh against her—the pair of us—you wid the handkerchy, and me wid the tobaccy-box.”

“Very well,” she replied. “Ha! ha! ha!—that’ll be great. At any rate, I’ve a crow to pluck wid the same Peggy Murray. Oh, never you fear, you must have it; the minnit I get my hands on it, I’ll secure it for you.” After a few words more of idle chat they separated; he to his master’s house, which was a considerable distance off; and this extraordinary creature—unconscious of the terrors and other weaknesses that render her sex at once so dependent on and so dear to man—full only of delight at the expected glee of the wake—to the house of death where it was held.

In the country parts of Ireland it is not unusual for those who come to a wake-house from a distance, to remain there until the funeral takes place: and this also is frequently the case with the nearest door neighbors. There is generally a solemn hospitality observed on the occasion, of which the two classes I mention partake. Sally’s absence, therefore, on that night, or for the greater portion of the next day, excited neither alarm nor surprise at home. On entering their miserable sheiling, she found her father, who had just returned, and her step-mother in high words; the cause of which, she soon learned, had originated in his account of the interview between young Dalton and Mave Sullivan, together with its unpleasant consequences to himself.

“What else could you expect,” said his wife, “but what you got? You’re ever an’ always too ready wid your divil’s grin an’ your black prophecy to thim you don’t like. I wondher you’re not afeard that some of them might come back to yourself, an’ fall upon your own head. If ever a man tempted Providence you do.”

“Ah, dear me!” he exclaimed, with a derisive sneer, rendered doubly repulsive by his own hideous and disfigured face, “how pious we are! Providence, indeed! Much I care about Providence, you hardened jade, or you aither, whatever puts the word into your purty mouth. Providence! oh, how much we regard it, as if Providence took heed of

what we do. Go an' get me somethin' to put to this swellin', you had betther; or if it's goin' to grow religious you are, be off out o' this; we'll have none of your cant or pishthrougues here."

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“What’s this?” inquired Sarah, seating; herself on a three legged stool, “the ould work, is it? bell-cat, bell-dog. Ah, you’re a blessed pair an’ a purty pair, too; you, wid your swelled face an’ blinkin’ eye. Arrah, what dacent man gave you that? An’ you,” she added, turning to her step-mother, “wid your cheeks poulticed, an’ your eye blinkin’ on the other side—what a pair o’ beauties you are, ha! ha! ha! I wouldn’t be surprised if the divil an’ his mother fell in consate wid you both!—ha! ha!”

“Is that your manners, afther spendin’ the night away wid yourself?” asked her father, angrily. “Instead of stealin’ into the house thremblin’ wid fear, as you ought to be, you walk in wid your brazen face, ballyraggin’ us like a Hecthor.”

“Devil a taste I’m afeard,” she replied, sturdily; “I did nothin’ to be afeard or ashamed of, an’ why should I?”

“Did you see Mr. Hanlon on your travels, eh?”

“You needn’t say eh about it,” she replied, “to be sure I did; it was to meet him that I went to the dance; I have no saicrets.”

“Ah, you’ll come to a good end yet, I doubt,” said her father.

“Sure she needn’t be afeard of Providence, any how,” observed his wife.

“To the divil wid you, at all events,” he replied; “if you’re not off out o’ that to get me somethin’ for this swellin’ I’ll make it worse for you.”

“Ay, ay, I’ll go,” looking at him with peculiar bitterness, “an wid the help of the same Providence that you laugh at, I’ll take care that the same roof won’t cover the three of us long. I’m tired of this life, and come or go what may, I’ll look to my sowl an’ lead it no longer.

“Do you mane to break our hearts?” he replied, laughing; “for sure we couldn’t do less afther her, Sally; eh, ha! ha! ha! Before you lave us, anyhow,” he added, “go and get me some Gaiharrawan roots to bring down this swellin’; I can’t go to the Grange wid sich a face as this on me.”

“You’ll have a blacker an’ a worse one on the day of judgment,” replied Nelly, taking up an old spade as she spoke, and proceeding to look for the Casharrawan (Dandelion) roots he wanted.

When she had gone, the prophet, assuming that peculiar sweetness of manner, for which he was so remarkable when it suited his purpose, turned to his daughter, and putting his hand into his waistcoat pocket, pulled out a tress of fair hair, whose shade and silky softness were exquisitely beautiful.

“Do you see that,” said he, “isn’t that pretty?”

“Show,” she replied, and taking the tress into her hand, she looked at it.

“It is lovely; but isn’t that aquil to it?” she continued, letting loose her own of raven black and equal gloss and softness—“what can it brag over that? eh,” and as she compared them her black eye flashed, and her cheek assumed a rich glow of pride and conscious beauty, that made her look just such a being as an old Grecian statuary would have wished to model from.

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“It is aiquil to hers any day,” replied her father, softening into affection as he contemplated her; “and indeed, Sally, I think you’re her match every way except—-except—no matter, troth are you.”

“What are you going to do wid it?” she asked; “is it to the Grange it’s goin’?”

“It is an’ I want you to help me in what I mentioned to you. If I get what I’m promised, we’ll lave the country, you and I, and as for that ould vagabond, we’ll pitch her to ould Nick. She’s talking about devotion and has nothing but Providence in her lips.”

“But isn’t there a Providence?” asked his daughter, with a sparkling eye.

“Devil a much myself knows or cares,” he replied, with indifference, “whether there is or not.”

“Bekase if there is,” she said, pausing—“if there is, one might as well—”

She paused again and her fine features assumed an intellectual meaning—a sorrowful and meditative beauty, that gave a new and more attractive expression to her face than her father had ever witnessed on it before.

“Don’t vex me, Sarah,” he replied, snappishly. “Maybe it’s goin’ to imitate her you are. The clargy knows these things maybe—an’ maybe they don’t. I only wish she’d come back with the caaharrawan. If all goes right, I’ll pocket what’ll bring yourself an’ me to America. I’m beginnin’ somehow to get unaisy; an’ I don’t wish to stay in this country any longer.”

Whilst he spoke, the sparkling and beautiful expression which had lit up his daughter’s countenance passed away, and with it probably the moment in which it was possible to have opened a new and higher destiny to her existence.

Nelly, in the meantime, having taken an old spade with her to dig the roots she went in quest of, turned up Glendhu, and kept searching for some time in vain, until at length she found two or three bunches of the herb growing in a little lonely nook that lay behind a projecting ledge of rock, where one would seldom think of looking for herbage at all. Here she found a little, soft, green spot, covered over with dandelion; and immediately she began to dig it up. The softness of the earth and its looseness surprised her a good deal; and moved by an unaccountable curiosity, she pushed the spade further down, until it was met by some substance that felt rather hard. From this she cleared away the earth as well as she could, and discovered that the spade had been opposed by a bone; and on proceeding to examine still further, she discovered that the spot on which the dandelions had grown, contained the bones of a full grown human body.

CHAPTER V. — The Black Prophet is Startled by a Black Prophecy.

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Having satisfied herself that the skeleton was a human one, she cautiously put back the earth, and covered it up with the green sward, as graves usually are covered, and in such a way that there should exist, from the undisturbed appearance of the place, as little risk as possible of discovery. This being-settled, she returned with the herbs, laying aside the spade, from off which she had previously rubbed the red earth, so as to prevent any particular observation; she sat down, and locking her fingers into each other, swayed her body backwards and forwards in silence, as a female does in Ireland when under the influence of deep and absorbing sorrow, whilst from time to time she fixed her eyes on the prophet, and sighed deeply.

“I thought,” said he, “I sent you for the dandelion; where is it?”

“Oh,” she replied, unrolling it from the corner of her apron, “here it is—I forgot it—ay, I forgot it—and no wondher—oh, no wondher, indeed!—Providence! You may blaspheme Providence as much as you like; but he’ll take his own out o’ you yet; an’ indeed, it’s comin’ to that—it is, Donnel, an’ you’ll find it so.”

The man had just taken the herbs into his hand and was about to shred them into small leaves for the poultice, when she uttered the last words. He turned his eyes upon her; and in an instant that terrible scowl, for which he was so remarkable, when in a state of passion, gave its deep and deadly darkness to his already disfigured visage. His eyes blazed, and one half of his face became ghastly with rage.

“What do you mane?” he asked; “what does she mane, Sarah? I tell you, wanst for all, you must give up ringing Providence into my ears, unless you wish to bring my hand upon you, as you often did! mark that!”

“Your ears,” she replied, looking at him calmly, and without seeming to regard his threat; “oh, I only wish I could ring the fear of Providence into your heart—I wish I I could; I’ll do for yourself what you often pretend to do for others: but I’ll give you warnin’. I tell you now, that Providence: himself is on your track—that his judgment’s hangin’ over you—-and that it’ll fall upon! you before long. This is my prophecy, and; a black one you’ll soon find it.”

That Nelly had been always a woman of some good nature, with gleams of feeling and humanity appearing in a character otherwise apathetic, hard, and dark, M’Gowan well knew; but that she was capable of bearding him in one of his worst and most ferocious moods, was a circumstance which amazed and absolutely overcame him. Whether it was the novelty or the moral elevation of the position she so unexpectedly assumed, or some lurking conviction within himself which echoed back the truth of her language, it is difficult to say. Be that, however, as it might, he absolutely quailed before her; and instead of giving way to headlong violence or outrage, he sat down, and merely looked on her in silence and amazement.

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Sarah thought he was unnecessarily tame on the occasion, and that her prophecy ought not to have been listened to in silence. The utter absence of all fear, however, on the part of the elder female, joined to the extraordinary union of determination and indifference with which she spoke, had something morally impressive in it; and Sarah, who felt, besides, that there seemed a kind of mystery in the words of the denunciation, resolved to let the matter rest between them, at least for the present.

A silence of some time now ensued, during which she looked from the one to the other with an aspect of uncertainty. At length, she burst into a hearty laugh—

“Ha, ha, ha!—well,” said she, “it’s a good joke at any rate to see my father bate with his own weapons. Why, she has frightened you more wid her prophecy than ever you did any one wid one of your own. Ha, ha, ha!”

To this Sally neither replied, nor seemed disposed to reply.

“Here,” added Sarah, handing her stepmother a cloth, “remimber you have to go to Darby Skinadre’s for meal. I’d go myself, an’ save you in the journey, but that I’m afraid you might fall in love wid one another in my absence. Be off now, you ould stepdivle, an’ get the meal; or if you’re not able to go, I will.”

After a lapse of a few minutes, the woman rose, and taking the cloth, deliberately folded it up, and asked him for money to purchase the meal she wanted.

“Here,” said he, handing her a written paper, “give him that, an’ it will do as well as money. He expects Master Dick’s interest for Dalton’s farm, an’ I’ll engage he’ll attend to that.”

She received the paper, and looking at it, said—

“I hope this is none of the villainy I suspect.”

“Be off,” he replied, “get what you want, and that’s all you have to do.”

“What’s come over you?” asked Sarah of her father, after the other had gone. “Did you get afeard of her?”

“There’s something in her eye,” he replied, “that I don’t like, and that I never seen there before.”

“But,” returned the other, a good deal surprised, “what can there be in her eye that you need care about? You have nobody’s blood on your hands, an’ you stole nothing. What made you look afeard that time?”

“I didn’t look afeard.”

“But I say you did, an’ I was ashamed of you.”

“Well, never mind—I may tell you something some o’ these days about that same woman. In the meantime, I’ll throw myself on the bed, an’ take a sleep, for I slept but little last night.”

“Do so,” replied Sarah; “but at any rate, never be cowed by a woman. Lie down, an’ I’ll go over awhile to Tom Cassidy’s. But first, I had better make the poultice for your face, to take down the ugly swellin’.”

Having made and applied the poultice, she went off, light-hearted as a lark, leaving her worthy father to seek some rest if he could.

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She had no sooner disappeared than the prophet, having closed and bolted the door, walked backwards and forwards, in a moody and unsettled manner.

“What,” he exclaimed to himself, “can be the matther with that woman, that made her look at me in sich a way a while agone? I could not mistake her eye. She surely knows more than I thought, or she would not fix her eye into mine as she did. Could there be anything in that dhrame about Dalton an’ my coffin? Hut! that’s nonsense. Many a dhrame I had that went for nothin’. The only thing she could stumble on is the Box, an’ I don’t think she would be likely to find that out, unless she went to throw down the house; but, anyhow, it’s no harm to thry.” He immediately mounted the old table, and, stretching up, searched the crevice in the wall where it had been, but, we need not add, in vain. He then came down again, in a state of dreadful alarm, and made a general search for it in every hole and corner visible, after, which his agitation became wild and excessive.

“She has got it!” he exclaimed—“she has stumbled on it, aided by the devil’—an’ may she soon be in his clutches!—and it’s the only thing I’m afeard of! But then,” he added, pausing, and getting somewhat cool—“does she know it might be brought against me, or who owned it? I don’t think she does; but still, where can it be, and what could she mane by Providence trackin’ me out?—an’ why did she look as if she: knew something? Then that dhrame I can’t get it out o’ my head this whole day—and the terrible one I had last night, too! But that last is aisily ’counted for. As it is, I must only wait, and watch her; and if I find she can be dangerous, why—it’ll be worse for her—-that’s all!”

He then threw himself on the wretched bed, and, despite of his tumultuous reflections, soon fell asleep.

CHAPTER VI. — A Rustic Miser and His Establishment

There is to be found in Ireland, and, we presume, in all other countries, a class of hardened wretches, who look forward to a period of dearth as to one of great gain and advantage, and who contrive, by exercising the most heartless and diabolical principles, to make the sickness, famine, and general desolation which scourge their fellow-creatures, so many sources of successful extortion and rapacity, and consequently of gain to themselves. These are Country Misers or Money-lenders, who are remarkable for keeping meal until the arrival of what is termed a hard year, or a dear summer, when they sell it out at an enormous or usurious prices, and who, at all times, and under all circumstances, dispose of it only at terms dictated by their own griping spirit and the crying necessity of the unhappy purchasers.

The houses and places of such persons are always remarkable for a character in their owners of hard and severe saving, which at a first glance has the appearance of that

rare virtue in our country, called frugality—a virtue which, upon a closer inspection, is found to be nothing with them but selfishness, sharpened up into the most unscrupulous avarice and penury.

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About half a mile from the Sullivan's, lived a remarkable man of this class, named Darby Skinadre. In appearance he was lank and sallow, with a long, thin, parched looking face, and a miserable crop of yellow beard, which no one could pronounce as anything else than "a dead failure;" added to this were two piercing ferret eyes, always sore and with a tear standing in each, or trickling down his fleshless cheeks; so that, to persons disposed to judge only by appearances, he looked very like a man in a state of perpetual repentance for his transgressions, or, what was still farther from the truth, who felt a most Christian sympathy with the distresses of the poor. In his house, and about it, there was much, no doubt, to be commended, for there was much to mark the habits of the saving man. Everything was neat and clean, not so much from any innate love of neatness and cleanliness, as because these qualities were economical in themselves. His ploughs and farming implements were all snugly laid up, and covered, lest they might be injured by exposure to the weather; and his house was filled with large chests and wooden hogsheads, trampled hard with oatmeal, which, as they were never opened unless during a time of famine, had their joints and crevices festooned by innumerable mealy-looking cobwebs, which description of ornament extended to the dresser itself, where they might be seen upon most of the cold-looking shelves, and those neglected utensils, that in other families are mostly used for food. His haggard was also remarkable for having in it, throughout all the year, a remaining stack or two of oats or wheat, or perhaps one or two large ricks of hay, tanned by the sun of two or three summers into tawny hue—each or all kept in the hope of a failure and a famine.

In a room from the kitchen, he had a beam, a pair of scales, and a set of weights, all of which would have been vastly improved by a visit from the lord-mayor, had our meal-monger lived under the jurisdiction of that civic gentleman. He was seldom known to use metal weights when disposing of his property; in lieu of these he always used round stones, which, upon the principle of the Scottish proverb, that "many a little makes a muckle," he must have found a very beneficial mode of transacting business.

If anything could add to the iniquity of his principles, as a plausible but most unscrupulous cheat, it was the hypocritical prostitution of the sacred name and character of religion to his own fraudulent impositions upon the poor and the distressed. Outwardly, and to the eye of men, he was proverbially strict and scrupulous in the observation of its sanctions, but outrageously severe and unsparing upon all who appeared to be influenced either by a negligent or worldly spirit, or who omitted the least tittle of its forms. Religion and its duties, therefore, were perpetually in his mouth but never with such apparent zeal and sincerity as when enforcing his most heartless and hypocritical exactions upon the honest and struggling creatures whom necessity or neglect had driven into his meshes.

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Such was Darby Skinadre; and certain we are that the truth of the likeness we have given of him will be at once recognized by our readers as that of the roguish hypocrite, whose rapacity is the standing curse of half the villages of the country, especially during the seasons of distress, or failure of crops.

Skinadre on the day we write of, was reaping a rich harvest from the miseries of the unhappy people. In a lower room of his house, to the right of the kitchen as you entered it, he stood over the scales, weighing out with a dishonest and parsimonious hand, the scanty pittance which poverty enabled the wretched creatures to purchase from him; and in order to give them a favorable impression of his piety, and consequently of his justice, he had placed against the wall a delf crucifix, with a semi-circular receptacle at the bottom of it for holding holy water This was as much as to say “how could I cheat you, with the image of our Blessed Redeemer before my eyes to remind me of my duty, and to teach me, as He did, to love my fellow-creatures?” And with many of; the simple people, he actually succeeded in making the impression he wished; for they could not conceive it possible, that any principle, however rapacious, could drive a man to the practice of such sacrilegious imposture.

There stood Skinadre, like the very Genius of Famine, surrounded by distress, raggedness, feeble hunger, and tottering disease, in all the various aspects of pitiable suffering, hopeless desolation, and that agony of the heart which impresses wildness upon the pale cheek, makes the eye at once dull and eager, parches the mouth and gives to the voice of misery tones that are hoarse and hollow. There he stood, striving to blend consolation with deceit, and in the name of religion and charity subjecting the helpless wretches to fraud and extortion. Around him was misery, multiplied into all her most appalling shapes. Fathers of families were there, who could read in each other’s faces too truly the gloom and anguish that darkened the brow and wrung the heart. The strong man, who had been not long-before a comfortable farmer, now stood dejected and apparently broken down, shorn of his strength, without a trace of either hope or spirit; so wofully shrunk away too, from his superfluous apparel, that the spectators actually wondered to think that this was the large man, of such powerful frame, whose feats of strength had so often heretofore filled them with amazement. But, alas! what will not sickness and hunger do? There too was the aged man—the grand-sire himself—bent with a double weight of years and sorrow—without food until that late hour; forgetting the old pride that never stooped before, and now coming with, the last feeble argument, to remind the usurer that he and his father had been schoolfellows and friends, and that although he had refused to credit his son and afterwards his daughter-in-law, still, for the sake of old times, and of those who were now no more, he hoped he would not refuse his gray hairs and tears, and for the sake of the living God besides, that which would keep his son, and his daughter-in-law, and his famishing grandchildren, who had not a morsel to put in their mouths, nor the means of procuring it on earth—if he failed them.

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And there was the widower, on behalf of his motherless children, coming with his worn and desolate look of sorrow, almost thankful to God that his Kathleen was not permitted to witness the many-shaped miseries of this woful year; and yet experiencing the sharp and bitter reflection that now, in all their trials—in his poor children's want and sickness—in their moanings by day and their cries for her by night, they have not the soft affection of her voice nor the tender touch of her hand to soothe their pain—nor has he that smile, which was ever his, to solace him now, nor that faithful heart to soothe him with its affection, or to cast its sweetness into the bitter cup of affliction. Alas! no; he knows that her heart will beat for him and them no more; that that eye of love will never smile upon them again; and so he feels the agony of her loss superadded to all his other sufferings, and in this state he approaches the merciless usurer.

And the widow—emblem of desolation and dependence—how shall she meet and battle with the calamities of this fearful season? She out of whose heart these very calamities draw forth the remembrances of him she has lost, with such vividness that his past virtues are added to her present sufferings; and his manly love as a husband—his tenderness as a parent—his protecting hand and ever kind heart, crush her solitary spirit by their memory, and drag it down to the utmost depths of affliction. Oh! bitter reflection!—"if her Owen wore now alive, and in health, she would not be here; but God took him to Himself, and now unless he—the miser—has compassion on her, she and her children—her Owen's children—must lie down and die! If it were not for their sakes, poor darlings, she would I wish to follow him out of such a world; but now she and the Almighty are all that they have to look to, blessed be His name!"

Others there were whose presence showed; how far the general destitution had gone into the heart of society, and visited many whose circumstances had been looked upon as beyond its reach. The decent farmer, for instance, whom no one had suspected of distress, made his appearance among them with an air of cheerfulness that was put on to baffle suspicion. Sometimes he laughed as if his heart were light, and again expressed a kind of condescending sympathy with some poor person or other, to whom he spoke kindly, as a man would do who knew nothing personally of the distress which he saw about him, but who wished to encourage those who did with the cheering hope that it must soon pass away. Then affecting the easy manner of one who was interesting himself for another person, he asked to have some private conversation with the usurer, to whom he communicated the immediate want that pressed upon him and his family.

It is impossible, however, to describe the various aspects and claims of misery which presented themselves at Skinadre's house. The poor people flitted to and fro silently and dejectedly, wasted, feeble, and sickly—sometimes in small groups of twos and threes, and sometimes a solitary individual might be seen hastening with earnest but languid speed, as if the life of some dear child or beloved parent, of a husband or wife, or perhaps, the lives of a whole farcify, depended upon his or her arrival with food.

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CHAPTER VII. — A Panorama of Misery.

Skinadre, thin and mealy, with his coat off, but wearing a waistcoat to which were attached flannel sleeves, was busily engaged in his agreeable task of administering to their necessities. Such was his smoothness of manner, and the singular control which a long life of hypocrisy had given him over his feelings, that it was impossible to draw any correct distinction between that which he only assumed, and that which he really felt. This consequently gave him an immense advantage over every one with whom he came in contact, especially the artless and candid, and all who were in the habit of expressing what they thought. We shall, however, take the liberty of introducing him to the reader, and allow honest Skinadre to speak for himself.

“They’re beggars—them three—that woman and her two children; still my heart bleeds for them, bekase we should love our neighbors as ourselves; but I have given away as much meal in charity, an’ me can so badly afford it, as would—I can’t now, indeed, my poor woman! Sick—troth they look sick, an’ you look sick yourself. Here, Paddy Lenahan, help that woman an’ her two poor children out of that half bushel of meal you’ve got; you won’t miss a handful for God’s sake.”

This he said to a poor man who had just purchased some oat-meal from him; for Skinadre was one of those persons who, however he might have neglected works of mercy himself, took great delight in encouraging others to perform them.

“Troth it’s not at your desire I do it, Darby,” replied the man; “but bekase she an’ they wants it, God help them. Here, poor creature, take this for the honor of God: an’ I’m only sorry, for both our sakes, that I can’t do more.”

“Well, Jemmy Duggan,” proceeded the miser, addressing a new-comer, “what’s the news wid you? They’re hard times, Jemmy; we all know that an’ feel it too, and yet we live, most of us, as if there wasn’t a God ta punish us.”

“At all events,” replied the man, “we feel what sufferin’ is now, God help us! Between hunger and sickness, the counthry was never in such a state widin the memory of man, What, in the name o’ God, will become of the poor people, I know not. The Lord pity them an’ relieve them!”

“Amen, amen, Jemmy! Well, Jemmy, can I do any thing for you? But Jemmy, in regard to that, the thruth is, we have brought all these scourges on us by our sins and our transgressions; thim that sins, Jemmy, must suffer.”

“There’s no one denyin’ it, Darby; but you’re axin’ me can you do any thing for me, an’ my answer to that is, you can, if you like.”

“Ah! Jemmy, you wor ever an’ always a wild, heedless, heerum-skeerum rake, that never was likely to do much good; little religion ever rested on you, an’ now I’m afeard no signs on it.”

“Well, well, who’s widout sin? I’m sure I’m not. What I want is, to know if you’ll credit me for a hundred of meal till the times mends a trifle. I have the six o’ them at home widout their dinner this day, an’ must go widout if you refuse me. When the harvest comes round, I’ll pay you.”

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“Jemmy, you owe three half-year’s, rent; an’ as for the harvest an’ what it’ll bring, only jist look at the day that’s in it. It goes to my heart to refuse you, poor man; but Jemmy, you see you have brought this on yourself. If you had been an attentive, industrious man, an’ minded your religion, you wouldn’t be as you are now. Six you have at home, you say?”

“Ay, not to speak of the woman; an’ myself. I know you won’t, refuse them, Darby, bekase if we’re hard pushed now, it’s, a’most every body’s case as well as mine. Be what I may, you know I’m honest.”

“I don’t doubt your honesty, Jemmy; but Jemmy, if I sell my meal to a man that can pay and won’t, or if I sell my meal to a man that would pay and can’t, by which do I lose most? There it is, Jemmy—think o’ that now. Six in family, you say?”

“Six in family, wid the woman an’ myself.”

“The sorra man livin’ feels more for you than I do, an’ I would let you have the meal if I could; but the truth is, I’m makin’ up my rent—an’ Jemmy, I lost so much last year by my foolish good nature, an’ I gave away so much on trust, that now I’m brought to a hard pass myself. Troth I’ll fret enough this night for havin’ to refuse you. I know it was rash of me to make the promise I did; but still, God forbid that ever any man should be able to throw it in my face, an’ say that Darby Skinadre ever broke his promise.”

“What promise?”

“Why, never to sell a pound of meal on trust.”

“God help us, then!—for what to do or where to go I don’t know.”

“It goes to my heart, Jemmy, to refuse you—six in family, an’ the two of yourselves. Troth it does, to my very heart itself; but stay, maybe we may manage it. You have no money, you say?”

“No money now, but won’t be so long, plaise God.”

“Well, but haven’t you value of any kind?—: sure, God help them, they can’t starve, poor cratures—the Lord pity them!” Here he wiped away a drop of villainous rheum which ran down his cheek, and he did it with such an appearance of sympathy, that almost any one would have imagined it was a tear of compassion for the distresses of the poor man’s family.

“Oh! no, they can’t starve. Have you no valuables of any kind, Jemmy!—ne’er a baste now, or anything that way?”

“Why, there’s a young heifer; but I’m strugglin’ to keep it to help me in the rent. I was obliged to sell my pig long ago, for I had no way of feedin’ it.”

“Well, bring me the heifer, Jemmy, an’ I won’t let the crathurs starve. We’ll see what can be done when it comes here. An’ now, Jemmy, let me ax if you wint to hear mass on last Sunday?”

“Troth I didn’t like to go in this trim. Peggy has a web of frieze half made this good while; it’ll be finished some time, I hope.”

“Ah! Jemmy, Jemmy, it’s no wondher the world’s the way it is, for indeed there’s little thought of God or religion in it. You passed last Sunday like a haythen, an’ now you see how you stand to-day for the same.”

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“You’ll let me bring some o’ the meal home wid me now,” said the man; “the poor cratures tasted hardly anything to-day yet, an’ they wor cryin’ whin I left home. I’ll come back wid the heifer fullfut. Troth they’re in utther misery, Darby.”

“Poor things!—an’ no wondher, wid such a haythen of a father; but, Jemmy, bring the heifer here first till I look at it, an’ the sooner you bring it here the sooner they’ll have relief, the crathurs.”

It is not our intention to follow up this iniquitous bargain any further; it is enough to say that the heifer passed from Jemmy’s possession into his, at about the fourth part of its value.

To those who had money he was a perfect honey-comb, overflowing with kindness and affection, expressed in such a profusion of warm and sugary words, that it was next to an impossibility to doubt his sincerity.

“Darby,” said a very young female, on whose face was blended equal beauty and sorrow, joined to an expression that was absolutely death-like, “I suppose I needn’t ax you for credit?” He shook his head.

“It’s for the couple,” she added, “an’ not for myself. I wouldn’t ax it for myself. I know my fault, an’ my sin, an’ may God forgive myself in the first place, an’ him that brought me to it, an’ to the shame that followed it! But what would the ould couple do now widout me?”

“An’ have you no money? Ah, Margaret Murtagh! sinful creature—shame, shame, Margaret. Unfortunate girl that you are, have you no money?”

“I have not, indeed; the death of my brother Alick left us as we are; he’s gone from them now; but there was no fear of me goin’ that wished to go. Oh, if God in His goodness to them had took me an’ spared him, they wouldn’t be sendin’ to you this day for meal to keep life in them till things comes round.”

“Troth I pity them—from my heart I pity them now they’re helpless and ould—especially for havin’ sich a daughter as you are; but if it was my own father an’ mother, God rest them, I couldn’t give meal out on credit. There’s not in the parish a poorer man than I am. I’m done wid givin’ credit now, thank goodness; an’ if I had been so long ago, it isn’t robbed, and ruined, an’ beggared by rogues I’d be this day, but a warm, full man, able and willin’ too to help my neighbors; an’ it is not empty handed I’d send away any messenger from your father or mother, as I must do, although my heart bleeds for them this minute.”

Here once more he wiped away the rheum, with every appearance of regret and sorrow. In fact, one would almost suppose that by long practice he had trained one of

his eyes—for we ought to have said that there was one of them more sympathetic than the other—to shed its hypocritical tear at the right place, and in such a manner, too, that he might claim all the credit of participating in the very distresses which he refused to relieve, or by which he amassed his wealth.

The poor heart-broken looking girl, who by the way carried an unfortunate baby in her arms, literally tottered out of the room, sobbing bitterly, and with a look of misery and despair that it was woeful to contemplate.

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“Ah, then, Harry Hacket,” said he, passing to another, “how are you? an’ how are you all over in Derrycloony, Harry? not forgettin’ the ould couple?”

“Throth, middlin’ only, Darby. My fine boy, Denis, is down wid this illness, an’ I’m wantin’ a barrel of meal from you till towards Christmas.”

“Come inside, Harry, to this little nest here, till I tell you something; an’, by the way, let your father know I’ve got a new prayer that he’ll like to learn, for it’s he that’s the pious man, an’ attinds to his duties—may God enable him! and every one that has the devotion in the right place; *amin a Chiernah!*”

He then brought Hacket into a little out-shot behind the room in which the scales were, and shutting the door, thus proceeded in a sweet, confidential kind of whisper—

“You see, Harry, what I’m goin’ to say to you is what I’d not say to e’er another in the parish, the divil a one—God pardon me for swearin’—*amin a Chiernah!* I’m ruined all out—smashed down and broke horse and foot; there’s the Slevins that wint to America, an’ I lost more than thirty pounds by them.”

“I thought,” replied Hacket, “they paid you before they went; they were always a daicent and an honest family, an’ I never heard any one speak an ill word o’ them.”

“Not a penny, Harry.”

“That’s odd, then, bekaise it was only Sunday three weeks, that Murty Slevin, their cousin, if you remember, made you acknowledge that they paid you, at the chapel green.”

“Ay, an’ I do acknowledge; bekaise, Harry, one may as well spake charitably of the absent as not; it’s only in private to you that I’m lettin’ out the truth.”

“Well, well,” exclaimed the other, rather impatiently, “what have they to do wid us?”

“Ay, have they; it was what I lost by them an’ others—see now, don’t be gettin’ onpatient, I bid you—time enough for that when you’re refused—that prevints me from bein’ able to give credit as I’d wish. I’m not refusin’ you, Harry; but *achora*, listen; you’ll bring your bill at two months, only I must charge you a trifle for trust, for chances, or profit an’ loss, as the schoolmasther says; but you’re to keep it a saicret from livin’ mortal, bekaise if it ’ud get known in these times that I’d do sich a thing, I’d have the very flesh ait off o’ my bones by others wantin’ the same thing; bring me the bill, then, Harry, an’ I’ll fill it up myself, only be *dhe husth* (* hold your tongue) about it.”

Necessity forces those who are distressed to comply with many a rapacious condition of the kind, and the consequence was that Hacket did what the pressure of the time

compelled him to do, passed his bill to Skinadre, at a most usurious price, for the food which was so necessary to his family.

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It is surprising how closely the low rustic extortioner and the city usurer upon a larger scale resemble each other in the expression of their sentiments, in their habits of business, their plausibility, natural tact, and especially, in that hardness of heart and utter want of all human pity and sympathy, upon which the success of their black arts of usury and extortion essentially depends. With extortion in all its forms Skinadre, for instance, was familiar. From those who were poor but honest, he got a bill such as he exacted from Hacket, because he knew that, cost what it might to them, he was safe in their integrity. If dishonest, he still got a bill and relied upon the law and its cruel list of harassing and fraudulent expenses for security. From others he got property of all descriptions; from some, butter, yarn, a piece of frieze, a pig, a cow, or a heifer. In fact, nothing that possessed value came wrong to him, so that it is impossible to describe adequately the web of mischief which this blood-sucking old spider contrived to spread around him, especially for those whom he knew to be too poor to avail themselves of a remedy against his villany.

“Molly Cassidy, how are you?” he said, addressing a poor looking woman who carried a parcel of some description rolled up under her cloak; “how are all the family, achora?”

“Glory be to God for it, they can scarcely be worse;” replied the woman, in that spirit of simple piety and veneration for the Deity, which in all their misery characterizes the Irish people; “but sure we’re only sufferin’ like others, an’ indeed not so bad as many; there’s Mick Kelly has lost his fine boy Lanty; and his other son, young Mick, isn’t expected to live, an’ all wid this sickness, that was brought on them, as it is everywhere, wid bad feedin’.”

“They’re miserable times, Molly, at least I find them so; for I dunna how it happens, but every one’s disappointment falls upon me, till they have me a’most out of house an’ home—throth it ’ud be no wondher I’d get hard-hearted some day wid the way I’m thrated an’ robbed by every one; aye, indeed, bekase I’m good-natured, they play upon me.”

The poor creature gave a faint smile, for she knew the man’s character thoroughly.

“I have a dish of butther here, Darby,” she said, “an’ I want meal instead of it.”

“Butther, Molly; why thin, Molly, sure it isn’t to me you’re bringing butther—me that has so much of it lyin’ on my hands here already. Sure, any way, it’s down to dirt since the wars is over—butther is; if it was anything else but butther, Molly: but—it’s of no use; I’ve too much of it.”

“The sorra other thing I have, thin, Mr. Skinadre; but sure you had betther look at it, an’ you’ll find it’s what butther ought to be, firm, claine, and sweet.”

“I can’t take it, achora; there’s no market for it now.”

“Here, as we’re distressed, take it for sixpence a pound, and that’s the lowest price—-God knows, if we wern’t as we are, it isn’t for that you’d get it.”

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“Troth, I dar’ say, you’re ill off—as who isn’t in these times? an’ it’s worse they’re gettin’ an’ will be gettin’ every day. Troth, I say, my heart bleeds for you; but we can’t dale; oh, no! butther, as I said, is only dirt now.”

“For God’s sake, thin,” exclaimed the alarmed creature, “take it for whatever you like.”

“It ’ud go hard wid me to see your poor family in a state of outther want,” he replied, “an’ it’s not in my nature to be harsh to a struggling person——so whether I lose or gain, I’ll allow you three-pence a pound for it.”

A shade of bitterness came across her features at this iniquitous proposal; but she felt the truth of that old adage in all its severity, that necessity has no law.

“God help us,” she exclaimed—“threepence a pound for such butther as this!—however, it’s the will of God sure, an’ it can’t be helped—take it.”

“Ay, it’s aisy said, take it; but not to say what’ll I do wid it, when I have it; however, that’s the man I am, an’ I know how it’ll end wid me—sarvin’ every one, workin’ for every one, an’ thinkin’ of every one but myself, an’ little thanks or gratitude for all—I know I’m not fit for sich a world—but still it’s a consolation to be doin’ good to our fellow-creatures when we can, an’ that’s what lightens my heart.”

A woman now entered, whose appearance excited general sympathy, as was evident from the subdued murmurs of compassion which were breathed from the persons assembled, as soon as she entered the room. There was something about her which, in spite of her thin and worn dress, intimated a consciousness of a position either then or at some previous time, above that of the common description of farmer’s wives. No one could mistake her for a highly-educated woman—but there was in her appearance that decency of manner resulting from habits of independence and from moral feeling, which at a first glance, whether it be accompanied by superior dress or not, indicates something which is felt to entitle its proprietor to unquestionable respect. The miser, when she entered, had been putting away the dish of butter into the outshot we have mentioned, so that he had not yet an opportunity of seeing her, and, ere he returned to the scales, another female possessing probably not less interest to the reader, presented herself—this was Mave or Mabel, the young and beautiful daughter of the pious and hospitable Jerry Sullivan.

Skinadre on perceiving the matron who preceded her, paused for a moment, and looked at her with a wince in his thin features that might be taken for an indication of either pleasure or pain. He’ closed the sympathetic eye, and wiped it—but this not seeming to satisfy him, he then closed both, and blew his nose with a little skeleton mealy handkerchief that lay on a sack beside him for that purpose.

“Hem—a-hem! why, thin, Mrs. Dalton, it isn’t to my poor place I expected you would come.”

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“Darby,” she replied, “there is no use for any length of conversation between you and me—I’m here contrary to the wishes of my family—but I am a mother, and cannot look upon their destitution without feeling that I should not allow my pride to stand between them and death: we are starving, I mean—they are; and I’m come to ask you for credit; if we are ever able to pay you, we will; if not, it’s only one good act done to a family that often did many to you when they thought you grateful.”

“I’m the worst in the world—I’m the worst in the world,” replied Skinadre; “but it wasn’t till I knew that you’d be put out o’ your farm that I offered for it, and now you’ve taken away my carrecther, an’ spoken ill o’ me everywhere, an’ said that I bid for it over your heads; ay, indeed, an’ that it was your husband that set me up, by the way—oh, yes—an’ supposin’ it was, an’ I’m not denyin’ it, but is that any raisin that I’d not bid for a good farm, when I knew that yez ’ud be put out of it?”

“I am now spakin’ about the distress of our family,” said Mrs. Dalton, “you know that sickness has been among us, and is among us—poor Tom is just able to be up, but that’s all.”

“Troth, an’ it ‘ud be well for you all, an’ for himself too, that he had been taken away afore he comes in a bad end. What he will come too, if God hasn’t said it. I hope he feels the affliction he brought on poor Ned Munay an’ his family by the hand he made of his unfortunate daughter.”

“He does feel it. The death of her brother and their situation has touched his heart, an’ he’s only waitin’ for better health and better times to do her justice; but now what answer do you give me?”

“Why, this: I’m harrished by what I’ve done for every one; an’—an’—the short and the long of it is, that I’ve naither male nor money to throw away. I couldn’t afford it and I can’t. I’m a rogue, Mrs. Dalton—a miser, an extortioner, an ungrateful knave, and everything that is bad an’ worse than another; an’ for that raison, I say, I have naither male nor money to throw away. That’s what I’d say if I was angry; but I’m not angry. I do feel for you an’ them; still I can’t afford to do what you want, or I’d do it, for I like to do good for evil, bad as I am. I’m strivin’ to make up my rent an’ to pay an unlucky bill that I have due to-morrow, and doesn’t know where the money’s to come from to meet both.”

“Mave Sullivan, achora, what can I—”

Mrs. Dalton, from her position in the room, could not have noticed the presence of Mave Sullivan, but even had she been placed otherwise, it would have been somewhat difficult to get a glimpse of the young creature’s face. Deeply did she participate in the sympathy which was felt for the mother of her mother, and so naturally delicate were her feelings, that she had drawn up the hood of her cloak, lest the other might have felt the humiliation to which Mave’s presence must have exposed her by the acknowledgment

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of her distress. Neither was this all the gentle and generous girl had to suffer. She experienced, in her own person, as well as Mrs. Dalton did, the painful sense of degradation which necessity occasions, by a violation of that hereditary spirit of decent pride and independence which the people consider as the prestige of high respect, and which, even while it excites compassion and sympathy, is looked upon, to a certain extent, as diminished by even a temporary visitation of poverty. When the meal-man, therefore, addressed her, she unconsciously threw the hood of her cloak back, and disclosed to the spectators a face burning with blushes and eyes filled with tears. The tears, however, were for the distress of Mrs. Dalton and her family, and the blushes for the painful circumstances which compelled her at once to witness them, and to expose those which were left under her own careworn father's roof. Mrs. Dalton, however, on looking round and perceiving what seemed to be an ebullition merely of natural shame, went over to her with a calm but mournful manner that amounted almost to dignity.

"Dear Mave," she said, "there is nothing here to be ashamed of. God forbid that the struggle of an honest family with poverty should bring a blot upon either your good name or mine. It does not, nor it will not: so dry your tears, my darlin' girl; there are better times before us all, I trust. Darby Skinadre," she added, turning to the miser, "you are both hard-hearted and ungrateful, or you would remember, in our distress, the kindness we showed you in yours. If you can cleanse your conscience from the stain of ingratitude, it must be by a change of life."

"Whatever stain there may be on my ungrateful conscience," he replied, turning up his red eyes, as it were with thanksgiving, "there's not the stain of blood and murdher on it —that's one comfort."

Mrs. Dalton did not seem to hear him, neither did she seem to look in the direction of where he stood. As the words were uttered she had been in the act of extending her hand to Mave Sullivan, who had hers stretched out to receive it. There now occurred, however, a mutual pause. Her hand was withdrawn, as was that of Mave also, who had suddenly become pale as death.

"God bless you, my darlin' girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Dalton, sighing, as if with some hidden sorrow; "God bless you and yours, prays my unhappy heart this day!"

And with these words she was about to depart, when Mave, trembling and much agitated, laid her hand gently and timidly upon her,—adding, in a low, sweet, tremulous voice,

"My heart is free from that suspicion—I can't tell why—but I don't believe it."

And while she spoke, her small hand gradually caught that of Mrs. Dalton, as a proof that she would not withhold the embrace on that account. Mrs. Dalton returned her pressure, and at the same moment kissed the fair girl's lips, who sobbed a moment or

two in her arms, where she threw herself. The other again invoked a blessing upon her head, and walked out, having wiped a few tears from her pale cheeks.

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The miser looked upon this exhibition of feeling with some surprise; but as his was not a heart susceptible of the impressions it was calculated to produce, he only said in a tone of indifference:

“Well, to be sure now, Mave, I didn’t expect to see you shakin’ hands wid and kissin’ Condy Dalton’s wife, at any rate, considerin’ all that has happened atween the families. However, it’s good to be forgivin’; I hope it is; indeed I know that; for it comes almost to a feelin’ in myself. Well, *achora*, what am I to do for you?”

“Will you let me speak to you inside a minute?” she asked.

“Will I? Why, then, to be sure I will; an’ who knows but it’s my daughter-in-law I might have you yet, *avillish!* Yourself and Darby’s jist about an age. Come inside, *ahagur*.”

Their dialogue was not of very long duration. Skinadre, on returning to the scales, weighed two equal portions of oatmeal, for one of which Mave paid him.

“I will either come or send for this,” she said laying her hand on the one for which she had paid. “If I send any one, I’ll give the token I mentioned.”

“Very well, a suchar—very well,” he replied; “it’s for nobody livin’ but yourself I’d do it; but sure, now that I must begin to coort you for Darby, it won’t be aisy to refuse you for anything in raison.”

“Mind, then,” she observed, as she seized one of the portions, in order to proceed home; “mind,” said she, laying her hand upon that which she was leaving behind her; “mind it’s for this one I have paid you.”

“Very well, achora, it makes no difference; sure a kiss o’ them red, purty lips o’ yours to Darby will pay the inthrest for all.”

Two other females now made their appearance, one with whom our readers are already acquainted. This was no other than the prophet’s wife, who had for her companion a woman whom neither she herself nor any one present knew.

“Mave Sullivan, darlin’,” exclaimed the former, “I’m glad to see you. Are you goin’ home, now?”

“I am, Nelly,” replied Mave, “jist on my step.”

“Well, thin, if you stop a minute or two, I’ll be part o’ the way wid you. I have somethin’ to mention as we go along.”

“Very well, then,” replied Mave; “make as much haste as you can, Nelly, for I’m in a hurry;” and an expression of melancholy settled upon her countenance as she spoke.

The stranger was a tall thin woman, much about the age and height of the prophet's 'wife, but neither so lusty nor so vigorous in appearance, She was but indifferently dressed, and though her features had evidently been handsome in her younger days, yet there was now a thin, shrewish expression about the nose, and a sharpness about the compressed lips, and those curves which bounded in her mouth, that betokened much firmness if not obstinancy in her character, joined to a look which might as well be considered an indication of trial and suffering, as of a temper naturally none of the best.

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On hearing Mave Sullivan's name mentioned, she started, and looked at her keenly, and for a considerable time; after which she asked for a drink of water, which she got in the kitchen, where she sat, as it seemed to rest a little.

Nelly, in the meantime, put her hand in a red, three-cornered pocket that hung by her side, and pulling out a piece of writing, presented it to the meal man. That worthy gentleman, on casting his eye over it, read as follows:

"Dear Skinadre: Give Daniel M'Gowan, otherwise the Black Prophet, any quantity of meal necessary for his own family, which please charge, (and you know why,) to your friend,

"Dick o' the Grange, Jun."

Skinadre's face, on perusing this document, was that of a man who felt himself pulled in different directions by something at once mortifying and pleasant. He smiled at first, then bit his lips, winked one eye, then another; looked at the prophet's wife with complacency, but immediately checked himself, and began to look keen and peevish. This, however, appeared to be an error on the other side; and the consequence was, that, after some comical alterations, his countenance settled down into its usual expression.

"Troth," said he, "that same Dick o' the Grange, as he calls himself, is a quare young gintleman; as much male as you want—a quare, mad—your family's small, I think?"

"But sharp an' active," she replied, with a hard smile, as of one who cared not for the mirth she made, "as far as we go."

"Ay," said he, abruptly, "divil a much—God pardon me for swearin'—ever they wor for good that had a large appetite. It's a bad sign of either man or woman. There never was a villain hanged yet that didn't ait more to his last breakfast than ever he did at a meal in his life before. How-an-ever, one may as well have a friend; so I suppose, we must give you a thrifle."

When her portion was weighed out, she and Mave Sullivan left this scene of extortion together, followed by the strange woman, who seemed, as it were, to watch their motions, or at least to feel some particular interest in them.

He had again resumed his place at the scales, and was about to proceed in his exactions, when the door opened, and a powerful young man, tall, big boned and broad shouldered, entered the room, leading or rather dragging with him the poor young-woman and her child, who had just left the place in such bitterness and affliction. He was singularly handsome, and of such resolute and manly bearing, that it was impossible not to mark him as a person calculated to impress one with a strong anxiety

to know who and what he might be. On this occasion his cheek was blanched and his eye emitted a turbid fire, which could scarcely be determined as that of indignation or illness.

“Is it thrue,” he asked, “that you’ve dared to refuse to this—this—unfor—is it thrue that you’ve dared to refuse this girl and her starvin’ father and mother the meal she wanted? Is this thrue, you hard-hearted ould scoundrel?—bekaise if it is, by the blessed sky above us, I’ll pull the wind-pipe out of you, you infernal miser!”

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He seized unfortunate Skinadre by the neck, as he spoke, and almost at the same moment forced him to project his tongue about three inches out of his mouth, causing his face at the same time to assume, by the violence of the act, an expression of such comic distress and terror, as it was difficult to look upon with gravity.

“Is it thrue,” he repeated, in a voice of thunder, “that you’ve dared to do so scoundrelly an act, an’ she, the unfortunate creature, famishing wid hunger herself?”

While he spake, he held Skinadre’s neck as if in a vice—firm in the same position—and the latter, of course, could do nothing more than turn his ferret eyes round as well as he could, to entreat him to relax his grip.

“Don’t choke him, Tom,” exclaimed Hacket, who came forward, to interpose; “you’ll strangle him; as Heaven’s above, you will.”

“An’ what great crime would that be?” answered the other, relaxing his awful grip of the miser. “Isn’t he an’ every cursed meal-monger like him a curse and a scourge to the counthry—and hasn’t the same counthry curses and scourges enough widhout either him or them? Answer me now,” he proceeded, turning to Skinadre, “why did you send her away widout the food she wanted?”

“My heart bled for her; but—”

“It’s a lie, you born hypocrite—it’s a lie—your heart never bled for anything, or anybody.”

“But you don’t know,” replied the miser, “what I lost by—”

“It’s a lie, I say,” thundered out the gigantic young fellow, once more seizing the unfortunate meal-monger by the throat, when out again went his tongue, like a piece of machinery touched by a spring, and again were the red eyes now almost starting out of his head, turned round, whilst he himself was in a state of suffocation, that rendered his appearance ludicrous beyond description—“it’s a lie, I say, for you have neither thruth nor heart—that’s what we all know.”

“For Heaven’s sake, let the man go,” said Hacket, “or you’ll have his death to answer for “—and as he spoke he attempted to unclasp the young man’s grip; “Tom Dalton, I say, let the man go.”

Dalton, who was elder brother to the lover of Mave Sullivan, seized Hacket with one of his hands, and spun him like a child to the other end of the room.

“Keep away,” he exclaimed, “till I settle wid him—here now, Skinadre, listen to me—you refused my father credit when we wanted it, although you knew we were honest—you refused him credit when we were turned out of our place, although you knew the sickness was among us—well, you know whether we that wor your friends, an’—my

father at least—the makin' of you"—and as he spoke, he accompanied every third word by a shake or two, as a kind of running commentary upon what he said; "ay—you did—-you knew it well, and I could bear all that; but I can't bear you to turn this unfortunate girl out of your place, widout what she wants, and she's sinkin' wid hunger herself. If she's in distress, 'twas I that brought her to it, an' to shame an' to sorrow too—but I'll set all right for you yet, Margaret dear—an' no one has a betther right to spake for her."

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“Tom,” said the young woman, with a feeble voice, “for the love of God let him go or he’ll drop.”

“Not,” replied Dalton, “till he gives you what you come for. Come now,” he proceeded, addressing the miser, “weigh her. How much will you be able to carry, Margaret?”

“Oh, never mind, now, Tom,” she replied, “I don’t want any, it’s the ould people at home—it’s them—it’s them.”

“Weigh her out,” continued the other, furiously; “weigh her out a stone of meal, or by all the lies that ever came from your lips, I’ll squeeze the breath out of your body, you deceitful ould hypocrite.”

“I will,” said the miser, panting, and adjusting his string of a cravat, “I will, Tom; here, I ain’t able, weigh it yourself—I’m not—indeed I’m not able,” said he, breathless; “an’ I was thinkin when you came in of sendin’ afther her, bekase, when I heard of the sickness among them, that I mayn’t sin, but I found my heart bleedin’ inwar—”

[Illustration: PAGE 807— Tom’s clutches were again at his throat]

Tom’s clutches were again at his throat. “Another lie,” he exclaimed, “and you’r a gone man. Do what I bid you.”

Skinadre appeared, in point of fact, unable to do so, and Dalton seeing this, weighed the unhappy young woman a stone of oatmeal, which, on finding it too heavy for her feeble strength, he was about to take up himself when he put his hands to his temples, then staggered and fell.

They immediately gathered about him to ascertain the cause of this sudden attack, when it appeared that he had become insensible. His brow was now pale and cold as marble, and a slight dew lay upon his broad forehead; his shirt was open, and exposed to view a neck and breast, which, although sadly wasted, were of surpassing whiteness and great manly beauty.

Margaret, on seeing him fall, instantly placed her baby in the hands of another woman, and flying to him, raised his head and laid it upon her bosom; whilst the miser, who had now recovered, shook his head, lifted his hands, and looked as if he felt that his house was undergoing pollution. In the meantime, the young woman bent her mouth down to his ear, and said, in tones that were wild and hollow, and that had more of despair than even of sorrow in them—

“Tom, oh, Tom, are you gone?—hear me!”

But he replied not to her. “Ah! there was a day,” she added, looking with a mournful smile around, “when he loved to listen to my voice; but that day has passed forever.”

He opened his eyes as she spoke; hers were fixed upon him. He felt a few warm tears upon his face, and she exclaimed in a low voice, not designed for other ears—

“I forgive you all, Tom, dear—I forgive you all!”

He looked at her, and starting to his feet, exclaimed—

“Margaret, my own Margaret, hear me! She is dyin’,” he shouted, in a hoarse and excited voice—“she is dyin’ with want. I see it all. She’s dead!”

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It was too true; the unhappy girl had passed into another life; but, whether from a broken heart, caused by sin, shame, and desertion, or from famine and the pressure of general destitution and distress, could never properly be ascertained.

“I see!” exclaimed Dalton, his eyes again blazing, and his voice hollow with emotion—“I see—there she lies; and who brought her to that? But I intended to set all right. Ay—-there she lies. An’ again, how are we at home? Brought low down, down to a mud cabin! Now, Dick o’ the Grange, an’ now, Darby Skinadre—now for revenge. The time is come. I’ll take my place at the head of them, and what’s to be done, must be done. Margaret Murtagh, you’re lying dead before me, and by the broken heart you died of—”

He could add no more; but with these words, tottering and frantic, he rushed out of the miser’s house.

“Wid the help o’ God, the young savage is as mad as a March hare,” observed Skinadre, coolly; “but, as it’s all over wid the unfortunate crature, I don’t see why an honest man should lose his own, at any rate.”

Whilst uttering these words, he seized the meal, and deliberately emptied it back into the chest from which young Dalton had taken it.

CHAPTER VIII. — A Middle Man and Magistrate—-Master and Man.

Having mentioned a strange woman who made her appearance at Skinadre’s, it may be necessary, or, at least, agreeable to the reader, that we should account for her presence under the roof of that worthy individual, especially as she is likely to perform a part of some interest in our tale. We have said already that she started on hearing Mave Sullivan’s name mentioned, and followed her and the Black Prophet’s wife like a person who watched their motions, and seemed to feel some peculiar interest in either one or both. The reader must return, then, to the Grey Stone already alluded to, which to some of the characters in our narrative will probably prove to be a “stone of destiny.”

Hanlon, having departed from Sarah M’Gowan in a state of excitement, wended his way along a lonely and dreary road, to the residence of his master, Dick o’ the Grange. The storm had increased, and was still increasing at every successive blast, until it rose to what might be termed a tempest. It is, indeed, a difficult thing to describe the peculiar state of his feelings as he struggled onwards, sometimes blown back to a stand-still, and again driven forward by the gloomy and capricious tyranny of the blast, as if he were its mere plaything. In spite, however, of the conflict of the external elements as they careered over the country around him, he could not shake from his imagination the impression left there by the groan which he had heard at the Grey Stone. A

supernatural terror, therefore, was upon him, and he felt as if he were in the presence of an accompanying spirit—of a spirit that seemed anxious to disclose the fact

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that murder would not rest; and so strongly did this impression gain upon him, that in the fitful howling of the storm, and in its wild wailing and dying sobs among the trees and hedges, as he went along, he thought he could distinguish sounds that belonged not to this life. Still he proceeded, his terrors thus translating, as it were, the noisy conflict of the elements into the voices of the dead, or thanking Heaven that the strong winds brought him to a calmer sense of his position, by the necessity that they imposed of preserving himself against their violence. In this anomalous state he advanced, until he came to a grove of old beeches that grew at the foot of one of the hill-ranges we have described, and here the noises he heard were not calculated to diminish his terrors. As the huge trees were tossed and swung about in the gloomy moonlight, his ears were assailed by a variety of wild sounds which had never reached them before. The deep and repeated crashes of the tempest, as it raged among them, was accompanied by a frightful repetition of hoarse moanings, muffled groans, and wild unearthly shrieks, which encountered him from a thousand quarters in the grove, and he began to feel that horrible excitement which is known to be occasioned by the mere transition from extreme cowardice to reckless indifference.

Still he advanced homewards, repeating his prayers with singular energy, his head uncovered notwithstanding the severity of the night, and the rain pouring in torrents upon him, when he found it necessary to cross a level of rough land, at all times damp and marshy, but in consequence of the rains of the season, now a perfect morass. Over this he had advanced about half a mile, and got beyond the frightful noises of the woods, when some large object rose into the air from a clump of plashy rushes before him, and shot along the blast, uttering a booming sound, so loud and stunning that he stood riveted to the earth. The noise resembled that which sometimes proceeds from a humming-top, if a person could suppose one made upon such a gigantic scale as to produce the deep and hollow buzz which this being emitted. Nothing could now convince him that he was not surrounded by spirits, and he felt confident that the voice of undiscovered murder was groaning on the blast—shrieking, as it were, for vengeance in the terrible voice of the tempest. He once more blessed himself, repeated a fresh prayer, and struggled forward, weak, and nearly exhausted, until at length he reached the village adjoining which his master, Dick o’ the Grange, resided.

The winds now, and for some minutes previously, had begun to fall, and the lulls in the storm were calmer and more frequent, as well as longer in duration. Hanlon proceeded to his master’s, and peering through the shutters, discovered that the servants had not yet retired to rest; then bending his steps further up the village, he soon reached a small isolated cabin, at the door of which he knocked, and in due time was admitted by a thin, tall female.

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“God protect us, dear, you’re lost!—blessed father, sich a night! Oh! my, my! Well, well; sit near the spark o’ fire, sich as it is; but, indeed, it’s little you’ll benefit by it. Any way, sit down.”

Hanlon sat on a stool, and laying his hat beside him on the floor, he pressed the rain as well as he could out of his drenched hair, and for some time did not speak, whilst the female, squatted upon the ground, somewhat like a hare in her form, sat with the candle in her hand, which she held up in the direction of his face, whilst her eyes were riveted on him with a look of earnest and solemn inquiry.

“Well,” she at length said, “did your journey end, as I tould you it would, in nothing? And yet, God presarve me, you look—eh!—what has happened?—you look like one that was terrified, sure enough. Tell me, at wanst, did the dhrame come out thrue?”

“I’ll not have a light heart this many a day,” he replied; “let no one say there’s not a Providence above us to bring murdher to light.”

“God of glory be about us!” she exclaimed, interrupting him; “something has happened! Your looks would frighten one, an’ your voice isn’t like the voice of a livin’ man. Tell me —and yet, for all so curious as I feel, I’m thremblin’ this minute—but tell me, did the dhrame come out thrue, I say?”

“The dhrame came out thrue,” he replied, solemnly. “I know where the tobaccy box is that he had about him; the same that transported my poor uncle, or that was partly the means of doin’ it.”

The woman crossed herself, muttered a short ejaculatory prayer, and again gathered her whole features into an expression of mingled awe and curiosity.

“Did you go to the place you dhramed of?” she asked.

“I went to the Grey Stone,” he replied, “an’ offered up a prayer for his sowl, afther puttin’ my right hand upon it in his name, jist as I did on yesterday; afther I got an account of the tobaccy box, I heard a groan at the spot—as heaven’s above me, I did.”

“Savior of earth, *gluntho shin!*”

“But that wasn’t all. On my way home, I heard, as I was passin’ the ould trees at the Rabbit Bank, things that I can’t find words to tell you of.”

“Well acushla, glory be to God for everything! it’s all his will, blessed be his name! What did you hear, avick?—but wait till I throw a drop o’ the holy wather that I have hangin’ in the little bottle at the bed-post upon us.”

She rose whilst speaking and getting the bottle alluded to, sprinkled both herself and him, after which she hung it up again in its former position.

“There, now, nothin’ harmful, at any rate, can come near us afther that, blessed be his name. Well, what did you hear comin’ home?—I mean at the Rabbit Bank. Wurrah,” she added, shuddering, “but it’s it that’s the lonely spot after night! What was it, dear?”

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“Indeed, I can scarcely tell you—sich groans, an’ wild shoutins, an’ shrieks, man’s ears never hard in this world, I think; there I hard them as I was comin’ past the trees, an’ afther I passed them; an’ when I left them far behind me, I could hear, every now and then, a wild shriek that made my blood run cowld. But there was still worse as I crossed the Black Park; something got up into the air out o’ the rushes before me, an’ went off wid a noise not unlike what Jerry Hamilton of the Band makes when he rubs his middle finger up against the tamborine.”

“Heaven be about us!” she exclaimed, once more crossing herself, and uttering a short prayer for protection from evil; “but tell me, how did you know it was his Box, and how did you find it out?”

“By the letters P. M., and the broken hinge,” he replied.

“Blessed be the name of God!” she exclaimed again—“He won’t let the murdher lie, that’s clear. But what I want to know is, how did your goin’ to the Grey Stone bring you to the knowledge of the box?”

He then gave her a more detailed account of his conversation with Sarah M’Gowan, and the singular turn which it chanced to take towards the subject of the handkerchief, in the first instance; but when the coincidence of the letters were mentioned, together with Sarah’s admission that she had the box in her possession, she clasped her hands, and looking upwards exclaimed—

“Blessed be the name of the Almighty for that! Oh, I feel there is no doubt now the hand of God is in it, an’ we’ll come at the murdher or the murdherers yet.”

“I hope so,” he replied; “but I’m lost Wid wet an’ cowld; so in the meantime I’ll be off home, an’ to my bed. I had something to say to you about another matther, but I’ll wait till mornin’; dear knows, I’m in no condition to spake about anything else to-night. This is a snug little cabin; but, plaise God, in the coorse of a week or so, I’ll have you more comfortable than you are. If my own throuble was over me, I wouldn’t stop long in the neighborhood; but as the hand of God seems to be in this business, I can’t think of goin’ till it’s cleared up, as cleared up it will be, I have no doubt, an’ can have none, afther what has happened this awful night.”

Hanlon’s situation with his master was one with which many of our readers are, no doubt, well acquainted. He himself was a clever, active, ingenious fellow, who could, as they say in the country, put a hand to anything, and make himself useful in a great variety of employments. He had in the spring of that year, been engaged as a common laborer by Dick o’ the Grange, in which capacity he soon attracted his employer’s notice, by his extraordinary skill in almost everything pertaining to that worthy gentleman’s establishment. It is true he was a stranger in the country, of whom nobody

knew anything—for there appeared to be some mystery about him; but as Dick cared little of either his place of birth or

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pedigree, it was sufficient for him to find that Hanlon was a very useful, not to say valuable young man, about his house, that he understood everything, and had an eye and hand equally quick and experienced. The consequence was, that he soon became a favorite with the father, and a kind of *sine qua non* with the son, into whose rustic gallantries he entered, with a spirit that satisfied the latter of his capacity to serve him in that respect as well as others. Hanlon, in truth, was just the person for such a master, and for such an establishment as he kept. Dick o' the Grange was not a man who, either by birth, education, or position in society, could entertain any pretensions to rank with the gentry of the surrounding country. It is true he was a magistrate, but then he was a middleman, and as such found himself an interested agent in the operation of one of the worst and most cruel systems that ever cursed either the country or the people. We of course mean that which suffered a third party to stand between the head landlord, and those who in general occupied the soil. Of this system, it may be with truth said, that the iniquity lay rather in the principal on which it rested, than in the individual who administered it; because it was next to an impossibility that a man anxious to aggrandize his family—as almost every man is—could, in the exercise of the habits which enable him to do so, avoid such a pressure upon those who were under him as amounted to great hardships and injustice. The system held out so many temptations to iniquity in the management of land, and in the remuneration of labor, that it required an amount of personal virtue and self-denial to resist them, that were scarcely to be expected from any one, so difficult was it to overlook or neglect the opportunities for oppression and fraud which it thus offered.

Old Dick, although bearing the character of being a violent and outrageous man, was, however, one of those persons of whom there will be always somebody found to speak favorably. Hot and ungovernable in temper, he unquestionably was, and capable of savage and cruel acts; but at the same time his capricious and unsteady impulses rendered him uncertain, whether for good or evil; so much so, indeed, that it was impossible to know when to ask him for a favor; nor was it extraordinary to find him a friend this day to the man whose avowed enemy he proclaimed himself yesterday; and this same point of character was true the other way——for whilst certain that you had him for a friend, perhaps you found him hard at work to oppress or over-reach you if he could. The consequence of this peculiarity was that he had a two-fold reputation in the country. Some were found to abuse him, and others to mention many acts of generosity and kindness which he had been known to perform under circumstances where they were least to be expected. This perhaps was one reason why they made so strong an impression upon the people,

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and were so distinctly remembered to his advantage. It is true he was a violent party man, but then he wanted coolness to adjust his principles, and thus make them subservient to his private interests. For this reason, notwithstanding his strong and outspoken prejudices, it was a well know fact, that the Roman Catholic population preferred him as a magistrate to many who were remarkable for a more equal and even tenor of life, and in whom, under greater plausibility of manner, there existed something which they would have readily exchanged for his violent abuse of them and their creed.

Such was Dick o' the Grange, a man who, as a middleman and a magistrate, stood out a prominent representative of a class that impressed themselves strongly upon their times, and who, whether as regards their position or office, would not find at the present day in the ranks of any party in Ireland a single man who could come forward and say they were not an oppressive evil to the country.

Dick o' the Grange, at this period of our narrative, was far advanced in years, and had, some time past, begun to feel what is known in men who have led a hard convivial life, as that breaking down of the constitution, which is generally the forerunner of dissolution. On this account he had for some time past resigned the management of his property altogether to his son, young Dick, who was certainly wild and unreflecting, but neither so impulsively generous, nor so habitually violent as his father. The estimate of his character which went abroad was such as might be expected—many thought him better than the old man. He was the youngest son and a favorite—two circumstances which probably occasioned his education to be neglected, as it had been. All his sisters and brothers having been for some years married and settled in life, he, and his father, who was a widower, kept a bachelor's house, where we regret to say the parental surveillance over his morals was not so strict as it ought to have been. Young Dick was handsome, and so exceedingly vain of his person, that any one wishing to gain a favor either from himself or his worthy sire, had little more to do than dexterously apply a strong dose of flattery to this his weakest point, and the favor was sure to be granted, for his influence over old Dick was boundless.

In this family, then, it was that Hanlon held the situation we have described—that is, partly a gardener, and partly a steward, and partly a laboring man. There was a rude and riotous character in and about Dick's whole place, which marked it at once as the property of a person below the character of a gentleman. Abundance there was, and great wealth; but neither elegance nor neatness marked the house or furniture. His servants partook of the same equivocal appearance, as did the father and son, and the "Grange" in general; but, above all and everything in his establishment, must we place, in originality and importance, Jemmy Branigan, who,

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in point of fact, ought to receive credit for the greater portion of old Dick's reputation, or at least for all that was good of it. Jemmy was his old, confidential—enemy—for more than forty years, during the greater portion of which period it could scarcely be said with truth that, in Jemmy's hands, Dick o' the Grange ought to be looked to as a responsible person. When we say "enemy," we know perfectly well what we mean; for if half a dozen battles between Jemmy and his master every day during the period above mentioned constituted friendship, then, indeed, the reader may substitute the word friend, if he pleases.

In fact, Dick and Jemmy had become notorious throughout the whole country; and we are certain that many of our readers will, at first glance, recognize these two remarkable individuals. Truly, the ascendancy which Jemmy had gained over the magistrate, was surprising; and nothing could be more amusing than the interminable series of communications, both written and oral, which passed between them, in the shape of dismissals from service on the one side, and notices to leave on the other; each of which whether written or oral, was treated by the party noticed with the most thorough contempt. Nothing was right that Jemmy disapproved of, and nothing wrong that had his sanction, and this without any reference whatsoever to the will of his master, who, if he happened to get into a passion about it, was put down by Jemmy, who got into a greater passion still; so that, after a long course of recrimination and Billinsgate on both sides, delivered by Jemmy in an incomparably louder voice, and with a more consequential manner, old Dick was finally forced to succumb.

The worthy magistrate and his son were at breakfast next morning, when young "Master Richard," as he was called, rung the bell, and Jemmy attended—for we must add, that Jemmy discharged the duties of butler, together with any other duty that he himself deemed necessary, and that without leave asked or given.

"Where's Hanlon, Jemmy?" he asked.

"Hanlon? troth, it's little matther where he is, an' devil a one o' myself cares."

"Well, but I care, Jemmy, for I want him. Where is he?"

"He's gone up to that ould streele's, that lives in the cabin above there. I don't like the same Hanlon; nobody here knows anything about him, nor he won't let them know anything about him. He's as close as Darby Skinadre, and as deep as a dhraw-well. Altogether, he looks as if there was a weight on his conscience, for all his lightness an' fun—an' if I thought so, I'd discharge him at wanst."

"And I agree with you for once," observed his master; "there is some cursed mystery about him. I don't like him, either, to say the truth."

"An' why don't you like him?" asked Jemmy, with a contemptuous look.

“I can’t say; but I don’t.”

“No! you can’t? I know you can’t say anything, at all events, that you ought to say,” replied Jemmy, who, like, his master, would have died without contradiction; “but I can say why you don’t like him; it’s bekaise he’s the best sarvint ever was about your place; that’s the raison you don’t like him. But what do you know about a good sarvint or a bad one, or anything else that’s useful to you, God help you.”

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“If you were near my cane, you old scoundrel, I’d pay you for your impertinence, ay would I.”

“Ould scoundrel, is it? Oh, hould your tongue; I’m not of your blood, thank God!—and don’t be fastenin’ your name upon me. Ould scoundrel, indeed!—Troth, we could spare an odd one now and then out of our own little establishment.”

“Jemmy, never mind,” said the son, “but tell Hanlon I want to speak to him in the office after breakfast.”

“If I see him I will, but the devil an inch I’ll go out o’ my way for it—if I see him I will, an’ if I don’t I won’t. Did you put a fresh bandage to your leg, to keep in them Pharisee (* Varicose, we presume) veins o’ yours, as the docthor ordhered you?”

This, in fact, was the usual style of his address to the old magistrate, when in conversation with him.

“Damn the quack!” replied his master: “no, I didn’t.”

“An’ why didn’t you?”

“You’re beginning this morning,” said the other, losing temper. “You had better keep quiet, keep your distance, if you’re wise—that’s all.”

“Why didn’t you, I ax,” continued Jemmy, walking up to him, with his hands in his coat pocket, and looking coolly, but authoritatively in his face. “I tell you, and if you don’t know how to take care of yourself, I do, and I will. I’m all that’s left over you now; an’ in spite of all I can do, it’s a purty account I’d be able to give of you, if I was called on.”

“This to my face!” exclaimed Dick—“this to my face, you villain!”—and, as he spoke, the cane was brandished over Jemmy’s head, as if it would descend every moment.

“Ay,” replied Jemmy, without budging, “ay, indeed—an’ a purty face it is—a nice face hard drinkin’ an’ a bad life has left you. Ah! do it if you dare,” he added, as the other swung his staff once or twice, as if about to lay it down in reality; “troth, if you do, I’ll know how to act.”

“What would you do, you old cancer—what would you do if I did?”

“Troth, what you’ll force me to do some day. I know you will, for heaven an’ earth couldn’t stand you; an’ if I do, it’s not me you’ll have to blame for it. Ah, that same step you’ll drive me to—I see that.”

“What will you do, you old viper, that has been like a blister to me my whole life—what will you do?”

“Send you about your business,” replied Jemmy, coolly, but with all the plenitude of authority in his manner; “send you from about the place, an’ then I’ll have a quiet house. I’ll send you to your youngest daughter’s or somewhere, or any where, out of this. So now that you know my determination you had betther keep yourself cool, unless, indeed, you wish to thravel. Oh, then heaven’s above, but you wor a bitther sight to me, an’ but it was the unlucky day that ever the divil druv you acrass me!”

“Dick,” said the father, “as soon as you go into the office, write a discharge, as bad a one, for that old vagabond, as the English language can enable you to do—for by the light of heaven, he shan’t sleep another night under this roof.”

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“Shan’t I?—we’ll see that, though. To the divil I pitch yourself an’ your discharge—an’ now mark my words: I’ll be no longer throubled wid you; you’ve been all my life a torment and a heart-break to me—a blister of French flies was swan’s down, compared to you, but by the book, I’ll end it at last—ay, will I—I give you up—I surrendher you as a bad bargain—I wash my hands of you—This is Tuesday mornin’, God bless the day and the weather—an’ woeful weather it is—but sure it’s betther than you desarve, an’ I don’t doubt but it’s you and the likes o’ you that brings it on us! Ay, this is Tuesday mornin’, an’ I now give you warnin’ that on Saturday next, you’ll see the last o’ me—an’ don’t think that this warnin’ is like the rest, or that I’ll relint again, as I was foolish enough to do often before. No—my mind’s made up—an’ indeed—” here his voice sank to a great calmness and philosophy, like a man who was above all human passion, and who could consequently talk in a voice of cool and quiet determination;—“An’ indeed,” he added, “my conscience was urgin’ me to this for some time past—so that I’m glad things has taken this turn.”

“I hope you’ll keep your word, then,” said his master, “but before you go, listen to me.”

“Listen to you—to be sure I will; God forbid I wouldn’t; let there be nothing at any rate, but civility between us while we’re together. What is it?”

“You asked me last night to let widow Leary’s cow out o’ pound?”

“Ay, did I!”

“And I swore I wouldn’t.”

“I know you did. Who would doubt that, at any rate?”

“Well, before you leave us, be off now, and let the animal out o’ the pound.”

“Is that it? Oh, God help you! what’ll you do when you’ll be left to yourself, as you will be on Saturday next? Let her out, says you. Troth, the poor woman had her cow safe and sound at home wid her before she went to bed last night, and her poor childre had her milk to kitchen their praties, the craythurs. Do you think I’d let her stay in till the maggot bit you? Oh, ay, indeed! In the mane time, as soon as you are done breakfast, I want you in the study, to put the bindage on that ould, good-for-nothin’ leg o’ yours; an’ mark my words, let there be no shirkin’ now, for on it must go, an’ will, too. If I see that Hanlon, I’ll tell him you want to see him, Master Richard; an’ now that I’m on it, I had betther say a word to you before I go; bekaise when I do go, you’ll have no one to guide you, God help you, or to set you a Christian patthern. You see that man sittin’ there wid that bad leg, stretched out upon the chair?”

“I do, Jemmy—ha, ha, ha! Well, what next?”

“That man was the worst patthern ever you had. In the word, don’t folly his example in anything—in any one single thing, an’ then there may be some chance o’ you still. I’ll want you by-an’-by in the study, I tould you.”

These last words were addressed to his master, at whom he looked as one might be supposed to do at a man whose case, in a moral sense, was hopeless; after which, having uttered a groan that seemed to imitate the woeful affliction he was doomed, day by day, to suffer, he left the room.

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It is not our intention, neither is it necessary that we should enter into the particulars of the interview which Hanlon had that morning with young Dick. It is merely sufficient to state that they had a private conversation in the old magistrate's office, at which the female whom Hanlon had visited the night before was present. When this was concluded, Hanlon walked with her a part of the way, evidently holding serious and interesting discourse touching a subject which we may presume bore upon the extraordinary proceedings of the previous night. He closed by giving her directions how to proceed on her journey; for it seemed that she was unacquainted with the way, being, like himself, but a stranger in the neighborhood:—"You will go on," said he, "till you reach the height at Aughindrummon, from that you will see the trees at the Rabbit Bank undher you; then keep the road straight till you come to where it crosses the ford of the river: a little on this side, and where the road turns to your right, you will find the Grey Stone, an' jist opposite that you will see the miserable cabin where the Black Prophet lives."

"Why do they call him the Black Prophet?"

"Partly, they tell me, from his appearance, an' partly bekaise he takes delight in prophesyin' evil."

"But could he have anything to do wid the murdher?"

"I was thinkin' about that," he replied, "and had some talk this mornin' wid a man that's livin' a long time—indeed that was born—a little above the place—and he says that the Black Prophet, or M'Gowan, did not come to the neighborhood till afther the murdher. I wasn't myself cool enough last night to ask his daughter many questions about it; an' I was afraid, besides, to appear over-anxious in the business. So now that you have your instructions in that and the other matthers, you'll manage every thing as well as you can."

Hanlon then returned to the Grange, and the female proceeded on her mission to the house, if house it could be called, of the Black Prophet, for the purpose, if possible, of collecting such circumstances as might tend to throw light upon a dark and mysterious murder.

When Sarah left her father, after having poulticed his face, to go a kailley, as she said, to a neighbor's house, she crossed the ford of the river, and was proceeding in the same directions that had been taken by Hanlon the preceding night, when she met a strange woman, or rather she found her standing, apparently waiting for herself, at the Grey Stone. From the position of the stone, which was a huge one, under one ledge of which, by the way, there grew a little clump of dwarf elder, it was impossible that Sarah could pass her, without coming in tolerable close contact; for the road was an old and narrow one, though perfectly open and without hedge or ditch on either side of it.

“Maybe you could tell me, young woman, whereabouts here a man lives that they call Donnel Dhu, or the Black Prophet; his real name is M’Gowan, I think.”

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“I ought to be able to tell you, at any rate,” replied Sarah; “I’m his daughter.”

The strange woman, on surveying Sarah more closely, looked as if she never intended to remove her eyes from her countenance and figure. She seemed for a moment, as it were, to forget every other object in life—her previous conversation with Hanlon—the message on which she had been sent—and her anxiety to throw light upon the awful crime that had been committed at the spot whereon she stood. At length she sighed deeply, and appeared to recover her presence of mind, and to break through the abstraction in which she had been wrapped. “You’re his daughter, you say?”

“Ay, I do say so.”

“Then you know a young man by name Pierce—och, what am I sayin’!—by name Charley Hanlon?”

“To be sure I do—I’m not ashamed of knowin’ Charles Hanlon.”

“You have a good opinion of him, then?”

“I have a good opinion of him, but not so good as I had thought.”

“Mush a why then, might one ask?”

“I’m afeard he’s a cowardly crathur, and rather unmanly a thrifle. I like a man to be a man, an’ not to get as white as a sheet, an’ cowld as a tombstone, bekaise he hears what he thinks to be a groan at night, an’ it may be nothin’ but an owld cow behind a ditch. Ha! ha! ha!”

“An’ where did he hear the groan?”

“Why, here where we’re standin’. Ha! ha! ha! I was thinkin’ of it since, an’ I did hear somethin’ very like a groan; but what about it? Sich a night as last night would make any one groan that had a groan in them.”

“You spoke about ditches, but sure there’s no ditches here.”

“Divil a matther—who cares what it was? What did you want wid my father?”

“It was yourself that I wanted to see.”

“Faix, an’ you’ve seen me, then, an’ the full o’ your eye you tuck out o’ me. You’ll know me again, I hope.”

“Is your mother livin’?”

“No.”

“How long is she dead, do you know?”

“I do not; I hardly remember anything about her. She died when I was a young slip—a mere child, I believe. Still,” she proceeded, rather slowly, musing and putting her beautiful and taper fingers to her chin—“I think that I do remember—it’s like a dhrame to me though, an’ I dunna but it is one—still it’s like a dhrame to me, that I was wanst in her arms, that I was cryin’, an’ that she kissed me—that she kissed me! If she had lived, it’s a different life maybe I’d lead an’ a different creature I’d be to-day, maybe, but I never had a mother.”

“Did your father marry a second time?”

“He did.”

“Then you have a step-mother?”

“Ay have I.”

“Is she kind to you, an’ do you like her?”

“Middlin’—she’s not so bad—better than I deserve, I doubt; I’m sorry for what I did to her; but then I have the divil’s temper, an’ have no guide o’ myself when it comes on me. I know whatever she may be to me, I’m not the best step-daughter to her.”

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The strange female was evidently much struck with the appearance and singularly artless disposition of Sarah, as well as with her extraordinary candor; and indeed no wonder; for as this neglected creature spoke, especially with reference to her mother, her eyes flashed and softened with an expression of brilliancy and tenderness that might be said to resemble the sky at night, when the glowing corruscations of the Aurora Borealis sweep over it like expanses of lightning, or fade away into those dim but graceful undulations which fill the mind with a sense of such softness and beauty.

“I don’t know,” observed her companion, sighing and looking at her affectionately, “how any step-mother could be harsh to you.”

“Ha! ha! ha! don’t you, indeed? Faix, then, if you had me, maybe you wouldn’t think so —I’m nothin’ but a born divil when the fit’s on me.”

“Charley Hanlon,” proceeded the strange woman, “bid me ax you for the ould tobaccy-box you promised him last night.”

“Well, but he promised me a handkerchy; have you got it?”

“I have,” replied the other, producing it; “but, then, I’m not to give it to you, unless you give me the box for it.”

“But I haven’t the box now,” said Sarah, “how-and-ever, I’ll get it for him.”

“Are you sure that you can an’ will?” inquired the other.

“I had it in my hand yesterday,” she said, “an’ if it’s to be had I’ll get it.”

“Well, then,” observed the other mildly, “as soon as you get him the box, he’ll give you this handkerchy, but not till then.”

“Ha!” she exclaimed, kindling, “is that his bargain; does he think I’d thrick him or cheat him?—hand it here.”

“I can’t,” replied the other; “I’m only to give it to you when I get the box.”

“Hand it here, I say,” returned Sarah, whose eyes flashed in a moment; “it’s Peggy Murray’s rag, I suppose—hand it here, I bid you.”

The woman shook her head and replied, “I can’t—not till you get the box.”

Sarah replied not a word, but sprang at it, and in a minute had it in her hands.

“I would tear it this minute into ribbons,” she exclaimed, with eyes of fire and glowing cheeks, “and tramp it undher my feet too; only that I want it to show her, that I may have the advantage over her.”

There was a sharp, fierce smile of triumph on her features as she spoke; and altogether her face sparkled with singular animation and beauty.

“God bless me!” said the strange woman, looking at her with a wondering yet serious expression of countenance; “I wanst knew a face like yours, an’ a temper the aiquil of it—at any rate, my good girl, you don’t pay much respect to a stranger. Is your stepmother at home?”

“She is not, but my father is; however, I don’t think he’ll see you now. My stepmother’s gone to Darby Skinadre, the meal-monger’s.”

“I’m goin’ there.”

“An’ if you see her,” replied the other, “you’ll know her; a score on her cheek—ha, ha, ha; an’ when you see it, maybe you’ll thank God that I am not your step-daughter.”

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“Isn’t there a family named Sullivan that lives not far from Skinadre’s?”

“There is; Jerry Sullivan, it’s his daughter that’s the beauty—*Gra Gal* Sullivan. Little she knows what’s preparin’ for her!”

“How am I to go to Skinadre’s from this?” asked the woman.

“Up by that road there; any one will tell you as you go along.”

“Thank you, dear,” replied the woman, tenderly; “God bless you; you are a wild girl, sure enough; but above all things, afore I go, don’t forget the box for—for—och, for—Charley Hanlon. God bless you, a *colleen machree*, an’ make you what you ought to be!”

Sarah, during many a long day, had not heard herself addressed in an accent of kindness or affection; for it would be wrong to bestow upon the rude attachment which her father entertained for her, or his surly mode of expressing it, any term that could indicate tenderness, even in a remote degree. She looked, therefore, at the woman earnestly, and as she did, her whole manner changed to one of melancholy and kindness. A soft and benign expression came like the dawn of breaking day over her features, her voice fell into natural melody and sweetness, and, approaching her companion, she took her hand and exclaimed—

“May God bless you for them words! it’s many a day since I heard the voice o’ kindness. I’ll get the box, if it’s to be had, if it was only for your own sake.”

She then passed on to her neighbor’s house, and the next appearance of her companion was that in which the reader caught, a glimpse of her in the house of Darby Skinadre, from which she followed Nelly M’Gowan and Mave Sullivan with an appearance of such interest.

CHAPTER IX. — Meeting of Strangers—Mysterious Dialogue.

Gra Gal Sullivan and the prophet’s wife, having left the meal-shop, proceeded in the direction of Aughamurran, evidently in close, and if one could judge by their gestures, deeply important conversation. The strange woman followed them at a distance, meditating, as might be perceived by her hesitating manner, upon the most seasonable moment of addressing either one or both, without seeming to interrupt or disturb their dialogue. Although the actual purport of the topic they discussed could not be known by a spectator, yet even to an ordinary observer, it was clear that the elder female uttered something that was calculated to warn or alarm the younger.

She raised her extended forefinger, looked earnestly into the face of her companion, then upwards solemnly, and, clasping her hands with vehemence, appeared to close her assertion by appealing to heaven in behalf of its truth; the younger looked at her with wonder, seemed amazed, paused suddenly on her step, raised her hands, and looked as if about to express terror; but, checking herself, appeared as it were perplexed by uncertainty and doubt. After this the elder

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woman seemed to confide some secret or sorrow to the other, for she began to weep bitterly, and to wring her hands as if with remorse, whilst her companion looked like one who had been evidently transformed into an impersonation of pure and artless sympathy. She caught the rough hand of the other—and, ere she had proceeded very far in her narrative, a few tears of compassion stole down her youthful cheek—after which she began to administer consolation in a manner that was at once simple and touching. She pressed the hand of the afflicted woman between hers, then wiped her eyes with her own handkerchief, and soothed her with a natural softness of manner that breathed at once of true tenderness and delicacy.

As soon as this affecting scene had been concluded, the strange woman imperceptibly mended her pace, until her proximity occasioned them to look at her with that feeling which prompts us to recognize the wish of a person to address us, as it is often expressed, by an appearance of mingled anxiety and diffidence, when they approach us. At length Mave Sullivan spoke—

“Who is that strange woman that is followin’ us, an’ wants to say something, if one can judge by her looks?”

“Well, I don’t know,” replied Nelly; “but whatsomever it may be, she wishes to speak to you or me, no doubt of it.”

“She looks like a poor woman,’"* said Mave, “an’ yet she didn’t ask anything in Skinadre’s, barring a drink of water; but, God pity her if she’s comin’ to us for relief poor creature! At any rate, she appears to have care and distress in her face; I’ll spake to her.”

* A common and compassionate name for a person forced to ask alms.

She then beckoned the female to approach them, who did so; but they could perceive as she advanced, that they had been mistaken in supposing her to be one of those unhappy beings whom the prevailing famine had driven to mendicancy. There was visible in her face a feeling of care and anxiety certainly, but none of that supplicating expression which is at once recognized as the characteristic of the wretched class to which they supposed her to belong. This circumstance particularly embarrassed the inexperienced girl, whose gentle heart at the moment sympathized with the stranger’s anxieties, whatever they may have been, and she hesitated a little, when the woman approached, in addressing her. At length she spoke:

“We wor jist sayin’ to one another,” she observed, “that it looked as if you wished to spake to either this woman or me.”

“You’re right enough, then,” she replied; “I have something to say to her, and a single word to yourself, too.”

“An’ what is it you have to say to me?” asked Nelly; “I hope it isn’t to borrow money from me, bekase if it is, my banker has failed, an’ left me as poor as a church mouse.”

“Are you in distress, poor woman,” inquired the generous and kind-hearted girl. “Maybe you’re hungry; it isn’t much we can do for you; but little as it is, if you come home with me, you’ll come to a family that won’t scruple to share the little they have now with any one that’s worse off than themselves.”

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“Ay, you may well say ‘now,’” observed the prophet’s wife; “for until now, it’s they that could always afford it; an’ indeed it was the ready an’ the willin’ bit was ever at your father’s table.”

The stranger looked upon the serene and beautiful features of Mave with a long gaze of interest and admiration; after which she added, with a sigh:

“And you, I believe, are the girl they talk so much about for the fair face and good heart? Little pinetration it takes to see that you have both, my sweet girl. If I don’t mistake, your name is Mave Sullivan, or *Gra Gal*, as the people mostly call you.”

Mave, whose natural delicacy was tender and pure as the dew-drop of morning, on hearing her praises thus uttered by the lips of a stranger, blushed so deeply, that her whole neck and face became suffused with that delicious crimson of modesty which, alas! is now of such rare occurrence among the sex, unconscious that, in doing so, she was adding fresh testimony to the impressions which had gone so generally abroad of her extraordinary beauty, and the many unostentatious virtues which adorned her humble life.

“Mave Sullivan is my name,” she replied, smiling through her blushes: “as to the nickname, the people will call one what they like, no matther whether it’s right or wrong.”

“The people’s seldom wrong, then, in givin’ names o’ the kind,” returned the stranger; “but in your case, they’re right at all events, as any one may know that looks upon you: that sweet face an’ them fair looks is seldom if ever found with a bad heart. May God guard you, my purty and innocent girl, an’ keep you safe from all evil, I pray his holy name.”

The prophet’s wife and Mave exchanged looks as the woman spoke: and the latter said:

“I hope you don’t think there’s any evil before me.”

“Who is there,” replied the stranger, “that can say there’s not? Sure it’s before us and about us every hour in the day; but in your case, darlin’, I jist say, be on your guard, an’ don’t trust or put belief in any one that you don’t know well. That’s all I can say, an’ indeed all I know.”

“I feel thankful to you,” replied Mave; “and now that you wish me well, (for I’m sure you do,) maybe you’d grant me a favor?”

“If it is widin the bounds of my power, I’ll do it,” returned the other; “but it’s little I can do, God help me.”

“Nelly,” said Mave, “will you go on to the cross-roads there, an’ I’ll be with you in a minute.”

The cross-roads alluded to were only a couple of hundred yards before them. The prophet’s wife proceeded, and Mave renewed the conversation.

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“What I want you to do for me is this—that is if you can do it—maybe you could bring a couple of stones of meal to a family of the name of—of—” here she blushed again, and her confusion became so evident that she felt it impossible to proceed until she had recovered in some degree her composure. “Only two or three years agone,” she continued, “they were the daicentest farmers in the parish; but the world went against them as it has of late a’most against every one, owing to the fall of prices, and now they’re out of their farm, very much reduced, and there’s sickness amongst them, as well as want. They’ve been living,” she proceeded, wiping away the tears which were now fast flowing, “in a kind of cabin or little cottage not far from the fine house an’ place that was not long ago their own. Their name,” she added, after a pause in which it was quite evident that she struggled strongly with her feelings, “is—is—Dal-ton.”

“O was the young fellow one of them,” asked the woman, “that was so outrageous awhile ago in the miser’s? I think I heard the name given to him.”

“Oh, I have nothing to say for him,” replied Mave; “he was always wild, but they say never bad-hearted; it’s the rest of the family I’m thinking about—and even that young man isn’t more than three or four days up out o’ the fever. What I want you to do is to bring the male I’m spakin’ of to that family; any one will show you their little place; an’ to leave it there about dusk this evenin’, so that no one will ever know that you do it; an’ as you love God an’ hope for mercy, don’t breathe my name in the business at all.”

“I will do it for you,” replied the other; “but in the meantime where am I to get the meal?”

“Why, at the miser’s,” replied Mave; “and when you go there, tell him that the person who told him they wouldn’t forget it to him, sent you for it, an’ you’ll get it.”

“God forbid I refused you that much,” said the stranger; “an’ although it’ll keep me out longer than I expected, still I’ll manage it for you, an’ come or go what will, widout mentioning your name.”

“God bless you for that,” said Mave, “an grant that you may never be brought to the same hard pass that they’re in, and keep you from ever having a heavy or a sorrowful heart.”

“Ah, *acushla oge*,” replied the woman with a profound sigh, “that prayer’s too late for me; anything else than a heavy and sorrowful heart I’ve seldom had: for the last twenty years and upwards little but care and sorrow has been upon me.

“Indeed, one might easily guess as much,” said Mave, “you have a look of heart-break and sorrow, sure enough. But answer me this: how do you know that there’s evil before me or, about me?’

“I don’t know much about it,” returned the other; “but I’m afeard there’s something to your disadvantage planned or plannin’ against you. When I seen you awhile ago I didn’t know you till I heard your name; I’m a stranger here, not two weeks in the neighborhood, and know hardly anybody in it.”

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“Well,” observed Mave, who had fallen back upon her own position, and the danger alluded to by the stranger, “I’ll do nothing that’s wrong myself, and if there’s danger about me, as I hear there is, it’s a good thing to know that God can guard me in spite of all that any one can do against me.”

“Let that be your principle, ahagur—sooner or latter the hand o’ God can and will make everything clear, and after all, dear, he is the best protection, blessed be his name!”

They had now reached the cross-roads already spoken of, where the prophet’s wife again joined them for a short time, previous to her separation from Mave, whose way from that point lay in a direction opposite to theirs.

“This woman,” said Mave, “wishes to go to Condy Dalton’s in the course of the evening, and you, Nelly, can show her from the road the poor place they now live in, God help them.”

“To be sure,” replied the other, “an’ the house where they did live when they wor as themselves, full, an’ warm, an’ daicent; an’ it is a hard case on them, God knows, to be turned out like beggars from a farm that they spent hundreds on, and to be forced to see the landlord, ould Dick o’ the Grange, now settin’ it at a higher rent and putting into his own pocket the money they had laid out upon improvin’ it an’ makin’ it valuable for him and his; troth, it’s open robbery an’ nothin’ else.”

“It in a hard case upon them, as every body allows,” said Mave, “but it’s over now, and can’t be helped. Good-bye, Nelly, an’ God bless you; an’ God bless you too,” she added, addressing the strange woman, whose hand she shook and pressed. “You are a great deal oulder than I am, an’ as I said, every one may read care an’ sorrow upon your face. Mine doesn’t show it yet, I know, but for all that the heart within me is full of both, an’ no likelihood of its ever bein’ otherwise with me.”

As she spoke, the tears again gushed down her cheeks; but she checked her grief by an effort, and after a second hurried good-bye, she proceeded on her way home.

“That seems a mild girl,” said the strange woman, “as she is a lovely creature to look at.”

“She’s better than she looks,” returned the prophet’s wife, “an’ that’s a great deal to say for her.”

“That’s but truth,” replied the stranger, “and I believe it; for indeed she has goodness in her face.”

“She has and in her heart,” replied Nelly; “no wondher, indeed, that every one calls her the *Gra Gal*, for it’s she that well deserves it. I You are bound for Condy Dalton’s, then?” she added, inquiringly. “I am,” said the other. “I think you must be a stranger in

the country, otherwise I'd know your face," continued Nelly—"but maybe you're a relation of theirs."

"I am a stranger," said the other; "but no relation."

"The Daltons," proceeded Nelly, "are daicent people,—but hot and hasty, as the savin' is. It's the blow before the word wid them always."

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“Ah, tut they say,” returned her companion, “that a hasty heart was never a bad one.”

“Many a piece o’ nonsense they say as well as that,” rejoined Nelly; “I know them that ’ud put a knife into your heart hastily enough—ay, an’ give you a hasty death, into the bargain. They’ll first break your head—cut you to the skull, and then, indeed, they’ll give you a plaisther. That was ever an’ always the carrecther of the same Daltons; an’, if all accounts be thrue, the hand of God is upon them, an’ will be upon them till the bloody deed is brought to light.”

“How is that?” inquired the other, with intense interest, whilst her eyes became riveted upon Nelly’s hard features.

“Why, a murdher that was committed betther than twenty years ago in this neighborhood.”

“A murdher!” exclaimed the stranger. “Where?—when?—how?”

“I can tell you where, an’ I can tell you when,” replied Nelly; “but there I must stop—for unless I was at the committin’ of it, you might know very well I couldn’t tell you how.”

“Where then?” she asked, and whilst she did so, it was by a considerable effort that she struggled to prevent her agitation from being noticed by the prophet’s wife.

“Why, near the Grey Stone at the crossroads of Mallybenagh—that’s the where!”

“An’ now for the when?” asked the stranger, who almost panted with anxiety as she spoke.

“Let me see,” replied Nelly, “fourteen and six makes twenty, an’ two before that or nearly —I mane the year of the rebellion, Why it’s not all out two-and-twenty years, I think.”

“Aisey,” said the other, “I’m but very weak an’ feeble—will you jist wait till I rest a minute upon this green bank by the road.”

“What ails you?” asked Nelly. “You look as if you got suddenly ill.”

“I did get a little—but it’ll soon pass away,” she answered—“thrue enough,” she added in a low voice, and as if in a soliloquy; “God is a just Judge—he is—he is! Well, but—oh, I’ll soon get better—well, but listen, what became of the murdhered man?—was the body ever got?”

“Nobody knows that—the body was never got—that is to say nobody knows where it’s now lyin’, snug enough too.”

“Ha!” thought the stranger, eying her furtively—“snug enough!—there’s more knowledge where that came from. What do you mane by snug enough?” she asked abruptly.

“Mane!” replied the other, who at once perceived the force of the unguarded expression she had used;—“mane, why what could I mane, but that whoever did the deed, hid the body where very few would be likely to find it.”

Her companion now stood up, and approaching the prophet’s wife, raised her hand, and said in a tone that was both startling and emphatic—

“I met you this day as you may think, by accident; but take my word for it, and, as sure as we must both account for our acts, it was the hand o’ God that brought us together. I now look into your face, and I tell you that I see guilt and throuble there—ay, an’ the dark work of a conscience that’s gnawin’ your heart both night and day.”

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Whilst speaking, she held her face within about a foot of Nelly's, into which she looked with an expression so searching and dreadful in its penetration, that the other shrunk back, and felt for a moment as if subdued by a superior spirit. It was, however, only for a moment; the sense of her subjection passed away, and she resumed that hard and imperturbable manner, for which she had been all her life so remarkable, unless, like Etna and Vesuvius, she burst out of this seeming coldness into fire and passion. There, however, they stood looking sternly into each others' faces, as if each felt anxious that the other should quail before her gaze—the stranger, in order that her impressions might be confirmed, and the prophet's wife, that she should, by the force of her strong will, fling off those traces of inquietude which she knew very well were often too legible in her countenance.

"You are wrong," said Nelly, "an' have only mistaken my face for a lookin'-glass. It was your own you saw, all it was your own you wor spaking of—for if ever I saw a face that publishes an ill-spent life on the part of its owner, yours is it."

"Care an' sorrow I have had," replied the other, "an' the sin that causes sorrow, I grant; but there's somethin' that's weighin' down your heart, an' that won't let you rest until you give it up. You needn't deny it, for you can't hide it—hard your eye is, but it's not clear, and I see that it quivers, and is unaisy before mine."

"I said you're mistaken," replied the other; "but even supposin' you wor not, how is it your business whether my mind is aisy or not? You won't have my sins to answer for."

"I know that," said the stranger; "and God sees my own account will be too long and too heavy, I doubt. I now beg of you, as you hope to meet judgment, to think of what I said. Look into your own heart, and it will tell you whether I am right or whether I am wrong. Consult your husband, and if he has any insight at all into futurity, he must tell you that, unless you clear your conscience, you'll have a hard death-bed of it."

"You're goin' to Condy Dalton's," replied Nelly, with much coolness, but whether assumed or not it is difficult to say; "look into his face, and try what you can find there. At any rate, report has it that there's blood upon his hand, an' that the downfall of himself and his family is only the vengeance of God, an' the curse of murdher that's pursuin' him and them."

"Why," inquired the other, eagerly, "was he accused of it?"

"Ay, an' taken up for it; but bekaise the body wasn't found, they could do nothing to him."

"May Heaven assist me!" exclaimed the stranger, "but this day is——however, God's will be done, as it will be done! Are you goin'?"

“I’m goin’,” replied Nelly; “by crossin’ the fields here, I’ll save a great deal of ground; and when you get as far as the broken bridge, you’ll see a large farm-house widout any smoke from it; about a quarter of a mile or less beyant that you’ll find the house you’re lookin’ for—the house where Condy Dalton lives.”

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Having thus directed the stranger, the prophet's wife entered a gap that led into a field, and proceeded on her way homewards, having, ere she parted, glanced at her with a meaning which rendered it extremely difficult to say whether the singular language addressed to her had left behind it any such impression as the speaker wished to produce. Their glances met and dwelt on each other for a short time: the strange woman pointed solemnly towards the sky, and the prophet's wife smiled carelessly; but yet, by a very keen eye, it might have been noticed that, under this natural or affected indifference, there lurked a blank or rather an unquiet expression, such as might intimate that something within her had been moved by the observations of her strange companion.

CHAPTER X. — The Black Prophet makes a Disclosure.

The latter proceeded on her way home, having marked the miserable hovel of Condy Dalton. At present our readers will accompany us once more to the cabin of Donnel Dhu, the prophet.

His wife, as the reader knows, had been startled into something like remorse, by the incidents which had occurred within the last two days, and especially by the double discovery of the dead body and the Tobacco box. Sarah, her step-daughter, was now grown, and she very reasonably concluded, her residence in the same house with this fiery and violent young female was next to an impossibility.—The woman herself was naturally coarse and ignorant; but still there was mixed, up in her character a kind of apathetic or indolent feeling of rectitude or vague humanity, which rendered her liable to occasional visitations of compunction for whatever she did that was wrong. The strongest principle in her, however, was one which is frequently to be found among her class—I mean such a lingering impression of religious feeling as is not sufficiently strong to prevent the commission of crime, but yet is capable by its influence to keep the conscience restless and uneasy under its convictions. Whether to class this feeling with weakness or with virtue, is indeed difficult; but to whichsoever of them it may belong, of one thing we are certain, that many a mind, rude and hardened by guilt, is weak or virtuous only on this single point. Persons so constituted are always remarkable for feelings of strong superstition, and are easily influenced by the occurrence of slight incidents, to which they are certain to attribute a peculiar significance, especially when connected with anything that may occasion them uneasiness for the time, or which may happen to occupy their thoughts, or affect their own welfare or interests.

The reader need not be surprised, therefore, on learning that this woman, with all her apathy of character on the general matters of life, was accessible to the feeling or

principle we have just described, nor that the conversation she had just had with the strange woman, both disturbed and alarmed her.

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On returning, she found her husband and step-daughter both at home; the latter hacking up some white thorn wood with an old hatchet, for the fire, and the other sitting with his head bent gloomily upon his hand, as if ruminating upon the vicissitudes of a troubled or ill-spent life.

Having deposited her burthen, she sat down, and drawing a long breath, wiped her face with the corner of a blue praskeen which she always wore, and this she did with a serious and stern face, intimating, as it were, that her mind was engaged upon matters of deep interest, whatever they might have been.

“What’s that you’re doin’?” she inquired of Sarah, in a grave, sharp voice.

“Have you no eyes?” replied the other; “don’t you see what I am doin’?”

“Where did you get them white thorns that you’re cuttin’ up?”

“Where did I get them, is it?”

“Ay; I said so.”

“Why, where they grew—ha, ha, ha! There’s information for you.”

“Oh, God help you! how do you expect to get through life at all?”

“Why, as well as I can—although not, maybe, as well as I wish.”

“Where did you cut them thorns, I ax?”

“An’ I tould you; but since that won’t satisfy you, I cut them on the *Rath* above there.”

“Heaven presarve us, you hardened jade, have you no fear of anything about you?”

“Divil a much that I know of, sure enough.”

“Didn’t you know that them thorns belongs to the fairies, and that some evil will betide any one that touches or injures a single branch o’ them.”

“Divil a single branch I injured,” replied Sarah, laughing; “I cut down the whole tree at wanst.”

“My sowl to glory, if I think its safe to live in the house wid you, you hardened divil.”

“Troth, I think you may well say so, afther yesterday’s escape,” returned Sarah; “an’ I have no objection that you should go to glory, body an’ soul; an’ a purty piece o goods will be in glory when you’re there—ha, ha, ha!”

“Throw out them thorns, I bid you.”

“Why so? Don’t we want them for the fire?”

“No matther for that; we don’t want to bring ’the good people’—this day’s Thursday, the Lord stand between us an’ harm—amin!—about our ears. Out wid them.”

“No, the sorra branch.”

“Out wid them, I say, Are you afeard of neither God nor the divil?”

“Not overburdened with much fear of either o’ them,” replied the daring young creature.

“Aren’t you afeard o’ the good people, then?”

“If they’re good people, why should we be afeard o’ them? No, I’m not.”

“Put the thorns out, I bid you again.”

“Divil a chip, mother dear; if your own evil conscience or your dirty cowardice makes you afeard o’ the fairies, don’t think I am. I don’t care that about them. These same thorns must boil the dinner in spite of all the fairies in Europe; so don’t fret either yourself or me on the head o’ them.”

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“Oh, I see what’s to come! There’s a doom over this house, that’s all, an’ over some, if not all o’ them that’s in it. Everything’s leadin’ to it; an’ come it will.”

“Why, mother, dear, at this rate you’ll leave my father nothin’ to say. You’re keepin’ all the black prophecies to yourself. Why don’t you rise up, man alive,” she added, turning to him, “and let her hear how much of the divil’s lingo you can give?—It’s hard, if you can’t prophesy as much evil as she can. Shake yourself, ruffle your feathers, or clap your wings three times, in the divil’s name, an’ tell her she’ll be hanged; or, if you wish to soften it, say she’ll go to Heaven in a string. Ha, ha, ha!”

At this moment, a poor, famine-struck looking woman, with three or four children, the very pictures of starvation and misery, came to the door, and, in that voice of terrible destitution, which rings feeble and hollow from an empty and exhausted frame, she implored them for some food.

“We haven’t it for you, honest woman,” said Nelly, in her cold, indifferent voice—“it’s not for you now.”

The hope of relief was nearly destroyed by the unfeeling tones of the voice in which she was answered. She looked, however, at her famishing children, and once more returned to the door, after having gone a few steps from it.

“Oh, what will become of these?” she added, pointing to the children. “I don’t care about myself—I think my cares will soon be over.”

“Go to the divil out o’ that!” shouted the prophet—“don’t be tormentin’ us wid yourself and your brats.”

“Didn’t you hear already,” repeated his wife, “that you got your answer? We’re poor ourselves, and we can’t help every one that comes to us. It’s not for you now.”

“Don’t you hear that there’s nothing for you?” again cried the prophet, in an angry voice; “yet you’ll be botherin’ us!”

“Indeed, we haven’t it, good woman,” repeated Nelly; “so take your answer.”

“Don’t you know that’s a lie?” said Sarah, addressing her step-mother. “You have it, if you wish to give it.”

“What’s a lie?” said her father, starting, for he had again relapsed into his moodiness. “What’s a lie?—who—who’s a liar?”

“You are!” she replied, looking him coolly and contemptuously in the face; “you tell the poor woman that there’s nothing for her. Don’t you know that’s a lie? It may be very well to tell a lie to them that can bear it—to a rich bodagh, or his proud lady of a wife—-

although it's a mean thing even to them; but to tell a lie to that heartbroken woman and her poor childhre—her childhre—aren't they her own?—an' who would spake for them if she wouldn't. If every one treated the poor that way, what would become of them? Ay, to look in her face, where there's want an' hunger, and answer distress wid a lie—it's cruel—cruel!"

"What a kind-hearted creature she is," said her step-mother, looking towards her father —"isn't she?"

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“Come here, poor woman,” said Sarah, calling her back; “it is for you. If these two choose to let you and your childhre die or starve, I won’t;” and she went to the meal to serve them as she spoke.

The woman returned, and looked with considerable surprise at her; but Nelly went also to the meal, and was about to interpose, when Sarah’s frame became excited, and her eyes flashed, as they always did when in a state of passion.

“If you’re wise, don’t prevent me,” she said. “Help these creatures I will. I’m your match now, an’ more than your match, thank God; so be quiet.”

“If I was to die for it, you won’t have your will now, then,” said Nelly.

“Die when you like, then,” replied Sarah; “but help that poor woman an’ her childhre I will.”

“Fight it out,” said Donnel Dhu, “its a nice quarrel, although Sal has the right on her side.”

“If you prevent me,” said she, disregarding her step-mother, “you’ll rue it quickly; or hould—I’m beginnin’ to hate this kind of quarrellin’—here, let her have as much meal as will make my supper; I’ll do without any for the sake of the childhre, this night.”

This was uttered in a tone of voice more mitigated, but at the same time so resolute, that Nelly stepped back and left her to pursue her own course.

She then took a wooden trencher, and with a liberal hand assisted the poor creatures, who began to feel alarmed at the altercation which their distress had occasioned in the family.

“You’re starvin’, childre,” said she, whilst emptying the meal into the poor woman’s bag.

“May the blessin’ of God rest upon you,” whispered the woman, “you’ve saved my orphans;” and, as she uttered the words, her hollow eyes filled, and a few tears ran slowly down her cheeks.

Sarah gave a short, loud laugh, and snatching up the youngest of the children, stroked its head and patted its cheek, exclaiming—

“Poor thing; you won’t go without your supper this night, at any rate.”

She then laughed again in the same quick, abrupt manner, and returned into the house.

“Why, then,” said her step-mother, looking at her with mingled anger and disdain, “is it tears you’re sheddin’—cryin’, no less! Afther that, maricles will never cease.”

Sarah turned towards her hastily; the tears, in a moment, were dried upon her cheeks, and as she looked at her hard, coarse, but well-shaped features, her eyes shone with a brilliant and steady light for more than a minute. The expression was at once; lofty and full of strong contempt, and, as she stood in this singular but striking mood, it would indeed be difficult to conceive a finer type of energy, feeling, and beauty, than that which was embodied in her finely-turned and exquisite figure. Having thus contemplated the old woman for some time, she looked upon the ground, and her face passed rapidly into a new form and expression of beauty. It at once became soft and full of melancholy, and might have been mistaken for an impersonation of pity and sorrow.

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“Oh, no!” she exclaimed, in a low voice, that was melody itself; “I never got it from either the one or the other—the kind or soft word—an’ it’s surely no wondher that I am as I am.”

And as she spoke she wept. Her heart had been touched by the distress of her fellow creatures, and became, as it were, purified and made tender by its own sympathies, and she wept. Both of them looked at her; but as they were utterly incapable of understanding what she felt, this natural struggle of a great but neglected spirit excited nothing on their part but mere indifference.

At this moment, the prophet, who seemed laboring under a fierce but gloomy mood, rose suddenly up, and exclaimed—

“Nelly—Sarah!—I can bear this, no longer; the saicret must come out. I am—”

“Stop,” screamed Sarah, “don’t say it—don’t say it! Let me leave the counthry. Let me go somewhere—any where—let me—let me—die first.”

“I am——,” said he.

“I know it,” replied his wife; “a murdherer! I know it now—I knew it since yesterday mornin’.”

“Give him justice,” said Sarah, now dreadfully excited, and seizing him by the breast of his coat,—“give him common justice—give the man justice, I say. You are my father, aren’t you? Say how you did it. It was a struggle—a fight; he opposed you—he did, and your blood riz, and you stabbed him for fear he might stab you. That was it. Ha! ha! I know it was, for you are my father, and I am your daughter; and that’s what I would do like a man. But you never did it—ah! you never did it in cowld blood, or like a coward.”

There was something absolutely impressive and commanding in her sparkling eyes, and the energetic tones of her voice, whilst she addressed him.

“Donnel,” said the wife, “it’s no saicret to me; but it’s enough now that you’ve owned it. This is the last night that I’ll spend with a murdherer. You know what I’ve to answer for on my own account; and so, in the name of God, we’ll part in the mornin’.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Sarah, “you’d leave him now, would you? You’d desart him now; now that all the world will turn against him; now that every tongue will abuse him; that every heart will curse him; that every eye will turn away from him with hatred; now that shame, an’ disgrace, an’ guilt is all upon his head; you’d leave him, would you, and join the world against him? Father, on my knees I go to you;” and she dropped down as she spoke; “here on my knees I go to you, an’ before you spake, mark, that through shame an’ pain, an’ sufferin’, an’ death, I’ll stay by you, an’ with you. But, I now kneel to you—-

what I hardly ever did to God—an for his sake, for God's sake, I ask you; oh say, say that you did not kill the man in cowld blood; that's all! Make me sure of that, and I'm happy."

"I think you're both mad," replied Donnel. "Did I say that I was a murdherer? Why didn't you hear me out?"

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“You needn’t,” returned Nelly; “I knew it since yestherday mornin’.”

“So you think,” he replied, “an’ it’s but nathural you should, I was at the place this day, and seen where you dug the *Casharrawan*. I have been strugglin’ for years to keep this saicret, an’ now it must come out; but I’m not a murdherer.”

“What saicret, father, if you’re not a murdherer?” asked Sarah; “what saicret; but there is not murder on you; do you say that?”

“I do say it; there’s neither blood nor murdher on my head! but I know who the murdherer is, an’ I can keep the saicret no longer!”

Sarah laughed, and her eyes sparkled up with singular vividness. “That’ll do,” she exclaimed; “that’ll do; all’s right now; you’re not a murdherer, you killed no man, aither in cowld blood or otherwise; ha! ha! you’re a good father; you’re a good father; I forgive you all now, all you ever did.”

Nelly stood contemplating her husband with a serious, firm, but dissatisfied look; her chin was supported upon her forefinger and thumb; and instead of seeming relieved by the disclosure she had just heard, which exonerated him from the charge of blood, she still kept her eyes riveted upon him with a stern and incredulous aspect.

“Spake out, then,” she observed coolly, “an’ tell us all, for I am not convinced.”

Sarah looked as if she would have sprang at her.

“You are not convinced,” she exclaimed; “you are not convinced! Do you think he’d tell a lie on such a subject as this?” But no sooner had she uttered the words than she started as if seized by a spasm. “Ah, father,” she exclaimed, “it’s now your want of truth comes against you; but still, still I believe you.”

“Tell us all about it,” said Nelly, coldly; “let us hear all.”

“But you both promise solemnly, in the sight of God, never to breathe this to a human being till I give yez lave.”

“We do; we do,” replied Sarah; “in the sight of God, we do.”

“You don’t spake,” said he, addressing Nelly.

“I promise it.”

“In the sight of God?” he added, “for I know you.”

“Ay.” said she, “in the sight of God, since you must have it so.”

“Well, then,” said he, “the common report is right; the man that murdhered him is Condy Dalton. I have kept it in till I can bear it no longer. It’s my intention to go to a magistrate’s as soon as my face gets well. For near two-and-twenty years, now, this saicret is lyin’ hard upon me; but I’ll aise my mind, and let justice take it’s coorse. Bad I have been, but never so bad as to take my fellow-crature’s life.”

“Well, I’m glad to hear it,” said his wife; “an’ now I can undherstand you.”

“And I’m both glad and sorry,” exclaimed Sarah; “sorry for the sake of the Daltons. Oh! who would suppose it! and what will become of them?”

“I have no peace,” her father added; “I have not had a minute’s peace ever since it happened; for sure, they say, any one that keeps their knowledge of murdher saicret and won’t tell it, is as bad as the murdherer himself. There’s another thing I have to mention,” he added, after a pause; “but I’ll wait for a day or two; it’s a thing I lost, an’, as the case stands now, I can do nothing widout it.”

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“What is it, father?” asked Sarah, with animation; “let us know what it is.”

“Time enough yet,” he replied; “it’ll do in a day or two; in the mean time it’s hard to tell but it may turn up somewhere or other; I hope it may; for if it get into any hands but my own—”

He paused and bent his eyes with singular scrutiny first upon Sarah, who had not the most distant appreciation of his meaning. Not so Nelly, who felt convinced that the allusion he made was to the Tobacco-box, and her impression being that it was mixed up in some way with an act of murder, she determined to wait until he should explain himself at greater length upon the subject. Had Sarah been aware of its importance, she would have at once disclosed all she knew concerning it, together with Hanlon’s anxiety to get it into his possession. But of this she could know nothing, and for that reason there existed no association, in her mind, to connect it with the crime which the Prophet seemed resolved to bring to light.

When Donnel Dhu laid himself down upon the bed that day, he felt that by no effort could he shake a strong impression of evil from off him. The disappearance of the Box surprised him so much, that he resolved to stroll out and examine a spot with which the reader is already acquainted. On inspecting the newly-disturbed earth, he felt satisfied that the body had been discovered, and this circumstance, joined with the disappearance of the Tobacco-box, precipitated his determination to act as he was about to do; or, perhaps altogether suggested the notion of taking such steps as might bring Condy Dalton to justice. At present it is difficult to say why he did not allude to the missing Box openly, but perhaps that may be accounted for at a future and more appropriate stage of our narrative.

CHAPTER XI. — Pity and Remorse.

The public mind, though often obtuse and stupid in many matters, is in others sometimes extremely acute and penetrating. For some years previous to the time laid in our tale, the family of Condy Dalton began to decline very perceptibly in their circumstances. There had been unpropitious seasons; there had been failure of crops and disease among the cattle—and, perhaps what was the worst scourge of all, there existed a bad landlord in the person of Dick-o’-the-Grange. So long, however, as they continued prosperous, their known principles of integrity and strict truth caused them to be well spoken of and respected, in spite of the imputation which had been made against them as touching the murder of Sullivan. In the course of time, however, when the evidences of struggle succeeded those of comfort and independence, the world began to perceive the just judgments of God as manifested in the disasters which befel them, and which seemed to visit them as with a judicial punishment. Year after year, as they sank in the scale of poverty, did the almost forgotten murder assume a more prominent and distinct shape in the public mind, until at length it became too certain to

be doubted, that the slow but sure finger of God’s justice was laid upon them as an additional proof that crime, however it may escape the laws of men, cannot veil itself from the all-seeing eye of the Almighty.

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There was, however, an individual member of the family, whose piety and many virtues excited a sympathy in her behalf, as general as it was deep and compassionate. This was Mrs. Dalton, towards whom only one universal impression of good-will, affection, and respect prevailed. Indeed, it might be said that the whole family were popular in the country; but, notwithstanding their respectability, both individually and collectively, the shadow of crime was upon them; and as long as the people saw that everything they put their hand to failed, and that a curse seemed to pursue them, as if in attestation of the hidden murder, so long did the feeling that God would yet vindicate His justice by their more signal punishment, operate with dreadful force against them, with the single exception we have mentioned.

Mrs. Dalton, on her return home from her unsuccessful visit to the miser's, found her family in the same state of grievous privation in which she had left them. 'Tis true she had not mentioned to any of them her intention of appealing to the gratitude or humanity of Skinadre; yet they knew, by an intuitive perception of her purpose, that she had gone to him, and although their pride would not allow them to ask a favor directly from him, yet they felt pleased that she had made the experiment, and had little doubt that the miser, by obliging her in the request she went to prefer, would gladly avail himself of the circumstance to regain their good will, not so much on their own account, as for the sake of standing well in the world, in whose opinion he knew he had suffered by his treachery towards them in the matter of their farm. She found her husband seated in an old arm-chair, which, having been an heir-loom in the family for many a long year, had, with one or two other things, been purchased in at the sheriff's sale. There was that chair, which had come down to them from three or four generations; an old clock, some smaller matters, and a grey sheep, the pet of a favorite daughter, who had been taken away from them by decline during the preceding autumn. There are objects, otherwise of little value, to which we cling for the sake of those unforgotten affections, and old mournful associations that invest indifferent things with a feeling of holiness and sorrow by which they are made sacred to the heart.

Condy Dalton was a man tolerably well stricken in years; his face was pale, but not unhealthy looking; and his hair, which rather flowed about his shoulders, was almost snow white—a circumstance which, in this case, was not attributed to the natural progress of years, but to that cankered remorse which turns the head grey before its time. Their family now consisted of two sons and two daughters, the original number having been two sons and three daughters—one of the latter having fallen a victim to decline, as we have already stated. The old man was sitting in the arm-chair, in which he leant back, having his chin at the same time on his breast, a position which gave something very peculiar to his appearance.

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As Mrs. Dalton had occupied a good deal of time in unsuccessfully seeking for relief from other sources, it is unnecessary to say that the day had now considerably advanced, and the heavy shadows of this dismal and unhealthy evening had thrown their gloom over the aspect of all nature, to which they gave an appearance of desolation that was in painful keeping with the sickness and famine that so mercilessly scourged the kingdom at large. A pot of water hung upon a dark slow fire, in order that as little time as possible might be lost in relieving their physical wants, on Mrs. Dalton's return with the relief which they expected.

"Here's my mother," said one of her daughters, looking with a pale cheek and languid eye out of the door; for she, too, had been visited by the prevailing illness; "an', my God! she's comin' as she went—empty handed!"

The other sister and Con, her brother, went also to look out, and there she was, certainly without relief.

"She isn't able to carry it herself," said their father; "or maybe she's comin' to get one of you—Con, I suppose—to go for it. Bad as Skinadre is, he wouldn't have the heart to refuse us a lock o' meal to keep the life in us. Oh! no, he'd not do that."

In a few moments Mrs. Dalton entered, and after looking upon the scene of misery about her, she sat down and burst into tears. "Mother," said the daughter, "there's no relief, then? You came as you went, I see."

"I came as I went, Nanty; but there is relief. There's relief for the poor of this world in Heaven; but on this earth, an' in this world, there is none for us—glory be to the name of God, still."

"So Skinadre refused, then?" said her husband; "he wouldn't give the meal?"

"No," she replied, "he would not; but the truth is, our woful' state is now so well known, that nobody will trust us; they know there's no chance of ever bein' paid, an' they all say they can't afford it."

"I'm not surprised at what Tom says," observed our friend, young Con, "that the meal-mongers and strong farmers that keep the provisions up on the poor desarves to be smashed and tramped under foot; an' indeed they'll get it, too, before long, for the people can't stand this, especially when one knows that there's enough, ay, and more than enough, in the country."

"If had tobacco," said the old man, "I didn't care—that would keep the hunger off o' me; but it's poor Mary, here, now recoverin' from the sickness, that I pity; don't cry, Mary, dear; come here, darlin', come here, and turn up that ould creel, and sit down beside me. It's useless to bid you not to cry, avourneen machree, bekaise we all know what

you feel; but you have one comfort—you are innocent—so are you all—there's nothing on any of your minds—no dark thought to lie upon your heart—oh, no, no; an' if it was only myself that was to suffer, I could bear it; but to see them that's innocent sufferin' along

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wid me, is what kills me. This is the hand of God that's upon us, an' that will be upon us, an' that has been upon us, an' I knew it would be so; for ever since that black night, the thought—the thought of what happened!—ay, it's that that's in me, an' upon me—it's that that has put wrinkles in my cheek before their time, an' that has made my hair white before its time, and that has—"

"Con, dear," observed his wife, "I never wished you to be talkin' of that before them; sure you did as much as a man could do; you repented, an' were sorry for it, an' what more could be expected from you?"

"Father, dear," said Mary, drying, or struggling to dry her tears, "don't think of me, or of any of us, nor don't think of anything that will disturb your mind—don't think of the, at any rate—I'm very weak, but I'm not so hungry as you may think; if I had one mouthful of anything just to take this feelin' that I have inwardly, an' this weakness away, I would be satisfied—that would do me; an' although I'm cryin' it's more to see your misery, father dear, an' all your miseries, than for what I'm sufferin' myself; but there's a kiss for you, it's all I have to give you."

"Mary, dear," said her sister, smote to the heart by her words, "you're sufferin' more than any of us, you an' my father," and she encircled her lovingly and mournfully in her arms as she spoke, and kissed her wan lips, after which she went to the old man, and said in a voice of compassion and consolation that was calculated to soothe any hearers—

"Oh, father, dear, if you could only banish all uneasy thoughts from your mind—if you could only throw that darkness that's so often over you, off you, we could bear anything —anything—Oh, anything, if we seen you aisy in your mind, an' happy!"

Mrs. Dalton had dried her tears, and sat upon a low stool musing and silent, and apparently revolving in her mind the best course to be pursued under such circumstances. It was singular to observe the change that had taken place in her appearance even within a few hours; the situation of her family, and her want of success in procuring them food, had so broken down her spirits and crushed her heart, that the lines of her face were deepened and her features sharpened and impressed with the marks of suffering as strongly as if they had been left there by the affliction of years. Her son leant himself against a piece of the broken wall that partially divided their hut into something like two rooms, if they could be called so, and from time to time he glanced about him, now at his father, then at his poor sisters, and again at his heart-broken mother, with an impatient agony of spirit that could scarcely be conceived.

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“Well,” said he, clenching his hands and grinding his teeth, “it is expected that people like us will sit tamely undher sich tratement as we have resaved from Dick o’ the Grange. Oh, if we had now the five hundre good pounds that we spent upon our farm—spent, as it turned out, not for ourselves, but to enable that ould villain of a landlord to set it to Darby Skinadre; for I b’lieve it’s he that’s to get it, with strong inthrest goin’ into his pocket for all our improvements; if we had now,” he continued, his passion rising, “if we had that five hundre pounds now, or one hundre, or one pound, great God! ay, or one shillin’ now, wouldn’t it save some of you from starving”

This reflection, which in the young man excited only wrath, occasioned the female portion of the family to burst into fresh sorrow; not so the old man; he arose hastily, and paced up and down the floor in a state of gloomy indignation and fury which far transcended that of his son.

“Oh!” said he, “if I was a young man, as I was wanst—but the young men now are poor, pitiful, cowardly—I would—I would;” he paused suddenly, however, looked up, and clasping his hands, exclaimed—“forgive me, O God! forgive the thought that was in my unhappy heart! Oh, no, no, never, never allow yourself, Con, dear, to be carried away by anger, for ’fraid you might do in one minute, or in a short fit of anger, what might make you pass many a sleepless night, an’ maybe banish the peace of God from your heart forever!”

“God bless you for them last words, Condy!” exclaimed his wife, “that’s the way I wish you always to spake; but what to do, or where to go, or who to turn to, unless to God himself, I don’t know.”

“We’re come to it at last,” said their daughter Peggy; “little we thought of it, but at all events, it’s betther to do that than to do worse—betther than to rob or steal, or do an ondaicent act of any kind. In the name of God, then, rather than you should die of hunger, Mary—you an’ my father an’ all of yez—I’ll go out and beg from the neighbors.”

“Beg!” shouted the old man, with a look of rage—“beg!” he repeated, starting to his feet and seizing his staff—“beg! you shameless and disgraceful strap. Do you talk of a Dalton goin’ out to bee? taka that!”

And as he spoke, he hit her over the arm with a stick he always carried.

“Now that will teach you to talk of beg-gin’. No!—die—die first—die at wanst; but no beggin’ for any one wid the blood of a Dalton in their veins. Death—death—a thousand times sooner!”

“Father—oh! father, father, why, why did you do that?” exclaimed his son, “to strike poor kind an’ heart-broken Peggy, that would shed her blood for you or any of us. Oh! father, I am sorry to see it.”

The sorrowing girl turned pale by the blow, and a few tears came down her cheeks; but she thought not of herself, nor of her sufferings. After the necessary pause caused by the pain, she ran to him, and, throwing her arms about his neck, exclaimed in a gush of sorrow that was perfectly heart-rending to witness—

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“Oh! father dear, forgive me—your own poor Peggy; sure it was chiefly on your account and Mary’s I was goin’ to do it. I won’t go, then, since you don’t wish it; but I’ll die with you.”

The old man flung the stick from him, and clasping her in his arms, he sobbed and wept aloud.

“My darlin’ child,” he exclaimed, “that never yet gave one of us a bad word or angry look—will you forgive your unhappy father, that doesn’t know what he’s doin’! Oh! I feel that this state we’re in—this outher desolation an’ misery we’re in—will drive me mad! but that hasty blow, *avourneen machree*—that hasty blow an’ the hot temper that makes me give it, is my curse yet, has always been my curse, an’ ever will be my curse; it’s that curse that’s upon me now, an’ upon all of us this minute—it is, it is!”

“Condy,” said his wife, “we all know that you’re not as bad as you make yourself. Within the last few years your temper has been sorely tried, and your heart too, God knows; for our trials and our downcome in this world has been great. In all these trials, however, and sufferings, its a consolation to us, that we never neglected to praise an’ worship the Almighty—we are now brought almost to the very last pass—let us go to our knees, then, an’ throw ourselves upon His mercy, and beg of Him to support us, an’ if it’s His holy will, to aid us, and send us relief.”

“Oh, Mary dear,” exclaimed her husband, “but you are the valuable and faithful wife! If ever woman was a protectin’ angel to man, you wor to me. Come children, in the name of the merciful God, let us kneel and pray.”

The bleak and depressing aspect of twilight had now settled down upon the sweltering and deluged country, and the air was warm, thick, moist, and consequently unhealthy. The cabin of the Daltons was placed in a low, damp situation; but fortunately it was approached by a remnant of one of those old roads or causeways which had once been peculiar to the remote parts of the country, and also of very singular structure, the least stone in it being considerably larger than a shilling loaf. This causeway was nearly covered with grass, so that in addition to the antique and desolate appearance which this circumstance gave it, the footsteps of a passenger could scarcely be heard as they fell upon the thick close grass with which its surface was mostly covered.

Along this causeway, then, at the very hour when the Daltons, moved by that piety which is characteristic of our peasantry, had gone to prayer, was the strange woman whom we have already noticed, proceeding with that relief which it may be God in His goodness had ordained should reach them in answer to the simple but trustful spirit of their supplications. On reaching the miserable looking cabin, she paused, listened, and heard their voices blend in those devout tones that always mark the utterance of prayer among the people. They were, in fact, repeating a Rosary, and surely, it is not for those who differ with them in creed, or for any one who feel the influence of true charity, to

quarrel with the form of prayer, when the heart is moved as theirs were, by earnestness and humble piety.

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The strange woman on approaching the door more nearly, stood again for a minute or two, having been struck more forcibly by something which gave a touching and melancholy character to this simple act of domestic worship. She observed, for instance, that their prayers were blended with many sighs, and from time to time, a groan escaped from one of the males, which indicated either deep remorse or a sense of some great misery. One of the female voices, too, was so feeble as scarcely to be heard, yet there ran through it, she felt, a spirit of such tender and lowly resignation, mingled with such an expression of profound sorrow, as almost moved her to tears. The door was open, and the light so dim, that she could not distinctly see their persons —two circumstances which for a moment induced her to try if it were possible to leave the meal there without their knowledge. She determined otherwise, however, and as their prayers were almost immediately concluded, she entered the house. The appearance of a stranger in the dusky gloom carrying a burden, caused them to suppose that it was some poor person coming to ask charity, or permission to stop for the night.

“Who is this?” asked Condy. “Some poor person, I suppose, axin’ charity,” he added. “But God’s will be done, we haven’t it to give this many a long day. Glory be to his name!”

“This is Condy Dalton’s house?” said the strange woman in a tone of inquiry.

“Sich as it is, it’s his house, an’ the best he has, my poor creature. I wish it was betther both for his sake and yours,” he replied, in a calm and resigned voice, for his heart had been touched and solemnized by the act of devotion which had just concluded.

Mrs. Dalton, in the meantime, had thrown a handful of straw on the fire to make a temporary light.

“Here,” said the stranger, “is a present of meal that a’ friend sent you.”

“Meal!” exclaimed Peggy Dalton, with a faint scream of joy; “did you say meal?” she asked.

“I did,” replied the other; “a friend that heard of your present distress, and thinks you don’t desarve it, sent it to you.”

Mrs. Dalton raised the burning straw, and looked for about half a minute into her face, during which the woman carried the meal over and placed it on the hearth.

“I met you to-day, I think,” said Mrs. Dalton, “along with Donnel Dhu’s wife on your way to Darby Skinadre’s?”

“You might,” replied the woman; “for I went there part o’ the road with her.”

“And who are we indebted to for the present?” she asked again.

“I’m not at liberty to say,” replied the other; “barrin’ that it’s from a friend and well-wisher.”

Mrs. Dalton clasped her hands, and looking with an appearance of abstraction, on the straw as it burned in the fire, said in a voice that became infirm by emotion—

“Oh! I know it; it can be no other. The friend that she speaks of is the girl—the blessed girl—whose goodness is in every one’s mouth—*Gra Gal* Sullivan. I know it, I feel it.”

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“Now,” said the woman, “I must go; but before I go, I wish to look on the face of Condy Dalton.”

“There’s a bit of rush on the shelf there,” said Mrs. Dalton to one of her daughters; “bring it over and light it.”

The girl did so, and the strange woman, taking the little taper in her hand, approached Dalton, and looking with a gaze almost fearfully solemn and searching into his face.

“You are Condy Dalton?” she asked.

“I am,” said he.

“Answer me now,” she proceeded, “as if you were in the presence of God at judgment, are you happy?”

Mrs. Dalton, who felt anxious for many reasons, to relieve her unfortunate husband from this unexpected and extraordinary catechist, hastened to reply for him.

“How, honest woman, could a man be happy who is in a state of such destitution, or who has had such misfortunes as he has had;” and as she spoke her eyes filled with tears of compassion for her husband.

“Don’t break it upon me,” said the woman, solemnly, “but let me ax my question, an’ let him give his answer. In God’s name and presence, are you a happy man?”

“I can’t speak a lie to that, for I must yet meet my judge—I am not.”

“You have one particular thought that makes you unhappy.”

“I have one particular thought that makes me unhappy.”

“How long has it made you unhappy?”

“For near two-and-twenty years.”

“That’s enough,” she replied; “God’s hand is in it all—I must now go. I have done what I was axed to do; but there’s a higher will at work. Honest woman,” she added, addressing Mrs. Dalton, “I wish you and your childre good night!”

The moment she went they almost ceased to think of her. The pot still hung on the fire, and little time was lost in preparing a meal of food.

From the moment *Gra Gal* Sullivan’s name was mentioned, the whole family observed that young Con started and appeared to become all at once deeply agitated; he walked

backwards and forwards—sat down—and rose up—applied his hands to his forehead —appeared sometimes flushed, and again pale—and altogether seemed in a state which it was difficult to understand.

“What is the matter with you, Con?” asked his mother, “you seem dreadfully uneasy.”

“I am ill, mother,” he replied—“the fever that was near taking Tom away, is upon me; I feel that I have it by the pains that’s in my head and the small o’ my back.”

“Lie down a little, dear,” she added, “its only the pain, poor boy, of an empty stomach—-lie down on your poor bed, God help you, and when the supper’s ready you’ll be better.”

“It’s her,” he replied—“it’s her—I know it”—and as he uttered the words, touched by her generosity, and the consciousness of his own poverty, he wept bitterly, and then repaired to his miserable bed, where he stretched himself in pain and sorrow.

“Now, Con,” said his wife, in a tone of consolation and encouragement, “will you ever despair of God’s mercy, or doubt his goodness, after what has happened?”

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“I’m an unhappy man, Nancy,” he replied, “but it never went to that with me, thank God —but where is that poor wild boy of ours, Tom,—oh, where is he now, till he gets one meal’s mate?”

“He is up at the Murtaghs,” said his sister, “an’ I had better fetch him home; I think the poor fellow’s almost out of his senses since Peggy Murtagh’s death—that an’ the dregs of the fever has him that he doesn’t know what he’s doin’, God help him.”

CHAPTER XII. — Famine, Death, and Sorrow.

It has never been our disposition, either in the living life we lead, or in the fictions, humble and imperfect as they are, which owe their existence to our imagination, to lay too heavy a hand upon human frailty, any more than it has been to countenance or palliate vice, whether open or hypocritical. Peggy Murtagh, with whose offence and death the reader is already acquainted, was an innocent and affectionate girl, whose heart was full of kind, generous, and amiable feelings. She was very young, and very artless, and loved not wisely but too well; while he who was the author of her sin, was nearly as young and artless as herself, and loved her with a first affection. She was, in fact, one of those gentle, timid, and confiding creatures who suspect not evil in others, and are full of sweetness and kindness to every one. Never did there live—with the exception of her offence—a tenderer daughter, or a more affectionate sister than poor Peggy, and for this reason, the regret was both sincere and general, which was felt for her great misfortune. Poor girl! she was but a short time released from her early sorrows, when her babe followed her, we trust, to a better world, where the tears were wiped from her eyes, and the weary one got rest.

The scene in her father’s house on this melancholy night, was such as few hearts could bear unmoved, as well on account of her parents’ grief, as because it may be looked upon as a truthful exponent both of the destitution of the country, and of the virtues and sympathies of our people.

Stretched upon a clean bed in the only room that was off the kitchen, lay the fair but lifeless form of poor Peggy Murtagh. The bed was, as is usual, hung with white, which was simply festooned about the posts and canopy, and the coverlid was also of the same spotless color, as were the death clothes in which she was laid out. To those who are beautiful—and poor Peggy had possessed that frequently fatal gift—death in its first stage, bestows an expression of mournful tenderness that softens while it solemnizes the heart. In her case there was depicted all the innocence and artlessness that characterized her brief and otherwise spotless life. Over this melancholy sweetness lay a shadow that manifested her early suffering and sorrow, made still more touching by the presence of an expression which was felt by the spectator to have been that of repentance. Her rich auburn hair

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was simply divided on her pale forehead, and it was impossible to contemplate the sorrow and serenity which blended into each other upon her young brow, without feeling that death should disarm us of our resentments, and teach us a lesson of pity and forgiveness to our poor fellow-creatures, who, whatever may have been their errors, will never more offend either God or man. Her extreme youthfulness was touching in the highest degree, and to the simplicity of her beauty was added that unbroken stillness which gives to the lifeless face of youth the only charm that death has to bestow, while it fills the heart I to its utmost depths with the awful conviction that that is the slumber which no human care nor anxious passion shall ever break, The babe, thin and pallid, from the affliction of its young and unfortunate mother, could hardly be looked, upon, in consequence of its position, without tears. They had placed it by her side, but within her arm, so that by this touching arrangement all the brooding tenderness of the mother's love seemed to survive and overcome the power of death itself. There they lay, victims of sin, but emblems of innocence, and where is the heart that shall, in the inhumanity of its justice, dare to follow them out of life, and disturb the peace they now enjoy by the heartless sentence of unforgiveness?

It was, indeed, a melancholy scene. The neighbors having heard of her unexpected death, came to the house, as is customary, to render every assistance in their power to the bereaved old couple, who were now left childless. And here too, might we read the sorrowful impress of the famine and illness which desolated the land. The groups around the poor departed one were marked with such a thin and haggard expression as general destitution always is certain to leave behind it. The skin of those who, with better health and feeding, had been fair and glossy as ivory, was now wan and flaccid; —the long bones of others projected sharply, and as it were offensively to the feelings of the spectators—the over-lapping garments hung loosely about the wasted and feeble person, and there was in the eyes of all a dull and languid motion, as if they turned in their socket by an effort. They were all mostly marked also by what appeared to be a feeling of painful abstraction, which, in fact, was nothing else than that abiding desire for necessary food, which in seasons of famine keeps perpetually gnawing, as they term it, at the heart, and pervades the system by that sleepless solicitation of appetite, which, like the presence of guilt, mingles itself up, while it lasts, with every thought and action of one's life.

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In this instance it may be remembered, that the aid which the poor girl had come to ask from Skinadre was, as she said, ‘for the ould couple,’ who had, indeed, been for a long time past their last meal, a very common thing during such periods, and were consequently without a morsel of food. The appearance of her corpse, however, at the house, an event so unexpected, drove, for the time, all feelings of physical want from their minds; but this is a demand which will not be satisfied, no matter by what moral power or calamity it may be opposed, and the wretched couple were now a proof of it. Their conduct to those who did not understand this, resembled insanity or fatuity more than anything else. The faces of both were ghastly, and filled with a pale, vague expression of what appeared to be horror, or the dull staring stupor, which results from the fearful conflict of two great opposing passions in the mind—passions, which in this case were the indomitable ones of hunger and grief. After dusk, when the candles were lighted, they came into the room where their daughter was laid out, and stood for some time contemplating herself and her infant in silence. Their visages were white and stony as marble, and their eyes, now dead and glassy, were marked by no appearance of distinct consciousness, or the usual expression of reason. They had no sooner appeared, than the sympathies of the assembled neighbors were deeply excited, and there was nothing heard for some minutes, but groans, sobbings, and general grief. Both stood for a short time, and looked with amazement about them. At length, the old man, taking the hand of his wife in his, said—

“Kathleen, what’s this?—what ails me? I want something.”

“You do, Brian—you do. There s Peggy there, and her child, poor thing; see how quiet they are! Oh, how she loved that child! an’ see her darlin’—see how she keeps her arm about it, for fear anything! might happen it, or that any one might take it away from her; but that’s her, all over—she loved everything.”

“Ay,” said the old man, “I know how she loved it; but, somehow, she was ever and always afeard, poor thing, of seemin’ over fond of it before us or before strangers, bekaise you know the poor unhappy—bekaise you know—what was I goin’ to say? Oh, ay, an’ I’ll tell you, although I didn’t let on to her, still I loved the poor little thing myself—-ay, did I. But, ah! Kathleen, wasn’t she the good an’ the lovin’ daughter?” The old woman raised her head, and looked searchingly around the room. She seemed uneasy, and gave a ghastly smile, which it was difficult to understand. She then looked into her husband’s face, after which she turned her eyes upon the countenances of the early dead who lay before her, and going over to them, stooped and looked closely into their still but composed faces, She then put her hand upon her daughter’s forehead, touched her lips with her fingers, carried her hand down along her arm, and felt the pale features of the baby with a look of apparent wonder; and whilst she did this, the old man left the room and passed into the kitchen.

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“For God’s love, an’ take her away,” said a neighboring woman, with tears in her eyes; “no one can stand this.”

“No, no,” exclaimed another, “it’s best to let her have her own will; for until they both shed plenty of tears, they won’t get the betther of the shock her unexpected death gave them.”

“Is it thrue that Tom Dalton’s gone mad, too?” asked another; “for it’s reported he is.”

“No; but they say he’s risin’ the counthry to punish Dick o’ the Grange and Darby Skinadre—the one, he says, for puttin’ his father and themselves out o’ their farm; and the other for bein’ the death, he says, of poor Peggy there and the child; an’ for tak in’, or offerin’ to take, the farm over their heads.”

The old woman then looked around, and, asked—

“Where is Brian? Bring him to me—I want him here. But wait,” she added, “I will find him myself.”

She immediately followed him into the I kitchen, where the poor old man was found searching every part of the house for food.

“What are you looking for, Brian?” asked another of his neighbors.

“Oh,” he replied, “I am dyin’ wid fair hunger—wid fair hunger, an’ I want something to ait;” and as he spoke, a spasm of agony came over his face. “Ah,” he added, “if Alick was livin’ it isn’t this way we’d be, for what can poor Peggy do for us afther her ‘misfortune?’ However, she is a good girl—a good daughter to us, an’ will make a good wife, too, for all that has happened yet; for sure they wor both young and foolish, an’ Tom is to marry her. She is now all we have to depend on, poor thing, an’ it wrings my heart to catch her in lonesome places, cryin’ as if her heart would break; for, poor thing, she’s sorry—sorry for her fault, an’ for the shame an’ sorrow it has brought her to; an’ that’s what makes her pray, too, so often as she does; but God’s good, an’ he’ll forgive her, bekaise she has repented.”

“Brian,” said his wife, “come away till I show you something.”

As she spoke, she led him into the other room.

“There,” she proceeded, “there is our dearest and our best—food—oh, I am hungry, too; but I don’t care for that—sure the mother’s love is stronger than hunger or want either: but there she is, that was wanst our pride and our delight, an’ what is she now? She needn’t cry now, the poor heartbroken child; she needn’t cry now; all her sorrow, and all her shame, and all her sin is over. She’ll hang her head no more, nor her pale cheek won’t get crimson at the sight of any one that knew her before her fall; but for all her sin

in that one act, did her heart ever fail to you or me? Was there ever such love an' care, an' respect, as she paid us? an' we wouldn't tell her that we forgave her; we wor too hardhearted for that, an' too wicked to say that one word that she longed for so much—-oh an' she our only one—but now—daughter of our hearts—now we forgive you when it's too late—for, Brian, there they are! there they lie in their last sleep—the sleep that they will never waken from! an' it's well for them, for they'll waken no more to care an' throuble, and shame! There they lie! see how quiet an' calm they both lie there, the poor broken branch, an' the little withered flower!"

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The old man's search for food in the kitchen had given to the neighbors the first intimation of their actual distress, and in a few minutes it was discovered that there was not a mouthful of anything in the house, nor had they tasted a single morsel since the morning before, when they took a little gruel which their daughter made for them. In a moment, with all possible speed, the poor creatures about them either went or sent for sustenance, and in many a case, almost the last morsel was shared with them, and brought, though scanty and humble, to their immediate assistance. In this respect there is not in the world any people so generous and kind to their fellow-creatures as the Irish, or whose sympathies are so deep and tender, especially in periods of sickness, want, or death. It is not the tear alone they are willing to bestow—oh no—whatever can be done, whatever aid can be given, whatever kindness rendered, or consolation offered, even to the last poor shilling, or, "the very bit out of the mouth," as they say themselves, will be given with a good will, and a sincerity that might in vain be looked for elsewhere. But alas! they know what it is to want this consolation and assistance themselves, and hence their promptitude and anxiety to render them to others. The old man, touched a little by the affecting language of his wife, began to lose the dull stony look we have described, and his eyes turned upon those who were about him with something like meaning, although at that moment it could scarcely be called so.

"Am I dhramin'?" he asked. "Is this a dhrame? What brings the people all about us? Where's Alick from us—an' stay—where's her that I loved best, in spite of her folly? Where's Peggy from me—there's something wrong wid me—and yet she's not here to take care o' me?"

"Brian, dear," said a poor famished-looking woman approaching him, "she's in a betther place, poor thing."

"Go long out o' that," he replied, "and don't put your hands on me. It's Peggy's hands I want to have about me, an' her voice. Where's Peggy's voice, I say? 'Father, forgive me,' she said, 'forgive me, father, or I'll never be happy more;' but I wouldn't forgive her, although my heart did at the same time; still I didn't say the word: bring her here," he added, "tell her I'm ready now to forgive her all; for she, it's she that was the forgivin' creature herself; tell her I'm ready now to forgive her all, an' to give her my blessin' wanst more."

It was utterly impossible to hear this language from the stunned and heart-broken father, and to contemplate the fair and lifeless form of the unhappy young creature as she lay stretched before him in the peaceful stillness of death, without being moved even to tears. There were, indeed, few dry eyes in the house as he spoke.

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“Oh, Brian dear,” said her weeping mother, “we helped ourselves to break her heart, as well as the rest. We wouldn’t forgive her; we wouldn’t say the word, although her heart was breakin’ bekaise we did not. Oh, Peggy,” she commenced in Irish, “oh, our daughter—girl of the one fault! the kind, the affectionate, and the dutiful child, to what corner of the world will your father an’ myself turn now that you’re gone from us? You asked us often an’ often to forgive you, an’ we would not. You said you were sorry, in the sight of God an’ of man, for your fault—that your heart was sore, an’ that you felt our forgiveness would bring you consolation; but we would not. Ould man,” she exclaimed abruptly, turning to her husband, “why didn’t you forgive our only daughter? Why, I say, didn’t you forgive her her one fault—you wicked ould man, why didn’t you forgive her?”

“Oh, Kathleen, I’ll die,” he replied, mournfully, “I’ll die if I don’t get something to ait. Is there no food? Didn’t Peggy go to thry Darby Skinadre, an’ she hoped, she said, that she’d bring us relief; an’ so she went upon our promise to forgive her when she’d come back wid it.”

“I wish, indeed, I had a drop o’ gruel or something myself,” replied his wife, now reminded of her famished state by his words.

At this moment, however, relief, so far as food was concerned, did come. The compassionate neighbors began, one by one, to return each with whatever could be spared from their own necessities, so that in the course of a little time this desolate old couple were supplied with provisions sufficient to meet the demands of a week or fortnight.

It is not our intention to describe, or rather to attempt to describe, the sorrow of Brian Murtagh and his wife, as soon as a moderate meal of food had awakened them, as it were, from the heavy and stupid frenzy into which the shock of their unhappy daughter’s death, joined to the pangs of famine, had thrown them. It may be sufficient to say, that their grief was wild, disconsolate, and hopeless. She was the only daughter they had ever had: and when they looked back upon the gentle and unfortunate girl’s many virtues, and reflected that they had, up to her death, despite her earnest entreaties, withheld from her their pardon for her transgression, they felt, mingled with their affliction at her loss, such an oppressive agony of remorse as no language could describe.

Many of the neighbors now proposed the performance of a ceremony, which is frequently deemed necessary in cases of frailty similar to that of poor Peggy Murtagh: —a ceremony which, in the instance before us, was one of equal pathos and beauty. It consisted of a number of these humble, but pious and well-disposed people joining in what is termed the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, which was an earnest solicitation of mercy, through her intercession with her Son, for the errors, frailties, and sins of the departed; and, indeed, when her youth and beauty, and

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her artlessness and freedom from guile, were taken into consideration, in connection with her unexpected death, it must be admitted that this act of devotion was as affecting as it was mournful and solemn. When they came to the words, “Mother most pure, Mother most chaste, Mother undefiled, Mother most loving, pray for her!”—and again to those, “Morning Star, Health of the Weak, Refuge of Sinners, Comfortress of the Afflicted, pray for her!”—their voices faltered, became broken, and, with scarcely a single exception, they melted into tears. And it was a beautiful thing to witness these miserable and half-famished creatures, shrunk and pinched with hunger and want, laboring, many of them, with incipient illness, and several only just recovered from it, forgetting their own distress and afflictions, and rendering all the aid and consolation in their power to those who stood in more need of it than themselves. When these affecting prayers for the dead had been concluded, a noise was heard at the door, and a voice which in a moment hushed them into silence and awe. The voice was that of him whom the departed girl had loved with such fatal tenderness.

“In the name of God,” exclaimed one of them, “let some of you keep that unfortunate boy out; the sight of him will kill the ould couple.” The woman who spoke, however, had hardly concluded, when Thomas Dalton entered the room, panting, pale, tottering through weakness, and almost frantic with sorrow and remorse. On looking at the unhappy sight before him, he paused and wiped his brow, which was moistened by excitement and over-exertion.

There was now the silence of death in the room so deep, that the shooting of a spark from one of the death-candles was heard by every one present, an incident which, small as it was, deepened the melancholy interest of the moment.

“An’ that’s it,” he at last exclaimed, in a voice which, though weak, quivered with excess of agony—“that’s it, Peggy dear—that’s what your love for me has brought you to! An’ now it’s too late, I can’t help you now, Peggy dear. I can’t bid you hould your, modest face up, as the darlin’ wife of him who loved you betther than all this world besides, but that left you, for all that a stained name an’ a broken heart! Ay! an’ there’s what your love for me brought you to! What can I do now for you, Peggy dear? All my little plans for us both—all that I dreamt of an’ hoped to come to pass, where are they now, Peggy dear? And it wasn’t I, Peggy, it was poverty—oh you know how I loved you!—it was the downcome we got—it was Dick-o’-the-Grange, that oppressed us—that ruined us—that put us out without house or home—it was he, and it was my father—my father that they say has blood on his hand, an’ I don’t doubt it, or he wouldn’t act the part he did—it was he, too that prevented me from doin’ what my heart encouraged me to do for you! O blessed God,” he exclaimed, “what will become of me! when I think of the

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long, sorrowful, implorin' look she used to give me. I'll go mad!—I'll go mad!—I've killed her—I've murdhered her, an' there's no one to take me up an' punish me for it! An' when I was ill, Peggy dear, when I had time to think on my sick bed of all your love and all your sorrow and distress and shame on my account, I thought I'd never see you in time to tell you what I was to do, an' to give consolation to your breakin' heart; but all that's now over; you are gone from me, an' like the lovin' crathur you ever wor, you brought your baby along wid you! An' when I think of it—oh God, when I think of it, before your shame, my heart's delight, how your eye felt proud out of me, an' how it smiled when it rested on me. Oh, little you thought I'd hould back to do you justice—me that you doted on—an' yet it was I that sullied you—I! me! Here," he shouted—"here, is there no one to saize a murdherer!—no one to bring him to justice!"

Those present now gathered about him, and attempted as best they might, to soothe and pacify him; but in vain.

"Oh," he proceeded, "if she was only able to upbraid me—but what am I sayin'—-upbraid! Oh, never, never was her harsh word heard—oh, nothing ever to me but that long look of sorrow—that long look of sorrow, that will either drive me mad, or lave me a broken heart! That's the look that'll always, always be before me, an' that, 'till death's day, will keep me from ever bein' a happy man."

He now became exhausted, and received a drink of water, after which he wildly kissed her lips, and bathed her inanimate face, as well as those of their infant, with tears.

"Now," said he, at length; "now, Peggy dear, listen—so may God never prosper me, if I don't work bitther vengeance on them that along wid myself, was the means of bringin' you to this—Dick-o'-the-Grange, an' Darby Skinadre, for if Darby had given you what you wanted, you might be yet a livin' woman. As for myself, I care not what becomes of me; you are gone, our child is gone, and now I have nothing in this world that I'll ever care for; there's nothing in it that I'll ever love again."

He then turned to leave the room, and was in the act of going out of it, when her father, who had nearly recovered the use of his reason, said:

"Tom Dalton, you are lavin' this house, an' may the curse of that girl's father, broken-hearted as you've left him, go along wid you."

"No," exclaimed his wife, "but may the blessin' of her mother rest upon you for the sake of the love she bore you!"

"You've spoken late, Kathleen Murtagh," he replied; "the curse of the father is on me, an' will folly me; I feel it."

His sister then entered the room to bring him home, whither he accompanied her, scarcely conscious of what he did, and ignorant of the cloud of vengeance which was so soon to break upon his wretched father’s head.

CHAPTER XIII. — Sarah’s Defence of a Murderer.

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Our readers are not, perhaps, in general, aware that a most iniquitous usage prevailed among Middlemen Landlords, whenever the leases under which their property was held were near being expired. Indeed, as a landed proprietor, the middleman's position differed most essentially from that of the man who held his estate in fee. The interest of the latter is one that extends beyond himself and his wants, and is consequently transmitted to his children, and more remote descendants; and on his account he is, or ought to be, bound by the ties of a different and higher character, to see that it shall not pass down to them in an impoverished or mutilated condition. The middleman, on the contrary, feels little or none of this, and very naturally endeavors to sweep from off the property he holds, whilst he holds it, by every means possible, as much as it can yield, knowing that his tenure of it is but temporary and precarious. For this reason, then, it too frequently happened that on finding his tenant's leases near expiring, he resorted to the most unscrupulous and oppressive means to remove from his land those who may have made improvements upon it, in order to let it to other claimants at a rent high in proportion to these very improvements.

Our readers know that this is not an extreme case, but a plain, indisputable fact, which has, unfortunately, been one of the standing grievances of our unhappy country, and one of the great curses attending the vicious and unsettled state of property in Ireland.

Dick-o'-the-Grange's ejectment of Condy Dalton and his family, therefore, had, in the eyes of many of the people, nothing in it so startlingly oppressive as might be supposed. On the contrary, the act was looked upon as much in the character of a matter of right on his part, as one of oppression to them. Long usage had reconciled the peasantry to it, and up to the period of our tale, there had been no one to awaken and direct public feeling against it.

A fortnight had now elapsed since the scene in which young Dalton had poured out his despair and misery over the dead body of Peggy Murtagh, and during that period an incident occurred, which, although by no means akin to the romantic, had produced, nevertheless, a change in the position of Dick-o'-the-Grange himself, without effecting any either in his designs or inclinations. His own leases had expired, so that, in one sense, he stood exactly in the same relation to the head landlord, in which his own tenants did to him. Their leases had dropped about a twelvemonth or more before his, and he now waited until he should take out new ones himself, previous to his proceeding any further in the disposition and readjustment of his property. Such was his position and theirs, with reference to each other, when one morning, about a fortnight or better subsequent to his last appearance, young Dick, accompanied by the Black Prophet, was seen to proceed towards the garden—both

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in close conversation. The Prophet's face was now free from the consequences of young Dalton's violence, but it had actually gained in malignity more than it had lost by the discoloration and disfigurement resulting from the blow. There was a calm, dark grin visible when he smiled, that argued a black and satanic disposition; and whenever the lips of his hard, contracted, and unfeeling mouth expanded by his devilish sneer, a portion of one of his vile side fangs became visible, which gave to his features a most hateful and viper-like aspect. It was the cold, sneering, cowardly face of a man who took delight in evil for its own sake, and who could neither feel happiness himself, nor suffer others to enjoy it.

As they were about to enter the garden Donnel Dhu saw approaching him at a rapid and energetic pace, his daughter Sarah, whose face, now lit up by exercise, as well as by the earnest expression of deep interest which might be read in it, never before appeared so strikingly animated and beautiful.

"Who is this lovely girl approaching us?" asked the young man, whose eyes at once kindled with surprise and admiration.

"That is my daughter," replied Donnel, coldly; "what can she want with me now, and what brought her here?"

"Upon my honor, Donnel, that girl surpasses anything I have seen yet. Why she's perfection—her figure is—is—I haven't words for it—and her face—good heavens! what brilliancy and animation!"

[Illustration: PAGE 834— The Prophet's brow darkened]

The Prophet's brow darkened at his daughter's unseasonable appearance in the presence of a handsome young fellow of property, whose character for gallantry was proverbial in the country.

"Sarah, my good girl," said he, whilst his voice, which at once became low and significant, quivered with suppressed rage—"what brought you here, I ax? Did any one send for you? or is there a matther of life and death on hands, that you tramp afther me in this manner—eh?"

"It may be life an' death for any thing I know to the contrary," she replied; "you are angry at something, I see," she proceeded—"but to save time, I want to spake to you."

"You must wait till I go home, then, for I neither can nor will spake to you now."

"Father, you will—you must," she replied—"and in some private place too. I won't detain you long, for I haven't much to say, and if I don't say it now, it may be too late."

“What the deuce, M’Gowan!” said Dick, “speak, to the young woman—you don’t know but she may have something of importance to say to you.”

She glanced at the speaker, but with a face of such indifference, as if she had scarcely taken cognizance of him, beyond the fact that she found some young man there in conversation with her father.

Donnel, rather to take her from under the libertine gaze of his young friend, walked a couple of hundred yards to the right of the garden, where, under the shadow of some trees that over-hung a neglected fishpond, she opened the purport for her journey after him to the Grange.

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“Now, in the divil’s name,” he asked, “what brought you here?”

“Father,” she replied, “hear me, and do not be angry, for I know—at laste I think—that what I am goin’ to say to you is right.”

“Well, madame, let us hear what you have to say.”

“I will—an’ I must spake plain, too. You know me; that I cannot think one thing and say another.”

“Yes, I know you very well—go on—ay, and so does your unfortunate step-mother.”

“Oh—well!” she replied—“yes, I suppose so—ha! ha!” In a moment, however, her face became softened with deep feeling; “O, father,” she proceeded, “maybe you don’t know me, nor she either; it’s only now I’m beginnin’ to know myself. But listen—I have often observed your countenance, father—I have often marked it well. I can see by you when you are pleased or angry—but that’s aisy; I can tell, too, when the bad spirit is up in you by the pale face but black look that scarcely any one could mistake. I have seen every thing bad, father, in your face—bad temper, hatred, revenge—an’ but seldom any thing good. Father, I’m your daughter, an’ don’t be angry!”

“What, in the devil’s name, are you drivin’ at, you brazen jade?”

“Father, you said this mornin’, before you came out, that you felt your conscience troublin’ you for not discoverin’ the murdher of Sullivan; that you felt sorry for keepin’ it to yourself so long—sorry!—you said you were sorry, father!”

“I did, and I was.”

“Father, I have been thinkin’ of that since; no, father—your words were false; there was no sorrow in your face, nor in your eye,—no, father, nor in your heart. I know that—I feel it. Father, don’t look so: you may bate me, but I’m not afraid.”

“Go home out o’this,” he replied—“be off, and carry your cursed madness and nonsense somewhere else.”

“Father, here I stand—your own child—your only daughter; look me in the face—let your eye look into mine, if you can. I challenge you to it! Now mark my words—you are goin’ to swear a murdher against the head of a poor and distressed family—to swear it—and, father, you know he never murdhered Sullivan!”

The Prophet started and became pale, but he did not accept the challenge.

He looked at her, however, after a struggle to recover his composure, and there she stood firm—erect; her beautiful face animated with earnestness, her eyes glowing with

singular lustre, yet set, and sparkling in the increasing moisture which a word or thought would turn into tears.

“What do you mane, Sarah?” said he, affecting coolness; “What do you mane? I know! Explain yourself.”

“Father, I will. There was a bad spirit in your face and in your heart when you said you were sorry; that you repented for consalin’ the murdher so long; there was, father, a bad spirit in your heart, but no repentance there!”

“An’ did you come all the way from home to tell me this?”

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“No, father, not to tell you what I have said, but, father, dear, what I am goin’ to say; only first answer me. If he did murdher Sullivan, was it in his own defence? was it a cool murdher? a cowardly murdher? because if it was, Condy Dalton is a bad man. But still listen: it’s now near two-an’-twenty years since the deed was done. I know little about religion, father; you know that; but still I have heard that God is willin’ to forgive all men their sins if they repent of them; if they’re sorry for them. Now, father, it’s well known that for many a long year Condy Dalton has been in great sorrow of heart for something or other; can man do more?”

“Go home out o’ this, I say; take yourself away.”

“Oh, who can tell, father, the inward agony and bitther repentance that that sorrowful man’s heart, maybe, has suffered. Who can tell the tears he shed, the groans he groaned, the prayers for mercy he said, maybe, and the worlds he would give to have that man that he killed—only by a hasty blow, maybe—again alive and well! Father, don’t prosecute him; leave the poor heartbroken ould man to God! Don’t you see that God has already taken him an’ his into His hands; hasn’t He punished them a hundred ways for years? Haven’t they been brought down, step by step, from wealth an’ respectability, till they’re now like poor beggars, in the very dust? Oh, think, father, dear father, think of his white hairs; think of his pious wife, that every one respects; think of his good-hearted, kind daughters; think of their poverty, and all they have suffered so long; an’ above all, oh, think, father dear, of what they will suffer if you are the manes of takin’ that sorrowful white-haired ould man out from the middle of his poor, but lovin’ and dacent and respected family, and hangin’ him for an act that he has repented for, maybe, and that we ought to hope the Almighty himself has forgiven him for. Father, I go on my knees to you to beg that you won’t prosecute this ould man; but leave him to God!”

As she uttered the last few sentences, the tears fell in torrents from her cheeks; but when she knelt—which she did—her tears ceased to flow, and she looked up into her father’s face with eyes kindled into an intense expression, and her hands clasped as if her own life and everlasting salvation depended upon his reply.

“Go home, I desire you,” he replied, with a cold sneer, for he had now collected himself, and fell back into his habitual snarl; “Go home, I desire you, or maybe you’d wish to throw yourself in the way of that young profligate that I was spakin’ to when you came up. Who knows, affcher all, but that’s your real design, and neither pity nor compassion for ould Dalton.”

“Am I his daughter?” she replied, whilst she started to her feet, and her dark eyes flashed with disdain: “Can I be his daughter?”

“I hope you don’t mean to cast a slur upon your—.” He paused a moment and started as if a serpent had bitten him; but left the word “mother” unuttered.

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Again she softened, and her eyes filled with tears. “Father, I never had a mother!” she said.

“No,” he replied; “or if you had, her name will never come through my lips.”

She looked at him with wonder for a few moments, after which she turned, and with a face of melancholy and sorrow, proceeded with slow and meditating steps in the direction of their humble cabin.

Her father, who felt considerably startled by some portions of her appeal, though by no means softened, again directed his steps towards the garden gate, where he left young Dick standing. Here he found this worthy young gentleman awaiting his return, and evidently amazed at the interview between him and his daughter; for although he had been at too great a distance to hear their conversation, he could, and did see, by the daughter’s attitudes, that the subject of their conversation was extraordinary, and consequently important.

On approaching him, the Prophet now, with his usual coolness, pulled out the tress which he had, in some manner, got from *Gra Gal* Sullivan, and holding it for a time, placed it in Dick’s hands.

“There’s one proof,” said he, alluding to a previous part of their conversation, “that I wasn’t unsuccessful, and, indeed, I seldom am, when I set about a thing in earnest.”

“But is it possible,” asked the other, “that she actually gave this lovely tress willingly—-you swear that?”

“As Heaven’s above me,” replied the Prophet, “there never was a ringlet sent by woman to man with more love than she sent that. Why, the purty creature actually shed tears, and begged of me to lose no time in givin’ it. You have it now, at all events—an’ only for young Dalton’s outrage, you’d have had it before now.”

“Then there’s no truth in the report that she’s fond of him?”

“Why—ahem—n—no—oh, no—not now—fond of him she was, no doubt; an’ you know it’s never hard to light a half-burned turf, or a candle that was lit before. If they could be got out of the counthry, at all events—these Daltons—it would be so much out of your way, for between, you an’ me, I can tell you that your life won’t be safe when he comes to know that you have put his nose out of joint with the *Gra Gal*.”

“It is strange, however, that she should change so soon!”

“Ah, Master Richard! how little you know of woman, when you say so. They’re a vain, uncertain, selfish crew—women are—there’s no honesty in them, nor I don’t think

there’s a woman alive that could be trusted, if you only give her temptation and opportunity; none of them will stand that.”

“But how do you account for the change in her case, I ask?”

“I’ll tell you that. First and foremost, you’re handsome—remarkably handsome.”

“Come, come, no nonsense, Donnel; get along, will you, ha! ha! ha!—handsome indeed! Never you mind what the world says—well!”

“Why,” replied the other, gravely, “there’s no use in denyin’ it, you know; it’s a matther that tells for itself, an’ that a poor girl with eyes in her head can judge of as a rich one—-at any rate, if you’re not handsome, you’re greatly belied; an’ every one knows that there’s never smoke without fire.”

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“Well, confound you!—since they’ll have it so, I suppose I may as well admit it—I believe I am a handsome dog, and I have reason to know that, that——” here he shook his head and winked knowingly: “Oh, come Donnel, my boy, I can go no further on that subject—ha! ha! ha!”

“There is no dispute about it,” continued Donnel, gravely; “but still I think, that if it was not for the mention made of the dress, an’ grandeur, and state that she was to come to, she’d hardly turn round as she did. Dalton, you know, is the handsomest young fellow, barring yourself, in the parish; an’ troth on your account an’ hers, I wish he was out of it. He’ll be crossin’ you—you may take my word for it—an’ a dangerous enemy he’ll prove—that I know.”

“Why? what do you mean?” Here the prophet, who was artfully trying to fill the heart of his companion with a spirit of jealousy against Dalton, paused for a moment, as if in deep reflection, after which he sighed heavily. “Mane!” he at length replied; “I am unhappy in my mind, an’ I know I ought to do it, an’ yet I’m loth now after sich a length of time. Mane, did you say, Masther Richard?”

“Yes, I said so, and I say so; what do you mean by telling me that young Dalton will be a dangerous enemy to me?”

“An’ so he will; an’ so he would to any one that he or his bore ill-will against. You know there’s blood upon their hands.”

“No, I don’t know any such thing; I believe he was charged with the murder of Mave Sullivan’s uncle, but as the body could not be found, there were no grounds for a prosecution. I don’t, therefore, know that there’s blood upon his hand.”

“Well, then, if you don’t—may God direct! me!” he added, “an’ guide me to the best—if you don’t, Masther Richard—Heaven direct me agin!—will I say it?—could you get that family quietly out of the counthry, Masther Richard? Bekaise if you could, it would be betther, maybe, for all parties.”

“You seem to know something about these Daltons, Mr. M’Gowan?” asked Dick, “and to speak mysteriously of them?”

“Well, then, I do,” he replied; “but! what I have to say, I ought to say it to your father, who is a magistrate.”

The other stared at him with surprise, but said nothing for a minute or two.

“What is this mystery?” he added at length; “I cannot understand you; but it is clear that you mean something extraordinary.”

“God pardon me, Masther Richard, but you are right enough. No; I can’t keep it any longer. Listen to me, sir, for I am goin’ to make a strange and a fearful discovery; I know who it was that murdhered Sullivan; I’m in possession of it for near the last two-an’-twenty years; I have travelled every where; gone to England, to Wales, Scotland, an’ America, but it was all of no use; the knowledge of the murdher! and the murdherer was here,” he laid his! hand upon his heart as he spoke; “an’ durin’ all that time I had peace neither by night nor by day.”

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His companion turned towards him with amazement, and truly his appearance was startling, if not frightful; he looked as it were into vacancy; his eyes had become hollow and full of terror; his complexion assumed the hue of ashes; his voice got weak and unsteady, and his limbs trembled excessively, whilst from every pore the perspiration came out, and ran down his ghastly visage in large drops.

“M’Gowan,” said his companion, “this is a dreadful business. As yet you have said nothing, and from what I see, I advise you to reflect before you proceed further in it. I think I can guess the nature of your secret; but even if you went to my father, he would tell you, that you are not bound to criminate yourself.”

The Prophet, in the mean time, had made an effort to recover himself, which, after a little time, was successful.

“I believe you think,” he added, with a gloomy and a bitter smile, “that it was I who committed the murdher; oh no! if it was, I wouldn’t be apt to hang myself, I think. No! but I must see your father, as a magistrate; an’ I must make the disclosure to him. The man that did murdher Sullivan is livin’, and that man is Condy Dalton. I knew of this, an’ for two-an’-twenty years let that murdherer escape, an’ that is what made me so miserable an’ unhappy. I can prove what I say; an’ I know the very spot where he buried Sullivan’s body, an’ where it’s lyin’ to this very day.”

“In that case, then,” replied the other, “you have only one course to pursue, and that is, to bring Dalton to justice.”

“I know it,” returned the Prophet; “but still I feel that it’s a hard case to be the means of hangin’ a fellow-crature; but of the two choices, rather than bear any longer what I have suffered an’ am still sufferin’, I think it betther to prosecute him.”

“Then go in and see my father at once about it, and a devilish difficult card you’ll have to play with him; for my part, I think he is mad ever since Jemmy Branigan left him. In fact, he knows neither what he is saying or doing without him, especially in some matters; for to tell you the truth,” he added, laughing, “Jemmy, who was so well acquainted with the country and every one in it, took much more of the magistrate on him than ever my father did; and now the old fellow, when left to himself, is nearly helpless in every sense. He knows he has not Jemmy, and he can bear nobody else near him or about him.”

“I will see him, then, before I lave the place; an’ now, Masther Richard, you know what steps you ought to take with regard to *Gra Gal* Sullivan. As she is willin’ herself, of course there is but one way of it.”

“Of course I am aware of that,” said Dick; “but still I feel that it’s devilish queer she should change so soon from Dalton to me.”

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“That’s bekaise you know nothing about women,” replied the Prophet. “Why, Masther Richard, I tell you that a weathercock is constancy itself compared with them. The notion of you an’ your wealth, an’ grandeur, an’ the great state you’re to keep her in—all turned her brain; an’ as a proof of it, there you have a lock of her beautiful hair that she gave me with her own hands. If that won’t satisfy you it’s hard to say what can; but indeed I think you ought to know by this time o’ day how far a handsome face goes with them. Give the divil himself but that, and they’ll take his horns, hooves, and tail into the bargain—ay, will they.”

This observation was accompanied by a grin so sneering and bitter, that his companion, on looking at him, knew not how to account for it, unless by supposing that he must during the course of his life have sustained some serious or irreparable injury at their hands.

“You appear not to like the women, Donnel; how is that?”

“Like them!” he replied, and as he spoke his face, which had been, a little before, ghastly with horror, now became black and venomous; “ha! ha! how is that, you say? oh, no matther now; they’re angels; angels of perdition; their truth is treachery, an’ their —but no matther. I’ll now go in an’ spake to your father on this business; but I forgot to say that I must see *Gra Gal* soon, to let her know our plans; so do you make your mind aisy, and lave the management of the whole thing in my hands.”

CHAPTEE XIV. — A Middleman Magistrate of the Old School, and his Clerk.

Dick-o’-the-Grange—whose name was Henderson—at least such is the name we choose to give him—held his office, as many Irish magistrates have done before him, in his own parlor; that is to say, he sat in an arm-chair at one of the windows, which was thrown open for him, while those who came to seek justice, or, as they termed it, law, at his hands, were compelled to stand uncovered on the outside, no matter whether the weather was stormy or otherwise. We are not now about to pronounce, any opinion upon the constitutional spirit of Dick’s decisions—inasmuch as nineteen out of every twenty of them were come to by the only “Magistrates’ Guide” he ever was acquainted with—to wit, the redoubtable Jemmy Branigan. Jemmy was his clerk, and although he could neither read nor write, yet in cases where his judgments did not give satisfaction, he was both able and willing to set his mark upon the discontented parties m a fashion that did not allow his blessed signature to be easily forgotten. Jemmy, however, as the reader knows, was absent on the morning we are writing about, having actually fulfilled his threat of leaving his master’s service—a threat, by the way, which was held out and acted upon at least once every year since he and the magistrate had stood to each other in the capacity of master and servant. Not that we are precisely correct in the statement we had made on this matter, for sometimes

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his removal was the result of dismissal on the part of his master, and sometimes the following up of the notice which he himself had given him to leave his service. Be this as it may, his temporary absences always involved a trial of strength between the parties, as to which of them should hold out, and put a constraint upon his inclinations the longest; for since the truth must be told of Jemmy, we are bound to say that he could as badly bear to live removed from the society of his master, as the latter could live without him. For many years of his life, he had been threatening to go to America, or to live with a brother that he had in the Isle of White, as he called it, and on several occasions he had taken formal leave of the whole family, (always in the presence of his master, however,) on his departure for either the one place or the other, while his real abode was a snug old garret, where he was attended and kept in food by the family and his fellow-servants, who were highly amused at the outrageous distress of his master, occasioned sometimes by Jemmy's obstinate determination to travel, and sometimes by his extreme brotherly affection.

Donnel, having left his son cracking a long whip which he held in his hand, and looking occasionally at the tress of Mave Sullivan's beautiful hair, approached the hall door, at which he knocked, and on the appearance of a servant, requested to see Mr. Henderson. The man waived his hand towards the space under the window, meaning that he should take his stand there, and added—

"If it's law you want, I'm afeard you'll get more abuse than justice from him now, since Jemmy's gone."

The knowing grin, and the expression of comic sorrow which accompanied the last words, were not lost upon the prophet, who, in common with every one in the neighborhood for a circumference of many miles, was perfectly well aware of the life which master and man both led.

"Is that it?" said the prophet; "however, it can't be helped. Clerk, or no clerk, I want to see him on sarious business, tell him; but I'll wait, of coorse, till he's at leisure."

"Tom," said Henderson from within, "Who's there?—is that him? If it is, tell him, confound him! to come in, and I'll forgive him. If he'll promise to keep a civil tongue in his head, I'll forget all, say. Come in, you old scoundrel, I'm not angry with you; I want to speak to you, at all events."

"It's not him, sir; it's only Donnel M'Gowan, the Black Prophet, that wants some law business."

"Send him to the devil for law business What brings him here now? Tell him he shall have neither law nor justice from me. Did you send to his brother-in-law? May be he's there?"

“We did, sir. Sorra one of his seed, breed, or generation but we sent to. However, it’s no use—off to America he’s gone, or to the Isle o’ White, at any rate.”

“May the devil sink America and the Isle of White both in the ocean, an’ you, too; you scoundrel, and all of you! Only for the cursed crew that’s about me, I’d have him here still—and he the only man that understood my wants and my wishes, and that could keep me comfortable and easy.”

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“Troth, then, he hadn’t an overly civil tongue in his head, sir,” replied the man; “for, when you and he, your honor, were together, there was little harmony to spare between you.”

“That was my own fault, you cur. No servant but himself would have had a day’s patience with me. He never abused me but when I deserved it—did he?”

“No, your honor; I know he didn’t, in troth.”

“You lie, you villain, you know no such thing. Here am I with my sore leg, and no one to dress it for me. Who’s to help me upstairs or downstairs?—who’s to be about me?—or, who cares for me, now that he’s gone? Nobody—not a soul.”

“Doesn’t Masther Richard, sir?”

“No sir; Master Richard gives himself little trouble about me. He has other plots and plans on his hands—other fish to fry—other irons in the fire. Masther Richard, sirra, doesn’t care a curse if I was under the sod to-morrow, but would be glad of it; neither does, any one about me—but he did; and you infernal crew, you have driven him away from me.”

“We, your honor?”

“Yes, all of you; you put me first out of temper by your neglect and your extravagance; then I vented it on him, because he was the only one among you I took any pleasure in abusin’—speaking to. However, my mind’s made up—I’ll call an auction—sell everything—and live in Dublin as well as I can. What does that black hound want?”

“Some law business, sir; but I donna what it is.”

“Is the scoundrel honest, or a rogue?”

“Throth it’s more than I’m able to tell your honor, sir. I don’t know much about him. Some spakes well, and some spakes ill of him—just like his neighbors—ahem!”

“Ay, an’ that’s all you can say of him? but if he was here, I could soon ascertain what stuff he’s made of, and what kind of a hearing he ought to get. However, it doesn’t matter now—I’ll auction everything—in this grange I won’t live; and to be sure but I was a precious-old scoundrel to quarrel with the best servant a man ever had.”

Just at this moment, who should come round from a back passage, carrying a small bundle in his hand, but the object of all his solicitude. He approached quietly on tiptoe, with a look in which might be read a most startling and ludicrous expression of anxiety and repentance.

“How is he?” said he—“how is his poor leg? Oh, thin, blessed saints, but I was the double distilled villain of the airth to leave him as I did to the crew that was about him! The best masther that ever an ould vagabond like me was ongrateful to! How is he, Tom?”

“Why,” replied the other, “if you take my advice, you’ll keep from him at all events. He’s cursin’ an’ abusin’ you ever since you went, and won’t allow one of us even to name you.”

“Troth, an’ it only shows his sense; for I desarved nothing else at his hands. However, if what you say is true, I’m afeared he’s not long for this world, and that his talkin’ sense at last is only the lightening before death, poor gintleman! I can stay no longer from him, any how, let him be as he may; an’ God pardon me for my ongratitude in desartin’ him like a villain as I did.”

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He then walked into the parlor; and as the prophet was beckoned as far as the hall, he had an opportunity of witnessing the interview which took place between this extraordinary pair. Jemmy, before entering, threw aside his bundle and his hat, stripped off his coat, and in a moment presented himself in the usual striped cotton jacket, with sleeves, which he alway's wore. Old Dick was in the act of letting fly an oath at something, when Jemmy, walking in, just as if nothing had happened, exclaimed—

"Why, thin, Mother o' Moses, is it at the ould work I find you? Troth, it's past counsel, past grace wid you—I'm afraid you're too ould to mend. In the manetime, don't stare as if you seen a ghost—only tell us how is that unfortunate leg of yours?"

"Why—eh?—ay,—oh, ah,—you're back are you?—an' what the devil brought you here again?—eh?"

"Come now, keep yourself quiet, you onpenitent ould sinner, or it'll be worse for you. How is your leg?"

"Ah, you provokin' ould rascal—eh?—so you are back?"

"Don't you see I am—who would stick to you like myself, afther all? Troth I missed your dirty tongue, bad as it is—divil a thing but rank pace and quietness I was ever in since I seen you last."

"And devil a scoundrel has had the honesty to give me a single word of abuse to my face since you left me."

"And how often did I tell you that you couldn't depind upon the crew that's around you—the truth's not in them—an' that you ought to know. However, so far as I am concerned, don't fret—Grod knows I forgive you all your folly and *feasthalaga*, (* nonsense,) in hopes always that you'll mend your life in many respects. You had meself before you as an example, though I say it, that ougtn't to say it, but you know you didn't take pattern by me as you ought."

"Shake hands, Jemmy; I'm glad to see you again; you were put to expense since you went."

"No, none; no, I tell you."

"But I say you were."

"There, keep yourself quiet now; no I wasn't; an' if I was, too, what is it to you?"

"Here, put that note in your pocket."

“Sorra bit, now,” replied Jemmy, “to plaise you,” gripping it tightly at the same time as he spoke; “do you want to vex me again?”

“Put it in your pocket, sirra, unless you want me to break your head.”

“Oh, he would,” said Jemmy, looking with a knowing face of terror towards Tom Booth and the Prophet,—“it’s the weight of his cane I’d get, sure enough—but it’s an ould sayin’ an’ a true one, that when the generosity’s in, it must come out. There now, I’ve put it in my pocket for you—an’ I hope you’re satisfied. Devil a sich a tyrant in Europe,” said he, loudly, “when he wishes—an’ yet, after all,” he added, in a low, confidential voice, just loud enough for his master to hear,—“where ’ud one get the like of him? Tom Booth, desire them to fetch warm water to the study, till I dress his poor leg, and make him fit for business.”

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“Here is Donnel Dhu,” replied Booth, “waitin’ for law business.”

“Go to the windy, Donnel,” said Jemmy, with an authoritative air; “go to your ground; but before you do—let me know what you want.”

“I’ll do no such thing,” replied the Prophet; “unless to say, that it’s a matter of life an’ death.”

“Go out,” repeated Jemmy, with brief and determined authority, “an wait till it’s his honor’s convanience, his full convanience, to see you. As dark a rogue, sir,” he continued, having shoved the Prophet outside, and slapped the door in his face; “and as great a schamer as ever put a coat on his back. He’s as big a liar too, when he likes, as ever broke bread; but there’s far more danger in him when he tells the truth, for then you may be sure he has some devil’s design in view.”

Dick-o’-the-Grange, though vulgar and eccentric, was by no means deficient in shrewdness and common sense—neither was he, deliberately, an unjust man; but, like too many in the world, he generally suffered his prejudices and his interests to take the same side. Having had his leg dressed, and been prepared by Jemmy for the business of the day, he took his place, as usual, in the chair of justice, had the window thrown open, and desired the Prophet to state the nature of his business.

The latter told him that the communication must be a private one, as it involved a matter of deep importance, being no less than an affair of life and death.

This startled the magistrate, who, with a kind of awkward embarrassment, ordered, or rather requested Jemmy to withdraw, intimating that he would be sent for, if his advice or opinion should be deemed necessary.

“No matther,” replied Jemmy; “the loss will be your own; for sure I know the nice hand you make of law when you’re left to yourself. Only before I go, mark my words;—there you stand, Donnel Dhu, an’ I’m tellin’ him to be on his guard against you—don’t put trust, plaise your honor, in either his word or his oath—an’ if he’s bringin’ a charge against any one, give it in favor of his enemy, whoever he is. I hard that he was wanst tried for robbery, an’ I only wondher it wasn’t for murdher, too; for in troth and sowl, if ever a man has both one and the other in his face, he has. It’s known to me that he’s seen now and then colloguin’ an’ skulkin’ behind the hedges, about dusk, wid red Rody Duncan, that was in twiste for robbery. Troth it’s birds of a feather wid them—and I wouldn’t be surprised if we were to see them both swing from the same rope yet. So there’s my carrecther of you, you villain,” he added, addressing M’Gowan, at whom he felt deeply indignant, in consequence of his not admitting him to the secret of the communication he was about to make.

Henderson, when left alone with the Prophet, heard the disclosures which the latter made to him, with less surprise than interest. He himself remembered the circumstances perfectly well, and knew that on the occasion of Condy Dalton's former arrest, appearances had been very strong against him. It was then expected that he would have disclosed the particular spot in which the body had been concealed, but as he strenuously persisted in denying any knowledge of it, and, as the body consequently could not be produced, they were obliged of necessity to discharge him, but still under strong suspicions of his guilt.

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The interview between Henderson and M'Gowan was a long one; and the disclosures made were considered of too much importance for the former to act without the co-operation and assistance of another magistrate. He accordingly desired the Prophet to come to him on the following day but one, when he said he would secure the presence of a Major Johnson; who was also in the commission, and by whose warrant old Condy Dalton had been originally arrested on suspicion of the murder. It was recommended that every thing that had transpired between them should be kept strictly secret, lest the murderer, if made acquainted with the charge which was about to be brought home to him, should succeed in escaping from justice. Young Dick, who had been sent for by his father, recommended this, and on those terms they separated.

CHAPTER XV. — A Plot and a Prophecy.

Our readers cannot forget a short dialogue which took place between Charley Hanlon and the strange female, who has already borne some part in the incidents of our story. It occurred on the morning she had been sent to convey the handkerchief which Hanlon had promised to Sarah M'Gowan, in lieu of the Tobacco-Box of which we have so frequently made mention, and which, on that occasion, she expected to have received from Sarah. After having inquired from Hanlon why Donnel Dhu was called the Black Prophet, she asked:

"But could he have anything to do with the murdher?"

To which Hanlon replied, that "he had been thinkin' about that, an' had some talk, this mornin', wid a man that's livin' a long time—indeed, that was born a little above the place, an' he says that the Black Prophet, or M'Gowan, did not come to the neighborhood till afther the murdher."

Now this person was no other than Red Rody Duncan, to whom our friend Jemmy Branigan made such opprobrious allusion in the character of the Black Prophet to Dick-o'-the-Grange. This man, who was generally known by the sobriquet of Red Body, had been for some time looking after the situation of bailiff or driver to Dick-o'-the-Grange; and as Hanlon was supposed to possess a good deal of influence with young Dick, Duncan very properly thought he could not do better than cultivate his acquaintance. This was the circumstance which brought them together at first, and it was something of a dry, mysterious manner which Hanlon observed in this fellow, when talking about the Prophet and his daughter, that caused him to keep up the intimacy between them.

When Donnel Dhu had closed his lengthened conference with Henderson, he turned his steps homewards, and had got half-way through the lawn, when he was met by Red Rody. He had, only a minute or two before, left young Dick, with whom he held another short conversation; and as he met Rody, Dick was still standing within about a hundred

yards of them, cracking his whip with that easy indolence and utter disregard of everything but his pleasures, which chiefly constituted his character.

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“Don’t stand to spake to me here,” said the Prophet; “that young scoundrel will see us. Have you tried Hanlon yet, and will he do? Yes or no?”

“I haven’t tried him, but I’m now on way to do so.”

“Caution!”

“Certainly; I’m no fool, I think. If we can secure him, the business may be managed aisily; that is, provided the two affairs can come off on the same night.”

“Caution, I say again.”

“Certainly; I’m no fool, I hope. Pass on.”

The Prophet and he passed each other very slowly during this brief dialogue; the former, when it was finished, pointing naturally towards the Grange, or young Dick, as if he I had been merely answering a few questions respecting some person about the place that the other was going to see. Having passed the Prophet, he turned to the left, by a back path that led to the garden, where, in fact, Hanlon was generally to be found, and where, upon this occasion, he found him. After a good deal of desultory chat, Rody at last inquired if Hanlon thought there existed any chance of his procuring the post of bailiff.

“I don’t think there is, then, to tell you the truth,” replied Hanlon; “old Jemmy is against you bitterly, an’ Masther Richard’s interest in this business isn’t as strong as his.”

“The blackguard ould villain!” exclaimed Rody; “it will be a good job to give him a dog’s knock some night or other.”

“I don’t see that either,” replied Hanlon; “Ould Jemmy does a power of good in his way; and indeed many an act of kindness the master himself gets credit for that ought to go to Jemmy’s account.”

“But you can give me a lift in the drivership, Charley, if you like.”

“I’m afeard not, so long as Jemmy’s against you.”

“Ay, but couldn’t you thry and twist that ould scoundrel himself in my favor?”

“Well,” replied the other, “there is something in that, and whatever I can do with him, I will, if you’ll thry and do me a favor.”

“Me! Name it, man—name it, and it’s done, if it was only to rob the Grange. Ha! ha! An’ by the way, I dunna what puts robbin’ the Grange into my head!”

And, as he spoke, his eye was bent with an expression of peculiar significance on Hanlon.

“No!” replied Hanlon with indifference; “it is not to rob the Grange. I believe you know something about the man they call the Black Prophet?”

“Donnel Dhu? Why—ahem!—a little—not much. Nobody, indeed, knows or cares much about him. However, like most people, he has his friends and his enemies.”

“Don’t you remember a murdher that was committed here about two-and-twenty-years ago?”

“I do.”

“Was that before or afther the Black Prophet came to live in this counthry?”

“Afther it—afther it. No, no!’” he replied, correcting himself; “I am wrong; it was before he came here.”

“Then he could have had no hand in it?”

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“Him! Is it him! Why, what puts such a thing as that into your head’?”

“Faith, to tell you the truth, Rody, his daughter Sarah an’ myself is beginnin’ to look at one another; an’, to tell you the truth again, I’d wish to know more about the same Prophet before I become his son-in-law, as I have some notion of doin’.”

“I hard indeed that you wor pullin’ a string wid her, an’ now that I think of it, if you give me a lift wid ould Jemmy, I’ll give you one there. The bailiff’s berth is jist the thing for me; not havin’ any family of my own, you see I could have no objection to live in the Grange, as their bailiff always did; but, aren’t you afeard to tackle yourself to that divil’s clip, Sarah?”

“Well, I don’t know,” replied the other; “I grant it’s a hazard, by all accounts.”

“An’ yet” continued Rody, “she’s a favorite with every one; an’ indeed there’s not a more generous or kinder-hearted creature alive this day than she is. I advise you, however, not to let her into your saicrets, for if it was the knockin’ of a man on the head and that she knew it, and was asked about it, out it would go, rather than she’d tell a lie.”

“They say she’s handsomer than *Gra Gal* Sullivan,” said Hanlon; “and I think myself she is.”

“I don’t know; it’s a dead tie between them; however, I can give you a lift with her father, but not with herself, for somehow, she doesn’t like a bone in my skin.”

“She and I made a swop,” proceeded Hanlon, “some time ago, that ’ud take a laugh out o’ you: I gave her a pocket-hand-kerchy; and she was to give me an ould Tobaccy-Box—but she says she can’t find it, altho’ I have sent for it, an’ axed it myself several times. She thinks the step-mother has thrown it away or hid it somewhere.”

Body looked at him inquiringly.

“A Tobaccy-Box,” he exclaimed; “would you like to get it?”

“Why,” replied Hanlon, “the poor girl has nothing else to give, an’ I’d like to have something from her, even if a ring never was to go on us, merely as a keepsake.”

“Well, then,” replied Duncan, with something approaching to solemnity in his voice, “mark my words—you promise to give me a lift for the drivership with old Jemmy and the two Dicks?”

“I do.”

“Well, then, listen: If you will be at the Grey Stone to-morrow night at twelve o’clock—-midnight—I’ll engage that Sarah will give you the box there.”

“Why, in troth, Eody, to tell you the truth if she could give it to me at any other time an’ place, I’d prefer it. That Grey Stone is a wild place to be in at midnight.”

“It is a wild place; still it’s there, an’ nowhere else, that you must get the box. And now that the bargain’s made, do you think it’s thrue that this old Hendherson”—here he looked very cautiously about him—“has as much money as they say he has?”

“I b’lieve he’s very rich.”

“It is thrue that he airs the bank notes in the garden here, and turns the guineas in the sun, for fraid—for fraid—they’d get blue-mowled—is it?”

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“It may, for all I know; but it’s more than I’ve seen yet.”

“An’ now between you and me, Charley—whisper—I say, isn’t it a thousand pities—-nobody could hear us, surely?”

“Nonsense—who could hear us?”

“Well, isn’t it a thousand pities, Charley, avia, that dacent fellows, like you and me, should be as we are, an’ that mad ould villain havin’ his house full ’o money? eh, now?”

“It’s a hard case,” replied Hanlon, “but still we must put up with our lot. His father I’m tould was as poor in the beginnin’ as either of us.”

“Ay, but it’s the son we’re spakin about—the ould tyrannical villain that dhrives an’ harries the poor! He has loads of money in the house, they say—eh?”

“Divil a know myself knows, Rody:—nor—not makin’ you an ill answer—divil a hair myself cares, Rody. Let him have much, or let him have little, that’s your share an’ mine of it.”

“Charley, they say America’s a fine place; talkin’ about money—wid a little money there, they say a man could do wondhers.”

“Who says that?”

“Why Donnel Dhu, for one; an’ he knows, for he was there.”

“I b’lieve that Donnel was many a place;—over half the world, if all’s thrue.”

“Augh! the same Donnel’s a quare fellow—a deep chap—a cute follow; but, I know more about him than you think—ay, do I.”

“Why, what do you know?”

“No matther—a thing or two about the same Donnel; an’ by the same token, a betther fellow never lived—an’ whisper—you’re a strong favorite wid him, that I know, for we wor talkin’ about you. In the meantime I wish to goodness we had a good scud o’ cash among us, an’ we safe an’ snug in America! Now shake hands an’ good bye—an’ mark me—if you dhrame of America an’ a long purse any o’ these nights, come to me an’ I’ll riddle your dhrame for you.”

He then looked Hanlon significantly in the face, wrung his hand, and left him to meditate on the purport of their conversation.

The latter as he went out gazed at him with a good deal of surprise.

“So,” thought he, “you were feelin’ my pulse, were you? I don’t think it’s hard to guess whereabouts you are; however I’ll think of your advice at any rate, an’ see what good may be in it. But, in the name of all that’s wondherful, how does it come to pass that that red ruffian has sich authority over Sarah M’Gowan as to make her fetch me the very thing I want?—that tobacco-box; an’ at sich a place, too, an’ sich an hour! An’ yet he says that she doesn’t like a bone in his skin, which I b’lieve! I’m fairly in the dark here; however time will make it all clear, I hope; an’ for that we must wait.”

He then resumed his employment.

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Donnel Dhu, who was a man of much energy and activity, whenever his purposes required it, instead of turning his steps homewards, directed them to the house of our kind friend Jerry Sullivan, with whose daughter, the innocent and unsuspecting Mave, it was his intention to have another private interview. During the interval that had elapsed since his last journey to the house of this virtuous and hospitable family, the gloom that darkened the face of the country had become awful, and such as wofully bore out to the letter the melancholy truth of his own predictions. Typhus fever had now set in, and was filling the land with fearful and unexampled desolation. Famine, in all cases the source and origin of contagion, had done, and was still doing, its work. The early potato crop, for so far as it had come in, was a pitiable failure; the quantity being small, and the quality watery and bad. The oats, too, and all early grain of that season's growth, were still more deleterious as food, for it had all fermented and become sour, so that the use of it, and of the bad potatoes, too, was the most certain means of propagating the pestilence which was sweeping away the people in such multitudes. Scarcely any thing presented itself to him as he went along that had not some melancholy association with death or its emblems. To all this, however, he paid little or no attention. When a funeral met him, he merely turned back three steps in the direction it went, as was usual; but unless he happened to know the family from which death had selected its victim, he never even took the trouble of inquiring who it was they bore to the grave—a circumstance which strongly proved the utter and heartless selfishness of the man's nature. On arriving at Sullivan's, however, he could not help feeling startled, hard and without sympathy as was his heart, at the wild and emaciated evidences of misery and want which a couple of weeks' severe suffering had impressed upon them. The gentle Mave herself, patient and uncomplaining as she was, had become thin and cheerless; yet of such a character was the sadness that rested upon her, that it only added a mournful and melancholy charm to her beauty—a charm that touched the heart of the beholder at once with love and compassion. As yet there had been no sickness among them; but who could say to-day that he or she might not be stricken down at once before to-morrow.

"Donnel," said Sullivan, after he had taken a seat, "how you came to prophecy what would happen, an' what has happened, is to me a wondher; but sure enough, *fareer gair*, (* bitter misfortune) it has all come to pass."

"I can't tell myself," replied the other, "how I do it; all I know is, that the words come into my mouth, an' I can't help spakin' them. At any rate, that's not surprisin'. I'm the seventh son of the seventh son, afther seven generations; that is I'm the seventh seventh son that was in our family; an' you must know that the knowledge

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increases as they go on. Every seventh son knows more than thim that wint before him till it comes to the last, and he knows more than thim all. There were six seventh sons before me, so that I'm the last; for it was never known since the world began that ever more than seven afther one another had the gift of prophecy in the same family. That's the raison, you see, that I have no sons—the knowledge ends wid me."

"It's very strange," replied Sullivan, "an' not to be accounted for by any one but God—-glory be to his name!"

"It is strange—an' when I find that I'm goin' to foretell any thing that's bad or unlucky, I feel great pain or uneasiness in my mind—but on the other hand, when I am to prophesy what's good, I get quite light-hearted and aisy—I'm all happiness. An' that's the way I feel now, an' has felt for the last day or two."

"I wish to God, Donnel," said Mrs. Sullivan, "that you could prophesize something good for us."

"Or," continued her charitable and benevolent husband, "for the thousands of poor creatures that wants it more still than we do—sure it's thankful to the Almighty we ought to be—an' is, I hope—that this woful sickness hasn't come upon us yet. Even Condy Dalton an' his family—ay, God be praised for givin' me the heart to do it—I can forgive him and them."

"Don't say them, Jerry ahagur," observed his wife, "we never had any bad feelin' against them."

"Well, well," continued the husband, "I can forgive him an' all o' them now—for God help them, they're in a state of most heart-breakin' distitution, livin' only upon the bits that the poor starvin' neighbors is able to crib from their own hungry mouths for them!" And here the tears—the tears that did honor not only to him, but to human nature and his country—rolled slowly down his emaciated cheeks, for the deep distress to which the man that he believed to be the murdherer of his brother had been.

"Indeed, Donnel," said Mrs. Sullivan, "it would be a hard an' uncharitable heart that wouldn't relent if it knew what they are suffering. Young Con is jist risin' out of the faver that was in the family, and it would wring your—"

A glance at Mave occasioned her to pause. The gentle girl, upon whom the Prophet had kept his eye during the whole conversation, had been reflecting, in her wasted but beautiful features, both the delicacy and depth of the sympathy that had been expressed for the unhappy Daltons. Sometimes she became pale as ashes, and again her complexion assumed the subdued hue of the wild rose; for—alas that we must say it—sorrow and suffering—in other words, want, in its almost severest form, had thrown its melancholy hue over the richness of her blush—which, on this occasion, borrowed a

delicate grace from distress itself. Such, indeed, was her beauty, and so gently and serenely did her virtues shine through it, that it mattered not to what condition of calamity they were subjected; in

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every situation they seemed to shed some new and unexpected charm upon the eyes of those who looked upon her. The mother, we said on glancing at her, paused—but the chord of love and sorrow had been touched, and poor Mave, unable any longer to restrain her feelings, burst out into tears, and wept aloud on heading the name and sufferings of her lover. Her father looked at her, and his brow got sad; but there was no longer the darkness of resentment or indignation there; so true is it that suffering chastens the heart into its noblest affections, and purges it of the gloomier and grosser passions.

“Poor Mave,” he exclaimed, “when I let the tears down for the man that has my doother’s blood on his hands, it’s no wonder you, should cry for him you love so well.”

“Oh, dear father,” she exclaimed, throwing herself into his arms, and embracing him tenderly, “I feel no misery nor sorrow now—the words you have spoken have made me happy. All these sufferings will pass away; for it cannot be but God will, sooner or later, reward your piety and goodness. Oh, if I could do anything for—for—for any one,” and she blushed as she spoke; “but I cannot. There is nothing here that I can do at home; but if I could go out and work by the day, I’d do it an’ be happy, in ordher to help the—-that—–family that’s now brought so low, and that’s so much to be pitied!”

We have already said that the Prophet’s eye had been bent upon her ever since he came into the house, but it was with an expression of benignity and affection which, notwithstanding the gloomy character of his countenance, no one could more plausibly or willingly assume.

Mave, in the mean time, could scarcely bear to look upon him; and it was quite clear from her manner that she had, since their last mysterious interview, once more fallen back into those feelings of strong aversion with which she had regarded him at first. M’Gowan saw this, and without much difficulty guessed at the individual who had been instrumental in producing the change.

“God pardon an’ forgive me,” he exclaimed, as if giving unconscious utterance to his I own reflections—“for what I had thoughts of about that darlin’ an’ lovely girl; but sure I’ll make it up to her; an’, indeed, I feel the words of goodness that’s to befall her breakin’ out o’ my lips. *A colleen dhas*, I had some private discoorse wid you when I was here last, an’ will you let me spake a few words to you by ourselves agin?”

“No,” she replied, “I’ll hear nothing from you: I don’t like you—I can’t like you, an’ I I’ll hold no private discoorse with you.”

“Oh, then, but that voice is music itself, an’ you are, by all accounts, the best of girls; I but sure we have all turned over a new leaf, poor child. I discovered how I was taken in an’ dasaved; but sure I can’t ait you—an’ a sweet morsel you’d be, *a lanna dhas*—nor’ can I run away wid you—an’ I seen the day that it’s not my heart would hinder me to do

that same. Oh, my goodness, what a head o' hair! an' talkin' about that—you undherstand—I'd like to have a word or two wid yourself.'

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“Say whatever you have to say before my father and mother, then,” she replied; “I have no—” she paused a moment and seemed embarrassed. The Prophet, who skilfully threw in the allusion to her hair, guessed the words she was on the point of uttering, and availing’ himself of her difficulty, seemed to act as if she had completed what she was about to say.

“I know, dear,” he added, “you have no saicrets from them: I’m glad to hear it, an’ for that raison I’m willin’ to say what I had to say in their presence; so far as I’m concerned, it makes no difference.”

The allusion to her hair; added to the last observations, reminded her that it might be possible that he had some message from her lover, and she consequently seemed to waver a little, as if struggling against her strong, instinctive abhorrence of him.

“Don’t be afeard, Mave dear,” said her mother, “sure, poor honest Donnel wishes you well, an’ won’t prophesize any harm to you. Go with him.”

“Do, achora,” added the father; “Donnel can have nothing to say to you that can have any harm in it—go for a minute or two, since he wishes it.”

Reluctantly, and with an indomitable feeling against the man, she went out, and stood under the shelter of a little elder hedge that adjoined the house.

“Now, tell me,” she asked, quickly, “what is it you have to say to me?”

“I gave young Condy Dalton the purty ringlet of hair you sent him.”

“What did he say?” she inquired.

“Not much,” he replied, “till I tould him it was the last token that ever you could send him afther what your father said to you.”

“Well?”

“Why, he cursed your father, an’ said he desirved to get his neck broke.”

“I don’t believe that,” she replied, “I know he never said them words, or anything like them. Don’t mislead me, but tell me what he did say.”

“Ah! poor Mave,” he replied, “you little know what hot blood runs in the Daltons’ veins. He said very little that was creditable to himself—an’ indeed I won’t repate it—but it was enough to make any girl of spirit have done wid him.”

“An’ don’t you know,” she replied, mournfully, “that I have done with him; an’ that there never can be anything but sorrow and good will between us? Wasn’t that my message to him by yourself?”

“It was, dear, an’ I hope you’re still of the same mind.”

“I am,” she said; “but you are not tellin’ me the truth about him. He never spoke disrespectfully of my father or me.”

“No, indeed, asthore, he did not then—oh, the sorra syllable—oh no; if I said so, don’t believe me.” And yet the very words he uttered, in consequence of the meaning which, they received from his manner, made an impression directly the reverse of their natural import.

“Well then,” she said, “that’s all you have to say to me?”

“No,” he replied, “it is not; I want to know from you when you’ll be goin’ to your uncle’s, at Mullaghmore.”

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“To-morrow,” replied the artless and unsuspicious girl, without a moment’s hesitation.

“Well, then,” said he, “you pass the Grey Stone, at the foot of Mallybenagh—of coorse, I know you must. Now, my dear Mave, I want to show you that I have some insight into futurity. What hour will you pass it at?”

“About three o’clock, as near as I think; it may be a little more or a little less.”

“Very well, acushlee; when you pass the Grey Stone about a few hundred yards on the right hand side, the first person you will meet will be a young man, well made, and very handsome. That young man will be the person, whosoever he is—an’ I don’t know myself—that will bring you love, and wealth, and happiness, and all that a woman can wish to have with a man. Nor, dear, if this doesn’t happen, never b’lieve anything I say again; but if this does happen, I hope you’ll have good sense, *acushla machree*, to be guided by one that’s your true friend—an’ that’s myself. The first person you meet, afther passin’ the Grey Stone, on your right hand side; remember the words. I know there’s great luck an’ high fortune before you; for, indeed, your beauty an’ goodness well desarves it, an’ they’ll get both.”

They then returned into the house; Mave somewhat surprised, but no way relieved, while the Prophet seemed rather in better spirits by the interview.

“Now, Jerry Sullivan,” said he, “an’ you, Bridget his wife, lend your ears an’ listen. The heart of Prophet is full of good to you and yours, and the good must come to his lips, and flow from them when it comes. There are three books known to the wise: the Book of Marriage, the Book of Death, and the Book of Judgment. Open a leaf, says the Angel of Marriage—the Garden Angel of Jericho—where he brings all love, happiness and peace to; open a’ leaf, says the Angel of Marriage—him that has one head and ten horns—and read us a page of futurity from the prophecy of St. Nebbychodanazor, the divine. The child is a faymale child, says the angel with one head and ten horns—by name Mabel Sullivan, daughter to honest Jerry Sullivan and his daicent wife Bridget, of Aughnamurrin. Amin, says the Prophet. Time is not tide, nor is tide time, and neither will wait for man. Three things will happen. A girl, young and handsome, will walk forth upon the highway, and there she will meet a man, young and handsome too, who will rise her to wealth, happiness and grandeur. So be it, says the Book of Marriage, and amin, agin, says the Prophet. Open a new leaf, says Nebbychodanazor, the divine; a new leaf in the Book of Judgment, and another in the Book of Death. A man was killed and his body hid, and a man lived with his blood upon him. Fate is fate, and Justice is near. For years he will keep the murther to himself, till a man’s to come that will bring him to judgment. Then will judgment be passed, and the Book of Death will be opened. Read, says the Prophet; it is done at last; Judgment is passed, and Death follows; the innocent is set free, and the murdherer that consaled the murdher so long swings at last; and all these things is to be found by the Wise in the Books of Marriage, Death,

and Judgment. He then added, as he had done at the conclusion of his former prophecy:

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“Be kind and indulgent to your daughter, for she’ll soon make all your fortunes; an’ take care of her and yourselves till I see yez again.”

As before, he gave them no further opportunity of asking for explanations, but immediately departed; and as if he had been moved by some new impulse or afterthought, he directed his steps once more to the Grange, where he saw young Henderson, with whom he had another private interview, of the purport of which our readers may probably form a tolerably accurate conjecture.

CHAPTER XVI. — Mysterious Disappearance of the Tobacco-box.

M’Gowan’s mind, at this period of our narrative, was busily engaged in arranging his plans—for we need scarcely add here, that whether founded on justice or not, he had more than one ripening. Still there preyed upon him a certain secret anxiety, from which, by no effort, could he succeed in ridding himself. The disappearance of the Tobacco-box kept him so ill at ease and unhappy, that he resolved, on his way home, to make a last effort at finding it out, if it could be done; and many a time did he heartily curse his own stupidity for ever having suffered it to remain in his house or about it, especially when it was so easy to destroy it. His suspicions respecting it most certainly rested upon. Nelly, whom he now began to regard with a feeling of both hatred and alarm. Sarah, he knew, had little sympathy with him; but then he also knew that there existed less in common between her and Nelly. He thought, therefore, that his wisest plan would be to widen the breach of ill-feeling between them more and more, and thus to secure himself, if possible, of Sarah’s co-operation and confidence, if not from affection or good feeling towards himself, at least from ill-will towards her step-mother. For this reason, therefore, as well as for others of equal, if not of more importance, he came to the determination of taking, to a certain extent, Sarah into his confidence, and thus making not only her quickness and activity, but her impetuosity and resentments, useful to his designs. It was pretty late that night, when he reached home; and, as he had devoted the only portion of his time that remained between his arrival and bed-time, to a description of the unsettled state of the country, occasioned by what were properly called the Famine Outrages, that were then beginning to take place, he made no allusion to anything connected with his projects, to either Nelly or his daughter, the latter of whom, by the way, had been out during the greater part of the evening. The next morning, however, he asked her to take a short stroll with him along the river, which she did; and both returned, after having had at least an hour’s conversation—Sarah, with a flushed cheek and indignant eye, and her father, with his brow darkened, and his voice quivering from suppressed resentment; so that, so far as observation went, their interview and communication had not been very agreeable on either side. After breakfast, Sarah put on her cloak and bonnet, and was about to go out, when her father said—

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“Pray, ma’am, where are you goin’ now?”

“It doesn’t signify,” she replied; “but at all events you needn’t ax me, for I won’t tell you.”

“What kind of answer is that to give me? Do you forget that I’m your father?”

“I wish I could; for indeed I am sorry you are.”

“Oh, you know,” observed Nelly, “she was always a dutiful girl—always a quiet good crathur. Why, you onbiddable sthrap, what kind o’ an answer is that to give to your father?”

Ever since their stroll that morning, Sarah’s eyes had been turned from time to time upon her step-mother with flash after flash of burning indignation, and now that she addressed her, she said—

“Woman, you don’t know how I scorn you! Oh, you mane an’ wicked wretch, had you no pride during all your life! It’s but a short time you an’ I will be undher the same roof together—an’ so far as I am consarned, I’ll not stoop ever to bandy abuse or ill tongue with you again. I know only one other person that is worse an’ meaner still than you are—an’ there, I am sorry to say, he stands in the shape of my father.”

She walked out of the cabin with a flushed check, and a step that was full of disdain, and a kind of natural pride that might almost be termed dignity. Both felt rebuked; and Nelly, whose face got blanched and pale at Sarah’s words, now turned upon the Prophet with a scowl.”

“Would it be possible,” said she, “that you’d dare to let out anything to that madcap?”

“Now,” said he, “that the coast is clear, I desire you to answer me a question that I’ll put to you—an’ mark my words—by all that s above us, an’ undher us, an’ about us, if you don’t spake thruth, I’ll be apt to make short work of it.”

“What is it?” she inquired, looking at him with cool and collected resentment, and an eye that was perfectly fearless.

“There was a Tobaccy-Box about this house, or in this house. Do you know anything about it?”

“A tobaccy-box—is it?”

“Ay, a tobaccy-box.”

“Well, an’ what about it? What do you want wid it? An ould, rusty Tobaccy-box; musha, is that what’s throublin’ you this mornin’?”

“Come,” said he darkening, “I’ll have no humbuggin’—answer me at wanst. Do you know anything about it?”

“Is it about your ould, rusty Tobaccy-box? Arrah, what ’ud I know about it? What the sorra would a man like you do wid a Tobaccy-box, that doesn’t ever smoke? Is it mad or ravin’ you are? Somehow I think the stroll you had wid the vagabone gipsy of a daughter of yours, hasn’t put you into the best of timper, or her aither. I hope you didn’t act the villain on me: for she looks at me as if she could ait me widout salt. But, indeed, she’s takin’ on her own hands finely of late; she’s gettin’ too proud to answer me now when I ax her a question.”

“Well, why don’t you ax her as you ought?”

“She was out all yesterday evenin’, and when I said ’You idle sthrap, where wor you?’ she wouldn’t even think it worth her while to give me an answer, the vagabone.”

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“Do you give me one in the manetime. What about the Box I want? Spake the truth, if you regard your health.”

“I know nothing about your box, an’ I wish I could say as much of yourself. However, I won’t long trouble you, that I can tell you—ay, an’ her too. She needn’t fear that I’ll be long undher the same roof wid her. I know, any way, I wouldn’t be safe. She would only stick me in one of her fits, now that she’s able to fight me.”

“Now, Nelly,” said the Prophet, deliberately shutting the door, “I know you to be a hardened woman, that has little fear in your heart. I think you know me, too, to be a hardened and a determined man. There, now, I have shut an’ boulted the door an’ by Him that made me, you’ll never lave this house, nor go out of that door a livin’ woman, unless you tell me all you know about that Tobaccy-Box. Now you know my mind an’ my coorse—act as you like now.”

“Ha, ha, ha! Do you think to frighten me?” she asked, laughing derisively. “Me!—oh, how much you’re mistaken, if you think so! Not that I don’t believe you to be dangerous, an’ a man that one ought to fear; but I have no fear of you.”

“Answer me quickly,” he replied—and as he spoke, he seized the very same knife from which she had so narrowly escaped in her conflict with Sarah—“answer me, I say; an’ mark, I have no reason to wish you alive.”

And as he spoke, the glare in his eyes flashed and became fearful.

“Ah,” said she, “there’s your daughter’s look an’ the same knife, too, that was near doin’ for me wanst. Well, don’t think that it’s fear makes me say what I’m goin’ to say; but that’s the same knife; an’ besides I dhramed last night that I was dressed in a black cloak—an’ a black cloak, they say, is death! Ay, death—an’ I know I’m not fit to die, or to meet judgment, an’ you know that too. Now, then, tell me what it is you want wid the Box.”

[Illustration: PAGE 847— I’ll tell you nothing about it]

“No,” he replied, sternly and imperatively, “I’ll tell you nothing about it; but get it at wanst, before my passion rises higher and deadlier.”

“Well, then, mark me, I’m not afeard of you—but I have the box.”

“An’ how did you come by it?” he asked.

“Sarah was lookin’ for a cobweb to stop the blood where she cut me in our fight the other day, an’ it came tumblin’ out of a cranny in the wall.”

“An’ where is it now?”

“I’ll get it for you,” she replied; “but you must let me out first.”

“Why so?”

“Because it’s not in the house.”

“An’ where is it? Don’t think you’ll escape me.”

“It’s in the thatch o’ the roof.”

The Prophet deliberately opened the door, and catching her by the shoulder, held her prisoner, as it were, until she should make her words good. The roof was but low, and she knew the spot too well to make any mistake about it.

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“Here,” said she, “is the cross I scraped on the stone undher the place.”

She put up her hand as she spoke, and searched the spot—but in vain. There certainly was the cross as she had marked it, and there was the slight excavation under the thatch where it had been; but as for the box itself, all search for it was fruitless—it had disappeared.

CHAPTER XVII. — National Calamity—Sarah in Love and Sorrow.

The astonishment of the Prophet’s wife on discovering that the Tobacco-box had been removed from the place of its concealment was too natural to excite any suspicion of deceit or falsehood on her part, and he himself, although his disappointment was dreadful on finding that it had disappeared, at once perceived that she had been perfectly ignorant of its removal. With his usual distrust and want of confidence, however, he resolved to test her truth a little further, lest by any possibility she might have deceived him.

“Now, Nelly,” said he sternly, “mark me—is this the way you produce the box? You acknowledge that you had it—that you hid it even—an’ now, when I tell you I want it, an’ that it may be a matther of life an’ death to me—you purtend its gone, an’ that you know nothing about it—I say again, mark me well—produce the box!”

“Here,” she replied, chafed and indignant as well at its disappearance as at the obstinacy of his suspicions—“here’s my throat—dash your knife into it, if you like—but as for the box, I tell you, that although I did put it in there, you know as much about it now as I do.”

“Well,” said he, “for wanst I believe you—but mark me still—this box munt be gotten, an’ it’s to you I’ll look for it. That’s all—you know me.”

“Ay,” she replied, “I know you.”

“Eh—what do you mane by that?” he asked—“what do you know? come now; I say, what do you know?”

“That you’re a hardened and a bad man:—oh! you needn’t brandish your knife—nor your eyes needn’t blaze up that way, like your daughter’s,” she added, “except that you’re hard an’ dark, and widout one spark o’ common feelin’, I know nothin’ particularly wicked about you—but, at the same time, I suspect enough.”

“What do you suspect, you hardened vagabond?”

“It doesn’t matther what I suspect,” she answered; “only I think you’d have bad heart for anything—so go about your business, for I want to have nothing more either to do or say to you—an’ I wish to glory I had been always of that way o’ thinkin’, *a chiernah!*—many a scalded heart I’d a missed that I got by you.”

She then walked into the cabin, and the Prophet slowly followed her with his fixed, doubtful and suspicious eye, after which he flung the knife on the threshold, and took his way, in a dark and disappointed mood, towards Glendhu.

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It is impossible for us here to detail the subject matter of his reflections, or to intimate to our readers how far his determination to bring Condy Dalton to justice originated in repentance for having concealed his knowledge of the murder, or in some other less justifiable state of feeling. At this moment, indeed, the family of the Daltons wore in anything but a position to bear the heavy and terrible blow which was about to fail upon them. Our readers cannot forget the pitiable state in which we left them, during that distressing crisis of misery, when the strange woman arrived with the oat-meal, which the kind-hearted Mave Sullivan had so generously sent them. On that melancholy occasion her lover complained of being ill, and, unfortunately, the symptoms were, in this instance, too significant of the malady which followed them. Indeed, it would be an infliction of unnecessary pain to detail here the sufferings which this unhappy family had individually and collectively borne. Young Condy, after a fortnight's prostration from typhus fever, was again upon his legs, tottering about, as his father had been, in a state of such helplessness between want of food on the one hand, and illness on the other, as it is distressing even to contemplate. If, however, the abstract consideration of it, even at a distance, be a matter of such painful retrospect to the mind, what must not the actual endurance of that and worse have been to the thousands upon thousands of families who were obliged, by God's mysterious dispensation, to encounter these calamities in all their almost incredible and hideous reality.

At this precise period, the state of the country was frightful beyond belief; for it is well known that the mortality of the season we are describing was considerably greater than that which even cholera occasioned in its worst and most malignant ravages. Indeed, the latter was not attended by such a tedious and lingering train of miseries as that, which in so many woful shapes, surrounded typhus fever. The appearance of cholera was sudden, and its operations quick, and although, on that account, it was looked upon with tenfold terror, yet for this very reason, the consequences which it produced were by no means so full of affliction and distress, nor presented such strong and pitiable claims on human aid and sympathy as did those of typhus. In the one case, the victim was cut down by a sudden stroke, which occasioned a shock or moral paralysis both to himself and the survivors—especially to the latter—that might, be almost said to neutralize its own inflictions. In the other, the approach was comparatively so slow and gradual, that all the sympathies and afflictions were allowed full and painful time to reach the utmost limits of human suffering, and to endure the wasting series of those struggles and details which long illness, surrounded by destitution and affliction, never fails to inflict. In the cholera, there was no time

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left to feel—the passions were wrenched and stunned by a blow, which was over, one may say, before it could be perceived; while in the wide-spread but more tedious desolation of typhus, the heart was left to brood over the thousand phases of love and misery which the terrible realities of the one, joined to the alarming exaggerations of the other, never failed to present. In cholera, a few hours, and all was over; but in the awful fever which then prevailed, there was the gradual approach—the protracted illness—the long nights of racking pain—day after day of raging torture—and the dark period of uncertainty when the balance of human life hangs in the terrible equilibrium of suspense—all requiring the exhibition of constant attention—of the eye whose affection never sleeps—the ear that is deaf only to every sound but the moan of pain—the touch whose tenderness is felt as a solace, so long as suffering itself is conscious—the pressure of the aching head—the moistening of the parched and burning lips—and the numerous and indescribable offices of love and devotedness, which always encompass, or should encompass, the bed of sickness and of death. There was, we say, all this, and much more than the imagination itself, unaided by a severe acquaintance with the truth, could embody in its gloomiest conceptions.

In fact, Ireland during the season, or rather the year, we are describing, might be compared to one vast lazar-house filled with famine, disease and death. The very skies of Heaven were hung with the black drapery of the grave; for never since, nor within the memory of man before it, did the clouds present shapes of such gloomy and funereal import. Hearses, coffins, long funeral processions, and all the dark emblems of mortality were reflected, as it were, on the sky, from the terrible work of pestilence and famine, which was going forward on the earth beneath them. To all this, the thunder and lightning too, were constantly adding their angry peals, and flashing, as if uttering the indignation of Heaven against our devoted people; and what rendered such fearful manifestations ominous and alarming to the superstitious, was the fact of their occurrence in the evening and at night—circumstances which are always looked upon With unusual terror and dismay.

To any person passing through the country, such a combination of startling and awful appearances was presented as has probably never been witnessed since. Go where you might, every object reminded you of the fearful desolation that was progressing around you. The features of the people were gaunt, their eyes wild and hollow, and their gait feeble and tottering. Pass through the fields, and you were met by little groups bearing home on their shoulders, and that with difficulty, a coffin, or perhaps two of them. The roads were literally black with funerals, and as you passed along from parish to parish, the death-bells were pealing forth, in slow but dismal tones, the gloomy triumph which pestilence was achieving over the face of our devoted country—a country that each successive day filled with darker desolation and deeper mourning.

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Nor was this all. The people had an alarmed and unsettled aspect; and whether you met them as individuals or crowds, they seemed, when closely observed, to labor under some strong and insatiable want that rendered them almost reckless. The number of those who were reduced to mendicancy was incredible, and if it had not been for the extraordinary and unparalleled exertions of the clergy of all creeds, medical, men, and local committees, thousands upon thousands would have perished of disease or hunger on the highways. Many, indeed, did so perish; and it was no unusual sight to meet the father and mother, accompanied by their children, going they knew not whither, and to witness one or other of them lying down on the road side; and well were they off who could succeed in obtaining a sheaf of straw, on which, as a luxury, to lay down their aching head, that was never more to rise from it, until borne, in a parish shell, to a shallow and hasty grave.

Temporary sheds were also erected on the road sides, or near them, containing fever-stricken patients, who had no other-home; and when they were released, at last, from their sorrows, nothing was more common than to place the coffin on the road side also, with a plate on the lid of it, in order to solicit, from those who passed, such aid as they could afford to the sick or starving survivors.

That, indeed, was the trying and melancholy period in which all the lingering traces of self-respect—all recollection of former independence—all sense of modesty was cast to the winds. Under the terrible pressure of the complex destitution which prevailed, everything like shame was forgotten, and it was well known that whole families, who had hitherto been respectable and independent, were precipitated, almost at once, into all the common cant of importunity and clamor during this frightful struggle between life and death. Of the truth of this, the scenes which took place at the public Soup Shops, and other appointed places of relief, afforded melancholy proof. Here were wild crowds, ragged, sickly, and wasted away to skin and bone, struggling for the dole of charity, like so many hungry vultures about the remnant of some carcase which they were tearing, amid noise, and screams, and strife, into very shreds; for, as we have said, all sense of becoming restraint and shame was now abandoned, and the timid girl, or modest mother of a family, or decent farmer, goaded by the same wild and tyrannical cravings, urged their claims with as much turbulent solicitation and outcry, as if they had been trained, since their very infancy, to all the forms of impudent cant and imposture.

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This, our readers will admit, was a most deplorable state of things; but, unfortunately, we cannot limit the truth of our descriptions to the scenes we have just attempted to portray. The misery which prevailed, as it had more than one source, so had it more than one aspect. There were, in the first place, studded over the country, a vast number of strong farmers with bursting granaries and immense haggards, who, without coming under the odious denomination of misers or mealmongers, are in the habit of keeping up their provisions, in large quantities, because they can afford to do so, until a year of scarcity arrives, when they draw upon their stock precisely when famine and prices are both at their highest. In addition to these, there was another still viler class; we mean the hard-hearted and well known misers—men who, at every time, and in every season, prey upon the distress and destitution of the poor, and who can never look upon a promising spring or an abundant harvest, without an inward sense of ingratitude against God for his goodness, or upon a season of drought, or a failing crop, unless with a thankful feeling of devotion for the approaching calamity.

During such periods, and under such circumstances, these men—including those of both classes—and the famished people, in general, live and act under antagonistic principles. Hunger, they say, will break through stone walls, and when we reflect, that in addition to this irresistible stimulus, we may add a spirit of strong prejudice and resentment against these heartless persons, it is not surprising that the starving multitudes should, in the ravening madness of famine, follow up its outrageous impulses, and forget those legal restraints, or moral principles, that protect property under ordinary or different circumstances. It was just at this precise period, therefore, that the people, impelled by hunger and general misery, began to burst out into that excited stupefaction which is, we believe, peculiar to famine riots. And what rendered them still more exasperated than they probably would have been, was the long lines of provision carts which met or intermingled with the funerals on the public thoroughfares, while on their way to the neighboring harbors, for exportation. Such, indeed, was the extraordinary fact! Day after day, vessels laden with Irish provisions, drawn from a population perishing with actual hunger, as well as with the pestilence which it occasioned, were passing out of our ports, while, singular as it may seem, other vessels came in freighted with our own provisions, sent back through the charity of England to our relief.

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It is not our business, any more than it is our inclination, to dwell here upon the state of those sumptuary enactments, which reflected such honor upon the legislative wisdom, that permitted our country to arrive at the lamentable condition we have attempted to describe. We merely mention the facts, and leave to those who possess position and ability, the task of giving to this extraordinary state of things a more effectual attention. Without the least disposition, however, to defend or justify any violation of the laws, we may be permitted to observe, that the very witnessing of such facts as these, by destitute and starving multitudes, was in itself such a temptation to break in upon the provisions thus transmitted, as it was scarcely within the strength of men, furious with famine, to resist. Be this as it may, however, it is our duty as a faithful historian to state, that at the present period of our narrative, the famine riots had begun to assume something of an alarming aspect. Several carts had been attacked and pillaged, some strong farmers had been visited, and two or three misers were obliged to become benevolent with rather a bad grace. At the head of these parties were two persons mentioned in these pages; to wit, Thomas Dalton and Red Eody Duncan, together with several others of various estimation and character; some of them, as might be naturally expected, the most daring and turbulent spirits in the neighborhood.

Such, then, was the miserable state of things in the country at that particular period. The dreadful typhus was now abroad in all his deadly power, accompanied, on this occasion, as he always is among the Irish, by a panic which invested him with tenfold terrors. The moment fever was ascertained, or even supposed to visit a family, that moment the infected persons were avoided by their neighbors and friends, as if they carried death, as they often did, about them; so that its presence occasioned all the usual interchanges of civility and good neighborhood to be discontinued. Nor should this excite our wonder, inasmuch as this terrific scourge, though unquestionably an epidemic, was also ascertained to be dangerously and fatally contagious. None, then, but persons of extraordinary moral strength, or possessing powerful impressions of religious duty, had courage to enter the houses of the sick or dead, for the purpose of rendering to the afflicted those offices of humanity which their circumstances required; if we except only their nearest relatives, or those who lived in the same family.

Having thus endeavored to give what we feel to be but a faint picture of the state of the kingdom at large in this memorable year, we beg our readers to accompany us once more to the cabin of our moody and mysterious friend, the Black Prophet.

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Evening was now tolerably far advanced; Donnel Dhu sat gloomily, as usual, looking into the fire, with no agreeable aspect; while on the opposite side sat Nelly, as silent and nearly as gloomy-looking as himself. Every now and then his black, piercing eye would stray over to her, as if in a state of abstraction, and again with that undetermined kind of significance which made it doubtful whether the subject-matter of his cogitations was connected with her at all or not. In this position were they placed when Sarah entered the cabin, and throwing aside her cloak, seated herself in front of the fire, something about halfway between each. She also appeared moody; and if one could judge by her countenance, felt equally disposed to melancholy or ill-temper.

“Well, madam,” said her father, “I hope it’s no offence to ask you where you have been sportin’ yourself since? I suppose you went to see Charley Hanlon; or, what is betther, his masther, young Dick o’ the Grange?”

“No,” she replied, “I did not. Charley Hanlon! Oh, no!”

“Well, his masther?”

“Don’t vex me—don’t vex me,” she replied, abruptly; “I don’t wish to fight about nothing, or about thrifles, or to give bad answers; but still, don’t vex me, I say.”

“There’s something in the wind now,” observed Nelly; “she’s gettin’ fast into one o’ her tantrums. I know it by her eyes; she’d as soon whale me now as cry; and she’d jist as soon cry as whale me. Oh! my lady, I know you. Here, at any rate, will you have your supper?”

The resentment which had been gathering at Nelly’s coarse observations, disappeared the moment the question as to supper had been put to her.

“Oh! why don’t you,” she said; “and why didn’t you always spake to me in a kind voice?”

“But about young Dick,” said the suspicious prophet; “did you see him since?”

“No,” she replied, calmly and thoughtfully; but, as if catching, by reflection, the base import of the query, she replied, in a loud and piercing voice, rendered at once full and keen by indignation. “No! I say, an’ don’t dare to suspect me of goin’ to Dick o’ the Grange, or any sich profligate.”

“Hollo! there’s a breeze!” After a pause, “You won’t bate us, I hope. Then, madame, where were you?”

Short as was the period that had passed since her reply and the putting of this last question, she had relapsed or fallen into a mood of such complete abstraction, that she heard him not. With her naturally beautiful and taper hand under her still more finely

chiseled chin, she sat looking, in apparent sorrow and perplexity, into the fire, and while so engaged, she sighed deeply two or three times.

“Never mind her, man,” said Nelly; “let her alone, an’ don’t draw an ould house on our heads. She has had a fight with Charley Hanlon, I suppose; maybe he has refused to marry her, if he ever had any notion of it—which I don’t think he had.”

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Sarah rose up and approaching her, said:

“What is that you wor saying? Charley Hanlon!—never name him an’ me together, from this minute out. I like him well enough as an acquaintance, but never name us together as sweethearts—mark my words now. I would go any length to sarve Charley Hanlon, but I care nothin’ for him beyond an acquaintance, although I did like him a little, or I thought I did.”

“Poor Charley!” exclaimed Nelly, “he’ll break his heart. Arra what’ll he do for a piece o’ black crape to get into murnin’? eh—ha! ha! ha!”

“If you had made use of them words to me only yesterday,” she replied, “I’d punish you on the spot; but now, you unfortunate woman, you’re below my anger. Say what you will or what you wish, another quarrel with you I will never have.”

“What does she mane?” said the other, looking fiercely at the Prophet; “I ax you, you traitor, what she manes?”

“Ay, an’ you’ll ax me till you’re hoarse, before you get an answer,” he replied.

“You’re a dark an’ deep villain,” she uttered, while her face became crimson with rage, and the veins of her neck and temples swelled out as if they would burst; “however, I tould you what your fate would be, an’ that Providence was on your bloody trail. Ay did I, and you’ll find it true soon.”

The Prophet rose and rushed at her; but Sarah, with the quickness of lightning, flew between them.

“Don’t be so mane,” she said—“don’t now, father, if you rise your hand to her I’ll never sleep a night undher the roof. Why don’t you separate yourself from her? Oh, no, the man that would rise his hand to sich a woman—to a woman that must have the conscience she has—especially when he could put the salt seas between himself an’ her—is worse and meaner than she is. As for me, I’m lavin’ this house in a day or two, for my mind’s made up that the same roof won’t cover us.”

“The divil go wid you an’ sixpence then,” replied Nelly, disdainfully—“an’ then you’ll want neither money nor company; but before you go, I’d thank you to tell me what has become o’ the ould Tobaccy Box, that you pulled out o’ the wall the other day. I know you were lookin’ for it, an’ I’m sure you got it—there was no one else to take it; so before you go, tell me—unless you wish to get a knife put into me by that dark lookin’ ould father of yours.”

“I know nothing about your ould box, but I wish I did.”

“That’s a lie, you sthrap; you know right well where it is.”

“No,” replied her father, “she does not, when she says she doesn’t. Did you ever know her to tell a lie?”

“Ay—did I—fifty.”

The Prophet rushed at her again, and again did Sarah interpose.

“You vile ould tarmagint,” he exclaimed, “you’re statin’ what you feel to be false when you say so; right well you know that neither you nor I, nor any one else, ever heard a lie from her lips, an’ yet you have the brass to say to the contrary.”

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“Father,” said Sarah, “there’s but one coorse for you; as for me, my mind’s made up—in this house I don’t stay if she does.”

“If you’d think of what I spoke to you about,” he replied, “all would soon be right wid us; but then you’re so unraisonable, an’ full of foolish notions, that it’s hard for me to know what to do, especially as I wish to do all for the best.”

“Well,” rejoined Sarah, “I’ll spake to you again, about it; at this time I’m disturbed and unaisy in my mind; I’m unhappy—unhappy—an’ I hardly knows on what hand to turn. I’m afeared I was born for a hard fate, an’ that the day of my doom isn’t far from me. All, father, is dark before me—my heart is, indeed, low an’ full of sorrow; an’ sometimes I could a’most tear any one that ’ud contradict me. Any way I’m unhappy.”

As she uttered the last words, her father, considerably surprised at the melancholy tenor of her language, looked at her, and perceived that, whilst she spoke, her large black eyes were full of distress, and swam in tears.

“Don’t be a fool, Sarah,” said he, “it’s not a thrifle should make any one cry in sich a world as this. If Charley Hanlon and you has quarrelled, it was only the case with thousands before you. If he won’t marry you, maybe as good or better will; for sure, as the ould proverb says, there’s as good fish in the say as ever was catched. In the mane time think what I said to you, an’ all will be right.”

Sarah looked not at him; but whilst he spoke, she hastily dried her tears, and ere half a minute had passed, her face had assumed a firm and somewhat of an indignant expression. Little, however, did her father then dream of the surprising change which one short day had brought about in her existence, nor of the strong passions which one unhappy interview had awakened in her generous but unregulated heart.

CHAPTER XVIII. — Love Wins the Race from Profligacy.

Donnel Dhu M’Gowan’s reputation as a Prophecy-man arose, in the first instance, as much on account of his mysterious pretensions to a knowledge of the quack prophecies of his day—Pastorini, Kolumbkille, &c, and such stuff—as from any pretensions he claimed to foretell the future. In the course of time, however, by assuming to be a seventh son, he availed himself of the credulity and ignorance of the people, and soon added a pretended insight into futurity to his powers of interpreting Pastorini, and all the catchpenny trash of the kind which then circulated among the people. This imposture, in course of time, produced its effect, Many, it is true, laughed at his impudent assumptions, but on the other hand, hundreds were strongly impressed with a belief in the mysterious and rhapsodical predictions which he was in the habit of uttering. Among the latter class we may reckon simple-hearted Jerry Sullivan and family, all of

whom, Mave herself included, placed the most religious confidence in the oracles he gave

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forth. It was then with considerable agitation and a palpitating heart, that on the day following that of Donnel's visit to her father's she approached the Grey Stone, where, in the words of the prophet, she should meet "the young man who was to bring her love, wealth, and happiness, and all that a woman can wish to have with a man." The agitation she felt, however, was the result of a depression that almost amounted to despair. Her faithful heart was fixed but upon one alone, and she knew that her meeting with any other could not, so far as she was concerned, realize the golden visions of Donnel Dhu. The words, however, could not be misunderstood; the first person she met, on the right hand side of the way, after passing the Grey Stone, was to be the individual; and when we consider her implicit belief in Donnel's prophecy, contrasted with her own impressions and the state of mind in which she approached the place, we may form a tolerably accurate notion of what she must have experienced. On arriving within two hundred yards or so of the spot mentioned, she observed in the distance, about a half mile before her, a gentleman, on horseback, approaching her at rapid speed. Her heart, on perceiving him, literally sank within her, and she felt so weak as to be scarcely able to proceed.

"Oh! what," she at length asked herself, "would I not now give but for one glance of young Condy Dalton! But it is not to be. The unfortunate murdher of my uncle has prevented that for ever; although I can't get myself to believe that any of the Daltons ever did it; but maybe that's because I wish they didn't. The general opinion is, that his father is the man that did it. May the Lord forgive them, whoever they are, that took his life—for it was a black act to me at any rate!"

Across the road, before her, ran one of those little deep valleys, or large ravines, and into this had the horseman disappeared as she closed the soliloquy. He had not, however, at all slackened his pace, but, on the contrary, evidently increased it, as she could hear by the noise of his horse's feet. At this moment she reached the brow of the ravine, and our readers may form some conception of what she felt when, on looking down it she saw her lover, young Dalton, toiling up towards her with feeble and failing steps, while pressing after him from the bottom, came young Henderson, urging his horse with whip and spur. Her heart, which had that moment bounded with delight, now utterly failed her, on perceiving the little chance which the poor young man had of being the first to meet her, and thus fulfill the prophecy. Henderson was gaining upon him at a rapid rate, and must in a few minutes have passed him, had not woman's wit and presence of mind come to her assistance. "If he cannot run up the hill," she said to herself, "I can run to him down it"—and as the thought occurred to her, she started towards him at her greatest speed, which indeed was considerable,

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as her form was of that light and elastic description which betokens great powers of activity and exertion. The struggle indeed was close; Henderson now plied whip and spur with redoubled energy, and the animal was approaching at full speed. Mave, on the other hand, urged by a thousand motives, forgot everything but the necessity of exertion. Dalton was incapable of running a step, and appeared not to know the cause of the contest between the parties. At length Mave, by her singular activity and speed reached her lover, into whose arms she actually ran, just as Henderson had come within about half a dozen yards of the spot where she met him. This effort, on the part of Mave, was in perfect accordance with the simple earnestness of her character; her youthful figure, her innocence of manner, the glow of beauty, and the crowd of blushing graces which the act developed, together with the joyous exultation of her triumph on reaching her lover's arms, and thus securing to herself and him completion of so delightful a prediction—all, when taken in at one view, rendered her being so irresistibly fascinating, that her lover could scarcely look upon the incident as a real one, but for a moment almost persuaded himself that his beloved Mave had undergone some delightful and glorious transformation—such as he had seen her assume in the dreams of his late illness.

Henderson, finding himself disappointed, now pulled up his horse and addressed her:

"Upon my word, Miss Sullivan—I believe," he added, "I have the pleasure of addressing Jeremy Sullivan's daughter—so far famed for her beauty—I say, upon my word, Miss Sullivan, your speed outstrips the wind—those light and beautiful feet of yours scarcely touch the ground—I am certain you must dance delightfully."

Mave again blushed, and immediately extricated herself from her lover's arms, but before she did, she felt his frame trembling with indignation at the liberty Henderson had taken in addressing her at all.

"Dalton," the latter proceeded, unconscious of the passion he was exciting, "I cannot but envy you at all events; I would myself delight to be a winning post under such circumstances."

[Illustration: PAGE 853— His eye, like that of his father, when enraged]

Dalton looked at him, and his eye, like that of his father, when enraged, glared with a deadly light.

"Pass on, sir," he replied; "Mave Sullivan is no girl for the like of you to address. She wishes to have no conversation with you, and she will not."

"I shan't take your word for that, my good friend," replied Henderson, smiling; "she can speak for herself; and will, too, I trust."

“Dear Condy,” whispered Mave, “don’t put yourself in a passion; you are too weak to bear it.”

“Miss Sullivan,” proceeded young Dick, “is a pretty girl, and as such I claim a portion of her attention, and—should she so far favor me—even of her conversation; and that with every respect for your very superior judgment, my good Mr. Dalton.”

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“What is your object, now, in wishin’ to spake to her?” asked the latter, looking him sternly in the face.

“I don’t exactly see that I’m bound to answer your catechism,” said Dick; “it is to Miss Sullivan I would address myself. I speak to you, Miss Sullivan; and, allow me to say, that I feel a very warm interest in your welfare, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to promote it by any means in my power.”

Mave was about to reply, but Dalton anticipated her.

“The only favor you can bestow upon Miss Sullivan, as you are plaised to call her, is to pass her by,” said Dalton; “she wishes to have no intimacy nor conversation of any kind with such a noted profligate. She knows your carrechter, Mr. Henderson; or if she doesn’t, I do—an’ that it’s as much as a daicent girl’s good name is worth to be seen spakin’ to you. Now, I tell you again to pass on. Don’t force either yourself or your conversation upon her, if you’re wise. I’m here to protect her—an’ I won’t see her insulted for nothing.”

“Do you mean that as a threat, my good fellow?”

“If you think it a threat, don’t deserve it, an’ you won’t get it. If right was to take place, our family would have a heavy account to settle with you and yours; and it wouldn’t be wise in you to add this to it.”

“Ha! I see—oh, I understand you, I think—more threatening—eh?”

“As I said before,” replied Dalton, “that’s as you may deserve it. Your cruelty, and injustice, and oppression to our family, we might overlook; but I tell you, that if you become the means of bringin’ a stain—the slightest that ever was breathed—upon the fair name of this girl, it would be a thousand times betther that you never were born.”

“Ah! indeed, Master Dalton! but in the mean time, what does Miss Sullivan herself say? We are anxious to hear your own sentiments on this matter, Miss Sullivan.”

“I would feel obliged to you to pass on, sir,” she replied; “Condy Dalton is ill, and badly able to bear sich a conversation as this.”

“Here,” said Dalton, fiercely, laying his hand upon Mave’s shoulder, “if you cross my path here—or lave but a shadow of a stain, as I said, upon her name, woe betide you!”

“Your wishes are commands to me, Miss Sullivan,” replied Henderson, without noticing Dalton’s denunciation in the slightest degree; “and, I trust that when we meet again, you won’t be guarded by such a terrible bow-wow of a dragon as has now charge of you. Good bye! and accept my best wishes until then.”

He immediately set spurs once more to his horse, and in a few minutes had turned at the cross roads, and taken that which led to his father’s house.

“It was well for him,” said Dalton, immediately after he had left them, “that I hadn’t a loaded pistol in my hand—but no, dear Mave,” he added, checking himself, “the hasty temper and the hasty blow is the fault of our family, an’ so far as I am consarned, I’ll do everything to overcome it.”

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Mave now examined him somewhat more earnestly than she had done; and although grieved at his thin and wasted appearance, yet she could not help being forcibly struck by the singular clearness and manly beauty of his features. And yet this beauty filled her heart with anything but satisfaction; for on contemplating it, she saw that it was over-shadowed by an expression of such settled sorrow and dejection, as it was impossible to look upon without the deepest compassion and sympathy.

“We had betther rest a little, dear Mave,” he said; “you must be fatigued, and so am I. Turn back a little, will you, an’ let us sit upon the Grey Stone; it’s the only thing in the shape of a seat that is now near us. Have you any objection?”

“None in the world,” she replied; “I’ll be time enough at my uncle’s, especially as I don’t intend to come home to-night.”

They accordingly sauntered back, and took their seat upon a ledge of the stone in question, that almost concealed them from observation; after which the dialogue proceeded as follows:

“Condy,” observed Mave, “I was glad to hear that you recovered from the fever; but I’m sorry to see you look so ill: there is a great deal of care in your face.”

“There is, dear Mave; there is,” he replied, with a melancholy smile, “an’ a great deal of care in my heart. You look thin yourself, and careworn too, dear.”

“We are not without our own struggles at home,” she replied, “as, indeed, who is now? But we had more than ourselves to fret for.”

“Who?” he asked; but on putting the question, he saw a look of such tender reproach in her eye as touched him.

“Kind heart!” he exclaimed; “kindest and best of hearts, why should I ax such a question? Surely I ought to know you. I am glad I met you, Mave, for I have many things to say to you, an’ it’s hard to say when I may have an opportunity again.”

“I know that is true,” said she; “but I did not expect to meet you here.”

“Mave,” he proceeded, in a voice filled with melancholy and sadness, “you acknowledged that you loved me.”

She looked at him, and that look moved him to the heart.

“I know you do love me,” he proceeded, “and now, dear Mave, the thought of that fills my heart with sorrow.”

She started slightly, and looked at him again with a good deal of surprise; but on seeing his eyes filled with tears, she also caught the contagion, and asked with deep emotion:

“Why, dear Condy? Why does my love for you make your heart sorrowful?”

“Because I have no hope,” said he—“no hope that ever you can be mine.”

Mave remained silent; for she knew the insurmountable obstacles that prevented their union; but she wept afresh.

“When I saw your father last, behind your garden, the day I struck Donnel Dhu,” Dalton proceeded, “I tould him what I then believed to be true, that my father never had a hand in your uncle’s death. Mave, dear, I cannot tell a lie; nor I will not. I couldn’t say as much to him now; I’m afeard that his death is on my father’s sowl.”

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Mave started and got pale at the words. “Great God!” she exclaimed, “don’t say so, Con dear. Oh, no, no—is it your father that was always so good, an’ so generous to every one that stood in need of it at his hands, an’ who was also so charitable to the poor?”

“Ay,” said he, “he was charitable to the poor; but of late I’ve heard him say things that nobody but a man that has some great crime to answer for could or would say. I believe too that what the public says is right: that it’s the hand of God Himself that’s upon him an’ us for that murdher.”

“But maybe,” said Mave, who still continued pale and trembling; “maybe it was accidentally afther all; a chance blow, maybe; but whatever it was, dear Con, let us spake no more about it. I am not able to listen to it; it would sicken me soon.”

“Very well, dear, we’ll drop it; an’ I hope I’m wrong; for I can’t think, afther all, that a man with such a kind and tendher heart as my father—a pious man, too; could—” he paused a moment, and then added; “oh! no; I’m surely wrong; he never did the act. However, as we said, I’ll drop it; for indeed, dear Mave, I have enough that’s sorrowful and heartbreakin’ to spake about, over and above that unfortunate subject.”

“I hope,” said Mave, “that there’s nothing worse than your own illness; an’ you know, thanks be to the Almighty, you’re recoverin’ fast from that.”

“My poor lovin’ sister Nancy,” said he, “was laid down yesterday morning with this terrible faver; she was our chief dependence; we could stand it out no longer; I could, an’ can do nothing; an’ my mother this mornin’”—His tears fell so fast, and his affliction was so deep, that he was not able, for a time to proceed.

“Oh! what about her?” asked Mave, participating in his grief; “oh! what about her that every one loves?”

“She was obliged to go out this mornin’,” he proceeded, “to beg openly in the face of day among the neighbors! Now, Mave Sullivan, farewell!” said he rising, while his face was crimsoned over with shame; “farewell, Mave Sullivan; all, from this minute, is over between you an’ me. The son of a beggar must never become your husband; will never call you his wife; even if there was no other raison against it.”

The melancholy but lovely girl rose with him; she trembled; she blushed—and again got pale; then blushed once more; at length she spoke:

“An’ is that, dear Con, all that you yet know of Mave Sullivan’s heart, or the love for you that’s in it? Your mother! Oh! an’ is it come to that with her? But—but—do you think that even that, or anything that wouldn’t be a crime in yourself; or, do you think; oh! I know not what to say; I see now, dear Con, the raison for the sorrow that’s in your face;

the heart-break an’ the care that’s there; I see, indeed, how low in spirits an’ how hopeless you are; an’ I see that although your eye is clear still it’s heavy; heavy with hard affliction; but then,

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what is love, Con dear, if it's to fly away when these things come on us? Is it now, then, that you'd expect me to desert you?—to keep cool with you, or to lave you when you have no other heart to go to for any comfort but mine? Oh, no! Con dear. You own Mave Sullivan is none of these. God knows it's little comfort," she proceeded, weeping bitterly; "it's little comfort's in my poor heart for any one; but there's one thing in it, Con, dear; that, poor as I stand here this minute; an' where, oh! where is there or could' there be a poorer girl than I am; still there's one thing in it that I wouldn't exchange for this world's wealth; an' that, that, dear Con, is my love for you! That's the love, dear Con, that neither this world nor its cares, nor its shame, nor its poverty, nor its sorrow, can ever overcome or banish; that's the love that would live with you in wealth; that would keep by your side through good and through evil; that would share your sickness; that would rejoice with you; that would grieve with you; beg with you, starve with you, an', to go where you might, die by your side. I cannot bid you to throw care and sorrow away; but if it's consolation to you to know an' to feel how your own Mave Sullivan loves you, then you have that consolation. Dear Con, I am ready to marry you, an' share your distress tomorrow; ay, this day, or this minute, if it could be done."

There was a gentle, calm, but firm enthusiasm about her manner, which carried immediate conviction with it, and as her tears fell in silence, she bestowed a look upon her lover which fully and tenderly confirmed all that her tongue had uttered.

Both had been standing; but her lover, taking her hand, sat down, as she also did; he then turned around and pressed her to his heart; and their tears in this melancholy embrace of love and sorrow both literally mingled together.

"I would be ungrateful to God, my beloved Mave," he replied, "and unworthy of you—-and, indeed, at best I'm not worthy of you—if I didn't take hope an' courage, when I know that sich a girl Joves me; as it is, I feel my heart aisier, an' my spirits lighter; although, at the same time, dear Mave, I'm very wake, and far from being well."

"That's bekaise this disturbance of your mind is too much for you yet—but keep your spirits up; you don't know," she continued, smiling sweetly through her tears; "what a delightful prophecy was fulfilled for us this day—ay, awhile ago, even when I met you."

"No," he replied, "what was it?" She then detailed the particulars of Donnel Dhu's prediction, which she dwelt upon with a very cheerful spirit, after which she added:

"And now, Con dear, don't you think that's a sign we'll be yet happy?"

Dalton, who placed no reliance whatever on Donnel Dhu's impostures, still felt reluctant to destroy the hope occasioned by such an agreeable illusion. "Well," he replied, "although I don't much believe in anything that ould scoundrel says; I trust, for all that, that he has tould you truth for wanst."

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“But how did you happen to come here, Con?” she asked; “to be here at the very minute, too?”

“Why,” said he, “I was desired to be the first to meet you after you passed the Grey Stone—the very one we’re sittin’ on—if I loved you, an’ wished to sarve you.”

“But who on earth could tell you this?” she asked; “bekaise I thought no livin’ bein’ knew of it but myself and Donnel Dhu.”

“It was Sarah, his daughter,” said Dalton; “but when I asked her why I should come to do so, she wouldn’t tell me—she said if I wished to save you from evil, or at any rate from trouble. That’s a strange girl—his daughter,” he added; “she makes one do whatever she likes.”

“Isn’t she very handsome?” said Mave, with an expression of admiration. “I think she’s without exception, the prettiest girl I ever seen; an’ her beautiful figure beats all; but somehow they say every one’s afraid of her, an’ durstn’t vex her.”

“She examined me well yesterday, at all events,” replied Con. “I thought them broad, black, beautiful eyes of hers would look through me. Many a wager has been laid as to which is the handsomest—you or she; an’ I know hundreds that ’ud give a great deal to see you both beside one another.”

“Indeed, an’ she has it then,” said Mave, “far an’ away, in face, in figure, an’ in everything.”

“I don’t think so,” he replied; “but at any rate not in everything—not in the heart, dear Mave—not in the heart.”

“They say she’s kind hearted, then,” replied Mave.

“They do,” said Con, “an’ I don’t know how it comes; but somehow every one loves her, and every one fears her at the same time. She asked me yestherday if I thought my father murdhered Sullivan.”

“Oh! for God’s sake, don’t talk about it,” said Mave, again getting pale; “I can’t bear to hear it spoken of.”

The Grey Stone—on a low ledge of which, nearly concealed from public view, our lovers had been sitting—was, in point of size, a very large rock of irregular size. After the last words, alluding to the murder, had been uttered, an old man, very neatly but plainly dressed, and bearing a pedlar’s pack, came round from behind a projection of it, and approached them. From his position, it was all but certain that he must have overheard their whole conversation. Mave, on seeing him, blushed deeply, and Dalton himself felt considerably embarrassed at the idea that the stranger had been listening, and become

acquainted with circumstances that were never designed for any other ears but their own.

The old man, on making his appearance, surveyed our lovers from head to foot with a curious and inquisitive eye—a circumstance which, taken in connection with his eaves-dropping, was not at all relished by young Dalton.

“I think you will know us again,” said he in no friendly voice. “How long have you been sittin’ behind the corner there?” he inquired.

“I hope I may know yez agin,” replied the pedlar, for he was one; “I was jist long enough behind the corner to hear some of what you were spakin’ about last.”

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“An’ what was that?” said Dalton, putting him to the test.

“You were talkin’ about the murdher of one Sullivan.”

“We were,” replied Dalton; “but I’ll thank you to say nothing further about it; it’s disagreeable to both of us—distressin’ to both of us.”

“I don’t understand that,” said the old pedlar; “how can it be so to either of you, if you’re not consarned in it one way or other?”

“We are, then,” said Dalton, with warmth; “the man that was killed was this girl’s uncle, and the man that was supposed to take his life is my father. Maybe you understand me now?”

The blood left the cheeks of the old man, who staggered over to the ledge whereon they sat, and placed himself beside them.

“God of Heaven!” said he, with astonishment, “can this be thrue?”

“Now that you know what you do know,” said Dalton, “we’ll thank you to drop the subject.”

“Well, I will,” said he; “but first, for Heaven’s sake, answer me a question or two. What’s your name, avick?”

“Condy Dalton.”

“Ay, Condy Dalton!—the Lord be about us! An’ Sullivan—Sullivan was the name of the man that was murdhered, you say?”

“Yes, Bartley Sullivan—God rest him!”

“An’ whisper—tell me—God presarve us!—was there anything done to your father, avick? What was done to him?”

“Why, he was taken up on suspicion soon afther it happened; but—but—there was nothing done: they had no proof against him, an’ he was let go again.”

“Is your father alive still?”

“He is livin’,” replied Dalton; “but come—pass on, ould man,” he added, bitterly; “I’ll give you no more information.”

“Well, thank you, dear,” said the pedlar; “I ax your pardon for givin’ you pain—an’ the colleen here—ay, you’re a Sullivan, then—an’ a purty but sorrowful lookin’ crature your

are, God knows. Poor things! God pity you both an' grant you a betther fate than what appears to be before you! for I did hear a thrifle of your discoorse."

There was something singularly benevolent and kind in the old pedlar's voice, as he uttered the last words, and he had not gone many perches from the stone, when Dalton's heart relented as he reflected on his harsh and unfriendly demeanor towards him.

"That is a good ould man," he observed, "and I am now sorry that I spoke to him so roughly—there was kindness in his voice and in his eye as he looked upon us."

"There was," replied Mave, "and I think him a good ould man too. I don't think he would harm any one."

"Dear Mave," said Dalton, "I must now get home as soon as I can; I don't feel so well as I was—there is a chill upon me, and I'm afeared I won't have a comfortable night."

"And I can do nothing for you!" added Mave, her eyes filling with tears.

"I didn't thank you for that lock of hair you sent me by Donnel Dhu," he added. "It is here upon my heart, and I needn't say that if anything had happened me, or if anything should happen me, it an' that heart must go to dust together."

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“You are too much cast down,” she replied, her tears flowing fast, “an’ it can’t surely be otherwise; but, dear Con, let us hope for better days—an’ put our trust in God’s goodness.”

“Farewell, dear Mave,” he replied, “an may God bless and presarve you till I see you again!”

“An’ may He send down aid to you all,” she added, “an’ give consolation to your breakin’ hearts!”

An embrace, long, tender, and mournful, accompanied their words, after which they separated in sorrow and in tears, and with but little hope of happiness on the path of life that lay before them.

CHAPTER XIX. — Hanlon Secures the Tobacco-box.—Strange Scene at Midnight.

The hour so mysteriously appointed by Red Rody for the delivery of the Tobacco-box to Hanlon, was fast approaching, and the night though by no means so stormy as that which we have described on the occasion of that person’s first visit to the Grey Stone, was nevertheless dark and rainy, with an occasional slight gust of wind, that uttered a dreary and melancholy moan, as it swept over the hedges. Hanlon, whose fear of supernatural appearances had not been diminished by what he had heard there before as well as on his way home, now felt alarmed at every gust of wind that went past him. He hurried on, however, and kept his nerves as firmly set as his terrors would allow him, until he got upon the plain old road which led directly to the appointed place. The remarkable interest which he had felt at an earlier stage of the circumstances that compose our narrative, was beginning to cool a little, when it was revived by his recent conversation with Red Rody concerning the Black Prophet, and the palpable contradictions in which he detected that person, with reference to the period when the Prophet came to reside in the neighborhood. His anxiety therefore, about the Tobacco-box began, as he approached the Grey Stone, to balance his fears; so that by the time he arrived there, he found himself cooler and firmer a good deal than when he first crossed the dark fields from home. Hanlon, in fact, had learned a good deal of the Prophet’s real character, from several of those who had never been duped by his impostures; and the fact of ascertaining that the very article so essential to the completion of his purpose, had been found in the Prophet’s house or possession, gave a fresh and still more powerful impulse to his determinations. The night, we have already observed, was dark, and the heavy gloom which covered the sky was dismal and monotonous. Several flashes of lightning, it is true, had shot out from the impervious masses of black clouds, that lay against each other overhead. These, however, only added terror to the depression which such a night and such a sky were calculated to occasion.

“I trust,” thought Hanlon, as he approached the stone, “that there will be no disappointment, and that I won’t have my journey on sich a dark and dismal night for nothing. How this red ruffian can have any authority over a girl like Sarah, is a puzzle that I can’t make out.”

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It was just as these thoughts occurred to him that he arrived at the Stone, where he stood anxiously waiting and listening, and repeating his pater noster, as well as he could, for several minutes, but without hearing or seeing any one.

“I might have known,” thought he, “that the rascal could bring about nothing of the kind, an’ I am only a fool for heedin’ him at all.”

At this moment, however, he heard the noise of a light, quick footstep approaching, and almost immediately afterwards Sarah joined him.

“Well, I am glad you are come,” said he, “for God knows when I thought of our last stand here, I was anything but comfortable.”

“Why,” replied Sarah, “what wor you afeard of? I hate a cowardly man, an’ you are cowardly.”

“Not where mere flesh and blood is consarned,” he replied; “I’m afeard of neither man nor woman—but I wouldn’t like to meet a ghost or spirit, may the Lord presarve us!”

“Why, now? What harm could a ghost or spirit do you? Did you ever hear that they laid hands on or killed any one?”

“No; but for all that, it’s well known that several persons have died of fright, in consequence.”

“Ay, of cowardliness; but it wasn’t the ghost killed them. Sure the poor ghost only comes to get relief for itself—to have masses said; or, maybe, to do justice to some one that is wronged in this world. There’s Jimmy Beatty, an’ he lay three weeks of fright from seein’ a ghost, an’ it turned out when all was known, that the ghost was nothing more or less than Tom Martin’s white-faced cow—ha! ha! ha!”

“At any rate, let us change the subject,” said Hanlon; “you heard yourself the last night we wor here, what I’ll never forget.”

“We heard some noise like a groan, an’ that was all; but who could tell what it was, or who cares either?”

“I, for one, do; but, dear Sarah, have you the box?”

“Why does your voice tremble that way for? Is it fear? bekaise if I thought it was, I wouldn’t scruple much to walk home with’ out another word, an’ bring the box with me.”

“You have it, then?”

“To be sure I have, an’ my father an’ Nelly is both huntin’ the house for it.”

“Why, what could your father want with it?”

“How can I tell?—an’ only that I promised it to you, I wouldn’t fetch it at all?”

“I thought you had given it up for lost; how did you get it again?”

“That’s nothing to you, an’ don’t trouble your head about it. There it is now, an’ I have kept my word; for while I live, I’ll never break it if I can. Dear me, how bright that flash was!”

As Hanlon was taking the box out of her hand, a fearful flash of sheeted lightning opened out of a cloud almost immediately above them, and discovered it so plainly, that the letters P. M. were distinctly legible on the lid of it, and nearly at the same moment a deep groan was heard, as if coming-out of the rock.

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“Father of Heaven!” exclaimed Hanlon, “do you hear that?”

“Yes,” she replied, “I did hear a groan; but here, do you go—oh, it would be useless to ask you—so I must only do it myself; stand here an’ I’ll go round the rock; at any rate let us be sure that it is a ghost.”

“Don’t, Sarah,” he exclaimed, seizing her arm; “for God’s sake, don’t—it is a spirit—I know it—don’t lave me. I understand it all, an’ maybe you will some day, too.”

“Now,” she exclaimed indignantly, and in an incredulous voice; “in God’s name, what has a spirit to do with an old rusty Tobaccy-box? It’s surely a curious box; there’s my father would give one of his eyes to find it; an’ Nelly, that hid it the other day, found it gone when she went to get it for him.”

“Do you toll me so?” said Hanlon, placing it as he spoke in his safest pocket.

“I do,” she replied; “an’ only that I promised it to you, and would not break my word, I’d give it to my father; but I don’t see myself what use it can be of to him or anybody.”

Hanlon, despite of his terrors, heard this intelligence with the deepest interest—indeed, with an interest so deep, that he almost forgot them altogether; and with a view of eliciting from her as much information in connection with it as he could, he asked her to accompany him a part of the way home.

“It’s not quite the thing,” she replied, “for a girl like me to be walkin’ with a young fellow at this hour; but as I’m not afeard of you, and as I know you are afeard of the ghost—if there is a ghost—I will go part of the way with you, although it does not say much for your courage to ask me.”

“Thank you, Sarah; you are a perfect treasure.”

“Whatever I was, or whatever I am, Charley, I can never be anything more to you than a mere acquaintance—I don’t think ever we were much more—but what I want to tell you is, that if ever you have any serious notion of me, you must put it out of your head.”

“Why so, Sarah?”

“Why so,” she replied, hastily; “why, bekaise I don’t wish it—isn’t that enough for you, if you have spirit?”

“Well, but I’d like to know why you changed your mind.”

“Ah,” said she; “well, afther all, that’s only natural—it is but raisonable; an’ I’ll tell you; in the first place, there’s a want of manliness about you that I don’t like—I think you’ve but little heart or feelin’. You toy with the girls—with this one and that one—an’ you don’t

appear to love any one of them—in short, you're not affectionate, I'm afeard. Now, here am I, an' I can scarcely say, that ever you courted me like a man that had feelin'. I think you're revengeful, too; for I have seen you look black an' angry at a woman, before now. You never loved me, I know—I say I know you did not. There, then, is some of my raisons—but I'll tell you one more, that's worth them all. I love another now—ay," she added, with a convulsive sigh, "I love another; and, I know, Charley, that he can't love me—there's more lightnin'—what a flash! Oh, I didn't care this minute if it went through my heart."

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“Don’t talk so, Sarah.”

“I know what’s before me—disappointment—disappointment in everything—the people say I’m wild and very wicked in my temper—an’ I am, too; but how could I be otherwise? for what did I ever see or hear undher our own miserable roof, but evil talk and evil deeds? A word of kindness I never got from my father or from Nelly; nothing but the bad word an’ the hard blow—until now that she is afeard of me; but little she knew, that many a time when I was fiercest, an’ threatened to put a knife into her, there was a quiver of affection in my heart; a yearnin’, I may say, afther kindness, that had me often near throwin’ my arms about her neck, and askin’ her why she mightn’t as well be kind as cruel to me; but I couldn’t, bekaise I knew that if I did, she’d only tramp on me, an’ despise me, an’ tyrannize over me more and more.”

She uttered these sentiments under the influence of deep feeling, checkered with an occasional burst of wild distraction, that seemed to originate from much bitterness of heart.

“Is it a fair question,” replied Hanlon, whose character she had altogether misunderstood, having, in point of fact, never had an opportunity of viewing it in it’s natural light; “is it a fair question to ask you who is it that you’re in love wid?”

“It’s not a fair question,” she replied; “I know he loves another, an’ for that raison I’ll never breathe it to a mortal.”

“Bekaise,” he added, “if I knew, maybe I might be able to put in a good word for you, now and then, accordin’ as I got an opportunity.”

“For me!” she replied indignantly; “what! to beg him get fond o’ me! Oh, its wondherful the maneness that’s in a’most every one you meet. No,” she proceeded, vehemently; “if he was a king on his throne, sooner than stoop to that, or if he didn’t, or couldn’t love me on my own account, I’d let the last drop o’ my heart’s blood out first. Oh, no!—no, no, no—ha! He loves another,” she added, hastily; “he loves another!”

“An’ do you know her?” asked Hanlon.

“Do I know her!” she replied; “do I know her! it’s I that do; ay, an’ I have her in my power, too; an’ if I set about it, can prevent a ring from ever goin’ on them. Ha! ha! Oh, ay; that divil, Sarah M’Gowan, what a fine character I have got! Well, well, good night, Charley! Maybe it’s a folly to have the bad name for nothin’; at laist they say so. Ha! ha! Good-night; I’ll go home. Oh, I had like to forgot; Red Body tould me he was spakin’ to you about something that he says you can’t but understhand yourself; and he desired me to get you, if I could, to join him in it. I said I would, if it was right an’ honest; for I have great doubts of it bein’ either the one or the other, if it comes from him. He said that it was both; but that it ’ud be a great piece of roguery to have it undone. Now, if it is what

he says it is, help him in it, if you can; but if it isn't, have no hand in it. That's all I tould him I would say, an' that's all I do say. Keep out of his saicrets I advise you; an', above all things, avoid everything mane an' dishonest; for, Charley, I have a kind o' likin' for you that I can't explain, although I don't love you as a sweetheart. Good-night again!"

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She left him abruptly, and at a rapid pace proceeded back to the Grey Stone, around which she walked, with a view of examining whether or not there might be any cause visible, earthly or otherwise, for the groans which they had heard; but notwithstanding a close and diligent search, she could neither see nor hear anything whatsoever to which they might possibly be ascribed.

She reached home about one o'clock, and after having sat musing for a time over the fire, which was raked for the night—that is, covered over with greeshaugh, or living ashes—she was preparing to sleep in her humble bed, behind a little partition wall about five feet high, at the lower end of the cabin, when her father, who had been moaning, and staring, and uttering abrupt exclamations in his sleep, at length rose up, and began deliberately to dress himself, as if with an intention of going out.

"Father," said she, "in the name of goodness, where are you goin' at this time o' the night?"

"I'm goin' to the murdhered man's grave," he replied, "I'm goin' to toll them all how he was murdhered, an' who it was that murdhered him."

A girl with nerves less firm would have felt a most deadly terror at such language, on perceiving, as Sarah at once did, that her father, whose eyes were shut, was fast asleep at the time. In her, however, it only produced such a high degree of excitement and interest, as might be expected from one of her ardent and excitable temperament, imbued as it was with a good deal of natural romance.

"In God's name," she said to herself, "what can this mean? Of late he hasn't had one hour's quiet rest at night; nothin' but startin' and shoutin' out, an' talkin' about murdher an' murdherers! What can it mane? for he's now walkin' in his sleep? Father," said she, "you're asleep; go back to bed, you had betther."

"No, I'm not asleep," he replied; "I'm goin' down to the grave here below, behind the rocks down in Glendhu, where the murdhered man is lyin' buried."

"An' what brings you there at this time o' the night?"

"Ha! ha!" he replied, uttering an exclamation of caution in a low, guarded voice—"what brings me?—whisht, hould your tongue, an' I'll tell you."

She really began to doubt her senses, notwithstanding the fact of his eyes being shut.

"Whisht yourself," she replied; "I don't want to hear anything about it; I have no relish for sich saicrets. I'm ready enough with my own hand, especially when there's a weapon in it—readier then ever I'll be again; but for all that I don't wish to hear sich saicrets. Are you asleep or awake?"

“I’m awake, of coorse,” he replied.

“An’ why are your eyes shut then? You’re frightful, father, to look at; no corpse ever had sich a face as you have; your heavy brows are knit in sich a way; jist as if you were in agony; your cheeks are so white too, an’ your mouth is down at the corners, that a ghost —ay, the ghost of the murdhered man himself—would be agreeable compared to you. Go to bed, father, if you’re awake.”

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To all this he made no reply, but having dressed himself, he deliberately, and with great caution, raised the latch, and proceeded out at that dismal and lonely hour. Sarah, for a time, knew not how to act. She had often heard of sleep-walking, and she feared now, that if she awakened him, he might imagine that she had heard matters which he wished no ears whatever to hear; for the truth was, that some vague suspicions of a dreadful nature had lately entered her mind; suspicions, which his broken slumbers—his starts, and frequent exclamations during sleep, had only tended to confirm.

“I will watch him at all events,” said she to herself, “and see that he comes to no ganger.” She accordingly shut the door after her, and followed him pretty closely into the deep gloom of the silent and solitary glen. With cautious, but steady and unerring steps, he proceeded in the direction of the loneliest spot of it, which having reached, he went by a narrow and untrodden circuit—a kind of broken, but natural pathway—to the identical spot where the body, which Nelly had discovered, lay.

He then raised his hand, as if in caution, and whispered—“Whisht! here is where the murdhered man’s body lies.”

“I’ll not do it,” said Sarah, “I’ll not do it; it would be mane and ungenerous to ax him a question that might make him betray himself.”

At this moment the moon which had been for some time risen, presented a strange and alarming aspect. She seemed red as blood; and directly across her centre there went a black bar—a bar so ominously and intensely black, that it was impossible to look upon it without experiencing something like what one might be supposed to feel in the presence of a supernatural appearance; at the performance of some magic or unnatural rite, where the sorcerer, by the wickedness of his spell, forced her, as it were, thus to lend a dreadful and reluctant sanction to his proceedings.

Her father, however, proceeded: “Ay—who murdhered him, my lord? Why, my lord—-hem—it was—Condy Dalton, an’ I have another man to prove it along wid myself—one Rody Duncan; now Rody answer strong; swear home; mind yourself, Rody.”

These words were spoken aside, precisely as one would address them when instructing any person to give a particular line of evidence. He then stooped down, and placed his hand upon the grave said, as if he were addressing the dead man:

“Ha! you sleep cool there, you guilty Villain! an’ it wasn’t my fault that the unfaithful an’ dishonest sthrap that you got that for, didn’t get as much herself. There you are, an’ you’ll tell no tales at all events! You know, Rody,” he proceeded, “it was Dalton that murdhered him; mind that—but you’re a coward at heart; as for myself there’s nothing troubles me but that Tobaccy-Box; but you know nothing about that; may the divil confound me, at any rate, for not destroyin’ it! an’ that ould sthrap, Nelly, suspects

something; for she’s always ringin Providence into my ears; but if I had that box destroyed, I’d disregard Providence; if there is a Providence.”

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The words had barely proceeded out of his lips, when a peal of thunder, astonishingly loud, broke, as it were, over their very heads, having been preceded by a flash of lightning, so bright, that the long, well-defined grave was exposed, in all its lonely horrors, to Sarah's eye.

"That's odd, now," said she, "that the thunder should come as he said them very words; but thank God that it was Dalton that did the deed, for if it was himself he'd not keep it back now, when the truth would be sure to come out."

"It was he, my lord, and gentlemen of the jury," proceeded her father, "an' my conscience, my lord, during all this long time—"

He here muttered something which she could not understand, and after stooping down, and putting his hand on the grave a second time, he turned about and retraced his steps home. It appeared, however, that late as the hour was, there were other persons abroad as well as themselves, for Sarah could distinctly hear the footsteps of several persons passing along the adjoining road, past the Grey Stone, and she also thought that among the rest might be distinguished the voice of Red Rody Duncan. The Prophet quietly opened the door, entered as usual, and went to bed; Sarah having also retired to her own little sleeping place, lay for some time, musing deeply over the incidents of the night.

CHAPTER XX. — Tumults—Confessions of Murder.

The next morning opened with all the dark sultry rain and black cloudy drapery, which had, as we have already stated, characterized the whole season. Indeed, during the year we are describing, it was known that all those visible signs which prognosticate any particular description of weather, had altogether lost their significance. If a fine day came, for instance, which indeed was a rare case, or a clear and beautiful evening, it was but natural that after such a dark and dreary course of weather, the heart should become glad and full of hope, that a permanent change for the better was about to take place; but alas, all cheerful hope and expectation were in vain. The morrow's sun rose as before, dim and gloomy, to wade along his dismal and wintry path, without one glimpse of enlivening light from his rising to his setting.

We have already mentioned slightly, those outrages, to which the disease and misery that scourged the country in so many shapes had driven the unfortunate and perishing multitudes. Indeed, if there be any violation of the law that can or ought to be looked upon with the most lenient consideration and forbearance, by the executive authorities, it is that which takes place under the irresistible pressure of famine. And singular as it may appear, it is no less true, that this is a subject concerning which much ignorance prevails, not only throughout other parts of the empire, but even at home here in Ireland, with ourselves. Much for instance is said, and has been said, concerning

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what are termed “Years of Famine,” but it is not generally known that since the introduction of the potato in this country, no year has ever past, which in some remote locality or other, has not been such to the unfortunate inhabitants. The climate of Ireland is so unsettled, its soil so various in quality and the potato so liable to injury from excess of either drought or moisture, that we have no hesitation in stating the startling fact of this annual famine as one we can vouch for, upon our personal knowledge, and against the truth of which we challenge contradiction. Neither does an autumn pass without a complaint peculiar to those who feed solely upon the new and unripe potato, and which, ever since the year ’32 is known by the people as the potato cholera. With these circumstances the legislature ought to be acquainted, inasmuch as they are calamities that will desolate and afflict the country so long as the potato is permitted to be, as it unfortunately is, the staple food of the people. That we are subject in consequence of that fact, to periodical recurrences of dearth and disease, is well known and admitted; but that every season brings its partial scourge of both these evils to various remote and neglected districts in Ireland, has not been, what it ought long since to have been, an acknowledged and established fact in the sanatory statistics of the country. Indeed, one would imagine, that after the many terrible visitations which we have had from destitution and pestilence, a legislature sincerely anxious for the health and comfort of the people, would have devoted itself, in some reasonable measure, to the human consideration of such proper sumptuary and sanatory enactments, as would have provided not only against the recurrence of these evils, but for a more enlightened system of public health and cleanliness, and a better and more comfortable provision of food for the indigent and poor. As it is at present, provision dealers of all kinds, meal-mongers, forestallers, butchers, bakers, and hucksters, combine together, and sustain such a general monopoly in food, as is at variance with the spirit of all law and humanity, and constitutes a kind of artificial famine in the country; and surely; these circumstances ought not to be permitted, so long as we have a deliberative legislature, whose duty it is to watch and guard the health and morals of the people.

At the present period of our narrative, and especially on the gloomy morning following the Prophet’s unconscious visit to the grave of the murdered man, the popular outrages had risen to an alarming height. Up to the present time occasional outbreaks, by small and detached groups of individuals, had taken place at night or before dawn, and rather in a timid or fugitive manner, than with the recklessness of men who assemble in large crowds, and set both law and all consequences at open defiance. Now, however, destitution and disease had wrought such woeful work among the general population, that it was difficult

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to know where or how to prescribe bounds to the impetuous resentment with which they expressed themselves against those who held over large quantities of food in order to procure high prices. At this moment the country, with its waste, unreaped crops, tying in a state of plashy and fermenting ruin, and its desolate and wintry aspect, was in frightful keeping with the appearance of the people when thus congregated together. We can only say, that the famine crowds of that awful year should have been seen in order to have been understood and felt. The whole country was in a state of dull but frantic tumult, and the wild crowds as they came and went in the perpetration of their melancholy outrages, were worn down by such starling evidences of general poverty and suffering, as were enough to fill the heart with fear as well as pity, even to look upon. Their cadaverous and emaciated aspects had something in them so wild and wolfish, and the fire of famine blazed so savagely in their hollow eyes, that many of them looked like creatures changed from their very humanity by some judicial plague, that had been sent down from Heaven to punish and desolate the land. And in truth there is no doubt whatsoever, that the intensity of their sufferings, and the natural panic which was occasioned by the united ravages of disease and famine, had weakened the powers of their understanding, and impressed upon their bearing and features an expression which seemed partly the wild excitement of temporary frenzy, and partly the dull, hopeless apathy of fatuity—a state to which it is well known that misery, sickness, and hunger, all together, had brought down the strong intellect and reason of the wretched and famishing multitudes. Nor was this state of feeling confined to those who were goaded by the frightful sufferings that prevailed. On the contrary, thousands became victims of a quick and powerful contagion which spread the insane spirit of violence at a rapid rate, affecting many during the course of the day, who in the early part of the morning had not partaken of its influence. To no other principle than this can we attribute the wanton and irrational outrages of many of the people. Every one acquainted with such awful visitations must know that their terrific realities cause them, by wild influences that run through the whole masses, to forget all the decencies and restraints of ordinary life, until fear and shame, and becoming respect for order, all of which constitute the moral safety of society—are thrown aside or resolved into the great tyrannical instinct of self-preservation, which, when thus stimulated, becomes what may be termed the insanity of desolation. We know that the most savage animals as well as the most timid will, when impelled by its ravenous clamors, alike forget every other appetite but that which is necessary for the sustainment of life. Urged by it alone, they will sometimes approach and assail the habitations of man, and, in the fury of the moment, expose themselves to his power, and dare his resentment; just as a famine mob will do, when urged by the same instinct, in a year of scarcity.

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There is no beast, however, in the deepest jungle of Africa itself, so wild, savage and ferocious, as a human mob, when left to its own blind and headlong impulses. On the morning in question, the whole country was pouring forth its famished hordes to intercept meal-carts and provision vehicles of all descriptions, on their way to market or to the next sea-port for shipment; or to attack the granaries of provision dealers, and all who, having food in large quantities, refused to give it gratis, or at a nominal price to the poor. Carts and cars, therefore, mostly the property of unoffending persons, were stopped on the highways, there broken, and the food which they carried openly taken away, and, in case of resistance, those who had charge of them were severely beaten. Mills were also attacked and pillaged, and in many instances large quantities of flour and grain not only carried off, but wantonly and wickedly strewn about the streets and destroyed.

In all these acts of violence there was very little shouting; the fact being that the wretched people were not able to shout; unless on rare occasions; and sooth to say, their vociferations were then but a faint and feeble echo of the noisy tumults which in general characterize the proceedings of excited and angry crowds. Truly, those pitiable gatherings had their own peculiarities of misery. During the progress of the pillage, individuals of every age, sex, and condition—so far as condition can be applied to the lower classes—might be seen behind ditches, in remote nooks—in porches of houses, and many on the open highways and streets, eating, or rather gobbling up raw flour, or oat-meal; others, more fortunate, were tearing and devouring bread, with a fury, to which only the unnatural appetites of so many famished maniacs could be compared. As might be expected, most of these inconsiderate acts of license were punished by the consequences which followed them. Sickness of various descriptions, giddiness, retchings, fainting fits, convulsions, and in some cases, death itself, were induced by this wolfish and frightful gluttony on the part of the starving people. Others, however, who possessed more sense, and maintained a greater restraint over their individual sufferings, might be seen in all directions, hurrying home, loaded with provisions of the most portable descriptions, under which they tottered and panted, and sometimes fell utterly prostrate from recent illness or the mere exhaustion of want. Aged people, grey-haired old men, and old women bent with age, exhibited a wild and excited alacrity that was grievous to witness, while hurrying homewards—if they had a home, or if not, to the first friendly shelter they could get—a kind of dim exulting joy feebly blazing in their heavy eyes, and a wild sense of unexpected good fortune working in unnatural play upon the muscles of their wrinkled and miserable faces. The ghastly impressions of famine, however, were not confined to those who composed the crowds.

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Even the children were little living skeletons, wan and yellow, with a spirit of pain and suffering legible upon their fleshless but innocent features—while the very dogs, as was well observed, were not able to bark, unless they stood against a wall; for indeed, such of them as survived, were nothing but ribs and skin. At all events, they assisted in making up the terrible picture of general misery which the country at large presented. Both day and night, but at night especially, their hungry howlings could be heard over the country, or mingling with wailings which the people were in the habit of pouring over those whom the terrible typhus was sweeping away with such wide and indiscriminate fatality.

Our readers may now perceive, that the sufferings of these unhappy crowds, before they had been driven to these acts of violence, were almost beyond belief. At an early period of the season, when the potatoes could not be dug, miserable women might be seen early in the morning, and in fact, during all hours of the day, gathering weeds of various descriptions, in order to sustain life; and happy were they who could procure a few handfuls of young nettles, chicken-weed, sorrel, preshagh, buglass, or seaweed, to bring home as food, either for themselves or their unfortunate children. Others, again, were glad to creep or totter to stock-farms, at great distances across the country, in hope of being able to procure a portion of blood, which, on such melancholy occasions, is taken from the heifers and bullocks that graze there, in order to prevent the miserable poor from perishing by actual starvation and death.

Alas! little do our English neighbors know or dream of the horrors which attend a year of severe famine in this unhappy country. The crowds which kept perpetual and incessant siege to the houses of wealthy and even of struggling small farmers, were such! as scarcely any pen could describe. Neither can we render anything like adequate justice to the benevolence and charity—nay, we ought to say, the generosity and magnanimity of this and the middle classes in general, In no country on earth could such noble instances of self-denial and sublime humanity be witnessed. It has happened in thousands of instances that the last miserable morsel, the last mouthful of nourishing liquid, the last potato, or the last six-pence, has been divided with wretched and desolate beings who required it more, and this, too, by persons who, when that was gone, knew not to what quarter they could turn with a hope of replacing for themselves that which they had just shared in a spirit of such genuine and exalted piety.*

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* It is as well to state here that the season described in this tale is the dreadful and melancholy one of 1817; and we may add, that in order to avoid the charge of having exaggerated the almost incredible sufferings of the people in that year, we have studiously kept our descriptions of them within the limits of truth. Dr. Cokkigan, in his able and very sensible pamphlet on “Fever and Famine as Cause and Effect in Ireland”—a pamphlet, by the way, which has been the means of conveying most important truths to statesmen, and which ought to be looked on as a great public benefit—has confirmed the accuracy of the gloomy pictures I was forced to draw. Here follow an extract or two:

“It is scarcely necessary to call to recollection the summer of 1810, cold and wet—corn uncut in November, or rotting in the sheaves on the ground—potatoes not ripened (and when unripe there cannot be worse food), containing more water than nutriment—straw at such an extravagant price as to render the obtaining of it for bedding almost impossible, and when procured, retaining from its half-fermented state, so much moisture, that the use was, perhaps, worse than the want of it. The same agent that destroyed the harvest spoiled the turf. Seldom had such a multiplication of evils come together. In some of the former years, although food and bedding were deficient, the portion saved was of good quality, and fuel was not wanting: but in 1815 every comfort that might have compensated for partial want was absent. This description applies to the two years of 1816 and 1817. In midsummer of 1817, the blaze of fever was over the entire country. It had burst forth in almost a thousand different points. Within the short space of a month, in the summer of 1817, the epidemic sprung forth in Tramore, Youghal, Kinsale, Tralee, and Clonmel, in Carrick-on-Suir, Iloscrea, Ballina, Castlebar, Belfast, Armagh, Omagh, Londonderry, Monasterevan, Tullamore and Slane. This simultaneous break-out shows that there must have been some universal cause.”

Again:

“The poor were deprived of employment and were driven from the doors where before they had always received relief, lest they should introduce disease with them. Thus, destitution and fever continued in a vicious circle, each impelling the other, while want of presence of mind aggravated a thousandfold the terrible infliction. Of the miseries that attend a visitation of epidemic fever, few can form a conception. The mere relation of the scenes that occurred in the country, even in one of its last visitations, makes one shudder in reading them. As Barker and Cheyne observe in their report, ’a volume might be filled with instances of the distress occasioned by the visitation of fever in 1817.’”

“’On the road leading from Cork, within a mile of the town (Kanturk), I visited a woman laboring under typhus; on her left lay a child very ill, at the foot of the

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bed another child just able to crawl about, and on her right the corpse of a third child who had died two days previously, which the unhappy mother could not get removed.'—Letter from Dr. O'Leary, Kanturk.

"'Ellen Pagan, a young woman, whose husband was obliged, in order to seek employment, to leave her almost destitute in a miserable cabin, with three children, gave the shelter of her roof to a poor beggar who had fever. She herself caught the disease, and from the terror created in the neighborhood, was, with her three children, deserted—except that some person left a little water and milk at the window for the children,—one about four, the other about three years old, and the other an infant at her breast. In this way she continued for a week, when a neighbor sent her a loaf of bread, which was left in the window. Four days after this he grew uneasy about her, and one night having prepared some tea and bread, he set off to her ralief. When he arrived, the following scene presented itself:—In the window lay the loaf, where it had been deposited four days previously; in one corner of the cabin, on a little straw, without covering of any kind, lay the wretched mother, actually dying, and her infant dead by her side, for the want of that sustenance which she had not to give; on the floor lay the children, to all appearance dying also of cold and hunger. At first they refused to take anything, and he had to pour a little liquid down their throats—with the cautious administration of food they gradually recovered. The woman expired before the visitor quitted the house.'— Letter from Dr. Mucarthney, Monivae.

"'A man, his wife, and two children lay together in a fever. The man died in the night; his wife, nearly convalescent, was so terrified with his corpse in the same bed with her, that she relapsed, and died in two days after; the children recovered from fever, but the eldest lost his reason by the fright. Many other scenes have I witnessed, which would be too tedious to relate.'—Barker & Oheyne's Report.

"I know not of any visitation so much to be dreaded as epidemic fever; it is worse than the plague, for it lasts throughout all seasons. Cholera may seem more frightful, but it is in reality less destructive. It terminates rapidly in death, or in as rapid recovery. Its visitation, too, is short, and it leaves those who recover unimpaired in health and strength. Civil war, were it not for its crimes, would be, as far as regards the welfare of a country, a visitation less to be dreaded than epidemic fever."

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“It is not possible, then, to form an exaggerated picture of the sufferings of a million and a half of people in these countries, in their convalescence from fever, deprived of, not only the comforts, but even the necessaries of life, with scanty food, and fuel, and covering, only rising from fever to slowly fall victims to those numerous chronic diseases that are sure to seize upon enfeebled constitutions. Death would be to many a more merciful dispensation than such a recovery.”—Famine and Fever, as Clause and Effect in Ireland, &a., &o. By D. J. Cohkigan, Esq., M.D., M.K.C.S.B. Dublin: J. Fannin & Co., Grafton Street.

It was to such a state of general tumult that the Prophet and his family arose on the morning of the following day. As usual, he was grim and sullen, but on this occasion his face had a pallid and sunken look in it, which apparently added at least ten years to his age. There was little spoken, and after breakfast he prepared to go out. Sarah, during the whole morning, watched his looks, and paid a marked attention to every thing he said. He appeared, however, to be utterly unconscious of the previous night’s adventure, a fact which his daughter easily perceived, and which occasioned her to feel a kind of vague compassion for him, in consequence of the advantage it might give Nelly over him; for of late she began to participate in her father’s fears and suspicions of that stubborn and superstitious personage.

“Father,” said she, as he was about to go out, “is it fair to ax where you are going?”

“It’s neither fair nor foul,” he replied; “but if it’s any satisfaction to you to know, I won’t tell you.”

“Have you any objections then, that I should walk a piece of the way with you?”

“Not if you have come to your senses, as you ought, about what I mentioned to you.”

“I have something to say to you,” she replied, without noticing the allusion he had made; “something that you ought to know.”

“An’ why not mention it where we are?”

“Bekaise I don’t wish her there to know it.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” replied Nelly; “I feel your kindness—an,’ dear me, what a sight o’ wisdom I’ll lose by bein’ kep’ out o’ the saicret—saicret indeed! A fig for yourself an’ your saicret; maybe I have my saicret as well as you.”

“Well, then,” replied Sarah, “if you have, do you keep yours as I’ll keep mine, and then we’ll be aiquil. Come, father, for I must go from home too. Indeed I think this is the last day I’ll be with either of you for some time—maybe ever.”

“What do you mane?” said the father.

“Hut!” said the mother, “what a goose you are! Charley Hanlon, to be sure; I suppose she’ll run off wid him. Oh, thin, God pity him or any other one that’s doomed to be blistered wid you!”

Sarah flashed like lightning, and her frame began to work with that extraordinary energy which always accompanied the manifestation of her resentment.

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“You will,” said she, approaching the other—“you will, after your escape the other day; you—no, ah! no—I won’t now; I forgot myself. Come, father,—come, come; my last quarrel with her is over.”

“Ay,” returned Nelly, as they went out, “there you go, an’ a sweet pair you are—father and daughter!”

“Now, father,” resumed Sarah, after they had got out of hearing, “will you tell me if you slep’ well last night?”

“Why do you ax?” he replied; “to be sure I did.”

“I’ll tell you why I ax,” she answered; “do you know that you went last night—in the middle of the night—to the murdhered man’s grave, in the glen there?”

It is impossible to express the look of astonishment and dismay which he turned up on her at these words.

“Sarah!” he said, sternly; but she interrupted him.

“It’s thruth,” said she; “an I went with—”

“What are you spakin’ about? Me go out, an’ not know it! Nonsense!”

“You went in your sleep, she rejoined.

“Did I spake?” said he, with a black and; ghastly look.
“What—what—tell me—eh? What did I say?”

“You talked a good deal, an’ said that it was Condy Dalton that murdhered him, and that you had Red Rody to prove it.”

“That was what I said?—eh, Sarah?”

“That’s what you said, an’ I thought it was only right to tell you.”

“It was right, Sarah; but at the same time, at the peril of your life, never folly me there again. Of coorse, you know now that Sullivan is buried there.”

“I do,” said she; “but that’s no great comfort, although it is to know that you didn’t murdher him. At any rate, father, remember what I tould you about Condy Dalton. Lave him to God; an’ jist that you may feel what you ought to feel on the subject, suppose you were in his situation—suppose for a minute that it was yourself that murdhered him—-then ask, would you like to be dragged out from us and hanged, in your ould age, like a dog—a disgrace to all belongin’ to you. Father, I’ll believe that Condy Dalton murdhered

him, when I hear it from his own lips, but not till then. Now, Good-bye. You won't find me at home when you come back, I think."

"Why, where are you goin'?"

"There's plenty for me to do," she replied; "there's the sick an' the dyin' on all hands about me, an' it's a shame for any one that has a heart in their body, to see their fellow-creatures gaspin' for want of a dhrop of cowld wather to wet their lips, or a hand to turn them where they lie. Think of how many poor sthrangers is lyin' in ditches an' in barns, an' in outhouses, without a livin' bein' a'most to look to them, or reach them any single thing they want; no, even to bring the priest to them, that they might die reconciled to the Almighty. Isn't it a shame, then, for me, an' the likes o' me, that has health an' strength, an' nothin' to do, to see my fellow-creatures dyin' on all hands about me, for want of the very assistance that I can afford them. At any rate, I wouldn't live in the house with that woman, an' you know that, an' that I oughtn't."

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“But aren’t you afeard of catchin’ this terrible faver, that’s takin’ away so many, if you go among them’?”

“Afeard!” she replied; “no, father, I feel no fear either of that or anything else. If I die, I lave a world that I never had much happiness in, an’ I know that I’ll never be happy again in it. What then have I to fear from death? Any change for me must now be for the betther; at all events it can hardly be for the worse. No; my happiness is gone.”

“What in Heaven’s name is the matther with you?” asked her father; “an’ what brings the big tears into your eyes that way?”

“Good-bye,” said she; and as she spoke, a melancholy smile—at once sad and brilliant—irradiated her features. “It’s not likely, father, that ever you’ll see me under your roof again. Forgive me all my follies now, maybe it’s the last time ever you’ll have an opportunity.”

“Tut, you foolish girl; it’s enough to sicken one to hear you spake such stuff!”

She stood and looked at him for a moment, and the light of her smile gradually deepened, or rather faded away, until nothing remained but a face of exquisite beauty, deeply shadowed by anxiety and distress.

The Prophet pursued his way to Dick o’ the Grange’s, whither, indeed, he was bent; Sarah, having looked after him for a moment with a troubled face, proceeded in the direction of old Dalton’s, with the sufferings and pitiable circumstances of whose family she was already but too well acquainted. Her journey across the country presented her with little else than records of death, suffering, and outrage. Along the roads the funerals were so frequent, that, in general, they excited no particular notice. They could, in fact scarcely be termed funerals, inasmuch as they were now nothing more than squalid and meagre-looking knots of those who were immediately related to the deceased, hurrying onward, with reckless speed and disturbed looks to the churchyard, where their melancholy burthen was hastily covered up with scarcely any exhibition of that simple and affecting decorum, or of those sacred and natural sorrows, which in other circumstances throw their tender but solemn light over the last offices of death. As she went along, new and more startling objects of distress attracted her notice. In dry and sheltered places she observed little temporary sheds, which, in consequence of the dreadful panic which always accompanies an epidemic in Ireland, had, to a timid imagination, something fearful about them, especially when it is considered that death and contagion were then at work in them in such terrible shapes. To Sarah, however, they had no terrors; so far from that, a great portion of the day was spent by her in relieving their wretched, and, in many cases, dying inmates, as well as she could. She brought them water, lit fires for them, fixed up their shed, and even begged aid for them from the neighbors around, and, as far as she could, did everything to ease their

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pain, or smooth their last moment by the consolation of her sympathy. If she met a family on the highway, worn with either illness or fatigue—perhaps an unhappy mother, surrounded by a helpless brood, bearing, or rather tottering under a couple of sick children, who were unable to walk—she herself, perhaps, also ill, as was often the case—she would instantly take one of them out 'of the poor creature's arms, and carry it in her own as far as she happened to go in that direction, utterly careless of contagion, or all other consequences.

In this way was she engaged towards evening when at a turn of the road she was met by a large crowd of rioters, headed by Red Rody, Tom Dalton, and many others in the parish who were remarkable only for a tendency to ruffianism and outrage; for we may remark here, that on occasions such as we are describing, it is generally those who have suffered least, and have but little or nothing to complain of, that lead the misguided and thoughtless people into crime, and ultimately into punishment.

The change that had come over young Dalton was frightful; he was not half his former size; his clothes were now in rags, his beard grown, his whole aspect and appearance that of some miscreant, in whom it was difficult to say whether the ruffian or the idiot predominated the most. He appeared now in his glory—frantic and destructive; but amidst all this drivelling impetuosity, it was not difficult to detect some desperate and unshaken purpose in his heavy but violent and bloodshot eyes.

Far different from him was Red Rody, who headed his own section of them with an easy but knowing swagger; now nodding his head with some wonderful purpose which nobody could understand; or winking at some acquaintance with an indefinite meaning, that set them a guessing at it in vain. It was easy to see that he was a knave, but one of those knaves on whom no earthly reliance could be placed, and who would betray to-morrow, for good reasons, and without a moment's hesitation, those whom he had corrupted to-day.

"Come, Tom," said Rody, "we have scattered a few of the meal-mongin' vagabonds; weren't you talkin' about that blessed voteen, ould Darby Skinadre? The villain that allowed Peggy Murtagh an' her child to starve to death! Aren't we to pay him a visit?"

Dalton coughed several times, to clear his throat; a settled hoarseness having given a frightful hollowness to his voice. "Ay," said he—"ha, ha, ha—by the broken-heart she died of—well—well—eh, Rody, what are we to do to him?"

Rody looked significantly at the crowd, and grinned, and touched his forehead, and pointed at Dalton.

"That boy's up to everything," said he; "he's the man to head us all—ha, ha!"

“Never mind laughin’ at him, anyway,” observed one of his friends; “maybe if you suffered what he did, poor fellow, an’ his family too, that it’s not fun you’d be makin’ of him.”

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“Why,” asked a new comer; “what’s wrong wid him?”

“He’s not at himself,” replied the other, “ever since he had the faver; that, they say, an’ the death of a very purty girl he was goin’ to be married to, has put him beside himself, the Lord save us!”

“Come on now,” shouted Tom, in his terrible voice; “here’s the greatest of all before us still. Who wants meal now? Come on, I say—ha, ha, ha! Is there any of you hungry? Is there any of you goin’ to die for want of food? Now’s your time—ho, ho! Now, Peggy, now. Amn’t I doin’ it? Ay, am I, an’ it’s all for your sake, Peggy dear, for, I swore by the broken heart you died of—ay, an’ didn’t I tell you that last night on your grave where I slep’. No, he wouldn’t—he wouldn’t—but now—now—he’ll see the differ—ay, an’ feel it too. Come on,” he shouted, “who-ever’s hungry, folly me! ha, ha, ha!”

This idiotic, but ferocious laugh, echoing such a dreadful purpose, was appalling; but the people who knew what he had suffered, only felt it as a more forcible incentive to outrage. Darby’s residence was now quite at hand, and in a few minutes it was surrounded by such a multitude, both of men and women, as no other occasion could ever bring together. The people were, in fact, almost lost in their own garments; some were without coats or waistcoats to protect them from the elements, having been forced, poor wretches, to part with them for food; others had nightcaps or handkerchiefs upon their heads instead of hats; a certain proof that they were only in a state of convalescence from fever—the women stood with dishevelled hair—some of them half naked, and others leading their children about, or bearing them in their arms; altogether they presented such an appearance as was enough to wring the benevolent heart with compassion and. sorrow for their sufferings.

On arriving at Darby’s house, they found it closed, but not deserted. At first, Tom Dalton knocked, and desired the door to be opened, but the women who were present, whether with shame or with honor to the sex, we are at a loss to say, felt so eager on the occasion, probably for the purpose of avenging Peggy Murtagh, that they lost not a moment in shivering in the windows, and attacking the house with stones and missiles of every description. In a few minutes the movement became so general and simultaneous that the premises were a perfect wreck, and nothing was to be seen but meal and flour, and food of every description, either borne off by the hungry crowd, or scattered most wickedly and wantonly through the streets, while, in the very midst of the tumult, Tom Dalton was seen dragging poor Darby out by the throat, and over to the centre of the street.

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“Now,” said he, “here I have you at last—ha, ha, ha!”—his voice, by the way, as he spoke and laughed, had become fearfully deep and hollow—“now, Peggy dear, didn’t I swear it—by the broken heart you died of, I said, an’ I’ll keep that sacred oath, darlin’.” While speaking, the thin fleshless face of the miser was becoming black—his eyes were getting blood-shot, and, in a very short time, strangulation must have closed his wretched existence, when a young and tall female threw herself by a bound upon Dalton, whom she caught by the throat, precisely as he himself had caught Darby. It was Sarah, who saw that there was but little time to lose in order to save the wretch’s life. Her grip was so effectual, that Dalton was obliged to relax his hold upon the other for the purpose of defending himself.

“Who is this?” said he; “let me go, you had better, till I have his life—let me go, I say.”

“It’s one,” she replied, “that’s not afeard but ashamed of you. You, a young man, to go strangle a weak, helpless ould creature, that hasn’t strength or breath to defend himself no more then a child.”

“Didn’t he starve Peggy Murtagh?” replied Tom; “ha, ha, ha!—didn’t he starve her and her child?”

“No,” she replied aloud, and with glowing cheeks; “it’s false—it wasn’t he but yourself that starved her and her child. Who deserted her—who brought her to shame, an’ to sorrow, in her own heart an’ in the eyes of the world? Who left her to the bitter and vile tongues of the whole counthry? Who refused to marry her, and kept her so that she couldn’t raise her face before her fellow cratures? Who sent her, without hope, or any expectation of happiness in this life—this miserable life—to the glens and lonely ditches about the neighborhood, where she did nothing but shed blither tears of despair and shame at the heartless lot you brought her to? An’ when she was desarted by the wide world, an’ hadn’t a friendly face to look to but God’s, an’ when one kind word from your lips would give her hope, an’ comfort, an’ happiness, where were you? and where was that kind word that would have saved her? Let the old man go, you unmanly coward; it wasn’t him that starved her—it was yourself that starved her, and broke her heart!”

“Did yez hear that?” said Dalton; “ha, ha, ha—an’ it’s all thrue; she has tould me nothing but the thruth—here, then, take the ould vagabond away with you, and do what you like with him—”

> “’I am a bold and rambling boy,
> My lodging’s in the isle of Throy;
> A rambling boy, although I be,
> I’d lave them all an’ folly thee.’

Ha, ha, ha!—but come, boys, pull away; we’ll finish the wreck of this house, at any rate.”

“Wreck away,” said Sarah, “I have nothin’ to do with that; but I think them women—man-women I ought to call them—might consider that there’s many a starvin’ mouth that would be glad to have a little of what they’re throwin’ about so shamefully. Do you come with me, Darby; I’ll save you as far as I can, an’ as long as I’m able.”

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“I will, achora,” replied Darby, “an’ may God bless you, for you have saved my life; but why should they attack me? Sure the world knows, an’ God knows, that my heart bleeds—”

“Whisht,” she exclaimed, “the world an’ God both know it’s a lie, if you say your heart bleeds for any thing but the destruction that you see on your place. If you had given Peggy Murtagh the meal, she might be a livin’ woman to-day; so no more falsehoods now, or I’ll turn you back to Tom Dalton’s clutches.”

“No, then,” replied the trembling wretch, “I won’t; but between you an’ me, then,—an’ it needn’t go farther—troth my heart bleeds for the severity that’s—”

“One word more,” she replied, “an’ I lave you to what you’ll get.”

Sarah’s interference had a singular effect upon the crowd. The female portion of it having reflected upon her words, soon felt and acknowledged their truth, because they involved a principle of justice and affection to their sex; while the men, without annexing any moral consideration to the matter, felt themselves influenced by her exquisite figure and great beauty.

“She’s the Black Prophet’s daughter,” exclaimed the women; “an’ if the devil was in her, she tould Tom Dalton nothing but the truth, at any rate.”

“An’ they say the devil is in her, the Lord save us, if ever he was in any one—keep away from her—my sowl in Heaven! but she’d think no more of tearin’ your eyes out, or stickin’ you wid a case-knife, than you would of aitin’ bread an’ butther.”

“Blessed Father!” exclaimed another, “did you see the brightness of her eyes while she was spakin?”

“No matther what she is,” said a young fellow beside them; “the devil a purtier crature ever was made; be my soul, I only wish I had a thousand pounds, I wouldn’t be long without a wife at any rate.”

The crowd having wrecked Skinadre’s dwelling, and carried off and destroyed almost his whole stock of provisions, now proceeded in a different direction, with the intention of paying a similar visit to some similar character. Sarah and Darby—for he durst not venture, for the present, towards his own house—now took their way to the cabin of old Condy Dalton, where they arrived just in time to find the house surrounded by the officers of justice, and some military.

“Ah,” thought Sarah, on seeing them; “it is done, then, an’ you lost but little time about it. May God forgive you, father.”

They had scarcely entered, when one of the officers pulling out a paper, looked at it and asked, “Isn’t your name Condy or Cornelius Dalton?”—

“That is my name,” said the old man.

“I arrest you, then,” he continued, “for the murder of one Bartholomew Sullivan.”

“It is the will of God,” replied the old man, while the tears flowed down his cheeks—“it’s God’s will, an’ I won’t consale it any longer; take me away—I’m guilty—I’m guilty.”

CHAPTEE XXI. — Condy Datton goes to Prison.

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The scene that presented itself in Condy Dalton's miserable cabin was one, indeed, which might well harrow any heart not utterly callous to human sympathy. The unhappy old man had been sitting in the armchair we have alluded to, his chin resting on his breast, and his mind apparently absorbed in deep and painful reflection, when the officers of justice entered. Many of our Landlord readers, and all, probably, of our Absentee ones, will, in the simplicity of their ignorance regarding the actual state of the lower classes, most likely take it for granted that the picture we are about to draw exists nowhere but in our own imagination. Would to God that it were so! Gladly and willingly would we take to ourselves all the shame; acknowledge all the falsehood; pay the highest penalty for all the moral guilt of our misrepresentations, provided only any one acquainted with the country could prove to us that we are wrong, change our nature, or, in other words, falsify the evidence of our senses and obliterate our experience of the truths we are describing.

Old Dalton was sitting, as we have said, in the only memorial of his former respectability now left him—the old arm-chair—when the men bearing the warrant for his arrest presented themselves. The rain was pouring down in that close, dark, and incessant fall, which gives scarcely any hope of its ending, and throws the heart into that anxious and gloomy state which every one can feel and perhaps no one describe.

The cabin in which the Daltons now lived was of the poorest description. When ejected from their large holding by Dick o' the Grange, or in other words, were auctioned out, they were unhappily at a loss where to find a place in which they could take a temporary refuge. A kind neighbor who happened to have the cabin in question lying unoccupied, or rather waste upon his hands, made them an offer of it; not, as he said, in the expectation that they could live in it for any length of time, but merely until they could provide themselves with a more comfortable and suitable abode.

"He wished," he added, "it was better for their sakes; and sorry he was to see such a family brought so low as to live in it at all!"

Alas! he knew not at the time how deeply the unfortunate family in question were steeped in distress and poverty. They accepted this miserable cabin; but in spite of every effort to improve their condition, days, weeks, and months passed, and still found them unable to make a change for the better.

When Darby and Sarah entered, they found young Con, who had now relapsed, lying in one corner of the cabin, on a wretched shake-down bed of damp straw; while on another of the same description lay his amiable and affectionate sister Nancy. The cabin stood, as we have said, in a low, moist situation, the floor of it being actually lower —which is a common case—than the ground about it outside. It served, therefore, as a receptacle for the damp

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and under-water which the incessant down-pouring of rain during the whole season had occasioned. It was therefore, dangerous to tread upon the floor, it was so soft and slippery. The rain, which fell heavily, now came down through the roof in so many places that they were forced to put under it such vessels as they could spare, not even excepting the beds over each of which were placed old clothes, doubled up under dishes, pots, and little bowls, in order, if possible, to keep them dry. The house—if such it could be called—was almost destitute of furniture, nothing but a few pots, dishes, wooden noggins, some spoons, and some stools being their principal furniture, with the exception of one standing short-posted bed, in a corner, near the fire. There, then, in that low, damp, dark, pestilential kraal, without chimney or window, sat the old man, who, notwithstanding its squalid misery, could have looked upon it as a palace, had he been able to say to his own heart—I am not a murderer.

There, we say, he sat alone, surrounded by pestilence and famine in their most fearful shapes, listening to the moanings of his sick family, and the ceaseless dropping of the rain, which fell into the vessels that were placed to receive it. Mrs. Dalton was “out,” a term which was used in the bitter misery of the period, to indicate that the person to whom it applied had been driven to the last resource of mendicancy; and his other daughter, Mary, had gone to a neighbor’s house to beg a little fire.

As the old man uttered the words, no language could describe the misery which was depicted on his countenance.

“Take me,” he exclaimed; “ah, no; for then what will become of these?” pointing to his son and daughter, who were sick.

The very minions of the law felt for him; and the chief of them said, in a voice of kindness and compassion:

“It’s a distressin’ case; but if you’ll be guided by me, you won’t say anything that may be brought against yourself. I was never engaged,” said he, looking towards Darby and Sarah, to whom he partly addressed his discourse, “in anything so painful as this. A man of his age, now afther so many years! However—well—it can’t be helped; we must do our duty.”

“Where is the rest of your family?” asked another of them; “is this young woman a daughter of yours?”

“Not at all,” replied a third; “this is a daughter of the Black Prophet himself; and, by japers, you hardened gipsey, it’s a little too bad for you to come to see how your blasted ould father’s work gets on. It’s his evidence that’s bringin’ this dacent ould man from his family to a gaol, this miserable evenin’. Be off out o’ this, I desire you; I wondher you’re not ashamed to be present here, above all places in the world, you brazen devil.”

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Sarah's whole soul, however, in all its best and noblest sympathies, had passed into and mingled with the scene of unparalleled misery which was then before her. She went rapidly to the bed in which young Con was I stretched; stooped down, and looking closely at him, perceived that he was in a broken and painful slumber. She then passed to that in which his sister lay, and saw that she was also asleep. After a glance at each, she rubbed her hands with a kind of wild satisfaction, and going up to old Dalton, exclaimed—for she had not heard a syllable of the language used towards her by the officer of justice—

"Ay," said she, laying her hand upon his white hairs; "you are to be pitied this night, poor ould man; but which of you, oh, which of you is to be pitied most, you or them! an' your wife, too; an' your other daughter, an' your other son, too; but he's past under-standin' it; oh, what will they do? At your age, too—at your age! Oh, couldn't you die?—couldn't you contrive, someway, to die?—couldn't you give one great struggle, an' then break your heart at wanst, an' forever!"

These words were uttered rapidly, but in a low and cautious voice, for she still feared to awaken those who slept.

The old man had also been absorbed in, his own misery; for he looked at her inquiringly, and only replied, "Poor girl, what is it you're saying?"

"I'm biddin' you to die," she replied, "if you can, you needn't be afeard of God—he has punished you enough for the crime you have committed. Try an' die, if you can—or if you can't—oh," she exclaimed, "I pray God that you—that he, there—" and she ran and bent over young Con's bed for a moment; "that you—that you may never recover, or live to see what you must see."

"It's a fact, that between hunger and this sickness," continued he who had addressed her last, "they say an' I know that there's great number of people silly; but I think this lady is downright mad; what do you mane, you clip?"

Sarah stared at him impatiently, but without any anger.

"He doesn't hear me," she added, again putting her hand in a distracted manner upon Dalton's gray hair; "no, no; but since it can't be so, there's not a minute to be lost. Oh, take him away, now," she proceeded, "take him away while they're asleep, an' before his wife and daughter comes home—take him away, now; and spare him—spare them —spare them all as much sufferin' as you can."

"There's not much madness in that, Jack," returned one of them; "I think it would be the best thing we could do. Are you ready to come now, Dalton?" asked the man.

“Who’s that,” said the old man, in a voice of indescribable woe and sorrow; “who’s that was talkin’ of a broken heart? Oh, God,” he exclaimed, looking up to Heaven, with a look of intense agony, “support me—support them; and if it be your blessed will, pity us all; but above all things, pity them, oh, Heavenly Father, and don’t punish them for my sin!”

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“It’s false,” exclaimed Sarah, looking on Dalton, and reasoning apparently with herself; “he never committed a could blooded murdher; an’ the Sullivans are—are—oh—take him away,” she said, still in a low, rapid voice; “take him away! Come now,” she added, approaching Dalton again; “come—while they’re asleep, an’ you’ll save them an’ yourself much distress. I’m not afeard of your wife—for she can bear it if any wife could—but I do your poor daughter, an’ she so weak an’ feeble afther her illness; come.”

Dalton looked at her, and said:

“Who is this girl that seems to feel so much for me? but whoever she is, may God bless her, for I feel that she’s right. Take me away before they waken! oh, she is right in every word she says, for I am not afeard of my wife—her trust in God is too firm for anything to shake. I’m ready; but I fear I’ll scarcely be able to walk all the way—an’ sich an evenin’ too—Young woman, will you break this business to these ones, and to my wife, as you can?”

“Oh, I will, I will,” she replied; “as well as I can; you did well to say so,” she added, in a low voice to herself; “an’ I’ll stay here with your sick family, an’ I’ll watch an’ attend them. Whatever can be done by the like o’ me for them, I’ll do. I’ll—I’ll not lave them—-I’ll nurse them—I’ll take care of them—I’ll beg for them—oh, what would I not do for them?” and while speaking she bent over young Con’s bed, and clasping her hands, and wringing them several times, she repeated “oh what wouldn’t I do for you!”

“May God bless you, best of girls, whoever you are! Come, now, I’m ready.”

“Ay,” said Sarah, running over to him, “that’s right—I’ll break the bitter news to them as well as it can be done; come, now.”

The old man stood, in the midst of his desolation, with his hat in his hand, and he looked towards the beds.

“Poor things!” he exclaimed; “what a change has come over you, for what you wanst, an’ that not long since, wor. Never, my darlin’ childhre—oh, never did one harsh or undutiful word come from your lips to your unhappy father. In my ould age and misery I’m now lavin’ you—may be forever—never, maybe, to see you again in this world; an’ oh, my God, if we are never to meet in the other; if the innocent and the guilty is never to meet, then this is my last look at you, for everlastin’, for everlastin’! I can’t do it,” he added, weeping bitterly—“I must take my lave of them; I must kiss their lips.”

Sarah, while he spoke, had uttered two or three convulsive sobs; but she shed no tears; on the contrary, her eyes were singularly animated and brilliant. She put her arms about him, and said, in a soothing and solicitous tone:

“Oh, no, it’s all thrue; but if you kiss them, you’ll disturb and waken them; and then, you know, when they see you taken away in this manner, an’ hears what it’s for, it may be their death.”

“Thrue, achora; thrue: well, I will only look at them, then. Let me keep my eyes on them for a little; may be they may go first, an’ may be I may go first; the last time, may be, for everlastin’, that I’ll see them!”

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He went over, as he spoke, Sarah still having her hand upon his arm, as if to intimate her anxiety to keep him under such control as might prevent him from awakening them; and, standing first over the miserable bed where Nancy slept, he looked down upon her.

“Ay,” said he, while the tears showered down his cheeks, “there lies the child that never vexed a parent’s heart or ruffled one of our tempers. May the blessin’, if it is a blessin’, or can be a blessin’—”

“It is, it is,” said Sarah, with a quick, short sob; “it is a blessin’, an’ a holy blessin’; but bless him—bless him, too!”

“May my blessin’ rest upon you, or rather may the blessin’ of Almighty God, rest upon you, daughter of my heart! And you too,” he proceeded, turning to the other bed; “here is him that among them all I loved the best; my youngest, an’ called afther myself—may my blessin’ an’ the blessin’ of God and my Saviour rest upon you, my darlin’ son; an’ if I never see either of you in this unhappy world, grant, oh, merciful Father, that we may meet in the glory of Heaven, when that stain will be taken away from me for that crime that I have repented for so long an’ so bittherly?”

Sarah, while he spoke, had let go his arm, and placing her two hands over her eyes, her whole breast quivered; and the men, on looking at her, saw the tears gushing out in torrents from between her finger. She turned round, however, for a few moments, as if to compose herself; and, when she again approached the old man, there was a smile—-a smile, brilliant, but agitated, in her eyes and upon her lips.

“There now,” she proceeded; “you have said all you can say; come, go with them. Ah,” she exclaimed with a start of pain, “all we’ve done or tried to do is lost, I doubt. Here’s his wife and daughter. Come out now,” said she addressing him, “say a word or two to them outside.”

Just as she spoke, Mrs. Dalton and the poor invalid, Mary, entered the house: the one with some scanty supply of food, and the other bearing a live coal between two turf, one under and the other over it.

“Wait,” said Sarah, “I’ll speak to them before they come in.” And, ere the words were uttered, she met them.

“Come here, Mrs. Dalton,” said she; “stop a minute, speak to this poor girl, and support her. These sogers, and the constables inside, is come about Sullivan’s business, long ago.”

“I know it,” replied Mrs. Dalton; “I’ve just heard all about it, there beyond; but she,” pointing to her daughter, “has only crossed the ditch from the commons, and joined me this minute.”

“Give me these,” said Sarah to the girl, “and stay here till I come out again, wet as it is. Your mother will tell you why.”

She took the fire from her as she spoke, and, running in, laid it upon the hearth, placing, at the same time, two or three turf about in a hurried manner, but still in a way that argued great presence of mind, amid all her distraction. On going out again, however, the first object she saw was one of the soldiers supporting the body of poor Mary, who had sunk under the intelligence. Mrs. Dalton having entered the cabin, and laid down the miserable pittance of food which she had been carrying, now waved her hand with authority and singular calmness, but at the same time with a face as pallid as death itself.

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“This is a solemn hour,” said she, “an’ a woful sight in this place of misery. Keep quiet, all of you. I know what this is about, dear Condy,” she said; “I know it; but what is the value of our faith, if it doesn’t teach us obedience? Kiss your child, here,” said she, “an’ go—or come, I ought to say, for I will go with you. It’s not to be wondhered at that she couldn’t bear it, weak, and worn, and nearly heartbroken as she is. Bless her, too, before you go. An’ this girl,” she said, pointing at Mary, and addressing Sarah, “you will spake to her, an’ support her as well as you can, and stay with them all for an hour or two. I can’t lave him.”

Dalton, while she spoke, had taken Mary in his arms, kissed her, and, as in the case of the others, blessed her with a fervor only surpassed by his sorrow and utter despair.

“I will stay with them,” said Sarah; “don’t doubt that—not for an hour or two, but till they come to either life or death; so I tould him.”

“It’s a bitther case,” said Mrs. Dalton; “a bitther case; but then it’s God’s gracious will, an’ them that He loves He chastises. Blessed be His name for all He does, and blessed be His name ever for this!”

Mary now recovered in her father’s arms; and her mother, in a low but energetic voice, pointing to the beds, said:

“Think of them, darlin’. There now, part with him. This world, I often tould you dear, Mary, is not our place, but our passage; an’ although it’s painful let us not forget that it is God Himself that is guidin’ and directin’ us through it. Come, Con dear, come.”

A long mournful embrace, and another sorrowful but fervent blessing, and with a feeble effort at consolation, Dalton parted with the weeping girl; and placing his hat on his white head, he gave one long look—one indescribable look—upon all that was so dear to him in this scene of unutterable misery, and departed. He had not gone far, however, when he returned a step or two towards the door; and Mary, having noticed this, went to him, and throwing her arms once more about his neck, exclaimed:

“Oh! Father, darlin’ an’ is it come to this? Oh, did we ever complain or grumble about all we suffered, while we had you wid us? no, we wouldn’t. What was our sufferins, father, dear—nothing. But, oh, nothing ever broke our hearts, or troubled us, but to see you in sich sorrow.”

“It’s thrue, Mary darlin’; you wor all—all a blessin’ to me; but I feel, threasure of my heart, that my sorrows an’ my cares will soon be over. It’s about Tom I come back. Och, sure I didn’t care what he or we might suffer, if it had plased God to lave him in his senses; but maybe now he’s happier than we are. Tell him—if he can understand it, or when he does understand it—that I lave my blessin’ and God’s blessin’ with him for

evermore—for evermore: an' with you all; an' with you, too, young woman, for evermore, amen! And now come; I submit myself to the will of my marciful Saviour."

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He looked up to heaven as he spoke, his two hands raised aloft; after which he covered his venerable head, and, with this pious and noble instance of resignation, did the affectionate old man proceed, as well as his feeble limbs could support him, to the county prison, accompanied by his pious and truly Christian wife.

As the men were about to go, he who had addressed Sarah so rudely, approached her with as much regret on his face as its hardened and habitual indifference to human misery could express, and said, tapping her on the shoulder:

“I was rather rough to you, jist now, my purty girl—to’ be jabers, it’ is you that is the purty girl. I dunna, by the way, how the ould Black Prophet came by the likes o’ you; but, then he was a handsome vagabond in his day, himself, an’ you are like him.”

“What do you want to say?” she asked, impatiently; “but stand outside, I won’t speak to you here—your voice would waken a corpse. Here, now,” she added, having gone out upon the causeway, “what is it?”

“Why, devil a thing,” he replied; “only you’re a betther girl than I tuck you to be. It’s a pitiful case, this—a woful case at his time o’ life. Be heaventhers, but I’d rather a thousand times see Black Boy, your own precious father, swing, than this poor ould man.”

A moment’s temporary fury was visible, but she paused, and it passed away; after which she returned slowly and thoughtfully into the cabin.

It is unnecessary to say, that almost immediately the general rumor of Dalton’s arrest for the murder had gone through the whole parish, together with the fact that it was upon the evidence of the Black Prophet and Red Rody Duncan, that the proof of it had been brought home to him. Upon the former occasion there had been nothing against him, but such circumstances of strong suspicion as justified the neighboring magistrates in having him taken into custody. On this, however, the two men were ready to point out the identical spot where the body had been buried, and to identify it as that of Bartholomew Sullivan. Nothing remained, therefore, now that Dalton was in custody, but to hold an inquest upon the remains, and to take the usual steps for the trial of Dalton at the following assizes, which were not very far distant. Indeed, notwithstanding the desolation that prevailed throughout the country, and in spite of the care and sorrow which disease and death brought home to so many in the neighborhood, there was a very general feeling of compassion experienced for poor old Dalton and his afflicted family. And among those who sympathized with them, there was scarcely one who expressed himself more strongly upon the subject than Mr. Travers, the head agent of the property on which they had lived, especially upon contrasting the extensive farm and respectable residence, from which their middleman landlord had so harshly and unjustly ejected them, with the squalid kennel in which they then endured such a painful and pitiable existence. This gentleman had come to the neighborhood, in order to look

closely into the condition of the property which had been entrusted to his management, in consequence of a great number of leases having expired; some of which had been held by extensive and wealthy middlemen, among the latter of whom was our friend, Dick o’ the Grange.

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The estate was the property of an English, nobleman, who derived an income of thirty-two or thirty-three thousand a year from it; and who though, as landlords went, was not, in many respects, a bad one; yet when called upon to aid in relieving the misery of those from whose toil he drew so large an income, did actually remit back the munificent sum of one hundred pounds! [A recent fact.] The agent, himself, was one of those men who are capable of a just, but not of a generous action. He could, for instance, sympathize with the frightful condition of the people—but to contribute to their relief was no part of his duty. Yet he was not a bad man. In his transactions with his landlord's tenancy, he was fair, impartial, and considerate. Whenever he could do a good turn, or render a service, without touching his purse, he would do it. He had, it is true, very little intercourse with the poorer class of under tenants, but, whenever circumstances happened to bring them before him, they found him a hard, just man, who paid attention to their complaints, but who, in a case of doubt, always preferred the interest of his employer, or his own, to theirs. He had received many complaints and statements against the middlemen who resided upon the property, and he had duly and carefully considered them. His present visit, therefore, proceeded from a determination to look closely into the state and condition of the general tenancy, by which he meant as well those who derived immediately from the head landlord, as those who held under middlemen. One virtue he possessed, which, in an agent, deserves every praise; he was inaccessible to bribery on the one hand, or flattery on the other; and he never permitted his religious or political principles to degenerate into prejudice, so far as to interfere with the impartial discharge of his duty. Such was Robert James Travers, Esq., and we only wish that every agent in the country at large would follow his example.

CHAPTER XXII. — Re-appearance of the Box—Friendly Dialogue Between Jimmy Branighan and the Pedlar

The next morning but one after the committal of Condy Dalton, the strange woman who had manifested such an anxious interest in the recovery of the Tobacco-Box, was seated at her humble fireside, in a larger and more convenient cottage than that which we have described, where she was soon joined by Charley Hanlon, who had already made it so comfortable and convenient that she was able to contribute something towards her own support, by letting what are termed in the country parts of Ireland, "Dry Lodgings." Her only lodger on this occasion was our friend the pedlar, who had been domiciled with her ever since his arrival in the neighborhood, and whose principal traffic, we may observe, consisted in purchasing the flowing and luxuriant heads of hair which necessity on the one hand, and fear of fever on the other, induced the country maidens to part with. This traffic,

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indeed, was very general during the period we are describing, the fact being that the poor people, especially the females, had conceived a notion, and not a very unreasonable one, too, that a large crop of hair not only predisposed them to the fever which then prevailed, but rendered their recovery from it more difficult. These notions, to be sure, resulted naturally enough from the treatment which medical men found it necessary to adopt in dealing with it—every one being aware that in order to relieve the head, whether by blister or other application, it is necessary to remove the hair. Be this, however, as it may, it is our duty to state here that the traffic we allude to was very general, and that many a lovely and luxuriant crop came under the shears of the pedlars who then strolled through the country.

“Afther all, aunt,” said Hanlon, after having bidden her good morrow, “I’m afraid it was a foolish weakness to depend upon a dhrame. I see nothing clear in the business yet. Here now we have got the Box, an’ what are we the nearer to the discovery?”

“Well,” replied his aunt, for in that relation she stood to him, “is it nothing to get even that? Sure we know now that it was his, an’ do you think that M’Gowan, or as they call him, the Black Prophet, would be in sich a state to get it—an’ his wife, too, it seems—-unless there was some raison on their part beyond the common, to come at it?”

“It’s a dark business altogether; but arn’t we thrown out of all trace of it in the mane time? Jist when we thought ourselves on the straight road to the discovery, it turns out to be another an’ a different murdher entirely—the murdher of one Sullivan.”

At this moment, the pedlar, who had been dressing himself in another small apartment, made, his appearance, just in time to catch his concluding words.

“An’ now,” Hanlon added, “it appears that Sullivan’s body has been found at last. The Black Prophet and Body Duncan knows all about the murdher, an’ can prove the act home to Condy Dalton, and identify the body, they say, besides.”

The pedlar looked at the speakers with a face of much curiosity and interest, then mused for a time, and at length took a turn or two about the floor, after which he sat down and began to drum his fingers on the little table which had been placed for breakfast.

“Afther I get my breakfast,” he said at length, “I’ll thank you to let me know what I have to pay. It’s not my intention to stop undher this roof any longer; I don’t think I’d be overly safe.”

“Safe!—arrah why so?” asked the woman.

“Why,” he replied, “ever since I came here, you have done nothing but collogue—-collogue—an’ whisper, an’ lay your heads together, an’ divil a syllable can I hear that

hasn’t murdher at the front an’ rear of it—either spake out, or get me my bill. If you’re of that stamp, it’s time for me to thravel; not that I’m so rich as to make it worth any body’s while to take the mouthful of wind out o’ me that’s in me. What do you mean by this discoorse?”

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“May God rest the sowls of the dead!” replied the woman, “but it’s not for nothing that we talk as we do, an’ if you knew but all, you wouldn’t think so.”

“Very likely,” he replied, in a dry but dissatisfied voice; “maybe, sure enough, that the more I’d know of it, the less I’d like of it—here now is a man named Sullivan—Barney, Bill, or Bartley, or some sich name, that has been murdhered, an’ it seems the murdherer was sent to gaol yestherday evenin’—the villain! Get me my bill, I say, it’s an unsafe neighborhood, an’ I’ll take myself out of it, while I’m able.”

“It’s not widout raisin we talk of murdher then,” replied the woman.

“Faith may be so—get me my bill, then, I bid you, an’ in the mane time, let me have, my breakfast. As it is, I tell you both that I carry no money to signify about me.”

“Tell him the truth, aunt,” said Hanlon, “there’s no use in lyin’ under his suspicion wrongfully, or allowin’ him to lave your little place for no raison.”

“The truth is, then,” she proceeded, throwing the corner of her apron over her left shoulder, and rocking herself to and fro, “that this young man had a dhrame some time ago—he dremt that a near an’ dear friend of his an’ of mine too, that was murdhered in this neighborhood, appeared to him, an’ that he desired him to go of a sartain night, at the hour of midnight, to a stone near this, called the Grey Stone, an’ that there he would get a clue to the murdherer.”

‘Well, an’ did he?”

“He went—an’—but you had betther tell it yourself, avillish,” she added, addressing Hanlon; “you know best.”

The pedlar instantly fixed his anxious and lively eyes on the young man, intimating that he looked to him for the rest of the story.

“I went,” proceeded Hanlon, “and you shall hear everything that happened.”

It is unnecessary for us, however, to go over the same ground a second time. Hanlon minutely detailed to him all that had taken place at the Grey Stone, precisely as it occurred, if we allow for a slight exaggeration occasioned by his terrors, and the impressions of supernatural manifestations which they left upon his imagination.

The pedlar heard all the circumstances with an astonishment which changed his whole bearing into that of deep awe and the most breathless attention. The previous eccentricity of his manner by degrees abandoned him; and as Hanlon proceeded, he frequently looked at him in a state of abstraction, then raised his eyes towards heaven, uttering, from time to time, “Merciful Father!”—“Heaven preserve us!” and such like, thus accompanying him by a running comment of exclamations as he went along.

“Well,” said he, when Hanlon had concluded, “surely the hand of God is in this business; you may take that for granted.”

“I would fain hope as much,” replied Hanlon; “but as the matthers stand now, we’re nearly as far from it as ever. Instead of gettin’ any knowledge of the murdherer we want to discover, it proves to be the murdher of Sullivan that has been found out.”

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“Of Sullivan!” he exclaimed; “well, to be sure—oh, ay—well, sure that same is something; but, in the mane time, will you let me look at this Box you spoke of? I feel a curiosity to see it.”

Hanlon rose and taking the Box from a small deal chest which was strongly locked, placed it in the pedlar’s hands. After examining it closely for about half a minute, they could observe that he got very pale, and his hands began to tremble, as he held and turned it about in a manner that was very remarkable.

“Do you say,” he asked, in an agitated voice, “that you have no manes of tracin’ the murdher?”

“None more than what we’ve tould you.”

“Did this Box belong to the murdhered man?—I mane, do you think he had it about him at the time of his death?”

“Ay, an’ for some time before it,” replied the woman. “It’s all belongin’ to him that we can find now.”

“And you got it in the keeping of this M’Gowan, the Black Prophet, you say?”

“We did,” replied the woman, “from his daughter, at all events.”

“Who is this Black Prophet?” he asked; “or what is he? for that comes nearer the mark. Where did he come from, where does he live, an’ what way does he earn his bread?”

“The boy here,” she replied, pointing to Hanlon, “can tell you that betther than I can; for although I’ve been at his place three or four times, I never laid eyes on him yet.”

“Well,” continued the pedlar, “you have both a right to be thankful that you tould me this. I now see the hand of God in the whole business. I know this box an’ I can tell you something that will surprise you more than that. Listen—but wait—I hear somebody’s foot. No matter—I’ll surprise you both by an’ by.”

“Godsave all here,” said the voice of our friend, Jemmy Branigan, who immediately entered. “In troth, this change is for the betther, at any rate,” said he, looking at the house; “I gave you a lift wid the masther yestherday,” he added, turning to the woman. “I think I’ll get him to throw the ten shillings off—he as good as promised me he would.”

“Masther!” exclaimed the pedlar, bitterly—“oh, thin, it’s he that’s the divil’s masther, by all accounts, an’ the divil’s landlord, too. Be me sowl, he’ll get a warm corner down here;” and as he uttered the words, he very significantly stamped with his heel, to intimate the geographical position of the place alluded to.

“It would be only manners to wait till your opinion is axed of him,” replied Jemmy; “so mind your pack, you poor sprissaun, or when you do spake, endeavor to know something of what you’re discoorsin’ about. Masther, indeed! Divil take your impidence!”

“He’s a scourge to the counthry,” continued the pedlar; “a worse landlord never faced the sun.”

“That’s what we call in this part of the counthry—a lie,” replied Jemmy. “Do you understand what that manes?”

“No one knows what an’ outrageous ould blackguard he is betther than yourself,” proceeded the pedlar; “an’ how he harrishes the poor.”

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“That’s ditto repated,” responded Jemmy; “you’re improvrn’—but tell me now do you know any one that he harrished?”

This was indeed a hazardous question on the part of Jemmy; who, by the way, put it solely upon the presumption of the peddlar’s ignorance of Dick’s proceedings as a landlord, in consequence of his (the pedlar) being a stranger.

“Who did you ever know that he harrished, i’ you please?”

“Look at the Daltons,” replied the other; “what do you call his conduct to them?”

Jemmy, who, whenever he felt himself deficient in truth, always made up for the want of it by warmth of temper, now turned shortly upon his antagonist, and replied, in a spirit very wide of the argument—

“What do I call his conduct to them? What do you call the nose on your face, my codger? Divil a sich an impident crature ever I met.”

“It would be no wondher that the curse o’ God would come on him for his tratement to that unfortunate and respectable family,” responded the pedlar.

“The curse o’ God knows where to fall best,” replied Jemmy, “or it’s not in the county jail ould Condy Dalton ’ud be for murdher this day.”

“But,” returned the other, “isn’t it a disgraceful thing to be, as they say he and yourself is, a pair o’ scourges in the hands o’ God for your fellow-creatures; an’ in troth you’re both fit for it by all accounts.”

“Troth,” replied Jemmy, whose gall was fast rising, “it’s a scourge wid nine tails to it ought to go to your back. The Daltons desarved all they got at his hands; an’ the same pack was never anything else than a hot-brained crew, that ’ud knock you on the head to-day, and groan over you to-morrow. He sarved them right, an’ he’s a liar that says to the contrary; so if you have a pocket for that put it in it.”

Jemmy, in fact, was now getting rapidly into a towering passion, for it mattered little how high in violence his own pitched battles with Dick ran, he never suffered, nor could suffer a human being to abuse his master behind his back, but himself. So confirmed, however, by habit, was his spirit of contradiction, that had the pedlar begun to praise Dick, Jemmy would immediately have attacked him without remorse, and scarcely have left a rag of his character together.

“It’s a shame for you,” proceeded the pedlar, “to defend an’ ould sinner like him; but then as there’s a pair of you, that’s not unnatural; every rogue will back his brother. I could name the place, any way, that’ll hould you both yet.”

“An’ I could,” replied Jemmy, “name the piece of machinery that’ll be apt to hould you, if you give the masther any more abuse. Whether you’ll grow in it or not, is more than I know, but be me sowl, we’ll plant you there any how. Do you know what the stocks manes? Faith, many a spare hour you’ve sarved there, I go bail, that is, when, you had nothing else to do—an’ by the way of raycreation jist.”

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“Ay,” said the pedlar, “listen how he sticks to the ould villain—but sure, if you put any other two blisthers together, they’ll do the same.”

“My own opinion is,” observed Hanlon’s aunt, “that it’s a pity of the Daltons, at any raite. Every one feels for them—but still the hand o’ God an’ his curse, I’m afeard, is upon them.”

“An’ that’s more, maybe, than you know,” replied Jemmy. “Maybe God’s only punishing them, bekaise he loves them. It’s good to have our suffering in this world.”

“Afther all,” said the pedlar, “I’m afeard myself, too, that the wrath o’ the Almighty has marked them out. Indeed, I’m sure of it.”

“An’ maybe that’s not the only lie you’re sure of,” replied Jemmy. “It’s a subject, any way, you don’t undherstand. No,” he proceeded, “by all accounts, Charley, it would wring any one’s heart to see him taken away in his ould age from his miserable family and childre, and then he’s so humble, too, and so resigned to the will an’ way o’ God. He’s lyin’ ill in the gaol. I seen him yestherday—I went to see him an’ to say whatever I could to comfort him. God pity his gray hairs! an’—hem—have compassion on him and his this day!”

The poor fellow’s heart could stand the sudden contemplation of Dalton’s sorrow no longer—and on uttering the last words he fairly wept.

“If I had known what it was about,” he proceeded; “but that ould scoundrel of a Prophet—ay, an’ that other ould scoundrel of a masther o’ mine—hem ay—whish—but—what am I sayin’?—but if I had known it, ‘ud go hard but I’d give him a lift—so that he might get out o’ the way, at any rate.”

“Ay,” said the pedlar, “at any rate, indeed—faith, you may well say it; but I say, that at any rate he’ll be hanged as sure as he murdhered Sullivan, and as sure as he did, that he may swing, I pray this day!”

“I’ll hould no more discoorse wid that circulatin’ vagabone,” replied Jemmy; “I’m a Christian man—a peaceable man; an’ I know what my religion ordhers me to do when I meet the likes of him—and that is when he houlds the one cheek towardst me to give him a sound Christian rap upon the other. So to the divil I pitch, you, you villain, sowl and body, an’ that’s the worst I wish you. If you choose to be unchristian, be so; but, be my sowl, I’ll not set you the example. Charley,” he proceeded, addressing Hanlon, “I was sent for you in a hurry. Masther Dick wants you, and so does Red Rody—the villain! and I tell you to take care of him, for, like that vagabone, Judas, he’d kiss you this minute and betray you the next.”

“I believe you’re purty near the truth,” replied Jemmy, “but I was near forgettin’—it seems the Crowner of the country is sick, an’ there can’t be an inquest held till he recovers; if he ever does recover, an’ if it ’ud sarve poor ould Dalton, that he never may, I pray God this day!—come away, you’ll be killed for stayin’.”

Just then young Henderson himself called Hanlon forth, who, after some conversation with him, turned towards the garden, where he held a second conference with Red Rody, who, on leaving him appeared in excellent spirits, and kept winking and nodding, with a kind of burlesque good humor, at every one whom he knew, until he reached home.

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In this state stood the incidents of our narrative, suspended for some time by the illness of the coroner, when Mr. Travers, himself a magistrate, came to the head inn of the county town in which he always put up, and where he held his office. He had for several days previously gone over the greater portion of the estate, and inspected the actual condition of the tenantry on it. It is unnecessary to say that he was grieved at the painful consequences of the middleman system, and of sub-letting in general. Wherever he went, he found the soil in many places covered with hordes of pauper occupants, one holding under another in a series that diminished from bad to worse in everything but numbers, until he arrived at a state of destitution that was absolutely! disgraceful to humanity. And what rendered this state of things doubly painful and anomalous was the fact, that while these starving wretches lived upon his employer's property, they had no claim on him as a landlord, nor could he recognize them as tenants. It is true that these miserable creatures, located upon small patches of land, were obliged to pay their rents to the little tyrant who was over them, and he again, probably to a still more important little tyrant, and so on; but whenever it happened that the direct tenant, or any one of the series, neglected to pay his or their rent, of course the landlord had no other remedy than to levy it from off the soil, thus rendering it by no means an unfrequent case that the small occupiers who owed nothing to him or those above them were forced to see their property applied to the payment of the head rent, in consequence of the inability, neglect, or dishonesty of the middleman, or some other subordinate individual from whom, they held. This was a state of things which Mr. Travers wished to abolish, but to do so, without inflicting injury, however unintentional, or occasioning harshness to the people, was a matter not merely difficult but impossible. As we are not, however, writing a treatise upon the management of property, we shall confine ourselves simply to the circumstances only of such of the tenants as have enacted a part in our narrative.

About a week had now elapsed since the abusive contest between Jemmy Branigan and the pedlar; the coroner was beginning to recover, and Charley Hanlon's aunt had disappeared altogether from the neighborhood. Previous to her departure, however, she, her nephew, and the pedlar, had several close, and apparently interesting conferences, into which their parish priest, the Rev. Anthony Devlin, was ultimately admitted. It was clear, indeed, that whatever secret the pedlar communicated, had inspired both Hanlon and his aunt with fresh energy in their attempts to discover the murderer of their relative; and there could be little doubt that the woman's disappearance from the scene of its perpetration was in some way connected with the steps they were taking to bring everything connected with it to light.

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Travers, already acquainted with the committal of old Dalton, as he was with all the circumstances of his decline and eviction from his farm, was sitting in his office, about twelve o'clock, when our friend, the pedlar, bearing a folded paper in his hand, presented himself, with a request that he might be favored with a private interview. This, without any difficulty, was granted, and the following dialogue took place between them:—

"Well, my good friend," said the agent; "what is the nature of this private business of yours?"

"Why, plase your honor, it's a petition in favor of ould Condy Dalton."

"A petition! Of what use is a petition to Dalton? Is he not now in gaol, on a charge of murder? You would not have me attempt to obstruct the course of justice, would you? The man will get a fair trial, I hope."

"I hope so, your honor; but this petition is not about the crime the unfortunate man is in for; it's an humble prayer to your honor, hopin' you might restore him—or, I ought rather to say, his poor family, to the farm that they wor so cruelly put out of. Will your honor read it, sir, and look into it, bekaise, at any rate, it sets forth too common a case."

"I am partly acquainted with the circumstances, already; however, let me see the paper."

"The pedlar placed it in Mr. Travers' hands,—who on looking over it, read, somewhat to his astonishment, as follows:—

"The humble petition of Cornelius Dalton, to his Honor, Mr. John Robert Travers, Esq., on behalf of himself, his Wife, and his afflicted family; now lying in a state of almost superhuman Destitution—by Eugenius M'Grane, Philomath and classical Instructor in the learned Languages of Latin, English, and the Hibernian Vernacular, with an inceptive Initiation into the Rudiments of Greek, as far as the Gospel of St. John the Divine; attended with copious Disquisitions on the relative Merits of moral and physical Philosophy, as contrasted with the pusillanimous Lectures of that Ignoramus of the first Water, Phadrick M'Swagger, falsely calling himself Philomath—*cum multis aliis quos enumerare longum est*:

"Humbly Sheweth—

"That Cornelius Dalton, late of Cargah, gentleman agriculturist, held a farm of sixty-six Irish acres, under the Right Honorable (the reverse could be proved with sound and legitimate logic) Lord Mollyborough, an absentee nobleman, and proprietor of the Tullystretchem estate. That the said Cornelius Dalton entered upon the farm of Cargah, with a handsome capital and abundant stock, as became a man bent on improving it, for both the intrinsic and external edification and comfort of himself and family. That the

rent was originally very high; and, upon complaint of this, several well indited remonstrances, urged with most persuasive and enthusiastic eloquence, as the inditer hereof can testify, were most insignificantly and superciliously disregarded. That the said Mr.

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Cornelius Dalton persisted notwithstanding this great act of contemptuosity and discouragement to his creditable and industrious endeavors, to expend, upon the aforesaid farm, in solid and valuable improvements, a sum of seven hundred pounds and upwards, in building, draining, enclosing, and manuring—all of which improvements transcendantly elevated the value of the farm in question, as the whole rational population of the country could depose to—*me ipso teste quoque*. That when this now highly emendated tenement was brought to the best condition of excellence of which it was susceptible, the middleman landlord—*va miseris agricolis!*—called upon him for an elevation of rent, which was reluctantly complied with, under the tyrannical alternative of threatened ejection, incarceration of cattle, &c, &c, and many other proceedings equally inhuman and iniquitous. That this rack-rent, being now more than the land could pay, began to paralyze the efforts, and deteriorate the condition of the said Mr. Cornelius Dalton; and which, being concatenated with successive failures in his crops, and mortality among his cattle, occasioned him, as it were, to retrogade from his former state; and in the course of a few calamitous years, to decline, by melancholy gradation and oppressive treatment from Richard Henderson, Esq., J.P., his landlord, to a state of painful struggle and poverty. That the said Richard Henderson, Esq., his unworthy landlord, having been offered a still higher rent, from a miserable disciple, named Darby Skinadre, among others, unfeelingly availed himself of Dalton's *res augusta*—and under play of his privileges as a landlord, levied an execution upon his property, auctioned him out, and expelled him from the farm; thus turning a respectable man and his family, hopeless and houseless, beggars upon the world, to endure misery and destitution. That the said Mr. Cornelius Dalton, now plain Corny Dalton—for vile poverty humilifies even the name—or rather his respectable family, among whom, *facile princeps*, for piety and unshaken trust in her Redeemer, stands his truly unparalleled wife, are lying in a damp wet cabin within about two hundred perches of his former residence, groaning with the agonies of hunger, destitution, dereliction, and disease, in such a state of complicated and multiform misery as rarely falls to the lot of human eyes to witness. That the burthen and onus of this petition is, to humbly supplicate that Mr. Cornelius Dalton, or rather his afflicted and respectable family, may be reinstated in their farm as aforesaid, or if not, that Richard Henderson, J.P., may be compelled to swallow such a titillating emetic from the head landlord as shall compel him to eructate to this oppressed and plundered man all the money he expended in making improvements, which remain to augment the value of the farm, but which, at the same time, were the means of ruining himself and his most respectable family: for, as the bard says, '*sio vos non vobis*,' &c, &c. Of the remainder of this appropriate quotation, your honor cannot be incognizant, or any man who has had the advantage of being college-bred, as every true gentleman or '*homo factus ad unguem*' must have, otherwise he fails to come under this category.—And your petitioner will ever pray."

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“Are you the Mr. Eugenius McGrane,” asked the agent, “who drew up this extraordinary document?”

“No, your honor; I’m only merely a friend of the Daltons, although a stranger in the neighborhood.”

“But what means have Dalton or his family, granting that he escapes from this charge of murder that’s against him, of stocking or working so large a farm? I am aware myself that the contents of this petition, with all its pedantry, are too true.”

“But consider, sir, that he sunk seven hundred pounds in it, an’ that, according to everything like fair play, he ought either to get his farm again, at a raisonable rate, or his money that raised its value for the landlord, back again; sure, that’s but fair, your honor.”

“I’m not here to discuss the morality of the subject, my good friend, neither do I question the truth of your argument, simply as you put it. I only say, that what you ask, is impracticable. You probably know not Dick o’ the Grange, for you say you are a stranger—if you did, you would not put yourself to the trouble of getting even a petition for such a purpose written.”

“It’s a hard case, your honor.”

“It is a hard case; but the truth is, I see nothing that can be done for the Daltons. To talk of putting a family, in such a state as they are now in, back again, upon such a farm, is stark nonsense—without stock or capital of any kind—the thing is ridiculous.”

“But suppose they had stock and capital?”

“Why, then, they certainly would have the best right to the farm—but where’s the use of talking about stock or capital, so far as they are concerned?”

“I wish your honor would interfere for an oppressed and ill-treated family, against as great a rogue, by all accounts, as ever broke bread—I wish you would make me first sure that they’d get their farm.”

“To what purpose, I say?”

“Why, sir, for a raison I have. If your honor will make me sure that they’ll get their land again, that’s all I want.'”

“What is your reason? Have you capital, and are you willing to assist them?”

The pedlar shook his head. “Is it the likes o’ me, your honor? No, but maybe it might be made up for them some way.”

“I believe,” said the agent, “that your intentions are good; only that they are altogether impracticable. However, a thought strikes me. Go to Dick o’ the Grange, and lay your case before him. Ask a new lease for your friends, the Daltons—of course he won’t give it; but at all events, come back to me, and let me know, as nearly in his own words as you can, what answer he will give you; go now, that is all that I can do for you in the matter.”

“Barrin’ this, your honor, that set in case the poor heart-broken Daltons wor to get capital some way.”

“Perhaps,” said Travers, interrupting him, “you can assist them.”

“Oh, if I could!—no, but that set in case, as I said, that it was to be forthcomin’, you persave. Me!—oh, the Lord that *I was* able!”

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“Very well,” replied the other, anxious to rid himself of the pedlar, “that will do, now. You are, I perceive, one of those good-natured, speculating creatures, who are anxious to give hope and comfort to every one. The world has many like you; and it often happens, that when some good fortune does throw the means of doing good into your power, you turn out to be a poor, pitiful, miserable crew, without actual heart or feeling. Goodbye, now. I have no more time to spare—try Dick o’ the Grange himself, and let me know his answer.”

So saying, he rang the bell, and our friend the pedlar, by no means satisfied with the success of his interview, took his leave.

CHAPTER XXIII. — Darby in Danger—Nature Triumphs.

The mild and gentle Mave Sullivan, with all her natural grace and unobtrusive modesty, was yet like many of the fair daughters of her country, possessed of qualities which frequently lie dormant in the heart until some trying calamity or startling event of more than ordinary importance, awakens them into life and action. Indeed, any one in the habit of observing the world, may have occasionally noticed, that even within the range of his own acquaintances, there has been many a quiet and apparently diffident girl, without pretence or affectation of any kind, who when some unexpected and stunning blow has fallen either upon herself or upon some one within the circle of her affections, has manifested a spirit so resolute or a devotion so heroic, that she has at once constituted herself the lofty example whom all admire and endeavor to follow. The unrecorded calamities of ordinary life, and the annals of human affection, as they occur from day to day around us, are full of such noble instances of courage and self sacrifice on the part of woman for the sake of those who are dear to her. Dear, holy, and heroic woman! how frequently do we who too often sneer at your harmless vanities and foibles, forget the light by which your love so often dispels the darkness of our affliction, and the tenderness with which your delicious sympathy charms our sorrows and our sufferings to rest, when nothing else can succeed in giving us one moment’s consolation!

The situation of the Daltons, together with the awful blow which fell upon them at a period of such unexampled misery, had now become the melancholy topic of conversation among their neighbors, most, if not all, of whom were, however, so painfully absorbed in their own individual afflictions either of death, or famine, or illness, as to be able to render them no assistance. Such as had typhus in their own families were incapable of attending to the wants or distress of others, and such as had not, acting under the general terror of contagion which prevailed, avoided the sick houses as they would a plague.

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On the morning after old Dalton's removal to prison, Jerry Sullivan and his family were all assembled around a dull fire, the day being, as usual, so wet that it was impossible to go out unless upon some matter of unusual importance; there was little said, for although they had hitherto escaped the fever, still their sufferings and struggles were such as banished cheerfulness from among them. Mave appeared more pale and dejected than they had ever yet seen her, and it was noticed by one or two of the family, that she had been occasionally weeping in some remote corner of the house where she thought she might do so without being observed.

"Mave, dear," said her father, "what is the matter wid you? You look, darlin', to be in very low spirits to-day. Were you cryin'?"

She raised her large innocent eyes upon him, and they instantly filled with tears.

"I can't keep it back from you, father," she replied, "let me do as I will—an' oh, father dear, when we look out upon the world that is in it, an' when we see how the hand o' God is takin' away so many from among us, and when we see how the people everywhere is sufferin' and strugglin' wid so much—how one is here this day, and in a week to come in the presence of their Judge! Oh, surely, when we see all the doin's of death and distress about us, we ought to think that it's no time to harbor hatred or any other bad or unchristian feelin's in our hearts!"

"It is not, indeed, darlin'; an' I hope nobody here does."

"No," she replied; and as she spoke, the vibrations of sorrow and of sympathy shook her naturally sweet voice into that tender expression which touches the heart of the hearer with such singular power—"no, father," she proceeded, "I hope not; religion teaches us a different lesson—not only to forgive our enemies, but to return good for evil."

"It does, *achora machree*," replied her father, whose eyes expressed a kind of melancholy pride, as he contemplated his beautiful but sorrowful looking girl, giving utterance to truths which added an impressive and elevated character to her beauty.

"Young and ould, *achushla machree*, is fallin' about us in every direction; but may the Father of Mercy spare you to us, my darlin' child, for if anything was to happen you, where—Oh, where could we look upon your aiquil, or find anything that could console us for your loss?"

"If it's my fate to go, father, I'll go, an if it isn't God will take care of me; whatever comes, I'm resigned to His will."

"Ay, dear, an' you ever wor, too—and for the same raison God's blessin' will be upon you; but what makes you look so low, avourneen? I trust in my Saviour, you are not unwell, Mave, dear."

“Thanks be to God, no, father; but there’s a thing on my mind, that’s distressin’ me very much, an’ I hope you’ll allow me my way in it.”

“I may say so, dear; because I know you wouldn’t ax me for anything that ’ud be wrong to grant you. What is it, Mave?”

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“It’s the unhappy an’ miserable state that these poor Daltons is in,” she replied. “Father, dear, forgive me for what I’m about to say; for, although it may make you angry, there’s nothin’ farther from my heart than to give you offence.”

“You needn’t tell me so, Mave; you need not, indeed; but sure you know, darlin’, that unfortunately, we have nothing in our power to do for them; I wish to the Lord we had! Didn’t we do all that people in our poor condition could do for them? Didn’t you, yourself, achora, make us send them such little assistance as we could spare?—ay, even to sharin’ I may say, our last morsel wid them; an’ now, darlin’, you know we haven’t it.”

“I know that,” she replied, as she wiped away the tears; “where is there a poorer family than we are, sure enough? but, father, dear; we can assist them—relieve them; ay, maybe save them—for all that.”

“God be praised then!” exclaimed Sullivan; “only show me how, an’ we’ll be glad to do it; for I can forget everything now, Mave, but their distress.”

“But do you know the condition they’re in at this moment?” she asked, “do you know, father, that they’re stretched on the bed of sickness? I mean Nancy an’—an’ young Con, who has got into a relapse; poor Mary is scarcely able to go about, she’s so badly recovered from the fever; an’ Tom, the wild unfortunate young man, is out of his senses, they say. Then there’s nobody to look to them but Mrs. Dalton herself; an’ she, you know, has to go ‘out’ to ask their poor bit from the neighbors. Only think,” she proceeded, with a fresh burst of sorrow, “oh, only think, father, of sich a woman bein’ forced to this!”

“May the Lord pity her an’ them, this woeful day!” exclaimed Sullivan.

“Now, father,” proceeded Mave; “I know—oh who knows better or so well—what a good an’ a kind an’ a forgivin’ heart you have; an’ I know that even in spite of the feelin’ that was, and maybe is, upon your mind against them, you’ll grant me my wish in what I’m goin’ to ask.”

“What is it then?—let me hear it.”

“It’s this: you know that here, in our family I can do nothing to help ourselves—that is, there is nothing for me to do—an’ I feel the time hang heavy on my hands. I have been thinkin’, father dear, of this miserable state the poor Daltons is in, without any one to attend them in their sickness—to say a kind word to them, or to hand them even a drink of clean water, if they wanted it. Them that hasn’t got the fever yet, won’t go near them for fear of catchin’ it. What, then, will become of them? There they are, without the face, or hand, or voice of kindness about them. Oh, what on God’s blessed earth will become of them? They may die an’ they must die, for want of care and assistance.”

“But sure that’s not our fault, dear Mave; we can’t help them.”

“We can, father—an’ we must; for if we don’t they’ll die. Father,” she added, laying her wasted hand in his; “it is my intention to go over to them—an’ as I have nothing that I can do at home, to spend the greater part of the day with them in takin’ care of them—-an’—an’ in doin’ what I can for them, Yes, father dear—it is my intention—for there is none but me to do it for them.”

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“Saviour of earth, Mave dear, is it mad you are? You, *achora machree*, that’s! dearer to us all than the apple of our eye, or the very pulse of our hearts—to let you into a plague-house—to let you near the deadly faver that’s upon them—where you’d be sure to catch it; an’ then—oh, blessed Father. Mave what’s come over you, to think of sich a thing? —ay, or to think that we’d let you expose yourself? But it’s all the goodness and kindness of your affectionate heart; put it out of your head, however—don’t name it, or let us hear of it again.”

“But, father, it’s a duty that our religion teaches us.”

“Why—what’s come over you, Mave?—all at wanst too—you that was so much afeard of it that you wouldn’t go on a windy side of a feverish house, nor walk near any one that was even recoverin’ from it. Why, what’s come over you?”

“Simply, father, the thought if I don’t go to them and help them, they will die. I was afeard of the fever, and I am afeard of it—but am I to let my own foolish fears prevent me from doin’ the part of a Christian to them? Let us put ourselves in their place—an’ who knows—although may God forbid!—but it may be our own before the season passes—suppose it was our own case—an’ that all the world was afeard to come near us; oh, what would we think of any one, man or woman, that trustin’ in God, would set their own fears at defiance, an’ come to our relief.”

“Mave, I couldn’t think of it; if anything happened you, an’ that we lost you, I never would lay my head down without the bitther thought that I had a hand in your death.”

At this moment, the mother who had been in another room, came in to the kitchen—and having listened for a minute to the subject of their conversation, she immediately joined her husband; but still with feelings of deep and almost tearful sympathy for the Daltons.

“It’s like her, poor affectionate girl,” she exclaimed, looking tenderly at her daughter; “but it’s a thing, Mave, we could never think of; so put it out of your head.”

She approached her mother, and, seizing her hands, exclaimed:—

“Oh, mother, for the sake of the livin’ God, make it your own case!—think of it—bring it home to you—look into the frightful state they’re in. Are they to die in a Christian country for want of some kind person to attend upon them? Is it not our duty, when we know how they are sufferin’? I cannot rest, or be at ease; an’ I am not afeard of fever here. You may say I love young Condy Dalton, an’ that it is on his account I am wishin’ to go. Maybe it is; an’ I will now tell you at wanst, that I do love him, and that if it was the worst plague that ever silenced the noise of life in a whole country, it wouldn’t prevent me from goin’ to his relief, nor to the relief of any one belongin’ to him.”

“I know,” said her father, “that that was at the bottom of it.”

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“I do love him,” she continued, “an’ this is more than ever I had courage to tell you openly before; but, father, I feel that I am called upon here to go to their assistance, and to see that they don’t die from neglect in a Christian country. I have trust an’ confidence in the Almighty God. I am not afeard of fever now; and even if I take it an’ die, you both know that I’ll die in actin’ the part of a Christian girl; an’ what brighter hope could anything bring to us than the happiness that such a death would open to me? But here I feel that the strength and protection of God is upon me, and I will not die.”

“That’s all very well Mave,” said her mother; “but if you took it, and did die--oh, darlin’------”

“In God’s name, then, I’ll take my chance, an’ do the duty that I feel myself called upon to do; and, father dear, just think for a minute—the thrue Christian doesn’t merely forgive the injury but returns good for evil; and then, above all things, let us make it our own case. As I said before, if we were as they are—lyin’ racked with pain, burnin’ with druth, the head splittin’, the whole strength gone—not able, maybe, to spake, and hardly able to make a sign—to wake ourselves, to put a drink to our lips;—suppose, I say, we wor lyin’ in this state, an’ that all the world had deserted us—oh, wouldn’t we say that any fellow-crature that had the kindness and the courage to come and aid us—wet our lips, raise our heads, and cheer our sinkin’ hearts by the sound of their voice alone—oh, wouldn’t we say that it was God that in His mercy put it into their heart to come to us, and relieve us, and save us?”

The mother’s feelings gave way at this picture; and she said, addressing her husband —

“Jerry, maybe it’s right that she should go, bekaise, afther all, what if it’s God Himself that has put it into her heart?”

He shook his head, but it was clear that his opposition began to waver.

“Think of the danger,” he replied; “think of that. Still if I thought it was God’s own will that was setting her to it—”

“Father,” she replied, “let us do what is right, and lave the rest to God Himself. Surely you aren’t afeard to trust in *Him*. I may take the fever here at home, without goin’ at all, and die; for if it’s His blessed will that I should die of it, nothing can save me, let me go or stay where I plaise; and if it’s not, it matthers little where I go; His divine grace and goodness will take care of me and protect me. It’s to God Himself, then, you are trustin’ me, an’ that ought to satisfy you.”

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Her parents looked at each other—then at her; and, with tears in their eyes, as if they had been parting with her as for a sacrifice, they gave a consent, in which that humble confidence in the will of God which constitutes the highest order of piety, was blended with a natural yearning and terror of the heart, lest they were allowing her to place herself rashly within the fatal reach of the contagion which prevailed. Having obtained their permission, she lost very little time in preparing for the task she had proposed to execute. A very small portion of meal, and a little milk, together with one or two jugs of gruel, whey, &c, she put under her cloak; and after getting the blessings of her parents, and kissing them and the rest of the family, she departed upon her pious—her sublime mission, followed by the tears and earnest prayers of her whole family.

How anomalous, and full of mysterious and inexplicable impulses is the human heart! Mave Sullivan, who, in volunteering to attend at the contagious beds of the unfortunate Daltons, gave singular and noble proof of the most heroic devotedness, absolutely turned from the common road, on her way to their cabin, rather than meet the funeral of a person who had died of fever, and on one or two occasions kept aloof from men who she knew to be invalids by the fact of their having handkerchiefs about their heads—a proof, in general, that they had been shaved or blistered, while laboring under its severest form.

When she had gone within about a quarter of a mile of her destination, she met two individuals, whose relative positions indicated anything but a state of friendly feeling between them. The persons we allude to were Thomas Dalton and the miserable object of his vengeance, Darby Skinadre. Our readers are aware that Sarah caused Darby to accompany her, for safety, to the cabin of the Daltons, as she feared that, should young Dalton again meet him at the head of his mob, and he in such a furious and unsettled state, the hapless miser might fall a victim to his vengeance. No sooner, therefore, had the meal-monger heard Tom's name mentioned by his father, when about to proceed to prison, than he left a dark corner of the cabin, into which he had slunk, and, passing out, easily disappeared, without being noticed, in the state of excitement which prevailed.

The very name of Tom reminded him that he was in his father's house, and that should he return, and find him there, he might expect little mercy at his hands. Tom, however, amidst the melancholy fatuity under which he labored, never forgot that he had an account to settle with Skinadre. It ran through his unsettled understanding like a sound thread through a damaged web; for ever and anon his thought and recollection would turn to Peggy Murtagh, and the miser's refusal to give her credit for the food she asked of him. During the early part of that day he had gone about with a halter in his hand, as if seeking some particular individual; and whenever he chanced to be questioned as to his object, he always replied with a wild and ferocious chuckle—

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“The fellow that killed her!—the fellow that killed her!”

Upon the present occasion, Mave was surprised by meeting him and the miser, whom he must have met accidentally, walking side by side, but in a position which gave fearful intimation of Dalton’s purpose respecting him. Around the unfortunate wretch’s neck was the halter aforesaid, made into a running noose, while, striding beside him, went his wild and formidable companion, holding the end of it in his hand, and eyeing him from time to time with a look of stupid but determined ferocity. Skinadre’s appearance and position were ludicrously and painfully helpless. His face was so pale and thin that it was difficult to see, even in those frightfuf times of sickness and famine, a countenance from which they were more significantly reflected. He was absolutely shrunk up with terror into half his size, his little thin, corded neck appearing as if it were striving unsuccessfully to work its way down into his trunk, and his small ferret eyes looking about in every direction for some one to extricate him out of the deadly thrall in which he was held. Mave, who had been aware of the enmity which his companion bore him, as well as of its cause, and fearing that the halter was intended to hang the luckless mealman, probably upon the next tree they came to, did not, as many another female would do, avoid or run away from the madman. On the contrary, she approached him with an expression singularly winning and sweet on her countenance, and in a voice of great kindness, laid her hand upon his arm to arrest his attention, asked him how he did. He paused a moment, and looking upon her with a dull but turbid eye, exclaimed with an insane laugh, pointing at the same time, to the miser—“This is the fellow that killed her—ha, ha, ha, but I have him now—here he is in the noose; in the noose. Ay, an’ I swore it, an’ there’s another, too, that’s to get it, but I won’t rob any body, nor join in that at all; I’ll hang him here, though—ha, Darby, I have you now.”

As he spoke, poor Skinadre received a chuck of the halter which almost brought his tongue out as far as in the throttling process which we have before described.

“Mave, achora,” said he, looking at her after his recovery from the powerful jerk he had just got, “for the sake of heaven, try an’ save my life; if you don’t he’ll never let me out of his hands a livin’ man.”

“Don’t be alarmed, Darby,” she replied, “poor Tom won’t injure you; so far from that, he’ll take the halter from about your neck, an’ let you go. Won’t you let poor Darby go, Tom?”

“I will,” he replied, “after I hang him—ha, ha, ha; ’twas he that killed her; he let her die wid hunger, but now he’ll swing for it, ha, ha!”

These words were accompanied by another chuck, which pulled miserable Skinadre almost off his legs.

“Tom, for shame,” said Mave, “why would you do sich an unmanly thing with this poor ould crature?—be a man, and let him go.”

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“Ay, when he’s, hangin’, wid his tongue out, ha, ha, ha; wait till we get to the Rabbit Bank, where there’s a tree to be had; I’ve sworn it, ay, on her very grave too; so good-by, Mave! Come along, Darby.”

“Mave, as you expect to have the gates of Heaven opened to your sowl, an’ don’t lave me,” exclaimed the miser with clasped hands.

Mave looked up and down the road, but could perceive no one approach who might render the unfortunate man assistance.

“Tom,” said she, “I must insist on your settin’ the poor man at liberty; I insist upon it. You cannot, an’ you must not take his life in a Christian country; if you do, you know you will be hanged yourself. Let him go immediately.”

“Oh, ay,” he replied, “you insist, Mave; but I’ll tell you what—I’ll put Peggy in a coach yet, when I come into my fortune; an’ so you’ll insist, will you? Jest look at that wrist of yours,” he replied, seizing hers, but with gentleness, “and then look at this of mine; an’ now will you tell me that you’ll insist? Come, Darby, we’re bound for the Bank; there’s not a beech there but’s a hundred feet high, an’ that’s higher than ever I’ll make you swing from. Your heart bled for her, didn’t it! but how will you look when I have you facin’ the sun, wid your tongue out?”

“Tom,” replied the wretch, “I go on my knees to you, an’ as you hope, Tom—”

“Hope, you hard-hearted hound! isn’t her father’s curse upon me? ay, an’ in me? Wasn’t she destroyed among us? an’ you bid me hope. By the broken heart she died of, you’ll get a double tug for that,” and he was about to drag him on in a state of great violence, when Mave again placed her hand upon, his arm, and said—

“I am sure, Tom, you are not ungrateful; I am sure you would not forget a kind act done to poor Peggy, that’s gone.”

“Peggy!” he replied, “what’s about her? gone!—Peggy gone!—is she gone?”

“She is gone,” replied Mave, “but not lost; an’ it is most likely that she is now looking down with displeasure at your conduct and intentions towards this poor man; but listen.”

“Are you goin’ to spake about Peggy, though?”

“I am, and listen. Do you remember one evenin’ in the early part of this summer, it was of a Sunday, there was a crowd about old Brian Murtagh’s house, and the report of Peggy’s shame had gone abroad and couldn’t be kept from people’s eyes any longer. She was turned out of her father’s house—she was beaten by her brother who swore that he would take the life of the first person, whether man or woman, young or ould, that would give her one hour’s shelter. She was turned out, poor, young, misled and

mistaken crature, and no one would resave her, for no one durst. There was a young girl then passin' through the village, on her way home, much about Peggy's own age, but barring in one respect, neither so good nor so handsome. Poor Peggy ran to that young girl, an' she was goin' to throw herself into her arms, but she stopped. 'I am not worthy,' she said, cryin' bitterly; 'I am not worthy,—but oh, I have no roof to shelter me, for no one dare take me in. What will become of me?'"

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While she spoke, Dalton's mind appeared to have been stirred into something like a consciousness of his situation, and his memory to have been brought back, as it were, from the wild and turbulent images, which had impaired its efficacy, to a personal recollection of circumstances that had ceased to affect him. His features, for instance, became more human, his eye more significant of his feeling, and his whole manner more quiet and restored. He looked upon the narrator with an awakened interest, surveyed Darby, as if he scarcely knew how or why he came there, and then sighed deeply. Mave proceeded:

"'I am an outcast now,' said poor Peggy; 'I have neither house nor home; I have no father, no mother, no brother, an' he that I loved, an' said that he loved me, has deserted me. Oh,' said she, 'I have nothing to care for, an' nobody to care for me now, an' what was dearest of all—my good name—is gone: no one will shelter me, although I thought of nothing but my love for Thomas Dalton!' She was scorned, Thomas Dalton, she was insulted and abused by women who knew her innocence and her goodness till she met him; every tongue was against her, every hand was against her, and every door was closed against her; no, not every one—the young woman she spoke to, with tears in her eyes, out of compassion for one so young and unfortunate, brought Peggy Murtagh home, and cried with her, and gave her hope, and consoled her, and pleaded with her father and mother for the poor deluded girl in such a way that they forgot her misfortune and sheltered her; till, after her brother's death, she was taken in again to her own father's house. Now, Tom, wouldn't you like to oblige that girl who was kind to poor Peggy Murtagh?"

"It was in Jerry Sullivan's—it was into your father's house she was taken."

"It was Tom; and the young woman who befriended Peggy Murtagh is now standin' by your side and asks you to let Darby Skinadre go; do, then, let him go, for the sake of that young woman!"

Mave, on concluding, looked up into his face, and saw that his eyes were moist; he then smiled moodily, and, placing his hand upon her head in an approving manner, said—

"You wor always good, Mave—here, set Darby free; but my mind's uneasy; I'm not right, I doubt:—nor as I ought to be; but I'll tell you what—I'll go back towards home wid you, if you'll tell me more about Peggy."

"Do so," she replied, delighted at such a proposal; "an' I will tell you many a thing about her; an' you, Darby," she added, turning round to that individual—short, however, as the time was, the exulting, but still trembling usurer was making his way, at full speed, towards his own house; so that she was spared the trouble of advising him, as she had intended, to look to his safety as well as he could. Such was the gentle power with which Mave softened and subdued this ferocious and unsettled young man to her

wishes; and, indeed, so forcible in general was her firm but serene enthusiasm, that wherever the necessity for exerting it occurred, it was always crowned with success.

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Thomas Dalton as might be expected, swayed by the capricious impulse of his unhappy derangement, did not accompany her to his father's cabin. When within a few hundred yards of it, he changed his intention, and struck across the country like one who seemed uncertain as to the course he should take. Of late, indeed, he rambled about, sometimes directing, otherwise associating himself with, such mobs as we have described; sometimes wandering, in a solitary manner, through the country at large; and but seldom appearing at home. On the present occasion, he looked at Mave, and said:

"I hate sick people, Mave, an' I won't go home; but, whisper, when you see Peggy Murtagh's father, tell him that I'll have her in a coach, yet, plaise God, an' he'll take the curse off o' me, when he hears it, maybe, an' all will be right."

He then bid her good-bye, turned from the road, and bent his steps in the direction of the Rabbit Bank, on one of the beeches of which he had intended to hang the miser.

CHAPTER XXIV. — Rivalry.

If the truth were known, the triumph which Mave Sullivan achieved over the terror of fever which she felt in common with almost every one in the country around her, was the result of such high-minded devotion, as would have won her a statue in the times of old Greece, when self-sacrifice for human good was appreciated and rewarded. In her case, indeed, the triumph was one of almost unparalleled heroism; for among all the difficulties which she had to overcome, by far the greatest was her own constitutional dread of contagion. It was only on reaching the miserable pest-house in which the Daltons lived, and on witnessing, with her own eyes, the clammy atmosphere which, in the shape of dark heavy smoke, was oozing in all directions from its roof, that she became conscious of the almost fatal step that she was about to take, and the terrible test of Christian duty and exalted affection, to which she was in the act of subjecting herself.

On arriving at the door, and when about to enter, even the resolution she had come to, and the lofty principle of trust in God, on which it rested, were scarcely able to support her against the host of constitutional terrors, which, for a moment, rushed upon her breast. The great act of self-sacrifice, as it may almost be termed, which she was about to perform, became so diminished in her imagination, that all sense of its virtue passed away; and instead of gaining strength from a consciousness of the pure and unselfish motive by which she was actuated, she began to contemplate her conduct as the result of a rash and unjustifiable presumption on the providence of God, and a wanton exposure of the life he had given her. She felt herself tremble; her heart palpitated, and for a minute or two her whole soul became filled with a tumultuous and indistinct! perception of all she had proposed to do, as well as of everything about her. Gradually, however, his state of feeling cleared away—by and by the purity and Christian principle that were involved in her conduct, came to her relief.

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“What,” she asked herself, “if they should die without assistance? In God’s name, and with his strength to aid me, I will run all risks, and fulfil the task I have taken upon me to do. May he support and protect me through it.”

Thus resolved, and thus fortified, she entered the gloomy scene of sickness and contagion.

There were but four persons within: that is to say, her lover, his sister Nancy, Mary the invalid, and Sarah M’Gowan. Nancy and her brother were now awake, and poor Mary occupied her father’s arm-chair, in which she sat with her head reclined upon the back of it, somewhat, indeed, after his own fashion—and Sarah opposite young Con’s bed, having her eyes fixed, with a mournful expression, on his pale and almost deathlike countenance. Mave’s appearance occasioned the whole party to feel much surprise—-and Mary rose from her arm-chair, and greeting her affectionately, said—

“I cannot welcome you, dear Mave, to sick a place as this—and indeed I am sorry you came to see us—for I needn’t tell you what I’d feel—what we’d all feel,” and here she looked quickly, but with the slightest possible significance at her brother, “if anything happened you in consequence; which may God forbid! How are you all at home?”

“We are all free from sickness, thank God,” said Mave, whom the presence of Sarah caused to blush deeply; “but how are you all here? I am sorry to find that poor Nancy is ill—and that Con has got a relapse.”

She turned her eyes upon him as she spoke, and, on contemplating his languid and sickly countenance, she could only, by a great effort, repress her tears.

“Do not come near us, dear Mave,” said Dalton, “and, indeed, it was wrong to come here at all.”

“God bless you, an’ guard you, Mave,” said Nancy, “an’ we feel your goodness; but as Con says, it was wrong to put yourself in the way of danger. For God’s sake, and as you hope to escape this terrible sickness, lave the house at wanst. We’re sensible of your kindness—but lave us—lave us—for every minute you stop, may be death to you.”

Sarah, who had never yet spoken to Mave, turned her black mellow eyes from her to her lover, and from him to her alternately. She then dropped them for a time on the ground, and again looked round her with something like melancholy impatience. Her complexion was high and flushed, and her eyes sparkled with unaccustomed brilliancy.

“It’s not right two people should run sich risk on our account,” said Con, looking towards Sarah; “here’s a young woman who has come to nurse, tend and take care of us, for which, may God bless her, and protect her!—it’s Sarah M’Gowan, Donnel Dhu’s daughter.”

“Think of Mave Sullivan,” said Sarah—“think only’ of Mave Sullivan—she’s in danger—-ha—but as for me—suppose I should take the faver and die?”

“May God forbid, poor girl,” exclaimed Con; “it would lave us all a sad heart. Dear Mave don’t stop here—every minute is dangerous.”

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Sarah went over to the bedside, and putting her hand gently upon his forehead, said—

“Don’t spake to pity me—I can’t bear pity; anything at all but pity from you. Say you don’t care what becomes of me, or whether I die or not—but don’t pity me.”

It is extremely difficult to describe Sarah’s appearance and state of mind as she spoke this. Her manner towards Con was replete with tenderness, and the most earnest and anxious interest, while at the same time there ran through her voice a tone of bitter feeling, an evident consciousness of something that pressed strongly on her heart, which gave a marked and startling character to her language.

Mave for a moment forgot everything but the interest which Sarah, and the mention of her, excited. She turned gently round from Mary, who had been speaking to her, and fixing her eyes on Sarah, examined her with pardonable curiosity, from head to foot; nor will she be blamed, we trust, if, even then and there, the scrutiny was not less close, in consequence of it having been I known to her that in point of beauty, and symmetry of figure, they had stood towards each other, for some time past, in the character of rivals. Sarah who had on, without stockings, a pair of small slippers, a good deal the worse for wear, had risen from the bed side, and now stood near the fire, directly opposite the only little window in the house, and, consequently, in the best light it afforded. Mave’s glance, though rapid, was comprehensive; but she felt it was sufficient: the generous girl, on contemplating the wild grace and natural elegance of Sarah’s figure, and the singular beauty and wonderful animation of her features, instantly, in her own mind, surrendered all claim to competition, and admitted to herself that Sarah was, without exception, the most perfectly beautiful girl she ever seen. Her last words, too, and the striking tone in which they were spoken, arrested her attention still more; so that she passed naturally from the examination of her person to the purport of her language.

We trust that our readers know enough of human nature, to understand that this examination of Sarah, upon the part of Mave Sullivan, was altogether an involuntary act, and one which occurred in less time than we have taken to write any one of the lines in which it is described.

Mave, who perceived at once that the words of Sarah were burdened by some peculiar distress, could not prevent her admiration from turning into pity without exactly knowing why; but in consequence of what Sarah had just said, she feared to express it either by word or look, lest she might occasion her unnecessary pain. She consequently, after a slight pause, replied to her lover—

“You must not blame me, dear Con, for being here. I came to give whatever poor attendance I could to Nancy here, and to sich of you as want it, while you’re sick. I came, indeed, to stay and nurse you all, if you will let me; an’ you won’t be sorry to hear it, in spite of all that has happened, that I have the consent of my father an’ mother for so doin’.”

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A faint smile of satisfaction lit up her lover's features, but this was soon overshadowed by his apprehension for her safety.

Sarah, who had for about a half minute been examining Mave on her part, now started, and exclaimed with flashing eyes, and we may add, a bursting and distracted heart—

"Well, Mave Sullivan, I have often seen you, but never so well as now. You have goodness an' truth in your face. Oh, it's a purty face—a lovely face. But why do you state a falsehood here—for what you've just said is false; I know it."

Mave started, and in a moment her pale face and neck were suffused by one burning blush, at the idea of such an imputation. She looked around her, as if enquiring from all those who were present the nature of the falsehood attributed to her; and then with a calm but firm eye, she asked Sarah what she could mean by such language.

"You're afther sayin'," replied Sarah, "that you're come here to nurse Nancy there. Now that's not true, and you know it isn't. You come here to nurse young Con Dalton: and you came to nurse him, bekaise you love him. No, I don't blame you for that, but I do for not saying so, without fear or disguise—for I hate both."

"That wouldn't be altogether true either," replied Mave, "if I said so; for I did come to nurse Nancy, and any others of the family that might stand in need of it. As to Con, I'm neither ashamed to love him, nor afeard to acknowledge it; and I had no notion of statin' a falsehood when I said what I did. I tell you, then, Sarah M'Gowan, that you've done me injustice. If there appeared to be a falsehood in my words, there was none in my heart."

"That's truth; I know, I feel that that's truth," replied Sarah, quickly; "but oh, how wrong I am," she exclaimed, "to mention that or anything else here that might distract him! Ah," she proceeded, addressing Mave, "I did you injustice—I feel I did, but don't be angry with me, for I acknowledge it."

"Why should I be angry with you?" replied Mave, "you only spoke what you thought, an' this, by all accounts, is what you always do."

"Let us talk as little as possible here," replied Sarah, the sole absorbing object of whose existence lay in Dalton's recovery. "I will speak to you on your way home, but not here—not here;" and while uttering the last words she pointed to Dalton, to intimate that further conversation might disturb him.

"Dear Mave," observed Mary, now rising from her chair, "you are stayin' too long; oh, for God's sake, don't stop; you can't dhrame of the danger you're in."

“But,” replied Mave, calmly, “you know, Mary, that I came to stop and to do whatever I can do till the family comes round. You are too feeble to undertake anything, and might only get into a relapse if you attempted it.”

“But, then we have Sarah M’Gowan,” she replied, “who came, as few would—none livin’ this day, I think, barrin’ yourself and her—to stay with us, and to do anything that she can do for us all. May God for ever bless her! for short as the time is, I think she has saved some of our lives—Condy’s without a doubt.”

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Mave turned towards Sarah, and, as she looked upon her, the tears started to her eyes.

“Sarah M’Gowan,” said she, “you are fond of truth, an’ you are right; I can’t find words to thank you for doin’ what you did, God bless and reward you!”

She extended her hand as she spoke, but Sarah put it back. “No,” said she, indignantly, “never from you; above all that’s livin’ don’t you thank me. You, you, why you arn’t his wife yet,” she exclaimed, in a suppressed voice of deep agitation, “an maybe you never will. You don’t know what may happen—you don’t know—”

She immediately seemed to recollect something that operated as a motive to restrain any exhibition of strong feeling or passion on her part, for all at once she composed herself, and sitting down, merely said:—

“Mave Sullivan, I’m glad you love truth, and I believe you do; I can’t, then, resave any thanks from you, nor I won’t; an’ I would tell you why, any place but here.”

“I don’t at all understand you,” replied Mave; “but for your care and attention to him, I’m sure it’s no harm to say, may God reward you! I will never forget it to you.”

“While I have life,” said Dalton feebly, and fixing his eyes upon Sarah’s face, “I, for one, won’t forget her kindness.”

“Kindness!” she re-echoed—“ha, ha!—well, it’s no matter—it’s no matter!”

“She saved my life, Mave; I was lyin’ here, and hadn’t even a drink of water, and there was no one else in the house; Mary, there, was out, an’ poor Nancy was ravin’ an’ ragin’ with illness and pain; but she, Sarah, was here to settle us, to attend us, to get us a drink whenever we wanted it—to raise us up, an’ to put it to our lips, an’ to let us down with as little pain as possible. Oh, how could I forget all this? Dear, dear Sarah, how could I forget this if I was to live a thousand years?”

Con’s face, while he spoke, became animated with the enthusiasm of the feeling to which he gave utterance, and, as his eyes were fixed on Sarah with a suitable expression, there appeared to be a warmth of emotion in his whole manner which a sanguine person might probably interpret in something beyond gratitude.

Sarah, after he had concluded, looked upon him with a long, earnest, but uncertain gaze; so long, indeed, and so intensely penetrating was it, that the whole energy of her character might, for a time, be read clearly in the singular expression of her eyes. It was evident that her thoughts were fluttering between pleasure and pain, cheerfulness and gloom; but at length her countenance lost, by degrees its earnest character, the alternate play of light and shadow over it ceased, and the gaze changed, almost imperceptibly, into one of settled abstraction.

“It might be,” she said, as if thinking aloud—“it might be—but time will tell; and, in the manetime, everything must be done fairly—fairly; still, if it shouldn’t come to pass—if it should not—it would be betther if I had never been born; but it may be, an’ time will tell.”

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Mave had watched her countenance closely, and without being able to discover the nature of the conflict that appeared in it, she went over, and placing her hand gently upon Sarah's arm, exclaimed—

"Don't blame me for what I'm goin' to say, Sarah—if you'll let me call you Sarah; but the truth is, I see that your mind is troubled. I wish to God I could remove that trouble, or that any one here could! I am sure they all would, as willingly as myself."

"She is troubled," said Mary; "I know by her manner that there's something distressing on her mind. Any earthly thing that we could do to relieve her we would; but I asked her, and she wouldn't tell me."

It is likely that Mary's kindness, and especially Mave's, so gently, but so sincerely expressed, touched her as they spoke. She made no reply, however, but approached Mave with a slight smile on her face, her lips compressed, and her eyes, which were fixed and brilliant, floating in something that looked like moisture, and which might as well have been occasioned by the glow of anger as the impulse of a softer emotion, or perhaps—and this might be nearer the truth—as a conflict between the two states of feeling. For some moments she looked into Mave's very eyes, and after a little, she seemed to regain her composure, and sat down without speaking. There was a slight pause occasioned by the expectation that she had been about to reply, during which Dalton's eyes were fixed upon her. In her evident distress, she looked upon him. Their eyes met, and the revelation that that glance of anguish, on the part of Sarah, gave to him, disclosed the secret.

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed, involuntarily and unconsciously, "is this possible?"

Sarah felt that the discovery had been made by him at last; and seeing that all their eyes were still upon her, she rose up, and approaching Mave, said—

"It is true, Mave Sullivan, I am troubled—Mary, I am troubled;" and as she uttered the words, a blush so deep and so beautiful spread itself over her face and neck, that the very females present were, for the moment, lost in admiration of her radiant youth and loveliness. Dalton's eyes were still upon her, and after a little time, he said—

"Sarah, come to me."

She went to his bedside, and kneeling, bent her exquisite figure over him; and as her dark brilliant eyes looked into his, he felt the fragrance of her breath mingling with his own.

"What is it?" said she.

"You are too near me," said he.

“Ah, I feel I am,” she said, shaking her head.

“I mane,” he added, “for your own safety. Give me your hand, dear Sarah.”

He took her hand, and raising himself a little on his right side, he looked upon her again; and as he did so, she felt a few warm tears falling upon it.

“Now,” he said, “lay me down again, Sarah.”

A few moments of ecstatic tumult, in which Sarah was unconscious of anything about her, passed. She then rose, and sitting down on the little stool, she wept for some minutes in silence. During this quiet paroxysm no one spoke; but when Dalton turned his eyes upon Mave Sullivan, she was pale as ashes.

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Mary, who had noticed nothing particular in the incidents just related, now urged Mave to depart; and the latter, on exchanging glances with Dalton, could perceive that a feeble hectic had overspread his face. She looked on him earnestly for a moment, then paused as if in thought, and going round to his bedside, knelt down, and taking his hand, said—

“Con, if there is any earthly thing that I can do to give ease and comfort to your mind, I am ready to do it. If it would relieve you, forget that you ever saw me, or ever—ever—-knew me at all. Suppose I am not living—that I am dead. I say this, dear Con, to relieve you from any pain or distress of mind that you may feel on my account. Believe me, I feel everything for you, an’ nothing now for myself. Whatever you do, I tell you that a harsh word or thought from me you will never have.”

Mave, while she spoke, did not shed a tear; nor was her calm, sweet voice indicative of any extraordinary emotion. Sarah, who had been weeping until the other began to speak, now rose up, and approaching Mave, said—

“Go, Mave Sullivan—go out of this dangerous house; and you, Condy Dalton, heed not what she has said. Mave Sullivan, I think I understand your words, an’ they make me ashamed of myself, an’ of the thoughts that have been troublin’ me. Oh, what am I when compared to you?—nothing nothing.”

Mave had, on entering, deposited the little matters she had brought for their comfort, and Mary now came over, and placing her hand on her shoulder, said:

“Sarah is right, dear Mave; for God’s sake do not stay here. Oh, think—only think if you tuck this faver, an’ that anything happened you.”

“Come,” said Sarah, “leave this dangerous place; I will see you part of the way home—-you can do nothing here that I won’t do, and everything that I can do will be done.” Her lover’s eyes had been fixed upon her, and with a feeble voice—for the agitation had exhausted him—he added his solicitations for her departure to theirs.

“I hope I will soon be better, dear Mave, and able to get up too—but may God bless you and take care of you till then!”

Mave again went round and took his hand, on which he felt a few tears fall.

“I came here, dear Con,” she said, “to take care of you all, and why need I be ashamed to say so—to do all I could for yourself. Sarah here wishes me to spake the truth, an’ why shouldn’t I? Think of my words then, Con, and don’t let me or the thoughts of me occasion you one moment’s unhappiness. To see you happy is all the wish I have in this world.”

She then bade them an affectionate farewell, and was about to take her departure, when Sarah, who had been musing for a moment, went to Dalton, and having knelt on one knee, was about to speak, and to speak, as was evident from her manner, with great earnestness, when she suddenly restrained herself, clasped her hands with a vehement action, looked distractedly from him to Mave, and then suddenly rising, took Mave's hand, and said:

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“Come away—it’s dangerous to stop where this fever is—you ought to be careful of yourself—you have friends that loves you, and that would feel for you if you were gone. You have a kind good father,—a lovhin’ mother—a lovin’ mother, that you could turn to, an’ may turn to, if ever you should have a sore heart—a mother—oh, that blessed word—what wouldn’t I give to say that I have a mother! Many an’ outrage—many a wild fit of passion—many a harsh word, too—oh, what mightn’t I be now if I had a mother? All the world thinks I have a bad heart—that I’m without feelin’; but, indeed, Mave Sullivan, I’m not without feelin’, an’ I don’t think I have a bad heart.”

“You have not a bad heart,” replied Mave, taking her hand; “no one, dear Sarah, could look into your face and say so; no, but I think so far from that, your heart is both kind and generous.”

“I hope so,” she replied, “I hope I have—now come you and leave this dangerous house; besides I have something to say to you.”

Mave and she proceeded along the old causeway that led to the cabin, and having got out upon the open road, Sarah stood.

“Now, Mave Sullivan,” said she, “listen—you do me only justice to say that I love truth, an’ hate a lie, or consalement of any kind. I ax you now this—you discovered awhile ago that I love Condy Dalton? Isn’t that thrue?”

“I wasn’t altogether certain,” replied Mave, “but I thought I did—an’ now I think you do love him.”

“I do love him—oh, I do—an’ why as you said, should I be ashamed of it?—ay, an’ it was my intention to tell you so the first time I’d see you, an’ to give you fair notice that I did, an’ that I’d lave nothing undone to win him from you.”

“Well,” replied the other, “this is open and honest, at all events.”

“That was my intention,” pursued Sarah, “an’ I had, for a short time, other thoughts; ay, an’ worse thoughts; my father was pursuadin’ me—but I can’t spake on that—for he has my promise not to do so. Oh, I’m nothing, dear Mave—nothing at all to you. I can’t forget your words awhile ago—bekaise I knew what you meant at the time, when you said to Con, ’any earthly thing that I can do to give aise and comfort to your mind. I am ready to do it. If it would relieve you, forget that you ever saw me or ever knew me.’ Now, Mave, I’ve confessed to you that I love Con Dalton—but I tell you not to trouble your heart by any thoughts of me; my mind’s made up as to what I’ll do—don’t fear me, I’ll never cross you here. I’m a lonely creature,” she proceeded, bursting into bitter tears; “I’m without friends and relations, or any one that cares at all about me—”

“Don’t say so,” replied Mave, “I care about you, an’ it’s only now that people is beginning to know you—but that’s not all, Sarah, if it’s any consolation to you to know it—know it—Condy Dalton loves you—ay, loves you, Sarah M’Gowan—you may take my word for that—I am certain this day that what I say is true.”

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“Loves me!” she exclaimed.

“Loves you,” repeated Mave, “is the word, an I have said it.”

“I didn’t suspect that when I spoke,” she replied.

Each looked upon the other, and both as they stood were as pale as death itself. At length Mave spoke.

“I have only one thought, Sarah, an’ that is how to make him happy; to see him happy.”

“I can scarcely spake,” replied Sarah; “I wouldn’t know what to say if I did. I’m all confused; Mave, dear, forgive me!”

“God bless you,” replied Mave, “for you are truth an’ honesty itself. God bless an’ you, make him happy! Good-bye, dear Sarah.”

She put her hand into Sarah’s and felt that it trembled excessively—but Sarah was utterly passive; she did not even return the pressure which she had received, and when Mave departed, she was standing in a reverie, incapable of thought, deadly pale, and perfectly motionless.

CHAPTEE XXV. — Sarah Without Hope.

How Sarah returned to Dalton’s cabin she herself knew not. Such was the tumult which the communication then made to her by Mave, had occasioned in her mind, that, the scene which had just taken place, altogether appeared to her excited spirit like a troubled dream, whose impressions were too unreal and deceptive to be depended on for a moment. The reaction from the passive state in which Mave had left her, was, to a temperament like her’s, perfectly overwhelming. Her pulse beat high, her cheek burned, and her eye flashed with more than its usual fire and overpowering brilliancy, and, with the exception of one impression alone, all her thoughts were so rapid and indistinct as to resemble the careering clouds which fly in tumult and confusion along the troubled sky, with nothing stationary but the sun far above, and which, in this case, might be said to resemble the bright conviction of Dalton’s love for her, that Mave’s assurance had left behind it. On re-entering the cabin, without being properly conscious of what she either did or said, she once more knelt by the side of Dalton’s bed, and hastily taking his unresisting hand, was about to speak; but a difficulty how to shape her language held her in a painful and troubled suspense for some moments, during which Dalton could plainly perceive the excitement, or rather rapture, by which she was actuated. At length a gush of hot and burning tears enabled her to speak, and she said:

“Con Dalton—dear Con, is it true? can it be true?—oh, no—no—but, then, she says it—is it true that you like me—like me!—no, no—that word is too wake—is it true that you

love me? but no—it can't be—there never was so much happiness intended for me; and then, if it should be true—oh, if it was possible, how will I bear it? what will I do? what—-is to be the consequence? for my love for you is beyond all belief—beyond all that tongue can tell. I can't stand this struggle—my head is giddy—I scarcely know what I'm sayin', or is it a dhrame that I'll waken from, and find it false—false?"

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Dalton pressed her hand, and looking tenderly upon her face, replied:

“Dear Sarah, forgive me; your dhrame is both thrue and false. It is true that I like you—-that I pity you; but you forbid me to say that—well it is true, I say, that I like you; but I can’t say more. The only girl I love in the sense you mane, is Mave Sullivan. I could not tell you an untruth, Sarah; nor don’t desave yourself. I like you, but I love her.”

She started up, and in an instant dashed the tears from her cheeks; after which she said:

“I am glad to know it; you have said the truth—the bitther truth; ay, bitther it will prove, Condy Dalton, to more than me. My happiness in this world is now over forever. I never was happy; an’ its clear that the doom is against me; I never will be happy. I am now free to act as I like. No matther what I do, it can’t make me feel more than I feel now. I might take a life; ay, twenty, an’ I couldn’t feel more miserable than I am. Then, what is there to prevent me from workin’ out my own will, an’ doin’ what my father wishes? I may make myself worse an’ guiltier; but unhappier I cannot be. That poor, weak hope was all I had in this world; but that is gone; and I have no other hope now.”

“Compose yourself, dear Sarah; calm yourself,” said Dalton.

“Don’t call me dear Sarah,” she replied; “you were wrong ever to do so. Oh, why was I born! an’ what has this world an’ this life been to me but hardship an’ sorrow? But still,” she added, drawing herself up, “I will let you all see what pride can do. I now know my fate, an’ what I must suffer: an’ if one tear would gain your love, I wouldn’t shed it—-never, never.”

“Sarah,” said Mary, in a soothing voice, “I hope you won’t blame poor Con. You don’t know maybe that himself an’ Mave Sullivan has loved one another ever since they were —”

“No more about Mave Sullivan,” she replied, almost fiercely; “lave her to me. As for me, I’ll not brake my word, either for good or evil; I was never the one to do an ungenerous —an ungenerous—no—” She paused, however, as if struck by some latent conviction, and, in a panting voice, she added, “I must lave you for a while, but I will be back in an hour or two; oh, yes I will; an’ in the mane time, Mary, anything that is to be done, you can do it for me till I come agin. Mave Sullivan! Mave Sullivan! lave Mave Sullivan to me!”

She then threw an humble garment about her, and in a few minutes was on her way to have an interview with her father. On reaching home, she found that he had arrived only a few minutes before her; and to her surprise he expressed something like; good humor, or, perhaps, gratification at her presence there. On looking into her face more closely, however, he had little trouble in perceiving that something extraordinary had

disturbed her. He then glanced at Nelly, who, as usual, sat gloomily by the fire, knitting her brows and groaning with suppressed ill-temper as she had been in the habit of doing, ever since she suspected that Donnel had made a certain disclosure, connecting with her, to Sarah.

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“Well,” said he, “has there been another battle? have you been *ding dust* at it as usual? What’s wrong, Sally? eh? Did it go to blows wid you, for you looked raised?”

“You’re all out of it,” replied Nelly; “her blood’s up, now, an’ I’m not prepared for a sudden death. She’s dangerous this minute, an’ I’ll take care of her. Blessed man, look at her eyes.”

She repeated these words with that kind of low, dogged ridicule and scorn which so frequently accompany stupid and wanton brutality; and which are, besides, provoking, almost beyond endurance, when the mind is chafed by a consideration of an exciting nature.

Sarah flew like lightning to the old knife, which we have already mentioned, and, snatching it from the shelf of the dresser, on which it lay, exclaimed:

“I have now no earthly thought, nor any hope of good in this world, to keep my hand from evil; an’ for all ever you made me suffer, take this—”

Her father had not yet sat down, and it was, indeed, well that he had not—for it required all his activity and strength united, to intercept the meditated blow, by seizing his daughter’s arm.’

“Sarah,” said he, “what is this? are you mad, you murdhering jade, to attempt the vagabond’s life? for she is a vagabond, and an ill-tongued vagabond. Why do you provoke the girl by sich language, you double-distilled ould sthrap? you do nothin’ but growl an’ snarl, an’ curse, an’ pray—ay, pray, from mornin’ to night, in sich a way, that the very devil himself could not bear you, or live wid you. Begone out o’ this, or I’ll let her at you, an’ I’ll engage she’ll give you what’ll settle you.”

Nelly rose, and putting on her cloak went out.

“I’m goin’,” she replied, looking at, and addressing the Prophet; “an’ plaise God, before long I’ll have the best wish o’ my heart fulfilled, by seein’ you hanged; but, until then, may my curse, an’ the curse o’ God light on you and pursue you. I know you have tould her everything, or she wouldn’t act towards me as she has done of late.”

Sarah stood like the Pythoness, in a kind of savage beauty, with the knife firmly grasped in her hand.

“I’m glad she’s gone,” she said; “but it’s not her, father, that I ought to raise my hand against.”

“Who then, Sarah?” he asked, with something like surprise.

“You asked me,” she proceeded, “to assist in a plan to have Mave Sullivan carried off by young Dick o’ the Grange—I’m now ready for anything, and I’ll do it. This world, father, has nothing good or happy in it for me—now I’ll be aquil to it; if it gives me nothing good, it’ll get nothing out of me. I’ll give it blow for blow; kindness, good fortune, if it was to happen—but it can’t now—would soften me; but I know, I feel that ill-treatment, crosses, disappointments, an’ want of all hope in this life, has made, an’ will make me a devil—-ay, an’ oh! what a different girl I might be this day!”

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“What has vexed you?” asked the father “for I see that something has.”

“Isn’t it a cruel thing,” she proceeded, without seeming to have attended to him; “isn’t it a cruel thing to think that every one you see about you has some happiness except yourself; an’ that your heart is burstin’, an’ your brain burnin’, an’ no relief for you; no one point to turn to, for consolation—but everything dark and dismal, and fiery about you?”

“I feel all this myself,” said the Prophet; “so, don’t be disheartened, Sarah; in the coorse o’ time your heart will get so hardened that you’ll laugh at the world—ay, at all that’s either bad or good in it, as I do.”

“I never wish to come to that state,” she replied; “an’ you never felt what I feel—you never had that much of what was good in your heart. No,” she proceeded, “sooner than come to that state—that is, to your state—I’d put this knife into my heart. You, father, never loved one of your own kind yet.”

“Didn’t I?” he replied, while his eyes lightened into a glare like those of a provoked tiger; “ay, I loved one of our kind—of your kind; loved her—ay, an’ was happy wid her—oh, how happy. Ah, Sarah M’Gowan, an’ I loved my fellow-creatures then, too, like a fool as I was: loved, ay, loved; an’ she that I so loved proved false to me—proved an adulteress; an’ I tell you now, that it may harden your heart against the world, that that woman—my wife—that I so loved, an’ that so disgraced me, was your mother.”

“It’s a lie—it’s as false as the devil himself,” she replied, turning round quickly, and looking him with frantic vehemence of manner in the face. “My mother never did what you say. She’s now in her grave, an’ can’t speak for or defend herself; but if I were to stand here till judgment day, I’d say it was false. You were misled or mistaken, or your own bad, suspicious nature made you do her wrong; an’ even if it was thrue—which it is not, but false as hell—why would you crash and wring her daughter’s heart by a knowledge of it? Couldn’t you let me get through the short but bitther passage of life that’s before me, without addin’ this to the other thoughts that’s distractin’ me?”

“I did it, as I said,” he replied, “to make you harden your heart, an’ to prevent you from puttin’ any trust in the world, or expectin’ anything either of thruth or goodness from it.”

She started, as if some new light had broken in upon her, and turning to him, said—

“Maybe I undherstand you, father—I hope I do. Oh, could it be that you wor wanst—a—a—a betther man—a man that had a heart for fellow-creatures, and cared for them? I’m lookin’ into my own heart now, and I don’t doubt but I might be brought to the same state yet. Ha, that’s terrible to think of; but again, I can’t believe it. Father, you can stoop to lies an’ falsity—that I could not do; but no matther; you wor wanst a good man, maybe. Am I right?”

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The Prophet turned round, and fixing his eyes upon his daughter, they stood each gazing upon the other for some time. He then looked for a moment into the ground, after which he sat down upon a stool, and covering his face with both his hands, remained in that position for two or three minutes.

“Am I right, father?” she repeated.

He raised his eyes, and looking upon her with his usual composure, replied—

“No—you are wrong—you are very wrong. When I was a light-hearted, affectionate boy, playing with my brothers and sisters, I was a villain. When I grew into youth, Sarah, an’ thought every one full of honesty an’ truth, an’ the world all kindness, an’ nothin’ about me but goodness, an’ generosity, an’ affection, I was, of coorse, a villain. When I loved the risin’ sun—when I looked upon the stars of heaven with a wonderin’ and happy heart—when the dawn of mornin’ and the last light of the summer evening filled me with joy, and made me love every one and everything about me—the trees, the runnin’ rivers, the green fields, and all that God—ha, what am I sayin’?—I was a villain. When I loved an’ married your mother, an’ when she—but no matther—when all these things happened, I was, I say, a villain; but now that things is changed for the betther, I am an honest man!”

“Father, there is good in you yet,” she said, as her eyes sparkled in the very depth of her excitement, with a hopeful animation that had its source in a noble and exalted benevolence, “you’re not lost.”

“Don’t I say,” he replied, with a cold and bitter sneer, “that I am an honest man.”

“Ah,” she replied, “that’s gone too, then—look where I will, everything’s dark—no hope—no hope of any kind; but no matther now; since I can’t do betther, I’ll make them think o’ me: aye, an’ feel me too. Come, then, what have you to say to me?”

“Let us have a walk, then,” replied her father. “There is a weeny glimpse of sunshine, for a wondher. You look heated—your face is flushed too, very much, an’ the walk will cool you a little.”

“I know my face is flushed,” she replied; “for I feel it burnin’, an’ so is my head; I have a pain in it, and a pain in the small o’ my back too.”

“Well, come,” he continued, “and a walk will be of sarvice to you.”

They then went out in the direction of the Rabbit Bank, the Prophet, during their walk, availing himself of her evident excitement to draw from her the history of its origin. Such a task, indeed, was easily accomplished, for this singular creature, in whom love of truth, as well as a detestation of all falsehood and subterfuge, seemed to have been a moral instinct, at once disclosed to him the state of her affections, and, indeed, all that the reader already knows of her love for Dalton, and her rivalry with Mave Sullivan.

These circumstances were such precisely as he could have wished for, and our readers need scarcely be told that he failed not to aggravate her jealousy of Mave, nor to suggest to her the necessity on her part, if she possessed either pride or spirit, to prevent her union with Dalton by every means in her power.

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“I’ll do it,” she replied, “I’ll do it; to be sure I feel it’s not right, an’ if I had one single hope in this world, I’d scorn it; but I’m now desperate; I tried to be good, but I’m only a cobweb before the wind—everything is against me, an’ I think I’m like some one that never had a guardian angel to take care of them.”

The Prophet then gave her a detailed account of their plan for carrying away Mave Sullivan, and of his own subsequent intentions in life.

“We have more than one iron in the fire,” he proceeded, “an’ as soon as everything comes off right, and to our wishes, we’ll not lose a single hour in going to America.”

“I didn’t think,” said Sarah, “that Dalton ever murdered Sullivan till I heard him confess it; but I can well understand it now. He was hasty, father, and did it in a passion, but it’s himself that has a good heart. Father, don’t blame me for what I say, but I’d rather be that pious, affectionate ould man, wid his murdher on his head, than you in the state you’re in. An’ that’s thrue, I must turn back and go to them—I’m too long away: still, something ails me—I’m all sickish, my head and back especially.”

“Go home to your own place,” he replied; “maybe it’s the sickness you’re takin.”

“Oh, no,” she replied, “I felt this way once or twice before, an’ I know it’ll go off me—-good-bye.”

“Good-bye, Sarah, an’ remember, honor bright and saicresy.”

“Saicresy, father, I grant you, but never honor bright for me again. It’s the world that makes me do it—the wicked, dark, cruel world, that has me as I am, widout a livin’ heart to love me—that’s what makes me do it.”

They then separated, he pursuing his way to Dick o’ the Grange’s, and she to the miserable cabin of the Daltons. They had not gone far, however, when she returned, and calling after him, said—

“I have thought it over again, and won’t promise altogether till I see you again.”

“Are you goin’ back o’ your word so soon!” he asked, with a kind of sarcastic sneer. “I thought you never broke your word, Sarah.”

She paused, and after looking about her as if in perplexity, she turned on her heel, and proceeded in silence.

CHAPTER XXVI. — The Pedlar Runs a Close Risk of the Stocks.

Nelly’s suspicions, apparently well founded as they had been, were removed from the Prophet, not so much by the disclosure to her and Sarah, of his having been so long cognizant of Sullivan’s murder by Dalton, as by that unhappy man’s own confession of the crime. Still, in spite of all that had yet happened, she could not divest herself of an impression that something dark and guilty was associated with the Tobacco-box; an impression which was strengthened by her own recollections of certain incidents that occurred upon a particular night, much about the time of Sullivan’s disappearance. Her memory,

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however, being better as to facts than to time, was such as prevented her from determining whether the incidents alluded to had occurred previous to Sullivan's murder, or afterwards. There remained, however, just enough of suspicion to torment her own mind, without enabling her to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion as to Donnel's positive guilt, arising from the mysterious incidents in question. A kind of awakened conscience, too, resulting not from any principle of true repentance, but from superstitious alarm and a conviction that the Prophet had communicated to Sarah a certain secret connected with her, which she dreaded so much to have known, had for some time past rendered her whole life a singular compound of weak terror, ill-temper, gloom, and a kind of conditional repentance, which depended altogether upon the fact of her secret being known. In this mood it was that she left the cabin as we have described.

"I'm not fit to die," she said to herself, after she had gone—"an' that's the second offer for my life she has made. Any way, it's the best of my play to lave them; an' above all, to keep away from her. That's the second attempt; and I know to a certainty, that if she makes a third one, it'll do for me. Oh, no doubt of that—the third time's always the charm!—an' into my heart that unlucky knife 'ill go, if she ever tries it a third time! They tell me," she proceeded, soliloquizing, as she was in the habit of doing, "that the inquest is to be held in a day or two, an' that the crowner was only unwell a trifle, and hadn't the sickness afther all. No matther—not all the wather in the sky 'ud clear my mind that there's not villany joined with that Tobaccy-box, though where it could go, or what could come of it (barrin' the devil himself or the fairies tuck it,) I don't know."

So far as concerned the coroner, the rumor of his having caught the prevailing typhus was not founded on fact. A short indisposition, arising from a cold caught by a severe wetting, but by no means of a serious or alarming nature, was his only malady; and when the day to which the inquest had been postponed had arrived, he was sufficiently recovered to conduct that important investigation. A very large crowd was assembled upon the occasion, and a deep interest prevailed throughout that part of the country. The circumstances, however, did not, as it happened, admit of any particular difficulty Jerry Sullivan and his friends attended as, was their duty, in order to give evidence touching the identity of the body. This, however, was a matter of peculiar difficulty. On disinterring the remains, it was found that the clothes worn at the time of the murder had not been buried with them—in other words, that the body had been stripped of all but the under garment, previous to its interment. The evidence, nevertheless, of the Black Prophet and of Red Rody was conclusive. The truth, however, of most if not of all the details, but not of the fact itself, was denied by old Dalton,

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who had sufficiently recovered from his illness, to be present at the investigation. The circumstances deposed to by the two witnesses were sufficiently strong and home to establish the fact against him, although he impugned the details as we have stated, but admitted that—after a hard battle with weighty sticks, he did kill Sullivan with an unlucky blow, and left him dead in a corner of the field for a short time near the Grey Stone. He said that he did not bury the body, but that he carried it soon afterwards from the field in which the unhappy crime had been committed, to the roadside, where he laid it for a time, in order to procure assistance. He said he then changed his mind, and having become afraid to communicate the unhappy accident to any of the neighbors, he fled in great terror across the adjoining mountains, where he wandered nearly frantic until the approach of day-break the next morning. He then felt himself seized with an uncontrollable anxiety to return to the scene of conflict, which he did, and found, not much to his surprise indeed, that the body had been removed, for he supposed at the time that Sullivan's friends must have brought it home. This he declared was the truth, neither more nor less, and he concluded by solemnly stating, that he knew no more than the child unborn what had become of the body, or how it disappeared. He also acknowledged that he was very much intoxicated at the time of the quarrel, and that were it not for the shock he received by perceiving that the man was dead, he thought he would not have had anything beyond a confused and indistinct recollection of the circumstance at all. He admitted also that he had threatened Sullivan in the market, and followed him closely for the purpose of beating him, but maintained that the fatal blow was not given with an intention of taking his life.

The fact, on the contrary, that the body had been privately buried and stripped before interment, was corroborated by the circumstance of Sullivan's body-coat having been found the next morning in a torn and bloody state, together with his great coat and hat; but indeed, the impression upon the minds of many was, that Dalton's version of the circumstances was got up for the purpose of giving to what was looked upon as a deliberate assassination, the character of simple homicide or manslaughter, so as that he might escape the capital felony, and come off triumphantly by a short imprisonment. The feeling against him too was strengthened and exasperated by the impetuous resentment with which he addressed himself to the Prophet and Rody Duncan, while giving their evidence, for it was not unreasonable to suppose that the man, who at his years, and in such awful circumstances, could threaten the lives of the witnesses against him, as he did, would not hesitate to commit, in a fit of that ungovernable passion that had made him remarkable through life, the very crime with which he stood charged through a similar act of blind and

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ferocious vengeance. Others, on the contrary held different opinions; and thought that the old man's account of the matter was both simple and natural, and bore the stamp of sincerity and truth upon the very face of it. Jerry Sullivan only swore that, to the best of his opinion, the skeleton found was much about the size of what his brother's would be; but as the proof of his private interment by Dalton had been clearly established by the evidence of the Prophet and Rody, constituting, as it did, an unbroken chain of circumstances which nothing could resist, the jury had no hesitation in returning the following verdict:—

"We find a verdict of wilful murder against Cornelius Dalton, Senior, for that he, on or about the night of the fourteenth of December, in the year of grace, 1798, did follow and waylay Bartholomew Sullivan, and deprive him of his life by blows and violence, having threatened him to the same effect in the early part of the aforesaid day."

During the progress of the investigation, our friend the pedlar and Charley Hanlon were anxious and deeply attentive spectators. The former never kept his eyes off the Prophet, but surveyed him with a face in which it was difficult to say whether the expression was one of calm conviction or astonishment. When the investigation had come to a close, he drew Hanlon aside and said—

"That swearin', Charley, was too clear, and if I was on the jury myself I would find the same verdict. May the Lord support the poor old man in the mane time! for in spite of all that happened one can't help pity'n' him, or at any rate his unfortunate family. However see what comes by not havin' a curb over one's passions when the blood's up."

"God's a just God," replied Hanlon—"the murderer deserves his punishment, an' I hope will meet it."

"There is little doubt of it," said the pedlar, "the hand of God is in it all."

"That's more than I see, or can at the present time, then," replied Hanlon. "Why should my aunt stay away so long?—but I dare say the truth is, she is either sick or dead, an' if that's the case, what's all you have said or done worth? You see it's but a chance still."

"Trust in God," replied the pedlar, "that's all either of us can do or say now. There's the coffin. I'm tould they're goin' to bury him, and to have the greatest funeral that ever was in the counthry; but, God knows, there's funerals enough in the neighborhood widout their making a show of themselves wid this."

"There's no truth in that report either," said Hanlon. "I was speakin' to Jerry Sullivan this mornin', an' I have it from him that they intend to bury him as quietly as they can. He's much changed from what he was—Jerry is—an' doesn't wish to have the old man hanged at all, if he can prevent it."

“Hanged or not, Charley, I must go on with my petition to Dick o’ the Grange. Of course I have no chance, but maybe the Lord put something good into Travers’s heart, when he bid me bring it to him; at any rate it can do no harm.”

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“Nor any earthly good,” replied the other. “The farm is this minute the property of Darby Skinadre, an’ to my knowledge Master Dick has a good hundred pounds in his pocket for befriendin’ the meal-monger.”

“Still an’ all, Charley, I’ll go to the father, if it was only bekaise the agent wishes it; I promised I would, an’ who knows at any rate but he may do something for the poor Daltons himself, when he finds that the villain that robbed and ruined them won’t.”

“So far you may be right,” said Hanlon, “an’ as you say, if it does no good it can do no harm; but for my part, I can scarcely think of anything but my poor aunt. What, in God’s name, except sickness or death, can keep her away, I don’t know.”

“Put your trust in God, man—that’s my advice to you.”

“And a good one it is,” replied the other, “if we could only follow it up as we ought. Every one here wondhers at the change that’s come over me—I that was so light and airy, and so fond of every divarsion that was to be had, am now as grave as a parson; but indeed no wondher, for ever since that awful night at the Grey Stone—since both nights indeed—I’m not the same man, an’ feel as if there was a weight come over me that nothing will remove, unless we trace the murdher, an’ I hardly know what to say about it, now that my aunt isn’t forthcommin’”

“Trust in God, I tell you, for as you live, truth will come to light yet.”

The conversation took various changes as they proceeded, until they reached the Grange, where the first person they met was Jemmy Branigan, who addressed his old enemy, the pedlar, in that peculiarly dry and ironical tone which he was often in the habit of using when he wished to disguise a friendly act in an ungracious garb—a method of granting favors, by the way, to which he was proverbially addicted. In fact, a surly answer from Jemmy was as frequently indicative of his intention to serve you with his master as it was otherwise; but so adroitly did he disguise his sentiments, that no earthly penetration could develop them until proved by the result. Jemmy, besides, liked the pedlar at heart for his open, honest scurrility—a quality which he latterly found extremely beneficial to himself, inasmuch as now that, increasing infirmity had incapacitated his master from delivering much of the alternate abuse that took place between them, he experienced great relief every moment from a fresh breathing with his rather eccentric opponent.

“Jemmy,” said Hanlon, “is the master in the office?”

“Is he in the office?—Who wants him?” and as he put the query he accompanied it by a look of ineffable contempt at the pedlar.

“Your friend, the pedlar, wants him; and so now,” added Hanlon, “I leave you both to fight it out between you.”

“You’re comin’ wid your petition, an’ a purty object you are, goin’ to look afther a farm for a man that’ll be hanged, (may God forbid—this day, amin!” he exclaimed in an under-tone which the other could not hear): “an’ what can you expect but to get kicked out or put in’ the stocks for attemptin’ to take a farm over another man’s head.”

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“What other man’s head?—nobody has it yet.”

“Ay, has there—a very daicent respectable man has it, by name one Darby Skinadre. (May he never warm his hungry nose in the same farm, the miserable keowt that he is this day,” he added in another soliloquy, which escaped the pedlar): “a very honest man is Darby Skinadre, so you may save yourself the trouble, I say.”

“At any rate there’s no harm in tryin’—worse than fail we can’t, an’ if we succeed it’ll be good to come in for anything from the ould scoundrel, before the devil gets him.”

Jemmy gave him a look.

“Why, what have you to say against the ould boy? Sure it’s not casting reflections on your own masther you’d be.”

“Oh, not at all,” replied the pedlar, “especially when I’m expectin’ a favor from one of his sarvints. Throth he’ll soon by all accounts have his hook in the ould Clip o’ the! Grange—an’ afther that some of his friends will soon folly him. I wouldn’t be mainin’ one Jemmy Branigan. Oh, dear no—but it’s a sure case that’s the Black Boy’s intention to take the whole family by instalments, an’ wid respect to the sarvints to place them in their ould situations. Faith you’ll have a warm berth of it, Jemmy, an’ well you desarve it.”

“Why then you circulating vagabone,” replied Jemmy; “if you wern’t a close friend to him, you’d not know his intentions so well. Don’t let out on yourself, man alive, unless you have the face to be proud of your acquaintance, which in throth is more than anyone, barrin’ the same set, could be of you.”

“Well, well,” retorted the pedlar, “sure blood alive, as we’re all of the same connection, let us not quarrel now, but sarve another if we can. Go an’ tell the old blackguard I want to see him about business.”

“Will I tell him you’re itchy about the houghs?—eh? However, the thruth is, that they,”—and he pointed to the stocks—“might be justice, but no novelty to you. The iron gathers is an ornament you often wore, an’ will again, plase goodness.”

“Throth, and. your ornament is one you’ll never wear a second time—the hemp collar will grace your neck yet; but never mind, you’re leadin’ the life to desarve it. See now if I can spake a word wid your masther for a poor family.”

“Why, then, to avoid your tongue, I may as well tell you that himself, Masther Richard, and Darby Skinadre’s in the office; an’ if you can use the same blackguard tongue as well in a good cause as you can in a bad one, it would be well for the poor crayturs. Go in now, an’,” he added in another soliloquy, “may the Lord prosper his virtuous endayvors, the vagabone; although all hope o’ that’s past, I doubt; for hasn’t Skinadre

the promise, and Masther Richard the bribe? However, who can tell?——so God prosper the vagabone, I say again."

The pedlar, on entering, found old Henderson sitting in an arm-chair, with one of his legs, as usual, bandaged and stretched out before him on another chair. He seemed much worn and debilitated, and altogether had the appearance of a man whose life was not worth a single week's purchase. Skinadre was about taking leave of his patron, the son, who had been speaking to him as the pedlar entered.

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“Don’t be unaisy, Darby,” he said. “We can’t give you a lease for about a week or fortnight; but the agent is now here, an’ we must first take out new leases ourselves. As soon as we do you shall have yours.”

“If you only knew, your honor, the scrapin’ I had in these hard times, to get together that hundhre—”

“Hush—there,” said the other, clapping his hand, with an air of ridicule and contempt upon the miser’s mouth; “that will do now; be off, and depend upon——mum, you understand mo! Ha, ha, ha!—that’s not a bad move, father,” he added; “however, I think we must give him the farm.”

The pedlar had been standing in the middle of the floor, when young Dick, turning round suddenly, asked him with a frown, occasioned by the fact of his having overheard this short dialogue, what he wanted.

“God save you honors, gintlemen,” said the pedlar, in a loud straightforward voice. “I’m glad to see your honor looking so well,” he added, turning to the father; “it’s fresh an’ young your gettin’, sir!—glory be to God!”

“Who is this fellow, Dick? Do you think I look better, my man?”

“Says Jemmy Branigan to me afore I came in,” proceeded the pedlar,—“he’s a thrue friend o’ mine, your honor, Jemmy is, an’ ’ud go to the well o’ the world’s end to sarve me—says he, you’ll be delighted, Harry, to see the masther look so fresh an’ well.”

“And the cursed old hypocrite is just after telling me, Dick, to prepare for a long journey; adding, for my consolation, that it won’t be a troublesome one, as it will be all down hill.”

“Why,” replied the son, “he has given you that information for the ten thousandth time, to my own knowledge. What does this man want? What’s your business, my good fellow?”

“Beggin’ your pardon, sir,” replied the pedlar, “will you allow me to ask you one question; were you ever in the forty-seventh foot? Oh, bedad, it must be him to a sartinty,” he added, as if to himself. “No,” replied Dick; “why so?”

“Take care, your honor,” said the pedlar, smiling roguishly;—“take care now, your honor, if it wasn’t you—”

“What are you speaking about—what do you mean?” asked the young man.

The pedlar went over to him, and said, in a low voice, looking cautiously at the father, as if he didn’t wish that he should hear him—

“It was surely your honor took away Lord Handicap’s daughter when you wor an ensign —the handsome ensign, as they called you in the forty-seventh? Eh? faix I knew you the minute I looked at you.”

“Ha, ha, ha! Do you know what, father? He says I’m the handsome ensign of the forty-seventh, that took away Lord Handicap’s daughter.”

“The greatest beauty in all England,” added the pedlar; “an’ I knew him at wanst, your honor.”

“Well, Dick, that’s a compliment, at any rate,” replied the father.

“Were you ever in the forty-seventh?” asked the son, smiling.

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“Ah, ah!” returned the pedlar, with a knowing wink, “behave yourself, captain; I’m not so soft as all that comes to; but sure as I have a favor to ax from his honor, your father, I’m glad to have your assistance. Faix, by all accounts you pleaded your own cause well, at any rate; and I hope you’ll give me a lift now wid his honor here.”

Dick the younger laughed heartily, but really had not ready virtue sufficient about, to disclaim the pedlar’s compliment.

“Come, then,” he added; “let us hear what your favor is?”

“Oh, thin, thank you, an’ God bless you, captain. It’s this: only to know if you’d be good enough to grant a new lease of Cargah Farm to young Condy Dalton; for the ould man, by all accounts, is not long for this world.”

Both turned their eyes upon him with a look of singular astonishment.

“Who are you at all, my good fellow?” asked the father; “or what devil drove you here on such an impudent message? A lease to the son of that ould murderer and his crew of beggars! That’s good, Dick! Well done, soger! will you back him in that, captain? Ha, ha, ha! D—n me, if I ever heard the like of it!”

“I hope you will back me, captain,” said the pedlar.

“Upon what grounds, comrade? Ha, ha, ha! Go on! Let us hear you!”

“Why, your honor, bekaise he’s best entitled to it. Think of what it was when he got it, an’ think of what it is now, and then ax yourselves—’Who raised it in value an’ made it worth twiste what it was worth?’ Wasn’t it the Daltons? Didn’t they lay out near eight hundre pounds upon it? An, didn’t you, at every renewal, screw them up—beggin’ your pardon, gintlemen—until they found that the more they improved it the poorer they were gettin’? An’ now that it lies there worth double its value, an’ they that made it so (to put money into your pocket) beggars—within a few hundred yards of it—wouldn’t it be rather hard to let them die an’ starve in destitution, an’ them wishin’ to get it back at a raisonable rint?”

“In this country, brother soldier,” replied Dick ironically, “we generally starve first and die afterwards.”

“You may well say so, your honor, an’ God knows, there’s not upon the face of the arth a counthry where starvation is so much practised, or so well understood. Faith, unfortunately, it’s the national divarsion wid us. However, is what I’m sayin’ raisonable, gintlemen?”

“Exceedingly so,” said Dick; “go on.”

“Well, then, I wish to know, will you give them a new lease of their farm?”

“You do! do you?”

“Troth I do, your honor.”

“Well, then,” replied the son, “I beg to inform you that we will not.”

“Why so, your honor?”

“Simply, you knave,” exclaimed the father, in a passion, “because we don’t wish it. Kick him out, Dick!”

“My good friend and brother soldier,” said Dick, “the fact is, that we are about to introduce a new system altogether upon our property. We are determined to manage it upon a perfectly new principle. It has been too much sublet under us, and we have resolved to rectify this evil. That is our answer. You get no lease. Provide for yourself and your friends, the Daltons, as best you can, but on this property you get no lease. That is your answer.”

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“Begone, now, you scoundrel,” said the father, “and not a word more out of your head.”

“Gintlemen!—gintlemen!”—exclaimed the pedlar, “have you no consciences? Is there no justice in the world? The misery, and sorrow, and sufferin’s of this misfortunate family, will be upon you, I doubt, if you don’t do them justice.”

“Touch the bell, Dick! Here some one! Jemmy Branigan! Harry Lowry! Jack Clinton! Where are you all, you scoundrels? Here, put this rascal in the stocks immediately! in with him!”

Jemmy, who, from an adjoining room, had been listening to every word that passed, now entered.

“Here, you, sir: clap this vagabond in the stocks for his insolence. He has come here purposely to insult myself and my son. To the stocks with him at once.”

“No!” replied Jemmy; “the devil resave the stock will go on him this day. Didn’t I hear every word that passed? An’ what did he say but the thruth, an’ what every one knows to be the thruth?”

“Put him in the stocks, I desire you, this instant!”

“Throth if you wor to look at your mug in the glass, you’d feel that you’ll soon be in a worse stocks yourself than ever you put any poor craythur into,” replied the redoubtable Jemmy. “Do you be off about your business, in the mane time, you good-natured vagabone, or this ould fire-brand will get some one wid less conscience than I have, that’ll clap you in them.”

“Never mind, father,” observed the son; “let the fellow go about his business—he’s not worth your resentment.”

The pedlar took the hint and withdrew, accompanied by Jemmy, on whose face there was a grin of triumph that he could not conceal.

“I tould you,” he added, as they went down the steps, “that the same stocks was afore you; an’ in the mane time, God pardon me for the injustice I did in keepin’ you out o’ them.”

“Go on,” replied the other; “devila harsh word ever I’ll say to you again.”

“Throth will you,” said Jemmy; “an’ both of us will be as fresh as a daisy in the mornin’, plaise goodness. I have scarcely any one to abuse me, or to abuse, either, now that the ould masther is so feeble.”

Jemmy extended his hand as he spoke, and gave the pedlar a squeeze, the cordiality of which was strongly at variance with the abuse he had given him.

“God bless you!” said the pedlar, returning the pressure; “your bark is worse than your bite. I’m off now, to mention the reception they gave me and the answers I got, to a man that will, maybe, bring themselves to their marrow-bones afore long.”

“Ay, but don’t abuse them, for all that,” replied Jemmy, “for I won’t bear it.”

“Throth,” returned the other, “you’re a quare Jemmy—an’ so God bless you!”

Having uttered these words, in an amicable and grateful spirit, our friend the pedlar bent his steps to the head inn of the next town—being that of the assizes, where Mr. Travers, the agent, kept his office.

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CHAPTER XXVII. — Sarah Ill—Mave Again, Heroic.

Young Henderson, whose passion for Mave Sullivan was neither virtuous nor honorable, would not have lent himself, notwithstanding, to the unprincipled projects of the Prophet, had not that worthy personage gradually and dishonestly drawn him into a false position. In other words, he led the vain and credulous young man to believe that Mave had been seized with a secret affection for him, and was willing, provided everything was properly managed, to consent to an elopement. For this purpose, it was necessary that the plan should be executed without violence, as the Prophet well knew, because, on sounding young Dick upon that subject, in an early stage of the business, he had ascertained that the proposal of anything bordering upon outrage or force, would instantly cause him to withdraw from the project altogether. For this reason, then, he found it necessary, if possible to embark Sarah as an accomplice, otherwise, he could not effect his design without violence, and he felt that her co-operation was required to sustain the falsehood of his assertions to Henderson with regard to Mave's consent to: place herself under his protection. This was to be brought about so as to hoodwink Henderson, in the following manner: The Prophet proposed that Sarah should, by his own or her ingenuity, contrive to domicile herself in Jerry Sullivan's house for a few days previous to the execution of their design; not only for the purpose of using her influence, such as it was, to sway the young creature's mind and principles from the path of rectitude and virtue, by dwelling upon the luxury and grandeur of her future life with Henderson, whose intentions were to be represented as honorable, but, if necessary, to leave a free ingress to the house, so as that under any circumstances, and even with a little violence, Mave should be placed in Henderson's hands. Should the Prophet, by his management, effect this, he was to receive a certain sum of money from his employer the moment he or his party had her in their possession—for such were the terms of the agreement—otherwise Donnel Dhu reserved to himself the alternative of disclosing the matter to her friends, and acquainting them with her situation. This, at all events, was readily consented to by Henderson, whose natural vanity and extraordinary opinion of his own merits in the eyes of the sex, prevented him from apprehending any want of success with Mave, provided he had an opportunity of bringing the influence of his person, and his wonderful powers of persuasion, to bear upon such a simple country girl as he considered her to be. So far, then, he had taken certain steps to secure himself, whilst he left Henderson to run the risk of such contingencies as might in all probability arise from the transaction.

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This, however, was but an under-plot of the Prophet, whose object was indeed far beyond that of becoming the paltry instrument of a rusty intrigue. It was a custom with Dick o’ the Grange, for a few years previous to the date of our story, to sleep during the assizes, in th