

The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer — Volume 2 eBook

The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer — Volume 2 by Charles Lever

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer — Volume 2 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	13
Page 6.....	14
Page 7.....	16
Page 8.....	18
Page 9.....	19
Page 10.....	20
Page 11.....	21
Page 12.....	22
Page 13.....	24
Page 14.....	25
Page 15.....	27
Page 16.....	28
Page 17.....	29
Page 18.....	30
Page 19.....	31
Page 20.....	32
Page 21.....	33
Page 22.....	35

Page 23.....	36
Page 24.....	38
Page 25.....	39
Page 26.....	40
Page 27.....	41
Page 28.....	42
Page 29.....	43
Page 30.....	44
Page 31.....	46
Page 32.....	47
Page 33.....	49
Page 34.....	51
Page 35.....	52
Page 36.....	53
Page 37.....	55
Page 38.....	57
Page 39.....	59
Page 40.....	61
Page 41.....	63
Page 42.....	64
Page 43.....	65
Page 44.....	66
Page 45.....	68
Page 46.....	70
Page 47.....	71
Page 48.....	72

Page 49.....	74
Page 50.....	76
Page 51.....	78
Page 52.....	80
Page 53.....	81
Page 54.....	83
Page 55.....	85
Page 56.....	87
Page 57.....	88
Page 58.....	90
Page 59.....	92
Page 60.....	93
Page 61.....	95
Page 62.....	96
Page 63.....	98
Page 64.....	100
Page 65.....	101
Page 66.....	103
Page 67.....	105
Page 68.....	107
Page 69.....	109
Page 70.....	111

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER XI.		1
CHAPTER XII.		14
CHAPTER XIII		24
CHAPTER XIV.		34
CHAPTER XV.		44
CHAPTER XVI.		50
CHAPTER XVIb.		57
CHAPTER XVII.		67
EBOOK EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		70

Page 1

CHAPTER XI.

CHELTENHAM—MATRIMONIAL ADVENTURE—SHOWING HOW TO MAKE LOVE FOR A FRIEND.

It was a cold raw evening in February as I sat in the coffee-room of the Old Plough in Cheltenham, “Lucullus c. Lucullo”—no companion save my half-finished decanter of port. I had drawn my chair to the corner of the ample fire-place, and in a half dreamy state was reviewing the incidents of my early life, and like most men who, however young, have still to lament talents misapplied, opportunities neglected, profitless labour, and disastrous idleness. The dreary aspect of the large and ill-lighted room—the close-curtained boxes—the unsocial look of every thing and body about suited the habit of my soul, and I was on the verge of becoming excessively sentimental—the unbroken silence, where several people were present, had also its effect upon me, and I felt oppressed and dejected. So sat I for an hour; the clock over the mantel ticked sharply on—the old man in the brown surtout had turned in his chair, and now snored louder—the gentleman who read the Times had got the Chronicle, and I thought I saw him nodding over the advertisements. The father who, with a raw son of about nineteen, had dined at six, sat still and motionless opposite his offspring, and only breaking the silence around by the grating of the decanter as he posted it across the table. The only thing denoting active existence was a little, shrivelled man, who, with spectacles on his forehead, and hotel slippers on his feet, rapidly walked up and down, occasionally stopping at his table to sip a little weak-looking negus, which was his moderate potation for two hours. I have been particular in chronicling these few and apparently trivial circumstances, for by what mere trifles are our greatest and most important movements induced—had the near wheeler of the Umpire been only safe on his fore legs, and while I write this I might—but let me continue. The gloom and melancholy which beset me, momentarily increased. But three months before, and my prospects presented every thing that was fairest and brightest—now all the future was dark and dismal. Then my best friends could scarcely avoid envy at my fortune—now my reverses might almost excite compassion even in an enemy. It was singular enough, and I should not like to acknowledge it, were not these Confessions in their very nature intended to disclose the very penetralia of my heart; but singular it certainly was—and so I have always felt it since, when reflecting on it—that although much and warmly attached to Lady Jane Callonby, and feeling most acutely what I must call her abandonment of me, yet, the most constantly recurring idea of my mind on the subject was, what will the mess say—what will they think at head-quarters?—the raillery, the jesting, the half-concealed allusion, the tone of assumed compassion, which all awaited me, as each of my comrades took

Page 2

up his line of behaving towards me, was, after all, the most difficult thing to be borne, and I absolutely dreaded to join my regiment, more thoroughly than did ever schoolboy to return to his labour on the expiration of his holidays. I had framed to myself all manner of ways of avoiding this dread event; sometimes I meditated an exchange into an African corps—sometimes to leave the army altogether. However, I turned the affair over in my mind—innumerable difficulties presented themselves, and I was at last reduced to that stand-still point, in which, after continual vacillation, one only waits for the slightest impulse of persuasion from another, to adopt any, no matter what suggestion. In this enviable frame of mind I sat sipping my wine, and watching the clock for that hour at which, with a safe conscience, I might retire to my bed, when the waiter roused me by demanding if my name was Mr. Lorrequer, for that a gentleman having seen my card in the bar, had been making inquiry for the owner of it all through the hotel.

“Yes,” said I, “such is my name; but I am not acquainted with any one here, that I can remember.”

“The gentleman has only arrived an hour since by the London mail, sir, and here he is.”

At this moment, a tall, dashing-looking, half-swaggering fellow, in a very sufficient envelope of box-coats, entered the coffee-room, and unwinding a shawl from his throat, showed me the honest and manly countenance of my friend Jack Waller, of the ___th dragoons, with whom I had served in the Peninsula.

Five minutes sufficed for Jack to tell me that he was come down on a bold speculation at this unseasonable time for Cheltenham; that he was quite sure his fortune was about to be made in a few weeks at farthest, and what seemed nearly as engrossing a topic—that he was perfectly famished, and desired a hot supper, “de suite.”

Jack having despatched this agreeable meal with a traveller’s appetite, proceeded to unfold his plans to me as follows:

There resided somewhere near Cheltenham, in what direction he did not absolutely know, an old East India colonel, who had returned from a long career of successful staff-duties and government contracts, with the moderate fortune of two hundred thousand. He possessed, in addition, a son and a daughter; the former, being a rake and a gambler, he had long since consigned to his own devices, and to the latter he had avowed his intention of leaving all his wealth. That she was beautiful as an angel—highly accomplished—gifted—agreeable—and all that, Jack, who had never seen her, was firmly convinced; that she was also bent resolutely on marrying him, or any other gentleman whose claims were principally the want of money, he was quite ready to swear to; and, in fact, so assured did he feel that “the whole affair was feasible,” (I use

his own expression,) that he had managed a two months' leave, and was come down express to see, make love to, and carry her off at once.

Page 3

"But," said I, with difficulty interrupting him, "how long have you known her father?"

"Known him? I never saw him."

"Well, that certainly is cool; and how do you propose making his acquaintance. Do you intend to make him a 'particeps criminis' in the elopement of his own daughter, for a consideration to be hereafter paid out of his own money?"

"Now, Harry, you've touched upon the point in which, you must confess, my genius always stood unrivalled—acknowledge, if you are not dead to gratitude—acknowledge how often should you have gone supperless to bed in our bivouacs in the Peninsula, had it not been for the ingenuity of your humble servant—avow, that if mutton was to be had, and beef to be purloined, within a circuit of twenty miles round, our mess certainly kept no fast days. I need not remind you of the cold morning on the retreat from Burgos, when the inexorable Lake brought five men to the halberds for stealing turkeys, that at the same moment, I was engaged in devising an ox-tail soup, from a heifer brought to our tent in jack-boots the evening before, to escape detection by her foot tracks."

"True, Jack, I never questioned your Spartan talent; but this affair, time considered, does appear rather difficult."

"And if it were not, should I have ever engaged in it? No, no, Harry. I put all proper value upon the pretty girl, with her two hundred thousand pounds pin-money. But I honestly own to you, the intrigue, the scheme, has as great charm for me as any part of the transaction."

"Well, Jack, now for the plan, then!"

"The plan! oh, the plan. Why, I have several; but since I have seen you, and talked the matter over with you, I have begun to think of a new mode of opening the trenches."

"Why, I don't see how I can possibly have admitted a single new ray of light upon the affair."

"There are you quite wrong. Just hear me out without interruption, and I'll explain. I'll first discover the locale of this worthy colonel —'Hydrabad Cottage' he calls it; good, eh?—then I shall proceed to make a tour of the immediate vicinity, and either be taken dangerously ill in his grounds, within ten yards of the hall-door, or be thrown from my gig at the gate of his avenue, and fracture my skull; I don't much care which. Well, then, as I learn that the old gentleman is the most kind, hospitable fellow in the world, he'll admit me at once; his daughter will tend my sick couch—nurse—read to me; glorious fun, Harry. I'll make fierce love to her; and now, the only point to be decided is whether,



having partaken of the colonel's hospitality so freely, I ought to carry her off, or marry her with papa's consent. You see there is much to be said for either line of proceeding."

"I certainly agree with you there; but since you seem to see your way so clearly up to that point, why, I should advise you leaving that an 'open question,' as the ministers say, when they are hard pressed for an opinion."

Page 4

“Well, Harry, I consent; it shall remain so. Now for your part, for I have not come to that.”

“Mine,” said I, in amazement; “why how can I possibly have any character assigned to me in the drama?”

“I’ll tell you, Harry, you shall come with me in the gig in the capacity of my valet.”

“Your what?” said I, horror-struck at his impudence.

“Come, no nonsense, Harry, you’ll have a glorious time of it—shall choose as becoming a livery as you like—and you’ll have the whole female world below stairs dying for you; and all I ask for such an opportunity vouchsafed to you is to puff me, your master, in every possible shape and form, and represent me as the finest and most liberal fellow in the world, rolling in wealth, and only striving to get rid of it.”

The unparalleled effrontery of Master Jack, in assigning to me such an office, absolutely left me unable to reply to him; while he continued to expatiate upon the great field for exertion thus open to us both. At last it occurred to me to benefit by an anecdote of a something similar arrangement, of capturing, not a young lady, but a fortified town, by retorting Jack’s proposition.

“Come,” said I, “I agree, with one only difference—I’ll be the master and you the man on this occasion.”

To my utter confusion, and without a second’s consideration, Waller grasped my hand, and cried, “done.” Of course I laughed heartily at the utter absurdity of the whole scheme, and rallied my friend on his prospects of Botany Bay for such an exploit; never contemplating in the most remote degree the commission of such extravagance.

Upon this Jack, to use the expressive French phrase, “pris la parole,” touching with a master-like delicacy on my late defeat among the Callonbys, (which up to this instant I believed him in ignorance of;) he expatiated upon the prospect of my repairing that misfortune, and obtaining a fortune considerably larger; he cautiously abstained from mentioning the personal charms of the young lady, supposing, from my lachrymose look, that my heart had not yet recovered the shock of Lady Jane’s perfidy, and rather preferred to dwell upon the escape such a marriage could open to me from the mockery of the mess-table, the jesting of my brother officers, and the life-long raillery of the service, wherever the story reached.

The fatal facility of my disposition, so often and so frankly chronicled in these Confessions—the openness to be led whither any one might take the trouble to conduct me—the easy indifference to assume any character which might be pressed upon me, by chance, accident, or design, assisted by my share of three flasks of champagne,

induced me first to listen —then to attend to—soon after to suggest—and finally, absolutely to concur in and agree to a proposal, which, at any other moment, I must have regarded as downright insanity. As the clock struck two, I had just affixed my name to an agreement, for Jack Waller had so much of method in his madness, that, fearful of my retracting in the morning, he had committed the whole to writing, which, as a specimen of Jack's legal talents I copy from the original document now in my possession.

Page 5

“The Plough, Cheltenham, Tuesday night or morning, two o’clock—be the same more or less. I, Harry Lorrequer, sub. in his Majesty’s ___th regiment of foot, on the one part; and I, John Waller, commonly called Jack Waller, of the ___th light dragoons on the other; hereby promise and agree, each for himself, and not one for the other, to the following conditions, which are hereafter subjoined, to wit, the aforesaid Jack Waller is to serve, obey, and humbly follow the aforementioned Harry Lorrequer, for the space of one month of four weeks; conducting himself in all respects, modes, ways, manners, as his, the aforesaid Lorrequer’s own man, skip, valet, or saucepan —duly praising, puffing, and lauding the aforesaid Lorrequer, and in every way facilitating his success to the hand and fortune of—”

“Shall we put in her name, Harry, here?” said Jack.

“I think not; we’ll fill it up in pencil; that looks very knowing.”

“—at the end of which period, if successful in his suit, the aforesaid Harry Lorrequer is to render to the aforesaid Waller the sum of ten thousand pounds three and a half per cent. with a faithful discharge in writing for his services, as may be. If, on the other hand, and which heaven forbid, the aforesaid Lorrequer fail in obtaining the hand of _____, that he will evacuate the territory within twelve hours, and repairing to a convenient spot selected by the aforesaid Waller, then and there duly invest himself with a livery chosen by the aforesaid Waller—”

“You know, each man uses his choice in this particular,” said Jack.

“—and for the space of four calendar weeks, be unto the aforesaid Waller, as his skip, or valet, receiving, in the event of success, the like compensation, as aforesaid, each promising strictly to maintain the terms of this agreement, and binding, by a solemn pledge, to divest himself of every right appertaining to his former condition, for the space of time there mentioned.”

We signed and sealed it formally, and finished another flask to its perfect ratification. This done, and after a hearty shake hands, we parted and retired for the night.

The first thing I saw on waking the following morning was Jack Waller standing beside my bed, evidently in excellent spirits with himself and all the world.

“Harry, my boy, I have done it gloriously,” said he. “I only remembered on parting with you last night, that one of the most marked features in our old colonel’s character is a certain vague idea, he has somewhere picked up, that he has been at some very remote period of his history a most distinguished officer. This notion, it appears, haunts his mind, and he absolutely believes he has been in every engagement from the seven years war, down to the Battle of Waterloo. You cannot mention a siege he did not lay down the first parallel for, nor a storming party where he did not lead the forlorn

Page 6

hope; and there is not a regiment in the service, from those that formed the fighting brigade of Picton, down to the London trainbands, with which, to use his own phrase, he has not fought and bled. This mania of heroism is droll enough, when one considers that the sphere of his action was necessarily so limited; but yet we have every reason to be thankful for the peculiarity, as you'll say, when I inform you that this morning I despatched a hasty messenger to his villa, with a most polite note, setting forth that a Mr. Lorrequer—ay, Harry, all above board—there is nothing like it—'as Mr. Lorrequer, of the ___th, was collecting for publication, such materials as might serve to commemorate the distinguished achievements of British officers, who have, at any time, been in command—he most respectfully requests an interview with Colonel Kamworth, whose distinguished services, on many gallant occasions, have called forth the unqualified approval of his majesty's government. Mr. Lorrequer's stay is necessarily limited to a few days, as he proceeds from this to visit Lord Anglesey; and, therefore, would humbly suggest as early a meeting as may suit Colonel K.'s convenience.' What think you now? Is this a master-stroke or not?"

"Why, certainly, we are in for it now," said I, drawing a deep sigh. "But Jack, what is all this? Why, you're in livery already."

I now, for the first time, perceived that Waller was arrayed in a very decorous suit of dark grey, with cord shorts and boots, and looked a very knowing style of servant for the side of a tilbury.

"You like it, don't you? Well, I should have preferred something a little more showy myself; but as you chose this last night, I, of course, gave way, and after all, I believe you're right, it certainly is neat."

"Did I choose it last night? I have not the slightest recollection of it."

"Yes, you were most particular about the length of the waistcoat, and the height of the cockade, and you see I have followed your orders tolerably close; and now, adieu to sweet equality for the season, and I am your most obedient servant for four weeks—see that you make the most of it."

While we were talking, the waiter entered with a note addressed to me, which I rightly conjectured could only come from Colonel Kamworth. It ran thus—

"Colonel Kamworth feels highly flattered by the polite attention of Mr. Lorrequer, and will esteem it a particular favour if Mr. L. can afford him the few days his stay in this part of the country will permit, by spending them at Hydrabad Cottage. Any information as to Colonel Kamworth's services in the four quarters of the globe, he need not say, is entirely at Mr. L.'s disposal.

“Colonel K. dines at six precisely.”

When Waller had read the note through, he tossed his hat up in the air, and, with something little sort of an Indian whoop, shouted out—

Page 7

“The game is won already. Harry, my man, give me the check for the ten thousand: she is your own this minute.”

Without participating entirely in Waller’s exceeding delight, I could not help feeling a growing interest in the part I was advertised to perform, and began my rehearsal with more spirit than I thought I should have been able to command.

That same evening, at the same hour as that in which on the preceding I sat lone and comfortless by the coffee-room fire, I was seated opposite a very pompous, respectable-looking old man, with a large, stiff queue of white hair, who pressed me repeatedly to fill my glass and pass the decanter. The room was a small library, with handsomely fitted shelves; there were but four chairs, but each would have made at least three of any modern one; the curtains of deep crimson cloth effectually secured the room from draught; and the cheerful wood fire blazing on the hearth, which was the only light in the apartment, gave a most inviting look of comfort and snugness to every thing. This, thought I, is all excellent; and however the adventure ends, this is certainly pleasant, and I never tasted better Madeira.

“And so, Mr. Lorrequer, you heard of my affair at Cantantrabad, when I took the Rajah prisoner?”

“Yes,” said I; “the governor-general mentioned the gallant business the very last time I dined at Government-House.”

“Ah, did he? kind of him though. Well, sir, I received two millions of rupees on the morning after, and a promise of ten more if I would permit him to escape—but no—I refused flatly.”

“Is it possible; and what did you do with the two millions?—sent them, of course—.”

“No, that I didn’t; the wretches know nothing of the use of money. No, no; I have them this moment in good government security.

“I believe I never mentioned to you the storming of Java. Fill yourself another glass, and I’ll describe it all to you, for it will be of infinite consequence that a true narrative of this meets the public eye—they really are quire ignorant of it. Here now is Fort Cornelius, and there is the moat, the sugar-basin is the citadel, and the tongs is the first trench, the decanter will represent the tall tower towards the south-west angle, and here, the wine glass—this is me. Well, it was a little after ten at night that I got the order from the general in command to march upon this plate of figs, which was an open space before Fort Cornelius, and to take up my position in front of the fort, and with four pieces of field artillery—these walnuts here—to be ready to open my fire at a moment’s warning upon the sou-west tower; but, my dear sir, you have moved the tower; I thought you were drinking Madeira. As I said before, to open my fire upon the sou-west tower,



or if necessary protect the sugar tongs, which I explained to you was the trench. Just at the same time the besieged were making preparations for a sortie to occupy this dish of almonds and raisins—the high ground to the left of my position—put another log on the fire, if you please, sir, for I cannot see myself—I thought I was up near the figs, and I find myself down near the half moon.”

Page 8

"It is past nine," said a servant entering the room; "shall I take the carriage for Miss Kamworth, sir?" This being the first time the name of the young lady was mentioned since my arrival, I felt somewhat anxious to hear more of her, in which laudable desire I was not however to be gratified, for the colonel, feeling considerably annoyed by the interruption, dismissed the servant by saying—

"What do you mean, sirrah, by coming in at this moment; don't you see I am preparing for the attack on the half moon? Mr. Lorrequer, I beg your pardon for one moment, this fellow has completely put me out; and besides, I perceive, you have eaten the flying artillery, and in fact, my dear sir, I shall be obliged to lay down the position again."

With this praiseworthy interest the colonel proceeded to arrange the "materiel" of our dessert in battle array, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and a very handsome girl, in a most becoming demi toilette, sprung into the room, and either not noticing, or not caring, that a stranger was present, threw herself into the old gentleman's arms, with a degree of emprossement, exceedingly vexatious for any third and unoccupied party to witness.

"Mary, my dear," said the colonel, completely forgetting Java and Fort Cornelius at once, "you don't perceive I have a gentleman to introduce to you, Mr. Lorrequer, my daughter, Miss Kamworth," here the young lady courtesied somewhat stiffly, and I bowed reverently; and we all resumed places. I now found out that Miss Kamworth had been spending the preceding four or five days at a friend's in the neighbourhood; and had preferred coming home somewhat unexpectedly, to waiting for her own carriage.

My confessions, if recorded verbatim, from the notes of that four weeks' sojourn, would only increase the already too prolix and uninteresting details of this chapter in my life; I need only say, that without falling in love with Mary Kamworth, I felt prodigiously disposed thereto; she was extremely pretty; had a foot and ankle to swear by, the most silvery toned voice I almost ever heard, and a certain witchery and archness of manner that by its very tantalizing uncertainty continually provoked attention, and by suggesting a difficulty in the road to success, imparted a more than common zest in the pursuit. She was little, a very little blue, rather a dabbler in the "ologies," than a real disciple. Yet she made collections of minerals, and brown beetles, and cryptogamias, and various other homeopathic doses of the creation, infinitessimally small in their subdivision; in none of which I felt any interest, save in the excuse they gave for accompanying her in her pony-phaeton. This was, however, a rare pleasure, for every morning for at least three or four hours I was obliged to sit opposite the colonel, engaged in the compilation of that narrative of his "res gestae," which was to eclipse the career of Napoleon and leave Wellington's laurels but a very faded lustre

Page 9

in comparison. In this agreeable occupation did I pass the greater part of my day, listening to the insufferable prolixity of the most prolix of colonels, and at times, notwithstanding the propinquity of relationship which awaited us, almost regretting that he was not blown up in any of the numerous explosions his memoir abounded with. I may here mention, that while my literary labour was thus progressing, the young lady continued her avocations as before—not indeed with me for her companion—but Waller; for Colonel Kamworth, “having remarked the steadiness and propriety of my man, felt no scruple in sending him out to drive Miss Kamworth,” particularly as I gave him a most excellent character for every virtue under heaven.

I must hasten on.—The last evening of my four weeks was drawing to a close. Colonel Kamworth had pressed me to prolong my visit, and I only waited for Waller’s return from Cheltenham, whither I had sent him for my letters, to make arrangements with him to absolve me from my ridiculous bond, and accept the invitation. We were sitting round the library fire, the colonel, as usual, narrating his early deeds and hair-breadth ‘scapes. Mary, embroidering an indescribable something, which every evening made its appearance but seemed never to advance, was rather in better spirits than usual, at the same time her manner was nervous and uncertain; and I could perceive by her frequent absence of mind, that her thoughts were not as much occupied by the siege of Java as her worthy father believed them. Without laying any stress upon the circumstance, I must yet avow that Waller’s not having returned from Cheltenham gave me some uneasiness, and I more than once had recourse to the bell to demand if “my servant had come back yet?” At each of these times I well remember the peculiar expression of Mary’s look, the half embarrassment, half drollery, with which she listened to the question, and heard the answer in the negative. Supper at length made its appearance; and I asked the servant who waited, “if my man had brought me any letters,” varying my inquiry to conceal my anxiety; and again, I heard he had not returned. Resolving now to propose in all form for Miss Kamworth the next morning, and by referring the colonel to my uncle Sir Guy, smooth, as far as I could, all difficulties, I wished them good night and retired; not, however, before the colonel had warned me that they were to have an excursion to some place in the neighbourhood the next day; and begging that I might be in the breakfast-room at nine, as they were to assemble there from all parts, and start early on the expedition. I was in a sound sleep the following morning, when a gentle tap at the door awoke me; at the same time I recognised the voice of the colonel’s servant, saying, “Mr. Lorrequer, breakfast is waiting, sir.”

Page 10

I sprung up at once, and replying, "Very well, I shall come down," proceeded to dress in all haste, but to my horror, I could not discern a vestige of my clothes; nothing remained of the habiliments I possessed only the day before—even my portmanteau had disappeared. After a most diligent search, I discovered on a chair in a corner of the room, a small bundle tied up in a handkerchief, on opening which I perceived a new suit of livery of the most gaudy and showy description and lace; of which colour was also the coat, which had a standing collar and huge cuffs, deeply ornamented with worked button holes and large buttons. As I turned the things over, without even a guess of what they could mean, for I was scarcely well awake, I perceived a small slip of paper fastened to the coat sleeve, upon which, in Waller's hand-writing, the following few words were written:

"The livery I hope will fit you, as I am rather particular about how you'll look; get quietly down to the stable-yard and drive the tilbury into Cheltenham, where wait for further orders from your kind master,

"John Waller."

The horrible villany of this wild scamp actually paralysed me. That I should put on such ridiculous trumpery was out of the question; yet what was to be done? I rung the bell violently; "Where are my clothes, Thomas?"

"Don't know, sir; I was out all the morning, sir, and never seed them."

"There, Thomas, be smart now and send them up, will you?" Thomas disappeared, and speedily returned to say, "that my clothes could not be found any where; no one knew any thing of them, and begged me to come down, as Miss Kamworth desired him to say that they were still waiting, and she begged Mr. Lorrequer would not make an elaborate toilette, as they were going on a country excursion." An elaborate toilette! I wish to heaven she saw my costume; no, I'll never do it. "Thomas, you must tell the ladies and the colonel, too, that I feel very ill; I am not able to leave my bed; I am subject to attacks—very violent attacks in my head, and must always be left quiet and alone—perfectly alone—mind me, Thomas—for a day at least." Thomas departed; and as I lay distracted in my bed, I heard, from the breakfast room, the loud laughter of many persons evidently enjoying some excellent joke; could it be me they were laughing at; the thought was horrible.

"Colonel Kamworth wishes to know if you'd like the doctor, sir," said Thomas, evidently suppressing a most inveterate fit of laughing, as he again appeared at the door.

"No, certainly not," said I, in a voice of thunder; "what the devil are you grinning at?"

"You may as well come, my man; you're found out; they all know it now," said the fellow with an odious grin.

Page 11

I jumped out of the bed, and hurled the boot-jack at him with all my strength; but had only the satisfaction to hear him go down stairs chuckling at his escape; and as he reached the parlour, the increase of mirth and the loudness of the laughter told me that he was not the only one who was merry at my expense. Any thing was preferable to this; down stairs I resolved to go at once—but how; a blanket I thought would not be a bad thing, and particularly as I had said I was ill; I could at least get as far as Colonel Kamworth's dressing-room, and explain to him the whole affair; but then if I was detected en route, which I was almost sure to be, with so many people parading about the house. No; that would never do, there was but one alternative, and dreadful, shocking as it was, I could not avoid it, and with a heavy heart, and as much indignation at Waller for what I could not but consider a most scurvy trick, I donned the yellow inexpressibles; next came the vest, and last the coat, with its broad flaps and lace excrescences, fifty times more absurd and merry-andrew than any stage servant who makes off with his table and two chairs amid the hisses and gibes of an upper gallery.

If my costume leaned towards the ridiculous, I resolved that my air and bearing should be more than usually austere and haughty; and with something of the stride of John Kemble in *Coriolanus*, I was leaving my bed-room, when I accidentally caught a view of myself in the glass; and so mortified, so shocked was I, that I sank into a chair, and almost abandoned my resolution to go on; the very gesture I had assumed for vindication only increased the ridicule of my appearance; and the strange quaintness of the costume totally obliterated every trace of any characteristic of the wearer, so infernally cunning was its contrivance. I don't think that the most saturnine martyr of gout and dyspepsia could survey me without laughing. With a bold effort, I flung open my door, hurried down the stairs, and reached the hall. The first person I met was a kind of pantry boy, a beast only lately emancipated from the plough, and destined after a dozen years' training as a servant, again to be turned back to his old employ for incapacity; he grinned horribly for a minute, as I passed, and then in a half whisper said

"Maester, I advise ye run for it; they're a waiting for ye with the constables in the justice's room!" I gave him a look of contemptuous superiority at which he grinned the more, and passed on.

Without stopping to consider where I was going, I opened the door of the breakfast-parlour, and found myself in one plunge among a room full of people. My first impulse was to retreat again; but so shocked was I, at the very first thing that met my sight, that I was perfectly powerless to do any thing. Among a considerable number of people who stood in small groups round the breakfast-table, I discerned Jack Waller, habited in a very accurate black frock

Page 12

and dark trowsers, supporting upon his arm —shall I confess—no less a person than Mary Kamworth, who leaned on him with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, and chatted gaily with him. The buzz of conversation which filled the apartment when I entered, ceased for a second of deep silence; and then followed a peal of laughter so long and so vociferous, that in my momentary anger I prayed some one might burst a blood-vessel, and frighten the rest. I put on a look of indescribable indignation, and cast a glance of what I intended should be most withering scorn on the assembly; but alas! my infernal harlequin costume ruined the effect; and confound me, if they did not laugh the louder. I turned from one to the other with the air of a man who marks out victims for his future wrath; but with no better success; at last, amid the continued mirth of the party, I made my way towards where Waller stood absolutely suffocated with laughter, and scarcely able to stand without support.

“Waller,” said I, in a voice half tremulous with rage and shame together; “Waller, if this rascally trick be yours, rest assured no former term of intimacy between us shall—”

Before I could conclude the sentence, a bustle at the door of the room, called every attention in that direction; I turned and beheld Colonel Kamworth, followed by a strong posse comitatus of constables, tipstiffs, &c., armed to the teeth, and evidently prepared for vigorous battle. Before I was able to point out my woes to my kind host, he burst out with—

“So you scoundrel, you impostor, you damned young villain, pretending to be a gentleman, you get admission into a man’s house and dine at his table, when your proper place had been behind his chair.—How far he might have gone, heaven can tell, if that excellent young gentleman, his master, had not traced him here this morning—but you’ll pay dearly for it, you young rascal, that you shall.”

“Colonel Kamworth,” said I, drawing myself proudly up, (and I confess exciting new bursts of laughter,) “Colonel Kamworth, for the expressions you have just applied to me, a heavy reckoning awaits you; not, however, before another individual now present shall atone for the insult he has dared to pass upon me.” Colonel Kamworth’s passion at this declaration knew no bounds; he cursed and swore absolutely like a madman, and vowed that transportation for life would be a mild sentence for such iniquity.

Waller at length wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes, interposed between the colonel and his victim, and begged that I might be forgiven; “for indeed my dear sir,” said he, “the poor fellow is of rather respectable parentage, and such is his taste for good society that he’d run any risk to be among his betters, although, as in the present case the exposure brings a rather heavy retribution, however, let me deal with him. Come, Henry,” said he, with an air of insufferable superiority, “take my tilbury into town, and wait for me at the George, I shall endeavour to make your peace with my excellent

friend, Colonel Kamworth; and the best mode you can contribute to that object, is to let us have no more of your society."

Page 13

I cannot attempt to picture my rage at these words; however, escape from this diabolical predicament was my only present object; and I rushed from the room, and springing into the tilbury at the door, drove down the avenue at the rate of fifteen miles per hour, amid the united cheers, groans, and yells of the whole servants' hall, who seemed to enjoy my "detection," even more than their betters. Meditating vengeance, sharp, short, and decisive on Waller, the colonel, and every one else in the infernal conspiracy against me, for I utterly forgot every vestige of our agreement in the surprise by which I was taken, I reached Cheltenham. Unfortunately I had no friend there to whose management I could commit the bearing of a message, and was obliged as soon as I could procure suitable costume, to hasten up to Coventry where the __th dragoons were then quartered. I lost no time in selecting an adviser, and taking the necessary steps to bring Master Waller to a reckoning; and on the third morning we again reached Cheltenham, I thirsting for vengeance, and bursting still with anger; not so, my friend, however, who never could discuss the affair with common gravity, and even ventured every now and then on a sly allusion to my yellow shorts. As we passed the last toll-bar, a travelling carriage came whirling by with four horses at a tremendous pace; and as the morning was frosty, and the sun scarcely risen, the whole team were smoking and steaming so as to be half invisible. We both remarked on the precipitancy of the party; for as our own pace was considerable, the two vehicles passed like lightning. We had scarcely dressed, and ordered breakfast, when a more than usual bustle in the yard called us to the window; the waiter who came in at the same instant told us that four horses were ordered out to pursue a young lady who had eloped that morning with an officer.

"Ah, our friend in the green travelling chariot, I'll be bound," said my companion; but as neither of us knew that part of the country, and I was too engrossed by my own thoughts, I never inquired further. As the chaise in chase drove round to the door, I looked to see what the pursuer was like; and as he issued from the inn, recognised my "ci devant host," Colonel Kamworth. I need not say my vengeance was sated at once; he had lost his daughter, and Waller was on the road to be married. Apologies and explanations came in due time, for all my injuries and sufferings; and I confess, the part which pleased me most was, that I saw no more of Jack for a considerable period after; he started for the continent, where he has lived ever since on a small allowance, granted by his father-in-law, and never paying me the stipulated sum, as I had clearly broken the compact.

So much for my second attempt at matrimony; one would suppose that such experience should be deemed sufficient to show that my talent did not lie in that way. And here I must rest for the present, with the additional confession, that so strong was the memory of that vile adventure, that I refused a lucrative appointment under Lord Anglesey's government, when I discovered that his livery included "yellow plush breeches;" to have such "souvenirs" flitting around and about me, at dinner and elsewhere, would have left me without a pleasure in existence.

Page 14

CHAPTER XII.

DUBLIN—TOM O'FLAHERTY—A REMINISCENCE OF THE PENINSULA.

Dear, dirty Dublin—"Io te salute"—how many excellent things might be said of thee, if, unfortunately, it did not happen that the theme is an old one, and has been much better sung than it can ever now be said. With thus much of apology for no more lengthened panegyric, let me beg of my reader, if he be conversant with that most moving melody—the Groves of Blarney—to hum the following lines, which I heard shortly after my landing, and which well express my own feelings for the "loved spot."

Oh! Dublin, sure, there is no doubtin',
Beats every city upon the say.
'Tis there you'll see O'Connell spouting,
And Lady Morgan making "tay."
For 'tis the capital of the greatest nation
With finest peasantry on a fruitful sod,
Fighting like devils for conciliation,
And hating each other for the love of God.

Once more, then, I found myself in the "most car-drivingest city," en route to join on the expiration of my leave. Since my departure, my regiment had been ordered to Kilkenny, that sweet city, so famed in song for its "fire without smoke;" but which, were its character in any way to be derived from its past or present representative, might certainly, with more propriety, reverse the epithet, and read "smoke without fire." My last communication from head-quarters was full of nothing but gay doings—balls, dinners, dejeunes, and more than all, private theatricals, seemed to occupy the entire attention of every man of the gallant ___th. I was earnestly entreated to come, without waiting for the end of my leave—that several of my old "parts were kept open for me;" and that, in fact, the "boys of Kilkenny" were on tip-toe in expectation of my arrival, as though his Majesty's mail were to convey a Kean or a Kemble. I shuddered a little as I read this, and recollected "my last appearance on any stage," little anticipating, at the moment, that my next was to be nearly as productive of the ludicrous, as time and my confessions will show. One circumstance, however, gave me considerable pleasure. It was this:—I took it for granted that, in the varied and agreeable occupations which so pleasurable a career opened, my adventures in love would escape notice, and that I should avoid the merciless raillery my two failures, in six months, might reasonably be supposed to call forth. I therefore wrote a hurried note to Curzon, setting forth the great interest all their proceedings had for me, and assuring him that my stay in town should be as short as possible, for that I longed once more to "strut the monarch of the boards," and concluded with a sly paragraph, artfully intended to act as a "paratonnere" to the gibes and jests which I dreaded, by endeavouring to make light of my matrimonial speculations. The postscript ran somewhat thus—"Glorious fun have I had since we

met; but were it not that my good angel stood by me, I should write these hurried lines with a wife at my elbow; but luck, that never yet deserted, is still faithful to your old friend, H. Lorrequer."

Page 15

My reader may suppose—for he is sufficiently behind the scenes with me—with what feelings I penned these words; yet any thing was better than the attack I looked forward to: and I should rather have changed into the Cape Rifle Corps, or any other army of martyrs, than meet my mess with all the ridicule my late proceedings exposed me to. Having disburthened my conscience of this dread, I finished my breakfast, and set out on a stroll through the town.

I believe it is Coleridge who somewhere says, that to transmit the first bright and early impressions of our youth, fresh and uninjured to a remote period of life, constitutes one of the loftiest prerogatives of genius. If this be true, and I am not disposed to dispute it—what a gifted people must be the worthy inhabitants of Dublin; for I scruple not to affirm, that of all cities of which we have any record in history, sacred or profane, there is not one so little likely to disturb the tranquil current of such reminiscences. “As it was of old, so is it now,” enjoying a delightful permanency in all its habits and customs, which no changes elsewhere disturb or affect; and in this respect I defy O’Connell and all the tail to refuse it the epithet of “Conservative.”

Had the excellent Rip Van Winkle, instead of seeking his repose upon the cold and barren acclivities of the Kaatskills—as we are veritably informed by Irving—but betaken himself to a comfortable bed at Morrison’s or the Bilton, not only would he have enjoyed a more agreeable siesta, but, what the event showed of more consequence, the pleasing satisfaction of not being disconcerted by novelty on his awakening. It is possible that the waiter who brought him the water to shave, for Rip’s beard, we are told, had grown uncommonly long—might exhibit a little of that wear and tear to which humanity is liable from time; but had he questioned him as to the ruling topics—the proper amusements of the day—he would have heard, as he might have done twenty years before, that there was a meeting to convert Jews at the Rotunda; another to rob parsons at the Corn Exchange; that the Viceroy was dining with the Corporation, and congratulating them on the prosperity of Ireland, while the inhabitants were regaled with a procession of the “broad ribbon weavers,” who had not weaved, heaven knows when! This, with an occasional letter from Mr. O’Connell, and now and then a duel in the “Phaynix,” constituted the current pastimes of the city. Such, at least, were they in my day; and though far from the dear locale, an odd flitting glance at the newspapers induces me to believe that matters are not much changed since.

Page 16

I rambled through the streets for some hours, revolving such thoughts as pressed upon me involuntarily by all I saw. The same little grey homunculus that filled my “prince’s mixture” years before, stood behind the counter at Lundy Foot’s, weighing out rappee and high toast, just as I last saw him. The fat college porter, that I used to mistake in my school-boy days for the Provost, God forgive me! was there as fat and as ruddy as heretofore, and wore his Roman costume of helmet and plush breeches, with an air as classic. The old state trumpeter at the castle, another object of my youthful veneration, poor “old God save the King” as we used to call him, walked the streets as of old; his cheeks indeed, a little more lanky and tendinous; but then there had been many viceregal changes, and the “one sole melody his heart delighted in,” had been more frequently called in requisition, as he marched in solemn state with the other antique gentlemen in tabards. As I walked along, each moment some old and early association being suggested by the objects around, I felt my arm suddenly seized. I turned hastily round, and beheld a very old companion in many a hard-fought field and merry bivouack. Tom O’Flaherty of the 8th. Poor Tom was sadly changed since we last met, which was at a ball in Madrid. He was then one of the best-looking fellows of his “style” I ever met,—tall and athletic, with the easy bearing of a man of the world, and a certain jauntiness that I have never seen but in Irishmen who have mixed much in society.

There was also a certain peculiar devil-may-care recklessness about the self-satisfied swagger of his gait, and the free and easy glance of his sharp black eye, united with a temper that nothing could ruffle, and a courage nothing could daunt. With such qualities as these, he had been the prime favourite of his mess, to which he never came without some droll story to relate, or some choice expedient for future amusement. Such had Tom once been; now he was much altered, and though the quiet twinkle of his dark eye showed that the spirit of fun within was not “dead, but only sleeping,”—to myself, who knew something of his history, it seemed almost cruel to awaken him to any thing which might bring him back to the memory of by-gone days. A momentary glance showed me that he was no longer what he had been, and that the unfortunate change in his condition, the loss of all his earliest and oldest associates, and his blighted prospects, had nearly broken a heart that never deserted a friend, nor quailed before an enemy. Poor O’Flaherty was no more the delight of the circle he once adorned; the wit that “set the table in a roar” was all but departed. He had been dismissed the service!!—The story is a brief one:—

In the retreat from Burgos, the ___ Light Dragoons, after a most fatiguing day’s march, halted at the wretched village of Cabenas. It had been deserted by the inhabitants the day before, who, on leaving, had set it on fire; and the blackened walls and fallen roof-trees were nearly all that now remained to show where the little hamlet had once stood.

Page 17

Amid a down-pour of rain, that had fallen for several hours, drenched to the skin, cold, weary, and nearly starving, the gallant 8th reached this melancholy spot at nightfall, with little better prospect of protection from the storm than the barren heath through which their road led might afford them. Among the many who muttered curses, not loud but deep, on the wretched termination to their day's suffering, there was one who kept up his usual good spirits, and not only seemed himself nearly regardless of the privations and miseries about him, but actually succeeded in making the others who rode alongside as perfectly forgetful of their annoyances and troubles as was possible under such circumstances. Good stories, joking allusions to the more discontented ones of the party, ridiculous plans for the night's encampment, followed each other so rapidly, that the weariness of the way was forgotten; and while some were cursing their hard fate, that ever betrayed them into such misfortunes, the little group round O'Flaherty were almost convulsed with laughter at the wit and drollery of one, over whom if the circumstances had any influence, they seemed only to heighten his passion for amusement. In the early part of the morning he had captured a turkey, which hung gracefully from his holster on one side, while a small goat-skin of Valencia wine balanced it on the other. These good things were destined to form a feast that evening, to which he had invited four others; that being, according to his most liberal calculation, the greatest number to whom he could afford a reasonable supply of wine.

When the halt was made, it took some time to arrange the dispositions for the night; and it was nearly midnight before all the regiment had got their billets and were housed, even with such scanty accommodation as the place afforded. Tom's guests had not yet arrived, and he himself was busily engaged in roasting the turkey before a large fire, on which stood a capacious vessel of spiced wine, when the party appeared. A very cursory "reconnaissance" through the house, one of the only ones untouched in the village, showed that from the late rain it would be impossible to think of sleeping in the lower story, which already showed signs of being flooded; they therefore proceeded in a body up stairs, and what was their delight to find a most comfortable room, neatly furnished with chairs, and a table; but, above all, a large old-fashioned bed, an object of such luxury as only an old campaigner can duly appreciate. The curtains were closely tucked in all round, and, in their fleeting and hurried glance, they felt no inclination to disturb them, and rather proceeded to draw up the table before the hearth, to which they speedily removed the fire from below; and, ere many minutes, with that activity which a bivouack life invariably teaches, their supper smoked before them, and five happier fellows did not sit down that night within a large circuit around. Tom was unusually

Page 18

great; stories of drollery unlocked before, poured from him unceasingly, and what with his high spirits to excite them, and the reaction inevitable after a hard day's severe march, the party soon lost the little reason that usually sufficed to guide them, and became as pleasantly tipsy as can well be conceived. However, all good things must have an end, and so had the wine-skin. Tom had placed it affectionately under his arm like a bag-pipe and failed, with even a most energetic squeeze, to extract a drop; there was no nothing for it but to go to rest, and indeed it seemed the most prudent thing for the party.

The bed became accordingly a subject of grave deliberation; for as it could only hold two, and the party were five, there seemed some difficulty in submitting their chances to lot, which all agreed was the fairest way. While this was under discussion, one of the party had approached the contested prize, and, taking up the curtains, proceeded to jump in—when, what was his astonishment to discover that it was already occupied. The exclamation of surprise he gave forth soon brought the others to his side; and to their horror, drunk as they were, they found that the body before them was that of a dead man, arrayed in all the ghastly pomp of a corpse. A little nearer inspection showed that he had been a priest, probably the Padre of the village; on his head he had a small velvet skull cap, embroidered with a cross, and his body was swathed in a vestment, such as priests usually wear at the mass; in his hand he held a large wax taper, which appeared to have burned only half down, and probably been extinguished by the current of air on opening the door. After the first brief shock which this sudden apparition had caused, the party recovered as much of their senses as the wine had left them, and proceeded to discuss what was to be done under the circumstances; for not one of them ever contemplated giving up a bed to a dead priest, while five living men slept on the ground. After much altercation, O'Flaherty, who had hitherto listened without speaking, interrupted the contending parties, saying, "stop, lads, I have it."

"Come," said one of them, "let us hear Tom's proposal."

"Oh," said he, with difficulty steadying himself while he spoke, "we'll put him to bed with old Ridgeway, the quarter-master!"

The roar of loud laughter that followed Tom's device was renewed again and again, till not a man could speak from absolute fatigue. There was not a dissentient voice. Old Ridgeway was hated in the corps, and a better way of disposing of the priest and paying off the quarter-master could not be thought of.

Page 19

Very little time sufficed for their preparations; and if they had been brought up under the Duke of Portland himself, they could not have exhibited a greater taste for a “black job.” The door of the room was quickly taken from its hinges, and the priest placed upon it at full length; a moment more sufficed to lift the door upon their shoulders, and, preceded by Tom, who lit a candle in honour of being, as he said, “chief mourner,” they took their way through the camp towards Ridgeway’s quarters. When they reached the hut where their victim lay, Tom ordered a halt, and proceeded stealthily into the house to reconnoitre. The old quarter-master he found stretched on his sheep-skin before a large fire, the remnants of an ample supper strewn about him, and two empty bottles standing on the hearth—his deep snoring showed that all was safe, and that no fears of his awaking need disturb them. His shako and sword lay near him, but his sabertasche was under his head. Tom carefully withdrew the two former; and hastening to his friends without, proceeded to decorate the priest with them; expressing, at the same time, considerable regret that he feared it might wake Ridgeway, if he were to put the velvet skull-cap on him for a night-cap.

Noiselessly and steadily they now entered, and proceeded to put down their burden, which, after a moment’s discussion, they agreed to place between the quarter-master and the fire, of which, hitherto, he had reaped ample benefit. This done, they stealthily retreated, and hurried back to their quarters, unable to speak with laughter at the success of their plot, and their anticipation of Ridgeway’s rage on awakening in the morning.

It was in the dim twilight of a hazy morning, that the bugler of the 8th aroused the sleeping soldiers from their miserable couches, which, wretched as they were, they, nevertheless, rose from reluctantly—so wearied and fatigued had they been by the preceding day’s march; not one among the number felt so indisposed to stir as the worthy quarter-master; his peculiar avocations had demanded a more than usual exertion on his part, and in the posture he had laid down at night, he rested till morning, without stirring a limb. Twice the reveille had rung through the little encampment, and twice the quarter-master had essayed to open his eyes, but in vain; at last he made a tremendous effort, and sat bolt upright on the floor, hoping that the sudden effort might sufficiently arouse him; slowly his eyes opened, and the first thing they beheld was the figure of the dead priest, with a light cavalry helmet on his head, seated before him. Ridgeway, who was “bon Catholique,” trembled in every joint—it might be a ghost, it might be a warning, he knew not what to think—he imagined the lips moved, and so overcome with terror was he at last, that he absolutely shouted like a maniac, and never ceased till the hut was filled with officers and men, who hearing the uproar ran to his

Page 20

aid—the surprise of the poor quarter-master at the apparition, was scarcely greater than that of the beholders—no one was able to afford any explanation of the circumstance, though all were assured that it must have been done in jest—the door upon which the priest had been conveyed, afforded the clue—they had forgotten to restore it to its place—accordingly the different billets were examined, and at last O’Flaherty was discovered in a most commodious bed, in a large room without a door, still fast asleep, and alone; how and when he had parted from his companions, he never could precisely explain, though he has since confessed it was part of his scheme to lead them astray in the village, and then retire to the bed, which he had determined to appropriate to his sole use.

Old Ridgeway’s rage knew no bounds; he absolutely foamed with passion, and in proportion as he was laughed at his choler rose higher; had this been the only result, it had been well for poor Tom, but unfortunately the affair got to be rumoured through the country—the inhabitants of the village learned the indignity with which the Padre had been treated; they addressed a memorial to Lord Wellington—inquiry was immediately instituted—O’Flaherty was tried by court martial, and found guilty; nothing short of the heaviest punishment that could be inflicted under the circumstances would satisfy the Spaniards, and at that precise period it was part of our policy to conciliate their esteem by every means in our power. The commander-in-chief resolved to make what he called an “example,” and poor O’Flaherty—the life and soul of his regiment—the darling of his mess, was broke, and pronounced incapable of ever serving his Majesty again. Such was the event upon which my poor friend’s fortune in life seemed to hinge—he returned to Ireland, if not entirely broken-hearted, so altered that his best friends scarcely knew him; his “occupation was gone;” the mess had been his home; his brother officers were to him in place of relatives, and he had lost all. His after life was spent in rambling from one watering place to another, more with the air of one who seeks to consume than enjoy his time; and with such a change in appearance as the alteration in his fortune had effected, he now stood before me, but altogether so different a man, that but for the well-known tones of a voice that had often convulsed me with laughter, I should scarcely have recognised him.

“Lorrequer, my old friend, I never thought of seeing you here—this is indeed a piece of good luck.”

“Why, Tom? You surely knew that the ___ were in Ireland, didn’t you?”

“To be sure. I dined with them only a few days ago, but they told me you were off to Paris, to marry something superlatively beautiful, and most enormously rich, the daughter of a duke, if I remember right; but certes, they said your fortune was made, and I need not tell you, there was not a man among them better pleased that I was to hear it.”

Page 21

“Oh! they said so, did they? Droll dogs—always quizzing—I wonder you did not perceive the hoax—eh—very good, was it not?” This I poured out in short broken sentences, blushing like scarlet, and fidgeting like a school girl with downright nervousness.

“A hoax! devilish well done too,”—said Tom, “for old Carden believed the whole story, and told me that he had obtained a six months’ leave for you to make your ‘com.’ and, moreover, said that he had got a letter from the nobleman, Lord _____ confound his name.”

“Lord Grey, is it?” said I, with a sly look at Tom.

“No, my dear friend,” said he drily, “it was not Lord Grey—but to continue—he had got a letter from him, dated from Paris, stating his surprise that you had never joined them there, according to promise, and that they knew your cousin Guy, and a great deal of other matter I can’t remember—so what does all this mean? Did you hoax the noble Lord as well as the Horse Guards, Harry?”

This was indeed a piece of news for me; I stammered out some ridiculous explanation, and promised a fuller detail. Could it be that I had done the Callonbys injustice, and that they never intended to break off my attention to Lady Jane—that she was still faithful, and that of all concerned I alone had been to blame. Oh! how I hoped this might be the case; heavily as my conscience might accuse, I longed ardently to forgive and deal mercifully with myself. Tom continued to talk about indifferent matters, as these thoughts flitted through my mind; perceiving at last that I did not attend, he stopped suddenly and said—

“Harry, I see clearly that something has gone wrong, and perhaps I can make a guess at the mode too: but however, you can do nothing about it now; come and dine with me to-day, and we’ll discuss the affair together after dinner; or if you prefer a ‘distraction,’ as we used to say in Dunkerque, why then I’ll arrange something fashionable for your evening’s amusement. Come, what say you to hearing Father Keogh preach, or would you like a supper at the Carlingford, or perhaps you prefer a soiree chez Miladi; for all of these Dublin affords—all three good in their way, and very intellectual.”

“Well, Tom, I’m yours; but I should prefer your dining with me; I am at Bilton’s; we’ll have our cutlet quite alone, and—”

“And be heartily sick of each other, you were going to add. No, no, Harry; you must dine with me; I have some remarkably nice people to present you to--six is the hour--sharp six--number ____ Molesworth-street, Mrs. Clanfrizzle’s—easily find it—large fanlight over the door—huge lamp in the hall, and a strong odour of mutton broth for thirty yards on each side of the premises—and as good luck would have it, I see old

Daly the counsellor, as they call him, he's the very man to get to meet you, you always liked a character, eh!"

Saying this, O'Flaherty disengaged himself from my arm, and hurried across the street towards a portly middle-aged looking gentleman, with the reddest face I ever beheld. After a brief but very animated colloquy, Tom returned, and informed that that all was right; he had secured Daly.

Page 22

“And who is Daly?” said I, inquiringly, for I was rather interested in hearing what peculiar qualification as a diner-out the counsellor might lay claim to, many of Tom’s friends being as remarkable for being the quizzed as the quizzers.

“Daly,” said he, “is the brother of a most distinguished member of the Irish bar, of which he himself is also a follower, bearing however, no other resemblance to the clever man than the name, for as assuredly as the reputation of the one is inseparably linked with success, so unerringly is the other coupled with failure, and strange to say, that the stupid man is fairly convinced that his brother owes all his success to him, and that to his disinterested kindness the other is indebted for his present exalted station. Thus it is through life; there seems ever to accompany dullness a sustaining power of vanity, that like a life-buoy, keeps a mass afloat whose weight unassisted would sink into obscurity. Do you know that my friend Denis there imagines himself the first man that ever enlightened Sir Robert Peel as to Irish affairs; and, upon my word, his reputation on this head stands incontestably higher than on most others.”

“You surely cannot mean that Sir Robert Peel ever consulted with, much less relied upon, the statements of such a person, as you described you friend Denis to be?”

“He did both—and if he was a little puzzled by the information, the only disgrace attaches to a government that send men to rule over us unacquainted with our habits of thinking, and utterly ignorant of the language—ay, I repeat it—but come, you shall judge for yourself; the story is a short one, and fortunately so, for I must hasten home to give timely notice of your coming to dine with me. When the present Sir Robert Peel, then Mr. Peel, came over here, as secretary to Ireland, a very distinguished political leader of the day invited a party to meet him at dinner, consisting of men of different political leanings; among whom were, as may be supposed, many members of the Irish bar; the elder Daly was too remarkable a person to be omitted, but as the two brothers resided together, there was a difficulty about getting him—however, he must be had, and the only alternative that presented itself was adopted —both were invited. When the party descended to the dining-room, by one of those unfortunate accidents, which as the proverb informs us occasionally take place in the best regulated establishments, the wrong Mr. Daly got placed beside Mr. Peel, which post of honor had been destined by the host for the more agreeable and talented brother. There was now no help for it; and with a heart somewhat nervous for the consequences of the proximity, the worthy entertainer sat down to do the honors as best he might; he was consoled during dinner by observing that the devotion bestowed by honest Denis on the viands before him effectually absorbed his faculties, and thereby threw the entire of Mr. Peel’s conversation

Page 23

towards the gentleman on his other flank. This happiness was like most others, destined to be a brief one. As the dessert made its appearance, Mr. Peel began to listen with some attention to the conversation of the persons opposite; with one of whom he was struck most forcibly—so happy a power of illustration, so vivid a fancy, such logical precision in argument as he evinced, perfectly charmed and surprised him. Anxious to learn the name of so gifted an individual, he turned towards his hitherto silent neighbour and demanded who he was.

“‘Who is he, is it?’ said Denis, hesitatingly, as if he half doubted such extent of ignorance as not to know the person alluded to.

“Mr. Peel bowed in acquiescence.

“‘That’s Bushe!’ said Denis, giving at the same time the same sound to the vowel, u, as it obtains when occurring in the word ‘rush.’

“‘I beg pardon,’ said Mr. Peel, ‘I did not hear.’

“‘Bushe!’ replied Denis, with considerable energy of tone.

“‘Oh, yes! I know,’ said the secretary, ‘Mr. Bushe, a very distinguished member of your bar, I have heard.’

“‘Faith, you may say that!’ said Denis, tossing off his wine at what he esteemed a very trite observation.

“‘Pray,’ said Mr. Peel, again returning to the charge, though certainly feeling not a little surprised at the singular laconicism of his informant, no less than the mellifluous tones of an accent then perfectly new to him. ‘Pray, may I ask, what is the peculiar character of Mr. Bushe’s eloquence? I mean of course, in his professional capacity.’

“‘Eh!’ said Denis, ‘I don’t comprehend you exactly.’

“‘I mean,’ said Mr. Peel, ‘in one word, what’s his forte?’

“‘His forte!’

“‘I mean what his peculiar gift consists in—’

“‘Oh, I perceive—I have ye now—the juries!’

“‘Ah! addressing a jury.’

“Ay, the juries.’

“Can you oblige me by giving me any idea of the manner in which he obtains such signal success in this difficult branch of eloquence.’

“‘I’ll tell ye,’ said Denis, leisurely finishing his glass, and smacking his lips, with the air of a man girding up his loins for a mighty effort, ‘I’ll tell ye—well, ye see the way he has is this,’—here Mr. Peel’s expectation rose to the highest degree of interest,—‘the way he has is this—he first butthers them up, and then slithers them down! that’s all, devil a more of a secret there’s in it.’”

How much reason Denis had to boast of imparting early information to the new secretary I leave my English readers to guess; my Irish ones I may trust to do him ample justice.

Page 24

My friend now left me to my own devices to while away the hours till time to dress for dinner. Heaven help the gentleman so left in Dublin, say I. It is, perhaps, the only city of its size in the world, where there is no lounge—no promenade. Very little experience of it will convince you that it abounds in pretty women, and has its fair share of agreeable men; but where are they in the morning? I wish Sir Dick Lauder, instead of speculating where salmon spent the Christmas holidays, would apply his most inquiring mind to such a question as this. True it is, however, they are not to be found. The squares are deserted—the streets are very nearly so—and all that is left to the luckless wanderer in search of the beautiful, is to ogle the beauties of Dame-street, who are shopkeepers in Grafton-street, or the beauties of Grafton-street, who are shopkeepers in Dame-street. But, confound it, how cranky I am getting—I must be tremendously hungry. True, it's past six. So now for my suit of sable, and then to dinner.

CHAPTER XIII

DUBLIN—THE BOARDING-HOUSE—SELECT SOCIETY.

Punctual to my appointment with O'Flaherty, I found myself a very few minutes after six o'clock at Mrs. Clanfrizzle's door. My very authoritative summons at the bell was answered by the appearance of a young, pale-faced invalid, in a suit of livery the taste of which bore a very unpleasant resemblance to the one I so lately figured in. It was with considerable difficulty I persuaded this functionary to permit my carrying my hat with me to the drawing-room, a species of caution on my part—as he esteemed it—savouring much of distrust. This point however, I carried, and followed him up a very ill-lighted stair to the drawing-room; here I was announced by some faint resemblance to my real name, but sufficiently near to bring my friend Tom at once to meet me, who immediately congratulated me on my fortune in coming off so well, for that the person who preceded me, Mr. Jones Blennerhasset, had been just announced as Mr. Blatherhasit—a change the gentleman himself was not disposed to adopt—"But come along, Harry, while we are waiting for Daly, let me make you known to some of our party; this, you must know, is a boarding-house, and always has some capital fun—queerest people you ever met—I have only one hint—cut every man, woman, and child of them, if you meet them hereafter—I do it myself, though I have lived here these six months." Pleasant people, thought I, these must be, with whom such a line is advisable, much less practicable.

"Mrs. Clanfrizzle, my friend Mr. Lorrequer; thinks he'll stay the summer in town. Mrs. Clan—, should like him to be one of us." This latter was said sotto voce, and was a practice he continued to adopt in presenting me to his several friends through the room.

Page 25

Miss Riley, a horrid old fright, in a bird of paradise plume, and corked eyebrows, gibbeted in gilt chains and pearl ornaments, and looking as the grisettes say, “superbe en chrysolite”—“Miss Riley, Captain Lorrequer, a friend I have long desired to present to you—fifteen thousand a-year and a baronetcy, if he has sixpence”—sotto again. “Surgeon M’Culloch—he likes the title,” said Tom in a whisper—“Surgeon, Captain Lorrequer. By the by, lest I forget it, he wishes to speak to you in the morning about his health; he is stopping at Sandymount for the baths; you could go out there, eh!” The tall thing in green spectacles bowed, and acknowledged Tom’s kindness by a knowing touch of the elbow. In this way he made the tour of the room for about ten minutes, during which brief space, I was according to the kind arrangements of O’Flaherty, booked as a resident in the boarding-house—a lover to at least five elderly, and three young ladies—a patient—a client—a second in a duel to a clerk in the post-office—and had also volunteered (through him always) to convey, by all of his Majesty’s mails, as many parcels, packets, band-boxes, and bird-cages, as would have comfortably filled one of Pickford’s vans. All this he told me was requisite to my being well received, though no one thought much of any breach of compact subsequently, except Mrs. Clan—herself. The ladies had, alas! been often treated vilely before; the doctor had never had a patient; and as for the belligerent knight of the dead office, he’d rather die than fight any day.

The last person to whom my friend deemed it necessary to introduce me, was a Mr. Garret Cudmore, from the Reeks of Kerry, lately matriculated to all the honors of freshmanship in the Dublin university. This latter was a low-sized, dark-browed man, with round shoulders, and particularly long arms, the disposal of which seemed sadly to distress him. He possessed the most perfect brogue I ever listened to; but it was difficult to get him to speak, for on coming up to town some weeks before, he had been placed by some intelligent friend at Mrs. Clanfrizzle’s establishment, with the express direction to mark and thoroughly digest as much as he could of the habits and customs of the circle about him, which he was rightly informed was the very focus of good breeding and haut ton; but on no account, unless driven thereto by the pressure of sickness, or the wants of nature, to trust himself with speech, which, in his then uninformed state, he was assured would inevitably ruin him among his fastidiously cultivated associates.

To the letter and the spirit of the despatch he had received, the worthy Garret acted rigidly, and his voice was scarcely ever known to transgress the narrow limits prescribed by his friends. In more respects that one, was this a good resolve; for so completely had he identified himself with college habits, things, and phrases, that whenever he conversed, he became little short of unintelligible to the vulgar—a difficulty not decreased by his peculiar pronunciation.

Page 26

My round of presentation was just completed, when the pale figure in light blue livery announced Counsellor Daly and dinner, for both came fortunately together. Taking the post of honour, Miss Riley's arm, I followed Tom, who I soon perceived ruled the whole concern, as he led the way with another ancient vestal in black stain and bugles. The long procession wound its snake-like length down the narrow stair, and into the dining-room, where at last we all got seated; and here let me briefly vindicate the motives of my friend—should any unkind person be found to impute to his selection of a residence, any base and grovelling passion for gourmandise, that day's experience should be an eternal vindication of him. The soup—alas! that I should so far prostitute the word; for the black broth of Sparta was mock turtle in comparison—retired to make way for a mass of beef, whose tenderness I did not question; for it sank beneath the knife of the carver like a feather bed—the skill of Saladin himself would have failed to divide it. The fish was a most rebellious pike, and nearly killed every loyal subject at table; and then down the sides were various comestibles of chickens, with azure bosoms, and hams with hides like a rhinoceros; covered dishes of decomposed vegetable matter, called spinach and cabbage; potatoes arrayed in small masses, and browned, resembling those ingenious architectural structures of mud, children raise in the high ways, and call dirt-pies. Such were the chief constituents of the “feed;” and such, I am bound to confess, waxed beautifully less under the vigorous onslaught of the party.

The conversation soon became both loud and general. That happy familiarity—which I had long believed to be the exclusive prerogative of a military mess, where constant daily association sustains the interest of the veriest trifles—I here found in a perfection I had not anticipated, with this striking difference, that there was no absurd deference to any existing code of etiquette in the conduct of the party generally, each person quizzing his neighbour in the most free and easy style imaginable, and all, evidently from long habit and conventional usage, seeming to enjoy the practice exceedingly. Thus, droll allusions, good stories, and smart repartees, fell thick as hail, and twice as harmless, which any where else that I had ever heard of, would assuredly have called for more explanations, and perhaps gunpowder, in the morning, than usually are deemed agreeable. Here, however, they knew better; and though the lawyer quizzed the doctor for never having another patient than the house dog, all of whose arteries he had tied in the course of the winter for practice—and the doctor retorted as heavily, by showing that the lawyer's practice had been other than beneficial to those for whom he was concerned—his one client being found guilty, mainly through his ingenious defence of him; yet they never showed any, the slightest irritation—on the contrary,

Page 27

such little playful badinage ever led to some friendly passages of taking wine together, or in arrangements for a party to the “Dargle,” or “Dunleary;” and thus went on the entire party, the young ladies darting an occasion slight at their elders, who certainly returned the fire, often with advantage; all uniting now and then, however, in one common cause, an attack of the whole line upon Mrs. Clanfrizzle herself, for the beef, or the mutton, or the fish, or the poultry—each of which was sure to find some sturdy defamer, ready and willing to give evidence in dispraise. Yet even these, and I thought them rather dangerous sallies, led to no more violent results than dignified replies from the worthy hostess, upon the goodness of her fare, and the evident satisfaction it afforded while being eaten, if the appetites of the party were a test. While this was at its height, Tom stooped behind my chair, and whispered gently—

“This is good—isn’t it, eh?—life in a boarding-house—quite new to you; but they are civilized now compared to what you’ll find them in the drawing-room. When short whist for five-penny points sets in—then Greek meets Greek, and we’ll have it.”

During all this melee tournament, I perceived that the worthy jib as he would be called in the parlance of Trinity, Mr. Cudmore, remained perfectly silent, and apparently terrified. The noise, the din of voices, and the laughing, so completely addled him, that he was like one in a very horrid dream. The attention with which I had observed him, having been remarked by my friend O’Flaherty, he informed me that the scholar, as he was called there, was then under a kind of cloud—an adventure which occurred only two nights before, being too fresh in his memory to permit him enjoying himself even to the limited extent it had been his wont to do. As illustrative, not only of Mr. Cudmore, but the life I have been speaking of, I may as well relate it.

Soon after Mr. Cudmore’s enlistment under the banners of the Clanfrizzle, he had sought and found an asylum in the drawing-room of the establishment, which promised, from its geographical relations, to expose him less to the molestations of conversation than most other parts of the room. This was a small recess beside the fire-place, not uncommon in old-fashioned houses, and which, from its incapacity to hold more than one, secured to the worthy recluse the privacy he longed for; and here, among superannuated hearth-brushes, an old hand screen, an asthmatic bellows, and a kettle-holder, sat the timid youth, “alone, but in a crowd.” Not all the seductions of loo, limited to three pence, nor even that most appropriately designated game, beggar-my-neighbour—could withdraw him from his blest retreat. Like his countryman, St. Kevin—my friend Petrie has ascertained that the saint was a native of Tralee—he fled from the temptations of the world, and the blandishments of the fair; but, alas! like the saint himself, the

Page 28

“poor jib little knew
All that wily sex can do;”

For while he hugged himself in the security of his fortress, the web of his destiny was weaving. So true is it, as he himself used, no less pathetically than poetically to express it, “misfortune will find you out, if ye were hid in a tay chest.”

It happened that in Mrs. Clanfrizzle’s establishment, the “enfant bleu,” already mentioned, was the only individual of his sex retained; and without for a moment disparaging the ability or attentions of this gifted person, yet it may reasonably be credited, that in waiting on a party of twenty-five or thirty persons at dinner, all of whom he had admitted as porter, and announced as maitre d’hotel, with the subsequent detail of his duties in the drawing-room, that Peter, blue Peter—his boarding-house soubriquet—not enjoying the bird-like privilege of “being in two places at once,” gave one rather the impression of a person of hasty and fidgetty habits—for which nervous tendency the treatment he underwent was certainly injudicious—it being the invariable custom for each guest to put his services in requisition, perfectly irrespective of all other claims upon him, from whatsoever quarter coming—and then, at the precise moment that the luckless valet was snuffing the candles, he was abused by one for not bringing coal; by another for having carried off his tea-cup, sent on an expedition for sugar; by a third for having left the door open, which he had never been near; and so on to the end of the chapter.

It chanced that a few evenings previous to my appearance at the house, this indefatigable Caleb was ministering as usual to the various and discrepant wants of the large party assembled in the drawing-room. With his wonted alacrity he had withdrawn from their obscure retreat against the wall, sundry little tables, destined for the players at whist, or “spoil five”—the popular game of the establishment. With a dexterity that savoured much of a stage education, he had arranged the candles, the cards, the counters; he had poked the fire, settled the stool for Miss Riley’s august feet, and was busily engaged in changing five shillings into small silver for a desperate victim of loo—when Mrs. Clanfrizzle’s third, and, as it appeared, last time, of asking for the kettle smote upon his ear. His loyalty would have induced him at once to desert every thing on such an occasion; but the other party engaged, held him fast, saying—

“Never mind *her*, Peter—you have sixpence more to give me.”

Poor Peter rummaged one pocket, then another—discovering at last three pence in copper, and some farthings, with which he seemed endeavouring to make a composition with his creditor for twelve shillings in the pound; when Mrs. Clan’s patience finally becoming exhausted, she turned towards Mr. Cudmore, the only unemployed person she could perceive, and with her blandest smile said,

Page 29

“Mr. Cudmore, may I take the liberty of requesting you would hand me the kettle beside you.”

Now, though the kettle aforesaid was, as the hostess very properly observed, beside him, yet the fact that in complying with the demand, it was necessary for the bashful youth to leave the recess he occupied, and, with the kettle, proceed to walk half across the room—there to perform certain manual operations requiring skill and presence of mind, before a large and crowded assembly—was horror to the mind of the poor Jib; and he would nearly as soon have acceded to a desire to dance a hornpipe, if such had been suggested as the wish of the company. However, there was nothing for it; and summoning up all his nerve—knitting his brows—clenching his teeth, like one prepared to “do or die,” he seized the hissing cauldron, and strode through the room, like the personified genius of steam, very much to the alarm of all the old ladies in the vicinity, whose tasteful drapery benefitted but little from his progress. Yet he felt but little of all this; he had brought up his courage to the sticking place, and he was absolutely half unconscious of the whole scene before him; nor was it till some kind mediator had seized his arm, while another drew him back by the skirts of the coat, that he desisted from the deluge of hot water, with which, having filled the tea-pot, he proceeded to swamp every thing else upon the tray, in his unfortunate abstraction. Mrs. Clanfrizzle screamed—the old ladies accompanied her—the young ones tittered—the men laughed—and, in a word, poor Cudmore, perfectly unconscious of any thing extraordinary, felt himself the admired of all admirers,—very little, it is true, to his own satisfaction. After some few minutes exposure to these eclats de rire, he succeeded in depositing the source of his griefs within the fender, and once more retired to his sanctuary,—having registered a vow, which, should I speak it, would forfeit his every claim to gallantry for ever.

Whether in the vow aforesaid Mr. Cudmore had only been engaged in that species of tessellating which furnishes the pavement so celebrated in the lower regions, I know not; but true it is, that he retired that night to his chamber very much discomfited at his debut in the great world, and half disposed to believe that nature had neither intended him for a Brummel nor a D’Orsay. While he was ruminating on such matters, he was joined by O’Flaherty, with whom he had been always more intimate than any other inmate of the house—Tom’s tact having entirely concealed what the manners of the others too plainly evinced, the perfect appreciation of the student’s oddity and singularity. After some few observations on general matters, O’Flaherty began with a tone of some seriousness to express towards Cudmore the warm interest he had ever taken in him, since his first coming among them; his great anxiety for his welfare, and his firm resolve that no chance or casual inattention to mere ceremonial observances on his part should ever be seized on by the other guests as a ground for detraction or an excuse for ridicule of him.

Page 30

"Rely upon it, my dear boy," said he, "I have watched over you like a parent; and having partly foreseen that something like this affair of to-night would take place sooner or later"—

"What affair?" said Cudmore—his eyes staring half out of his head.

"That business of the kettle."

"Kett—el. The kettle! What of that?" said Cudmore.

"What of it? Why, if you don't feel it, I am sure it is not my duty to remind you; only"—

"Feel it—oh, yes. I saw them laughing, because I spilled the water over old Mrs. Jones, or something of that sort."

"No, no, my dear young friend, they were not laughing at that—their mirth had another object."

"What the devil was it at, then?"

"You don't know, don't you?"

"No; I really do not."

"Nor can't guess—eh?"

"Confound me if I can."

"Well. I see, Mr. Cudmore, you are really too innocent for these people. But come—it shall never be said that youth and inexperience ever suffered from the unworthy ridicule and cold sarcasm of the base world, while Tom O'Flaherty stood by a spectator.

"Sir," said Tom, striking his hand with energy on the table, and darting a look of fiery indignation from his eye, "Sir, you were this night trepanned—yes, sir, vilely, shamefully trepanned—I repeat the expression—into the performance of a menial office—an office so degrading, so offensive, so unbecoming the rank, the station, and the habits of gentlemen, my very blood recoils when I only think of the indignity."

The expression of increasing wonder and surprise depicted in Mr. Cudmore's face at these words, my friend Phiz might convey—I cannot venture to describe it—suffice it to say, that even O'Flaherty himself found it difficult to avoid a burst of laughter, as he looked at him and resumed.



“Witnessing, as I did, the entire occurrence; feeling deeply for the inexperience which the heartless worldlings had dared to trample upon, I resolved to stand by you, and here I am come for that purpose.”

“Well, but what in the devil’s name have I done all this time?”

“What! are you still ignorant?—is it possible? Did you not hand the kettle from the fire-place, and fill the tea-pot?—answer me that!”

“I did,” said Cudmore, with a voice already becoming tremulous.

“Is that the duty of a gentleman?—answer me that.”

A dead pause stood in place of a reply, while Tom proceeded—

“Did you ever hear any one ask me, or Counsellor Daly, or Mr. Fogarty, or any other person to do so?—answer me that.”

“No; never” muttered Cudmore, with a sinking spirit.

“Well then why may I ask, were you selected for an office that by your own confession, no one else would stoop to perform? I’ll tell you, because from your youth and inexperience, your innocence was deemed a fit victim to the heartless sneers of a cold and unfeeling world.” And here Tom broke forth into a very beautiful apostrophe, beginning—

Page 31

“Oh, virtue!” (this I am unfortunately unable to present to my readers; and must only assure them that it was a very faithful imitation of the well-known one delivered by Burke in the case of Warren Hastings,) and concluding with an exhortation to Cudmore to wipe out the stain of his wounded honour, by repelling with indignation the slightest future attempt at such an insult.

This done, O’Flaherty retired, leaving Cudmore to dig among Greek roots, and chew over the cud of his misfortune. Punctual to the time and place, that same evening beheld the injured Cudmore resume his wonted corner, pretty much with the feeling with which a forlorn hope stands match in hand to ignite the train destined to explode with ruin to thousands —himself perhaps amongst the number: there he sat with a brain as burning, and a heart as excited, as though, instead of sipping his bohea beside a sea-coal fire, he was that instant trembling beneath the frown of Dr. Elrington, for the blunders in his Latin theme, and what terror to the mind of a “Jib” can equal that one?

As luck would have it, this was a company night in the boarding-house. Various young ladies in long blue sashes, and very broad ribbon sandals, paraded the rooms, chatting gaily with very distinguished looking young gentlemen, with gold brooches, and party-coloured inside waistcoats; sundry elderly ladies sat at card-tables, discussing the “lost honour by an odd trick they played,” with heads as large as those of Jack or Jill in the pantomime; spruce clerks in public offices, (whose vocation the expansive tendency of the right ear, from long pen-carrying, betokened) discussed fashion, “and the musical glasses” to some very over-dressed married ladies, who preferred flirting to five-and-ten. The tea-table, over which the amiable hostess presided, had also its standing votaries: mostly grave parliamentary-looking gentlemen, with powdered heads, and very long-waisted black coats, among whom the Sir Oracle was a functionary of his Majesty’s High Court of Chancery, though I have reason to believe, not, Lord Manners: meanwhile, in all parts of the room might be seen Blue Peter, distributing tea, coffee, and biscuit, and occasionally interchanging a joke with the dwellers in the house. While all these pleasing occupations proceeded, the hour of Cudmore’s trial was approaching. The tea-pot which had stood the attack of fourteen cups without flinching, at last began to fail, and discovered to the prying eyes of Mrs. Clanfrizzle, nothing but an olive-coloured deposit of soft matter, closely analogous in appearance and chemical property to the residuary precipitate in a drained fish-pond; she put down the lid with a gentle sigh and turning towards the fire bestowed one of her very blindest and most captivating looks on Mr. Cudmore, saying—as plainly as looks could say—“Cudmore, you’re wanting.” Whether the youth did, or did not understand, I am unable to record: I can only say, the appeal was made without acknowledgment. Mrs. Clanfrizzle again essayed, and by a little masonic movement of her hand to the tea-pot, and a sly glance at the hob, intimated her wish—still hopelessly; at last there was nothing for it but speaking; and she donned her very softest voice, and most persuasive tone, saying—

Page 32

“Mr. Cudmore, I am really very troublesome: will you permit me to ask you?”—

“Is it for the kettle, ma’am?” said Cudmore, with a voice that startled the whole room, disconcerting three whist parties, and so absorbing the attention of the people at loo, that the pool disappeared without any one being able to account for the circumstance.

“Is it for the kettle, ma’am?”

“If you will be so very kind,” lisped the hostess.

“Well, then, upon my conscience, you are impudent,” said Cudmore, with his face crimsoned to the ears, and his eyes flashing fire.

“Why, Mr. Cudmore,” began the lady, “why, really, this is so strange. Why sir, what can you mean?”

“Just that,” said the imperturbable jib, who now that his courage was up, dared every thing.

“But sir, you must surely have misunderstood me. I only asked for the kettle, Mr. Cudmore.”

“The devil a more,” said Cud, with a sneer.

“Well, then, of course”—

“Well, then, I’ll tell you, of course,” said he, repeating her words; “the sorrow taste of the kettle, I’ll give you. Call you own skip—Blue Pether there—damn me, if I’ll be your skip any longer.”

For the uninitiated I have only to add, that “skip” is the Trinity College appellation for servant, which was therefore employed by Mr. Cudmore, on this occasion, as expressing more contemptuously his sense of the degradation of the office attempted to be put upon him. Having already informed my reader on some particulars of the company, I leave him to suppose how Mr. Cudmore’s speech was received. Whist itself was at an end for that evening, and nothing but laughter, long, loud, and reiterated, burst from every corner of the room for hours after.

As I have so far travelled out of the record of my own peculiar confessions, as to give a leaf from what might one day form the matter of Mr. Cudmore’s, I must now make the only amende in my power, by honestly narrating, that short as my visit was to the classic precincts of this agreeable establishment, I did not escape without exciting my share of ridicule, though, I certainly had not the worst of the joke, and may, therefore, with better grace tell the story, which, happily for my readers, is a very brief one. A custom prevailed in Mrs. Clanfrizzle’s household, which from my unhappy ignorance of

boarding-houses, I am unable to predicate if it belong to the genera at large, or this one specimen in particular, however, it is a sufficiently curious fact, even though thereby hang no tale, for my stating it here. The decanters on the dinner-table were never labelled, with their more appropriate designation of contents, whether claret, sherry, or port, but with the names of their respective owners, it being a matter of much less consequence that any individual at table should mix his wine, by pouring “port upon madeira,” than commit the truly legal offence of appropriating to his own use and benefit, even by mistake, his neighbour’s bottle. However well the system may work among the regular members of the “domestic circle,” and I am assured that it does succeed extremely—to the newly arrived guest, or uninitiated visitor, the affair is perplexing, and leads occasionally to awkward results.

Page 33

It so chanced, from my friend O'Flaherty's habitual position at the foot of the table, and my post of honour near the head, that on the first day of my appearing there, the distance between us, not only precluded all possible intercourse, but any of those gentle hints as to habits and customs, a new arrival looks for at the hands of his better informed friend. The only mode of recognition, to prove that we belonged to each other, being by that excellent and truly English custom of drinking wine together, Tom seized the first idle moment from his avocation as carver to say,

"Lorrequer, a glass of wine with you."

Having, of course, acceded, he again asked,

"What wine do you drink?" intending thereby, as I afterwards learned, to send me from his end of the table, what wine I selected. Not conceiving the object of the inquiry, and having hitherto without hesitation helped myself from the decanter, which bore some faint resemblance to sherry, I immediately turned for correct information to the bottle itself, upon whose slender neck was ticketed the usual slip of paper. My endeavours to decypher the writing occupied time sufficient again to make O'Flaherty ask,

"Well, Harry, I'm waiting for you. Will you have port?"

"No, I thank you," I replied, having by this revealed the inscription. "No, I thank you; I'll just stick to my old friend here, Bob M'Grotty;" for thus I rendered familiarly the name of Rt. M'Grotty on the decanter, and which I in my ignorance believed to be the boarding-house soubriquet for bad sherry. That Mr. M'Grotty himself little relished my familiarity with either his name or property I had a very decisive proof, for turning round upon his chair, and surveying my person from head to foot with a look of fiery wrath, he thundered out in very broad Scotch,

"And by my saul, my freend, ye may just as weel finish it noo, for deil a glass o' his ain wine did Bob M'Grotty, as ye ca' him, swallow this day."

The convulsion of laughter into which my blunder and the Scotchman's passion threw the whole board, lasted till the cloth was withdrawn, and the ladies had retired to the drawing-room, the only individual at table not relishing the mistake being the injured proprietor of the bottle, who was too proud to accept reparation from my friend's decanter, and would scarcely condescend to open his lips during the evening; notwithstanding which display of honest indignation, we contrived to become exceedingly merry and jocose, most of the party communicating little episodes of their life, in which, it is true, they frequently figured in situations that nothing but their native and natural candour would venture to avow. One story I was considerably amused at; it was told by the counsellor, Mr. Daly, in illustration of the difficulty of rising at the bar, and which, as showing his own mode of obviating the delay that young professional men

submit to from hard necessity, as well as in evidence of his strictly legal turn, I shall certainly recount, one of these days, for the edification of the junior bar.

Page 34

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHASE.

On the morning after my visit to the boarding-house, I received a few hurried lines from Curzon, informing me that no time was to be lost in joining the regiment—that a grand fancy ball was about to be given by the officers of the Dwarf frigate, then stationed off Dunmore; who, when inviting the ____, specially put in a demand for my well-known services, to make it to go off, and concluding with an extract from the Kilkenny Moderator, which ran thus—

“An intimation has just reached us, from a quarter on which we can place the fullest reliance, that the celebrated amateur performer, Mr. Lorrequer, may shortly be expected amongst us; from the many accounts we have received of this highly-gifted gentleman’s powers, we anticipate a great treat to the lovers of the drama,” &c. &c. “So you see, my dear Hal,” continued Curzon, “thy vocation calls thee; therefore come, and come quickly—provide thyself with a black satin costume, slashed with light blue—point lace collar and ruffles—a Spanish hat looped in front—and, if possible, a long rapier, with a flap hilt.—Carden is not here; so you may show your face under any colour with perfect impunity.—Yours from the side scenes,

“C. Curzon.”

This clever epistle sufficed to show me that the gallant __th had gone clean theatrical mad; and although from my “last appearance on any stage,” it might be supposed I should feel no peculiar desire to repeat the experiment, yet the opportunity of joining during Col. Carden’s absence, was too tempting to resist, and I at once made up my mind to set out, and, without a moment’s delay, hurried across the street to the coach office, to book myself an inside in the mail of that night; fortunately no difficulty existed in my securing the seat, for the way-bill was a perfect blank, and I found myself the only person who had, as yet, announced himself a passenger. On returning to my hotel, I found O’Flaherty waiting for me; he was greatly distressed on hearing my determination to leave town—explained how he had been catering for my amusement for the week to come—that a picnic to the Dargle was arranged in a committee of the whole house, and a boating party, with a dinner at the Pigeon-house, was then under consideration; resisting, however, such extreme temptations, I mentioned the necessity of my at once proceeding to headquarters, and all other reasons for my precipitancy failing, concluded with that really knock-down argument, “I have taken my place;” this, I need scarcely add, finished the matter—at least I have never known it fail in such cases. Tell your friends that your wife is hourly expecting to be confined; your favourite child is in the measles—you best friend waiting your aid in an awkward scrape—your one vote only wanting to turn the scale in an election. Tell them, I say, each or all of these, or a hundred

Page 35

more like them, and to any one you so speak, the answer is—"Pooh, pooh, my dear fellow, never fear—don't fuss yourself —take it easy—to-morrow will do just as well." If, on the other hand, however, you reject such flimsy excuses, and simply say, "I'm booked in the mail," the opposition at once falls to the ground, and your quondam antagonist, who was ready to quarrel with you, is at once prepared to assist in packing your portmanteau.

Having soon satisfied my friend Tom that resistance was in vain, I promised to eat an early dinner with him at Morrisson's, and spent the better part of the morning in putting down a few notes of my Confessions, as well as the particulars of Mr. Daly's story, which, I believe, I half or wholly promised my readers at the conclusion of my last chapter; but which I must defer to a more suitable opportunity, when mentioning the next occasion of my meeting him on the southern circuit.

My dispositions were speedily made. I was fortunate in securing the exact dress my friend's letter alluded to among the stray costumes of Fishamble-street; and rich in the possession of the only "properties" it has been my lot to acquire, I despatched my treasure to the coach office, and hastened to Morrisson's, it being by this time nearly five o'clock. There, true to time, I found O'Flaherty deep in the perusal of the bill, along which figured the novel expedients for dining, I had been in the habit of reading in every Dublin hotel since my boyhood. "Mock turtle, mutton, gravy, roast beef and potatoes—shoulder of mutton and potatoes! —ducks and peas, potatoes!! ham and chicken, cutlet steak and potatoes!!! apple tart and cheese:" with a slight cadenza of a sigh over the distant glories of Very, or still better the "Freres," we sat down to a very patriarchal repast, and what may be always had par excellence in Dublin, a bottle of Sneyd's claret.

Poor Tom's spirits were rather below their usual pitch; and although he made many efforts to rally and appear gay, he could not accomplish it. However, we chatted away over old times and old friends, and forgetting all else but the topics we talked of, the time-piece over the chimney first apprised me that two whole hours had gone by, and that it was now seven o'clock, the very hour the coach was to start. I started up at once, and notwithstanding all Tom's representations of the impossibility of my being in time, had despatched waiters in different directions for a jarvey, more than ever determined upon going; so often is it that when real reasons for our conduct are wanting, any casual or chance opposition confirms us in an intention which before was but uncertain. Seeing me so resolved, Tom, at length, gave way, and advised my pursuing the mail, which must be now gone at least ten minutes, and which, with smart driving, I should probably overtake before getting free of the city, as they have usually many delays in so doing. I at once ordered out the "yellow post-chaise," and before many minutes had elapsed, what, with imprecation and bribery, I started in pursuit of his Majesty's Cork and Kilkenny mail coach, then patiently waiting in the court-yard of the Post Office.

Page 36

"Which way now, your honor?" said a shrill voice from the dark—for such the night had already become, and threatened with a few heavy drops of straight rain, the fall of a tremendous shower.

"The Naas road," said I; "and, harkye, my fine fellow, if you overtake the coach in half an hour, I'll double your fare."

"Be gorra, I'll do my endayvour," said the youth; at the same time instant dashing in both spurs, we rattled down Nassau-street at a very respectable pace for harriers. Street after street we passed, and at last I perceived we had got clear of the city, and were leaving the long line of lamp-lights behind us. The night was now pitch dark. I could not see any thing whatever. The quick clattering of the wheels, the sharp crack of the postillion's whip, or the still sharper tone of his "gee hup," showed me we were going at a tremendous pace, had I not even had the experience afforded by the frequent visits my head paid to the roof of the chaise, so often as we bounded over a stone, or splashed through a hollow. Dark and gloomy as it was, I constantly let down the window, and with half my body protruded, endeavored to catch a glimpse of the "Chase;" but nothing could I see. The rain now fell in actual torrents; and a more miserable night it is impossible to conceive.

After about an hour so spent, he at last came to a check, so sudden and unexpected on my part, that I was nearly precipitated, harlequin fashion, through the front window. Perceiving that we no longer moved, and suspecting that some part of our tackle had given way, I let down the sash, and cried out—"Well now, my lad, any thing wrong?" My questions was, however, unheard; and although, amid the steam arising from the wet and smoking horses, I could perceive several figures indistinctly moving about, I could not distinguish what they were doing, nor what they said. A laugh I certainly did hear, and heartily cursed the unfeeling wretch, as I supposed him to be, who was enjoying himself at my disappointment. I again endeavored to find out what had happened, and called out still louder than before.

"We are at Ra'coole, your honor," said the boy, approaching the door of the chaise, "and she's only beat us by hafe a mile."

"Who the devil is she?" said I.

"The mail, your honor, is always a female in Ireland."

"Then why do you stop now? You're not going to feed I suppose?"

"Of course not, your honor, it's little feeding troubles these bastes, any how, but they tell me the road is so heavy we'll never take the chaise over the next stage without leaders."



“Without leaders!” said I. “Pooh! my good fellow, no humbugging, four horses for a light post-chaise and no luggage; come get up, and no nonsense.” At this moment a man approached the window with a lantern in his hand, and so strongly represented the dreadful state of the roads from the late rains—the length of the stage—the frequency of accidents latterly from under-horsing, &c. &c. that I yielded, a reluctant assent, and ordered out the leaders, comforting myself the while, that considering the inside fare of the coach, I made such efforts to overtake, was under a pound, and that time was no object to me, I certainly was paying somewhat dearly for my character for resolution.

Page 37

At last we got under way once more, and set off cheered by a tremendous shout from at least a dozen persons, doubtless denizens of that interesting locality, amid which I once again heard the laugh that had so much annoyed me already. The rain was falling, if possible, more heavily than before, and had evidently set in for the entire night.

Throwing myself back into a corner of the “leathern convenience,” I gave myself up to the full enjoyment of the Rouchefoucauld maxim, that there is always a pleasure felt in the misfortunes of even our best friends, and certainly experienced no small comfort in my distress, by contrasting my present position with that of my two friends in the saddle, as they sweltered on through mud and mire, rain and storm. On we went, splashing, bumping, rocking, and jolting, till I began at last to have serious thoughts of abdicating the seat and betaking myself to the bottom of the chaise, for safety and protection. Mile after mile succeeded, and as after many a short and fitful slumber, which my dreams gave an apparent length to, I woke only to find myself still in pursuit—the time seemed so enormously protracted that I began to fancy my whole life was to be passed in the dark, in chase of the Kilkenny mail, as we read in the true history of the flying Dutchman, who, for his sins of impatience—like mine—spent centuries vainly endeavouring to double the Cape, or the Indian mariner in Moore’s beautiful ballad, of whom we are told as—

“Many a day to night gave way,
And many a morn succeeded,
Yet still his flight, by day and night,
That restless mariner speeded.”

This might have been all very well in the tropics, with a smart craft and doubtless plenty of sea store—but in a chaise, at night, and on the Naas road, I humbly suggest I had all the worse of the parallel.

At last the altered sound of the wheels gave notice of our approach to a town, and after about twenty minutes; rattling over the pavement we entered what I supposed, correctly, to be Naas. Here I had long since determined my pursuit should cease. I had done enough, and more than enough, to vindicate my fame against any charge of irresolution as to leaving Dublin, and was bethinking me of the various modes of prosecuting my journey on the morrow, when we drew up suddenly at the door of the Swan. The arrival of a chaise and four at a small country town inn, suggests to the various employees therein, any thing rather than the traveller in pursuit of the mail, and so the moment I arrived, I was assailed with innumerable proffers of horses, supper, bed, &c. My anxious query was thrice repeated in vain, “When did the coach pass?”

“The mail,” replied the landlord at length. “Is it the down mail?”

Not understanding the technical, I answered, “Of course not the Down—the Kilkenny and Cork mail.”

“From Dublin, sir?”

“Yes, from Dublin.”

“Not arrived yet, sir, nor will it for three quarters of an hour; they never leave Dublin till a quarter past seven; that is, in fact, half past, and their time here is twenty minutes to eleven.”

Page 38

“Why, you stupid son of a boot-top, we have been posting on all night like the devil, and all this time the coach has been ten miles behind us.”

“Well, we’ve cotch them any how,” said the urchin, as he disengaged himself from his wet saddle, and stood upon the ground; “and it is not my fault that the coach is not before us.”

With a satisfactory anathema upon all innkeepers, waiters, hostlers, and post-boys, with a codicil including coach-proprietors, I followed the smirking landlord into a well-lighted room, with a blazing fire, when having ordered supper, I soon regained my equanimity.

My rasher and poached eggs, all Naas could afford me, were speedily despatched, and as my last glass, from my one pint of sherry, was poured out, the long expected coach drew up. A minute after the coachman entered to take his dram, followed by the guard; a more lamentable spectacle of condensed moisture cannot be conceived; the rain fell from the entire circumference of his broad-brimmed hat, like the ever-flowing drop from the edge of an antique fountain; his drab-coat had become a deep orange hue, while his huge figure loomed still larger, as he stood amid a nebula of damp, that would have made an atmosphere for the Georgium Sidus.

“Going on to-night, sir?” said he, addressing me; “severe weather, and no chance of its clearing, but of course you’re inside.”

“Why, there is very little doubt of that,” said I. “Are you nearly full inside?”

“Only one, sir; but he seems a real queer chap; made fifty inquiries at the office if he could not have the whole inside to himself, and when he heard that one place had been taken—your’s, I believe, sir—he seemed like a scalded bear.”

“You don’t know his name then?”

“No, sir, he never gave a name at the office, and his only luggage is two brown paper parcels, without any ticket, and he has them inside; indeed he never lets them from him even for a second.”

Here the guard’s horn, announcing all ready, interrupted our colloquy, and prevented my learning any thing further of my fellow-traveller, whom, however, I at once set down in my own mind for some confounded old churl that made himself comfortable every where, without ever thinking of any one else’s convenience.

As I passed from the inn door to the coach, I once more congratulated myself that I was about to be housed from the terrific storm of wind and rain that railed about.

“Here’s the step, sir,” said the guard, “get in, sir, two minutes late already.”

"I beg your pardon, sir," said I, as I half fell over the legs of my unseen companion. "May I request leave to pass you?" While he made way for me for this purpose, I perceived that he stooped down towards the guard, and said something, who from his answer had evidently been questioned as to who I was. "And how did he get here, if he took his place in Dublin?" asked the unknown.

Page 39

"Came half an hour since, sir, in a chaise and four," said the guard, as he banged the door behind him, and closed the interview.

Whatever might have been the reasons for my fellow-traveller's anxiety about my name and occupation, I knew not, yet could not help feeling gratified at thinking that as I had not given my name at the coach office, I was a great a puzzle to him as he to me.

"A severe night, sir," said I, endeavouring to break ground in conversation.

"Mighty severe," briefly and half crustily replied the unknown, with a richness of brogue, that might have stood for a certificate of baptism in Cork or its vicinity.

"And a bad road too, sir," said I, remembering my lately accomplished stage.

"That's the reason I always go armed," said the unknown, clinking at the same moment something like the barrel of a pistol.

Wondering somewhat at his readiness to mistake my meaning, I felt disposed to drop any further effort to draw him out, and was about to address myself to sleep, as comfortably as I could.

"I'll jist trouble ye to lean aff that little parcel there, sir," said he, as he displaced from its position beneath my elbow, one of the paper packages the guard had already alluded to.

In complying with this rather gruff demand, one of my pocket pistols, which I carried in my breast pocket, fell out upon his knee, upon which he immediately started, and asked hurriedly—"and are you armed too?"

"Why, yes," said I, laughingly; "men of my trade seldom go without something of this kind."

"Be gorra, I was just thinking that same," said the traveller, with a half sigh to himself.

Why he should or should not have thought so, I never troubled myself to canvass, and was once more settling myself in my corner, when I was startled by a very melancholy groan, which seemed to come from the bottom of my companion's heart.

"Are you ill, sir?" said I, in a voice of some anxiety.

"You might say that," replied he—"if you knew who you were talking to —although maybe you've heard enough of me, though you never saw me till now."

"Without having that pleasure even yet," said I, "it would grieve me to think you should be ill in the coach."

“May be it might,” briefly replied the unknown, with a species of meaning in his words I could not then understand. “Did ye never hear tell of Barney Doyle?” said he.

“Not to my recollection.”

“Then I’m Barney,” said he; “that’s in all the newspapers in the metropolis; I’m seventeen weeks in Jervis-street hospital, and four in the Lunatic, and the devil a better after all; you must be a stranger, I’m thinking, or you’d know me now.”

“Why I do confess, I’ve only been a few hours in Ireland for the last six months.”

“Ay, that’s the reason; I knew you would not be fond of travelling with me, if you knew who it was.”

Page 40

"Why, really," said I, beginning at the moment to fathom some of the hints of my companion, "I did not anticipate the pleasure of meeting you."

"It's pleasure ye call it; then there's no accountin' for tastes, as Dr. Colles said, when he saw me bite Cusack Rooney's thumb off."

"Bite a man's thumb off!" said I, in a horror.

"Ay," said he with a kind of fiendish animation, "in one chop; I wish you'd see how I scattered the consultation; begged they didn't wait to ax for a fee."

Upon my soul, a very pleasant vicinity, though I. "And, may I ask sir," said I, in a very mild and soothing tone of voice, "may I ask the reason for this singular propensity of yours?"

"There it is now, my dear," said he, laying his hand upon my knee familiarly, "that's just the very thing they can't make out; Colles says, it's all the ceribellum, ye see, that's inflamed and combusted, and some of the others think it's the spine; and more, the muscles; but my real impression is, the devil a bit they know about it at all."

"And have they no name for the malady?" said I.

"Oh sure enough they have a name for it."

"And, may I ask—"

"Why, I think you'd better not, because ye see, maybe I might be troublesome to ye in the night, though I'll not, if I can help it; and it might be uncomfortable to you to be here if I was to get one of the fits."

"One of the fits! Why it's not possible, sir," said I, "you would travel in a public conveyance in the state you mention; your friends surely would not permit it?"

"Why, if they knew, perhaps," slily responded the interesting invalid, "if they knew they might not exactly like it, but ye see, I escaped only last night, and there'll be a fine hub-bub in the morning, when they find I'm off; though I'm thinking Rooney's barking away by this time."

"Rooney barking, why, what does that mean?"

"They always bark for a day or two after they're bit, if the infection comes first from the dog."

"You are surely not speaking of hydrophobia," said I, my hair actually bristling with horror and consternation.

"Ayn't I?" replied he; "may be you've guessed it though."

"And have you the malady on you at present?" said I, trembling for the answer.

"This is the ninth day since I took to biting," said he gravely, perfectly unconscious as it appeared of the terror such information was calculated to convey.

"Any with such a propensity, sir, do you think yourself warranted in travelling in a public coach, exposing others—"

"You'd better not raise your voice, that way," quietly responded he, "if I'm roused, it 'll be worse for ye, that's all."

"Well but," said I, moderating my zeal, "is it exactly prudent, in your present delicate state, to undertake a journey?"

"Ah," said he, with a sigh, "I've been longing to see the fox hounds throw off, near Kilkenny; these three weeks I've been thinking of nothing else; but I'm not sure how my nerves will stand the cry; I might be troublesome."

Page 41

"Upon my soul," thought I, "I shall not select that morning for my debut in the field."

"I hope, sir, there's no river, or watercourse on this road—any thing else, I can, I hope, control myself against; but water—running water particularly—makes me troublesome."

Well knowing what he meant by the latter phrase, I felt the cold perspiration settling on my forehead, as I remembered that we must be within about ten or twelve miles of Leighlin-bridge, where we should have to pass a very wide river. I strictly concealed this fact from him, however, and gave him to understand that there was not a well, brook, or rivulet, for forty miles on either side of us. He now sunk into a kind of moody silence, broken occasionally by a low muttering noise, as if speaking to himself—what this might portend, I knew not—but thought it better, under all circumstances, not to disturb him. How comfortable my present condition was, I need scarcely remark—sitting vis a vis to a lunatic, with a pair of pistols in his possession—who had already avowed his consciousness of his tendency to do mischief, and his inability to master it; all this in the dark, and in the narrow limits of a mail-coach, where there was scarcely room for defence, and no possibility of escape—how heartily I wished myself back in the Coffee-room at Morrisson's, with my poor friend Tom—the infernal chaise, that I cursed a hundred times, would have been an "exchange," better than into the Life Guards—ay, even the outside of the coach, if I could only reach it, would, under present circumstances, be a glorious alternative to my existing misfortune. What were rain and storm, thunder and lightning, compared with the chances that awaited me here?—wet through I should inevitably be, but then I had not yet contracted the horror of moisture my friend opposite laboured under. "Ha! what is that? is it possible he can be asleep; is it really a snore?—Heaven grant that little snort be not what the medical people call a premonitory symptom—if so, he'll be in upon me now in no time. Ah, there it is again; he must be asleep surely; now then is my time or never." With these words, muttered to myself, and a heart throbbing almost audibly at the risk of his awakening, I slowly let down the window of the coach, and stretching forth my hand, turned the handle cautiously and slowly; I next disengaged my legs, and by a long continuous effort of creeping—which I had learned perfectly once, when practising to go as a boa constrictor to a fancy ball—I withdrew myself from the seat and reached the step, when I muttered something very like a thanksgiving to Providence for my rescue. With little difficulty I now climbed up beside the guard, whose astonishment at my appearance was indeed considerable—that any man should prefer the out, to the inside of a coach, in such a night, was rather remarkable; but that the person so doing should be totally unprovided with a box-coat,

Page 42

or other similar protection, argued something so strange, that I doubt not, if he were to decide upon the applicability of the statute of lunacy to a traveller in the mail, the palm would certainly have been awarded to me, and not to my late companion. Well, on we rolled, and heavily as the rain poured down, so relieved did I feel at my change of position, that I soon fell fast asleep, and never awoke till the coach was driving up Patrick street. Whatever solace to my feelings reaching the outside of the coach might have been attended with at night, the pleasure I experienced on awaking, was really not unalloyed. More dead than alive, I sat a mass of wet clothes, like nothing under heaven except it be that morsel of black and spongy wet cotton at the bottom of a schoolboy's ink bottle, saturated with rain, and the black dye of my coat. My hat too had contributed its share of colouring matter, and several long black streaks coursed down my "wrinkled front," giving me very much the air of an Indian warrior, who had got the first priming of his war paint. I certainly must have been rueful object, were I only to judge from the faces of the waiters as they gazed on me when the coach drew up at Rice and Walsh's hotel. Cold, wet, and weary as I was, my curiosity to learn more of my late agreeable companion was strong as ever within me—perhaps stronger, from the sacrifices his acquaintance had exacted from me. Before, however, I had disengaged myself from the pile of trunks and carpet bags I had surrounded myself with—he had got out of the coach, and all I could catch a glimpse of was the back of a little short man in a kind of grey upper coat, and long galligaskins on his legs. He carried his two bundles under his arm, and stepped nimbly up the steps of the hotel, without turning his head to either side.

"Don't fancy you shall escape me now, my good friend," I cried out, as I sprung from the roof to the ground, with one jump, and hurried after the great unknown into the coffee-room. By the time I reached it he had approached the fire, on the table near which, having deposited the mysterious paper parcels, he was now busily engaged in divesting himself of his great coat; his face was still turned from me, so that I had time to appear employed in divesting myself of my wet drapery before he perceived me; at last the coat was unbuttoned, the gaiters followed, and throwing them carelessly on a chair, he tucked up the skirts of his coat; and spreading himself comfortably a l'Anglais, before the fire, displayed to my wondering and stupified gaze, the pleasant features of Doctor Finucane.

"Why, Doctor—Doctor Finucane," cried I, "is this possible? were you really the inside in the mail last night."

"Devil a doubt of it, Mr. Lorrequer; and may I make bould to ask,—were you the outside?"

"Then what, may I beg to know, did you mean by your damned story about Barney Doyle, and the hydrophobia, and Cusack Rooney's thumb—eh?"

Page 43

“Oh, by the Lord,” said Finucane, “this will be the death of me; and it was you that I drove outside in all the rain last night! Oh, it will kill Father Malachi outright with laughing, when I tell him;” and he burst out into a fit of merriment that nearly induced me to break his head with the poker.

“Am I to understand, then, Mr. Finucane, that this practical joke of your was contrived for my benefit, and for the purpose of holding me up to the ridicule of your confounded acquaintances.”

“Nothing of the kind, upon my conscience,” said Fin, drying his eyes, and endeavouring to look sorry and sentimental. “If I had only the least suspicion in life that it was you, upon my oath I’d not have had the hydrophobia at all, and, to tell you the truth, you were not the only one frightened—you alarmed me devilishly too.”

“I alarmed you! Why, how can that be?”

“Why, the real affair is this: I was bringing these two packages of notes down to my cousin Callaghan’s bank in Cork—fifteen thousand pounds—devil a less; and when you came into the coach at Naas, after driving there with your four horses, I thought it was all up with me. The guard just whispered in my ear, that he saw you look at the priming of your pistols before getting in; and faith I said four paters, and a hail Mary, before you’d count five. Well, when you got seated, the thought came into my mind that maybe, highwayman as you were, you would not like dying a natural death, more particularly if you were an Irishman; and so I trumped up that long story about the hydrophobia, and the gentleman’s thumb, and devil knows what besides; and, while I was telling it, the cold perspiration was running down my head and face, for every time you stirred, I said to myself, now he’ll do it. Two or three times, do you know, I was going to offer you ten shillings in the pound, and spare my life; and once, God forgive me, I thought it would not be a bad plan to shoot you by ‘mistake,’ do you perceive?”

“Why, upon my soul, I’m very much obliged to you for your excessively kind intentions; but really I feel you have done quite enough for me on the present occasion. But, come now, doctor, I must get to bed, and before I go, promise me two things—to dine with us to-day at the mess, and not to mention a syllable of what occurred last night—it tells, believe me, very badly for both; so, keep the secret, for if these confounded fellows of ours ever get hold of it, I may sell out, or quit the army; I’ll never hear the end of it!”

“Never fear, my boy; trust me. I’ll dine with you, and you’re as safe as a church-mouse for any thing I’ll tell them; so, now you’d better change your clothes, for I’m thinking it rained last night.”

Page 44

Muttering some very dubious blessings upon the learned Fin, I left the room, infinitely more chagrined and chop-fallen at the discovery I had made, than at all the misery and exposure the trick had consigned me to; “however,” thought I, “if the doctor keep his word, it all goes well; the whole affair is between us both solely; but, should it not be so, I may shoot half the mess before the other half would give up quizzing me.” Revolving such pleasant thought, I betook myself to bed, and what with mulled port, and a blazing fire, became once more conscious of being a warm-blooded animal, and feel sound asleep, to dream of doctors, strait waistcoats, shaved heads, and all the pleasing associations my late companion’s narrative so readily suggested.

CHAPTER XV.

Mems. Of the North cork.

At six o’clock I had the pleasure of presenting the worthy Doctor Finucane to our mess, taking at the same time an opportunity, unobserved by him, to inform three or four of my brother officers that my friend was really a character, abounding in native drollery, and richer in good stories than even the generality of his countrymen.

Nothing could possibly go on better than the early part of the evening. Fin, true to his promise, never once alluded to what I could plainly perceive was ever uppermost in his mind, and what with his fund of humour, quaintness of expression, and quickness at reply, garnished throughout by his most mellifluous brogue, the true “Bocca Corkana,” kept us from one roar of laughter to another. It was just at the moment in which his spirits seemed at their highest, that I had the misfortune to call upon him for a story, which his cousin Father Malachi had alluded to on the ever-memorable evening at his house, and which I had a great desire to hear from Fin’s own lips. He seemed disposed to escape telling it, and upon my continuing to press my request, drily remarked,

“You forget, surely, my dear Mr. Lorrequer, the weak condition I’m in; and these gentlemen here, they don’t know what a severe illness I’ve been labouring under lately, or they would not pass the decanter so freely down this quarter.”

I had barely time to throw a mingled look of entreaty and menace across the table, when half-a-dozen others, rightly judging from the Doctor’s tone and serio-comic expression, that his malady had many more symptoms of fun than suffering about it, called out together—

“Oh, Doctor, by all means, tell us the nature of your late attack—pray relate it.”

“With Mr. Lorrequer’s permission I’m your slave, gentlemen,” said Fin, finishing off his glass.

“Oh, as for me,” I cried, “Dr. Finucane has my full permission to detail whatever he pleases to think a fit subject for your amusement.”

“Come then, Doctor, Harry has no objection you see; so out with it, and we are all prepared to sympathise with your woes and misfortunes, whatever they be.”

Page 45

“Well, I am sure, I never could think of mentioning it without his leave; but now that he sees no objection—Eh, do you though? if so, then, don’t be winking and making faces at me; but say the word, and devil a syllable of it I’ll tell to man or mortal.”

The latter part of this delectable speech was addressed to me across the table, in a species of stage whisper, in reply to some telegraphic signals I had been throwing him, to induce him to turn the conversation into any other channel.

“Then, that’s enough,” continued he sotto voce—“I see you’d rather I’d not tell it.”

“Tell it and be d____d,” said I, wearied by the incorrigible pertinacity with which the villain assailed me. My most unexpected energy threw the whole table into a roar, at the conclusion of which Fin began his narrative of the mail-coach adventure.

I need not tell my reader, who has followed me throughout in these my Confessions, that such a story lost nothing of its absurdity, when entrusted to the Doctor’s powers of narration; he dwelt with a poet’s feeling upon the description of his own sufferings, and my sincere condolence and commiseration; he touched with the utmost delicacy upon the distant hints by which he broke the news to me; but when he came to describe my open and undisguised terror, and my secret and precipitate retreat to the roof of the coach, there was not a man at table that was not convulsed with laughter—and, shall I acknowledge it, even I myself was unable to withstand the effect, and joined in the general chorus against myself.

“Well,” said the remorseless wretch, as he finished his story, “if ye haven’t the hard hearts to laugh at such a melancholy subject. Maybe, however, you’re not so cruel after all—here’s a toast for you, ’a speedy recovery to Cusack Rooney.” This was drank amid renewed peals, with all the honors; and I had abundant time before the uproar was over, to wish every man of them hanged. It was to no purpose that I endeavoured to turn the tables, by describing Fin’s terror at my supposed resemblance to a highwayman—his story had the precedence, and I met nothing during my recital but sly allusions to mad dogs, muzzles, and doctors; and contemptible puns were let off on every side at my expense.

“It’s little shame I take to myself for the mistake, any how,” said Fin, “for putting the darkness of the night out of question, I’m not so sure I would not have ugly suspicions of you by daylight.”

“And besides, Doctor,” added I, “it would not be your first blunder in the dark.”

“True for you, Mr. Lorrequer,” said he, good-humouredly; “and now that I have told them your story, I don’t care if they hear mine, though maybe some of ye have heard it already—it’s pretty well known in the North Cork.”

We all gave our disclaimers on this point, and having ordered in a fresh cooper of port, disposed ourselves in our most easy attitudes, while the Doctor proceeded as follows:

Page 46

"It was in the hard winter of the year __99, that we were quartered in Maynooth, as many said, for our sins—for a more stupid place, the Lord be merciful to it, never were men condemned to. The people at the college were much better off than us—they had whatever was to be got in the country, and never were disturbed by mounting guard, or night patrols. Many of the professors were good fellows, that liked grog fully as well as Greek, and understood short whist, and five and ten quite as intimately as they knew the Vulgate, or the confessions of St. Augustine—they made no ostentacious display of their pious zeal, but whenever they were not fasting, or praying, or something of that kind, they were always pleasant and agreeable; and to do them justice, never refused, by any chance, an invitation to dinner—no matter at what inconvenience. Well, even this little solace in our affliction we soon lost, by an unfortunate mistake of that Orange rogue of the world, Major Jones, that gave a wrong pass one night—Mr. Lorrequer knows the story, (here he alluded to an adventure detailed in an early chapter of my Confessions) —and from that day forward we never saw the pleasant faces of the Abbe D'Array, or the Professor of the Humanities, at the mess. Well, the only thing I could do, was just to take an opportunity to drop in at the College in the evening, where we had a quiet rubber of whist, and a little social and intellectual conversation, with maybe an oyster and a glass of punch, just to season the thing, before we separated; all done discreetly and quietly—no shouting nor even singing, for the 'superior' had a prejudice about profane songs. Well, one of those nights it was, about the first week in February, I was detained by stress of weather from 11 o'clock, when we usually bade good-night, to past twelve, and then to one o'clock, waiting for a dry moment to get home to the barracks—a good mile and a half off. Every time old Father Mahony went to look at the weather, he came back saying, 'It's worse it's getting; such a night of rain, glory be to God, never was seen.' So there was no good in going out to be drenched to the skin, and I sat quietly waiting, taking, between times, a little punch, just not to seem impatient, nor distress their rev'rances. At last it struck two, and I thought—'well, the decanter is empty now, and I think, if I mean to walk, I've taken enough for the present;' so, wishing them all manner of happiness, and pleasant dreams, I stumbled by way down stairs, and set out on my journey. I was always in the habit of taking a short cut on my way home, across the 'gurt na brocha,' the priest's meadows, as they call them, it saved nearly half a mile, although, on the present occasion, it exposed one wofully to the rain, for there was nothing to shelter against the entire way, not even a tree. Well, out I set in a half trot, for I staid so late I was pressed for time; besides, I felt it easier to run than walk;

Page 47

I'm sure I can't tell why; maybe the drop of drink I took got into my head. Well, I was just jogging on across the common; the rain beating hard in my face, and my clothes pasted to me with the wet; notwithstanding, I was singing to myself a verse of an old song, to lighten the road, when I heard suddenly a noise near me, like a man sneezing. I stopped and listened,—in fact, it was impossible to see your hand, the night was so dark—but I could hear nothing; the thought then came over me, maybe it's something 'not good,' for there were very ugly stories going about what the priests used to do formerly in these meadows; and bones were often found in different parts of them. Just as I was thinking this, another voice came nearer than the last; it might be only a sneeze, after all; but in real earnest it was mighty like a groan. 'The Lord be about us,' I said to myself, 'what's this?—have ye the pass?' I cried out, 'have ye the pass? or what brings ye walking here, in nomine patri?' for I was so confused whether it was a 'sperit' or not, I was going to address him in Latin—there's nothing equal to the dead languages to lay a ghost, every body knows. Faith the moment I said these words he gave another groan, deeper and more melancholy like than before. 'If it's uneasy ye are,' says I, 'for any neglect of your friends,' for I thought he might be in purgatory longer than he thought convenient, 'tell me what you wish, and go home peaceably out of the rain, for this weather can do no good to living or dead; go home,' said I, 'and, if it's masses ye'd like, I'll give you a day's pay myself, rather than you should fret yourself this way.' The words were not well out of my mouth, when he came so near me that the sigh he gave went right through both my ears; 'the Lord be merciful to me,' said I, trembling. 'Amen,' says he, 'whether you're joking or not.' The moment he said that my mind was relieved, for I knew it was not a sperit, and I began to laugh heartily at my mistake; 'and who are ye at all?' said I, 'that's roving about, at this hour of the night, ye can't be Father Luke, for I left him asleep on the carpet before I quitted the college, and faith, my friend, if you hadn't the taste for divarsion ye would not be out now?' He coughed then so hard that I could not make out well what he said, but just perceived that he had lost his way on the common, and was a little disguised in liquor. 'It's a good man's case,' said I, 'to take a little too much, though it's what I don't ever do myself; so, take a hold of my hand, and I'll see you safe.' I stretched out my hand, and got him, not by the arm, as I hoped, but by the hair of the head, for he was all dripping with wet, and had lost his hat. 'Well, you'll not be better of this night's excursion,' thought I, 'if ye are liable to the rheumatism; and, now, whereabouts do you live, my friend, for I'll see you safe, before I leave you?' What he said then I never could clearly make out, for the

Page 48

wind and rain were both beating so hard against my face that I could not hear a word; however, I was able just to perceive that he was very much disguised in drink, and spoke rather thick. 'Well, never mind,' said I, 'it's not a time of day for much conversation; so, come along, and I'll see you safe in the guard-house, if you can't remember your own place of abode in the meanwhile.' It was just at the moment I said this that I first discovered he was not a gentleman. Well, now, you'd never guess how I did it; and, faith I always thought it a very cute thing of me, and both of us in the dark."

"Well, I really confess it must have been a very difficult thing, under the circumstances; pray how did you contrive?" said the major.

"Just guess how."

"By the tone of his voice perhaps, and his accent," said Curzon.

"Devil a bit, for he spoke remarkably well, considering how far gone he was in liquor."

"Well, probably by the touch of his hand; no bad test."

"No; you're wrong again, for it was by the hair I had a hold of him for fear of falling, for he was always stooping down. Well, you'd never guess it; it was just by the touch of his foot."

"His foot! Why how did that give you any information?"

"There it is now; that's just what only an Irishman would ever have made any thing out of; for while he was stumbling about, he happened to tread upon my toes, and never, since I was born, did I feel any thing like the weight of him. 'Well,' said I, 'the loss of your hat may give you a cold, my friend; but upon my conscience you are in no danger of wet feet with such a pair of strong brogues as you have on you.' Well, he laughed at that till I thought he'd split his sides, and, in good truth, I could not help joining in the fun, although my foot was smarting like mad, and so we jogged along through the rain, enjoying the joke just as if we were sitting by a good fire, with a jorum of punch between us. I am sure I can't tell you how often we fell that night, but my clothes the next morning were absolutely covered with mud, and my hat crushed in two; for he was so confoundedly drunk it was impossible to keep him up, and he always kept boring along with his head down, so that my heart was almost broke in keeping him upon his legs. I'm sure I never had a more fatiguing march in the whole Peninsula, than that blessed mile and a half; but every misfortune has an end at last, and it was four o'clock, striking by the college clock, as we reached the barracks. After knocking a couple of times, and giving the countersign, the sentry opened the small wicket, and my heart actually leaped with joy that I had done with my friend; so, I just called out the sergeant of the guard,

and said, 'will you put that poor fellow on the guard-bed till morning, for I found him on the common, and he could neither find his way home nor tell me where he lived.' 'And where is he?'

Page 49

said the sergeant. 'He's outside the gate there,' said I, 'wet to the skin, and shaking as if he had the ague.' 'And is this him?' said the sergeant as we went outside. 'It is,' said I, 'maybe you know him?' 'Maybe I've a guess,' said he, bursting into a fit of laughing, that I thought he'd choke with. 'Well, sergeant,' said I, 'I always took you for a humane man; but, if that's the way you treat a fellow-creature in distress.' 'A fellow-creature,' said he, laughing louder than before. 'Ay, a fellow-creature,' said I—for the sergeant was an orangeman—and if he differs from you in matters of religion, sure he's your fellow-creature still.' 'Troth, Doctor, I think there's another trifling difference betune us,' said he. 'Damn your politics,' said I; 'never let them interfere with true humanity.' 'Wasn't I right, Major?' 'Take good care of him, and there's a half-a-crown for ye.' So saying these words, I steered along by the barrack wall, and, after a little groping about, got up stairs to my quarters, when, thanks to a naturally good constitution, and regular habits of life, I soon fell fast asleep."

When the Doctor had said thus much, he pushed his chair slightly from the table, and, taking off his wine, looked about him with the composure of a man who has brought his tale to a termination.

"Well, but Doctor," said the Major, "you are surely not done. You have not yet told us who your interesting friend turned out to be."

"That's the very thing, then, I'm not able to do."

"But, of course," said another, "your story does not end there."

"And where the devil would you have it end?" replied he. "Didn't I bring my hero home, and go asleep afterwards myself, and then, with virtue rewarded, how could I finish it better?"

"Oh, of course; but still you have not accounted for a principal character in the narrative," said I.

"Exactly so," said Curzon. "We were all expecting some splendid catastrophe in the morning; that your companion turned out to be the Duke of Leinster, at least—or perhaps a rebel general, with an immense price upon his head."

"Neither the one nor the other," said Fin, drily.

"And do you mean to say there never was any clue to the discovery of him?"

"The entire affair is wrapt in mystery to this hour," said he. "There was a joke about it, to be sure, among the officers; but the North Cork never wanted something to laugh at."

“And what was the joke?” said several voices together.

“Just a complaint from old Mickey Oulahan, the postmaster, to the Colonel, in the morning, that some of the officers took away his blind mare off the common, and that the letters were late in consequence.”

“And so, Doctor,” called out seven or eight, “your friend turned out to be—”

“Upon my conscience they said so, and that rascal, the serjeant, would take his oath of it; but my own impression I’ll never disclose to the hour of my death.”

Page 50

CHAPTER XVI.

THEATRICALS.

Our seance at the mess that night was a late one, for after we had discussed some coopers of claret, there was a very general public feeling in favour of a broiled bone and some devilled kidneys, followed by a very ample bowl of bishop, over which simple condiments we talked "green room" till near the break of day.

From having been so long away from the corps I had much to learn of their doings and intentions to do, and heard with much pleasure that they possessed an exceedingly handsome theatre, well stocked with scenery, dresses, and decorations; that they were at the pinnacle of public estimation, from what they had already accomplished, and calculated on the result of my appearance to crown them with honour. I had indeed very little choice left me in the matter; for not only had they booked me for a particular part, but bills were already in circulation, and sundry little three-cornered notes enveloping them, were sent to the elite of the surrounding country, setting forth that "on Friday evening the committee of the garrison theatricals, intending to perform a dress rehearsal of the 'Family Party,' request the pleasure of Mr. _____ and Mrs. _____'s company on the occasion. Mr. Lorrequer will undertake the part of Captain Beauguarde. Supper at twelve. An answer will oblige."

The sight of one of these pleasant little epistles, of which the foregoing is a true copy—was presented to me as a great favour that evening, it having been agreed upon that I was to know nothing of their high and mighty resolves till the following morning. It was to little purpose that I assured them all, collectively and individually, that of Captain Beauguarde I absolutely knew nothing—had never read the piece—nor even seen it performed. I felt, too, that my last appearance in character in a "Family Party," was any thing but successful; and I trembled lest, in the discussion of the subject, some confounded allusion to my adventure at Cheltenham might come out. Happily they seemed all ignorant of this; and fearing to bring conversation in any way to the matter of my late travels, I fell in with their humour, and agreed that if it were possible, in the limited time allowed me to manage it—I had but four days—I should undertake the character. My concurrence failed to give the full satisfaction I expected, and they so habitually did what they pleased with me, that, like all men so disposed, I never got the credit for concession which a man more niggardly of his services may always command.

"To be sure you will do it, Harry," said the Major, "why not? I could learn the thing myself in a couple of hours, as for that."

Now, be it known that the aforesaid Major was so incorrigibly slow of study, and dull of comprehension, that he had been successively degraded at our theatrical board from the delivering of a stage message to the office of check-taker.

Page 51

"He's so devilish good in the love scene," said the junior ensign, with the white eyebrows. "I say, Curzon, you'll be confoundedly jealous though, for he is to play with Fanny."

"I rather think not," said Curzon, who was a little tipsy.

"Oh, yes," said Frazer, "Hepton is right. Lorrequer has Fanny for his 'Frou;' and, upon my soul, I should feel tempted to take the part myself upon the same terms; though I verily believe I should forget I was acting, and make fierce love to her on the stage."

"And who may la charmante Fanny be?" said I, with something of the air of the "Dey of Algiers" in my tone.

"Let Curzon tell him," said several voices together, "he is the only man to do justice to such perfection."

"Quiz away, my merry men," said Curzon, "all I know is, that you are a confoundedly envious set of fellows; and if so lovely a girl had thrown her eyes on one amongst you__"

"Hip! hip! hurrah!" said old Fitzgerald, "Curzon is a gone man. He'll be off to the palace for a license some fine morning, or I know nothing of such matters."

"Well, Bat," said I, "if matters are really as you all say, why does not Curzon take the part you destine for me?"

"We dare not trust him," said the Major, "Lord bless you, when the call-boy would sing out for Captain Beaugarde in the second act, we'd find that he had Levanted with our best slashed trowsers, and a bird of paradise feather in his cap."

"Well," thought I, "this is better at least than I anticipated, for if nothing else offers, I shall have rare fun teasing my friend Charley" —for it was evident that he had been caught by the lady in question.

"And so you'll stay with us; give me your hand—you are a real trump." These words, which proceeded from a voice at the lower end of the table, were addressed to my friend Finucane.

"I'll stay with ye, upon my conscience," said Fin; "ye have a most seductive way about ye; and a very superior taste in milk punch."

"But, Doctor," said I, "you must not be a drone in the hive; what will ye do for us? You should be a capital Sir Lucius O'Trigger, if we could get up the Rivals."

“My forte is the drum—the big drum; put me among what the Greeks call the ‘Mousikoi,’ and I’ll astonish ye.”

It was at once agreed that Fin should follow the bent of his genius; and after some other arrangements for the rest of the party, we separated for the night, having previously toasted the “Fanny,” to which Curzon attempted to reply, but sank, overpowered by punch and feelings, and looked unutterable things, without the power to frame a sentence.

Page 52

During the time which intervened between the dinner and the night appointed for our rehearsal, I had more business upon my hands than a Chancellor of the Exchequer the week of the budget being produced. The whole management of every department fell, as usual, to my share, and all those who, previously to my arrival, had contributed their quota of labour, did nothing whatever now but lounge about the stage, or sit half the day in the orchestra, listening to some confounded story of Finucane's, who contrived to have an everlasting mob of actors, scene-painters, fiddlers, and call-boys always about him, who, from their uproarious mirth, and repeated shouts of merriment, nearly drove me distracted, as I stood almost alone and unassisted in the whole management. Of la belle Fanny, all I learned was, that she was a professional actress of very considerable talent, and extremely pretty; that Curzon had fallen desperately in love with her the only night she had appeared on the boards there, and that to avoid his absurd persecution of her, she had determined not to come into town until the morning of the rehearsal, she being at that time on a visit to the house of a country gentleman in the neighbourhood. Here was a new difficulty I had to contend with—to go through my part alone was out of the question to making it effective; and I felt so worried and harassed that I often fairly resolved on taking the wings of the mail, and flying away to the uttermost parts of the south of Ireland, till all was tranquil again. By degrees, however, I got matters into better train, and by getting our rehearsal early before Fin appeared, as he usually slept somewhat later after his night at mess, I managed to have things in something like order; he and his confounded drum, which, whenever he was not story-telling, he was sure to be practising on, being, in fact the greatest difficulties opposed to my managerial functions. One property he possessed, so totally at variance with all habits of order, that it completely baffled me. So numerous were his narratives, that no occasion could possibly arise, no chance expression be let fall on the stage, but Fin had something he deemed, apropos, and which, sans facon, he at once related for the benefit of all whom it might concern; that was usually the entire corps dramatique, who eagerly turned from stage directions and groupings, to laugh at his ridiculous jests. I shall give an instance of this habit of interruption, and let the unhappy wight who has filled such an office as mine pity my woes.

I was standing one morning on the stage drilling my "corps" as usual. One most refractory spirit, to whom but a few words were entrusted, and who bungled even those, I was endeavouring to train into something like his part.

"Come now, Elsmore, try it again—just so. Yes, come forward in this manner—take her hand tenderly—press it to your lips; retreat towards the flat, and then bowing deferentially—thus, say 'Good night, good night'—that's very simple, eh? Well, now that's all you have to do, and that brings you over here—so you make your exit at once."

Page 53

“Exactly so, Mr. Elsmore, always contrive to be near the door under such circumstances. That was the way with my poor friend, Curran. Poor Philpot, when he dined with the Guild of Merchant Tailors, they gave him a gold box with their arms upon it—a goose proper, with needles saltier wise, or something of that kind; and they made him free of their ‘ancient and loyal corporation,’ and gave him a very grand dinner. Well, Curran was mighty pleasant and agreeable, and kept them laughing all night, till the moment he rose to go away, and then he told them that he never spent so happy an evening, and all that. ‘But, gentlemen,’ said he, ‘business has its calls, and I must tear myself away; so wishing you now’—there were just eighteen of them—‘wishing you now every happiness and prosperity, permit me to take my leave’—and here he stole near the door—to take my leave, and bid you both good night.” With a running fire of such stories, it may be supposed how difficult was my task in getting any thing done upon the stage.

Well, at last the long-expected Friday arrived, and I rose in the morning with all that peculiar tourbillon of spirits that a man feels when he is half pleased and whole frightened with the labour before him. I had scarcely accomplished dressing when a servant tapped at my door, and begged to know if I could spare a few moments to speak to Miss Ersler, who was in the drawing-room. I replied, of course, in the affirmative, and, rightly conjecturing that my fair friend must be the lovely Fanny already alluded to, followed the servant down stairs.

“Mr. Lorrequer,” said the servant, and closing the door behind me, left me in sole possession of the lady.

“Will you do me the favour to sit here, Mr. Lorrequer,” said one of the sweetest voices in the world, as she made room for me on the sofa beside her. “I am particularly short-sighted; so pray sit near me, as I really cannot talk to any one I don’t see.”

I blundered out some platitude of a compliment to her eyes—the fullest and most lovely blue that ever man gazed into—at which she smiled as if pleased, and continued, “Now, Mr. Lorrequer, I have really been longing for your coming; for your friends of the 4th are doubtless very dashing, spirited young gentlemen, perfectly versed in war’s alarms; but pardon me if I say that a more wretched company of strolling wretches never graced a barn. Now, come, don’t be angry, but let me proceed. Like all amateur people, they have the happy knack in distributing the characters—to put every man in his most unsuitable position—and then that poor dear thing Curzon—I hope he’s not a friend of yours—by some dire fatality always plays the lover’s parts, ha! ha! ha! True, I assure you, so that if you had not been announced as coming this week, I should have left them and gone off to Bath.”

Here she rose and adjusted her brown ringlets at the glass, giving me ample time to admire one of the most perfect figures I ever beheld. She was most becomingly

dressed, and betrayed a foot and ankle which for symmetry and “chaussure,” might have challenged the Rue Rivoli itself to match it.

Page 54

My first thought was poor Curzon; my second, happy and trice fortunate Harry Lorrequer. There was no time, however, for indulgence in such very pardonable gratulation; so I at once proceeded “pour faire l’aimable,” to profess my utter inability to do justice to her undoubted talents, but slyly added, “that in the love making part of the matter she should never be able to discover that I was not in earnest.” We chatted then gaily for upwards of an hour, until the arrival of her friend’s carriage was announced, when, tendering me most graciously her hand, she smiled benignly and saying “au revoir, donc,” drove off.

As I stood upon the steps of the hotel, viewing her “out of the visible horizon,” I was joined by Curzon, who evidently, from his self-satisfied air, and jaunty gait, little knew how he stood in the fair Fanny’s estimation.

“Very pretty, very pretty, indeed, deeper and deeper still,” cried he, alluding to my most courteous salutation as the carriage rounded the corner, and its lovely occupant kissed her hand once more. “I say Harry, my friend, you don’t think that was meant for you, I should hope?”

“What! the kiss of the hand? Yes, faith, but I do.”

“Well, certainly that is good! why, man, she just saw me coming up that instant. She and I—we understand each other—never mind, don’t be cross—no fault of yours, you know.”

“Ah, so she is taken with you,” said I. “Eh, Charley?”

“Why, I believe that. I may confess to you the real state of matters. She was devilishly struck with me the first time we rehearsed together. We soon got up a little flirtation; but the other night when I played Mirabel to her, it finished the affair. She was quite nervous, and could scarcely go through with her part. I saw it, and upon my soul I am sorry for it; she’s a prodigiously fine girl—such lips and such teeth! Egad I was delighted when you came; for, you see, I was in a manner obliged to take one line of character, and I saw pretty plainly where it must end; and you know with you it’s quite different, she’ll laugh and chat, and all that sort of thing, but she’ll not be carried away by her feelings; you understand me?”

“Oh, perfectly; it’s quite different, as you observed.”

If I had not been supported internally during this short dialogue by the recently expressed opinion of the dear Fanny herself upon my friend Curzon’s merits, I think I should have been tempted to take the liberty of wringing his neck off. However, the affair was much better as it stood, as I had only to wait a little with proper patience, and I had no fears but that my friend Charley would become the hero of a very pretty episode for the mess.

“So I suppose you must feel considerably bored by this kind of thing,” I said, endeavouring to draw him out.

“Why, I do,” replied he, “and I do not. The girl is very pretty. The place is dull in the morning; and altogether it helps to fill up time.”

Page 55

"Well," said I, "you are always fortunate, Curzon. You have ever your share of what floating luck the world affords."

"It is not exactly all luck, my dear friend; for, as I shall explain to you—"

"Not now," replied I, "for I have not yet breakfasted." So saying I turned into the coffee-room, leaving the worthy adjutant to revel in his fancied conquest, and pity such unfortunates as myself.

After an early dinner at the club-house, I hastened down to the theatre, where numerous preparations for the night were going forward. The green-room was devoted to the office of a supper-room, to which the audience had been invited. The dressing-rooms were many of them filled with the viands destined for the entertainment. Where, among the wooden fowls and "impracticable" flagons, were to be seen very imposing pasties and flasks of champagne, littered together in most admirable disorder. The confusion naturally incidental to all private theatricals, was ten-fold increased by the circumstances of our projected supper. Cooks and scene-shifters, fiddlers and waiters, were most inextricably mingled; and as in all similar cases, the least important functionaries took the greatest airs upon them, and appropriated without hesitation whatever came to their hands—thus the cook would not have scrupled to light a fire with the violoncello of the orchestra; and I actually caught one of the "gens de cuisine" making a "soufflet" in a brass helmet I had once worn when astonishing the world as Coriolanus.

Six o'clock struck. In another short hour and we begin, thought I, with a sinking heart, as I looked upon the littered stage crowded with hosts of fellows that had nothing to do there. Figaro himself never wished for ubiquity more than I did, as I hastened from place to place, entreating, cursing, begging, scolding, execrating, and imploring by turns. To mend the matter, the devils in the orchestra had begun to tune their instruments, and I had to bawl like a boatswain of a man-of-war, to be heard by the person beside me.

As seven o'clock struck, I peeped through the small aperture in the curtain, and saw, to my satisfaction, mingled, I confess, with fear, that the house was nearly filled—the lower tier of boxes entirely so. There were a great many ladies handsomely dressed, chatting gaily with their chaperons, and I recognised some of my acquaintances on every side; in fact, there was scarcely a family of rank in the county that had not at least some member of it present. As the orchestra struck up the overture to Don Giovanni, I retired from my place to inspect the arrangements behind.

Before the performance of the "Family Party," we were to have a little one-act piece called "a day in Madrid," written by myself—the principal characters being expressly composed for "Miss Ersler and Mr. Lorrequer."

The story of this trifle, it is not necessary to allude to; indeed, if it were, I should scarcely have patience to do so, so connected is my recollection of it with the distressing incident which followed.

Page 56

In the first scene of the piece, the curtain rising displays la belle Fanny sitting at her embroidery in the midst of a beautiful garden, surrounded with statues, fountains, &c. At the back is seen a pavillion in the ancient Moorish style of architecture, over which hang the branches of some large and shady trees—she comes forward, expressing her impatience at the delay of her lover, whose absence she tortures herself to account for by a hundred different suppositions, and after a very sufficient expose of her feelings, and some little explanatory details of her private history, conveying a very clear intimation of her own amiability, and her guardian's cruelty, she proceeds, after the fashion of other young ladies similarly situated, to give utterance to her feelings by a song; after, therefore, a suitable prelude from the orchestra, for which, considering the impassioned state of her mind, she waits patiently, she comes forward and begins a melody—

“Oh why is he far from the heart that adores him?”

in which, for two verses, she proceeds with sundry sol feggio's, to account for the circumstances, and show her disbelief of the explanation in a very satisfactory manner, —meanwhile, for I must not expose my reader to an anxiety on my account, similar to what the dear Fanny here laboured under, I was making the necessary preparations for flying to her presence, and clasping her to my heart—that is to say, I had already gummed on a pair of mustachios, had corked and arched a ferocious pair of eyebrows, which, with my rouged cheeks, gave me a look half Whiskerando, half Grimaldi; these operations were performed, from the stress of circumstances, sufficiently near the object of my affections, to afford me the pleasing satisfaction of hearing from her own sweet lips, her solicitude about me—in a word, all the dressing-rooms but two were filled with hampers of provisions, glass, china, and crockery, and from absolute necessity, I had no other spot where I could attire myself unseen, except in the identical pavillion already alluded to—here, however, I was quite secure, and had abundant time also, for I was not to appear till scene the second, when I was to come forward in full Spanish costume, “every inch a Hidalgo.” Meantime, Fanny had been singing—

“Oh why is he far,” &c. &c.

At the conclusion of the last verse, just as she repeats the words “why, why, why,” in a very distracted and melting cadence, a voice behind startles her—she turns and beholds her guardian—so at least run the course of events in the real drama—that it should follow thus now however, “Dus aliter visum”—for just as she came to the very moving apostrophe alluded to, and called out, “why comes he not?”—a gruff voice from behind answered in a strong Cork brogue—“ah! would ye have him come in a state of nature?” at the instant a loud whistle rang through the house, and the pavillion scene slowly drew up, discovering

Page 57

me, Harry Lorrequer, seated on a small stool before a cracked looking-glass, my only habiliments, as I am an honest man, being a pair of long white silk stockings, and a very richly embroidered shirt with point lace collar. The shouts of laughter are yet in my ears, the loud roar of inextinguishable mirth, which after the first brief pause of astonishment gave way, shook the entire building—my recollection may well have been confused at such a moment of unutterable shame and misery; yet, I clearly remember seeing Fanny, the sweet Fanny herself, fall into an arm-chair nearly suffocated with convulsions of laughter. I cannot go on; what I did I know not. I suppose my exit was additionally ludicrous, for a new eclat de rire followed me out. I rushed out of the theatre, and wrapping only my cloak round me, ran without stopping to the barracks. But I must cease; these are woes too sacred for even confessions like mine, so let me close the curtain of my room and my chapter together, and say, adieu for a season.

CHAPTER XVIb.

[Note: There are two Chapter XVIs. In the table of contents, this one has an asterisk but no explanation.]

The wager.

It might have been about six weeks after the events detailed in my last chapter had occurred, that Curzon broke suddenly into my room one morning before I had risen, and throwing a precautionary glance around, as if to assure himself that we were alone, seized my hand with a most unusual earnestness, and, steadfastly looking at me, said

“Harry Lorrequer, will you stand by me?”

So sudden and unexpected was his appearance at the moment, that I really felt but half awake, and kept puzzling myself for an explanation of the scene, rather than thinking of a reply to his question; perceiving which, and auguring but badly from my silence, he continued—

“Am I then, really deceived in what I believed to be an old and tried friend?”

“Why, what the devil’s the matter?” I cried out. “If you are in a scrape, why of course you know I’m your man; but, still, it’s only fair to let one know something of the matter in the meanwhile.”

“In a scrape!” said he, with a long-drawn sigh, intended to beat the whole Minerva press in its romantic cadence.

“Well, but get on a bit,” said I, rather impatiently; “who is the fellow you’ve got the row with? Not one of ours, I trust?”

“Ah, my dear Hal,” said he, in the same melting tone as before—“How your imagination does run upon rows, and broils, and duelling rencontres,” (he, the speaker, be it known to the reader, was the fire-eater of the regiment,) “as if life had nothing better to offer than the excitement of a challenge, or the mock heroism of a meeting.”

As he made a dead pause here, after which he showed no disposition to continue, I merely added—

“Well, at this rate of proceeding we shall get at the matter in hand, on our way out to Corfu, for I hear we are the next regiment for the Mediterranean.”

Page 58

The observation seemed to have some effect in rousing him from his lethargy, and he added—

“If you only knew the nature of the attachment, and how completely all my future hopes are concerned upon the issue—”

“Ho!” said I, “so it’s a money affair, is it? and is it old Watson has issued the writ? I’ll bet a hundred.”

“Well, upon my soul, Lorrequer,” said he, jumping from his chair, and speaking with more energy than he had before evinced, “you are, without exception, the most worldly-minded, cold-blooded fellow I ever met. What have I said that could have led you to suppose I had either a duel or a law-suit upon my hands this morning? Learn, once and for all, man, that I am in love—desperately and over head and ears in love.”

“Et puis,” said I coolly.

“And intend to marry immediately.”

“Oh, very well,” said I; “the fighting and debt will come later, that’s all. But to return—now for the lady.”

“Come, you must make a guess.”

“Why, then, I really must confess my utter inability; for your attentions have been so generally and impartially distributed since our arrival here, that it may be any fair one, from your venerable partner at whist last evening, to Mrs. Henderson, the pastry-cook inclusive, for whose macaroni and cherry-brandy your feelings have been as warm as they are constant.”

“Come, no more quizzing, Hal. You surely must have remarked that lovely girl I waltzed with at Power’s ball on Tuesday last.”

“Lovely girl! Why, in all seriousness, you don’t mean the small woman with the tow wig?”

“No, I do not mean any such thing—but a beautiful creature, with the brightest locks in Christendom—the very light-brown waving ringlets, Dominicheno loved to paint, and a foot—did you see her foot?”

“No; that was rather difficult, for she kept continually bobbing up and down, like a boy’s cork-float in a fish-pond.”

“Stop there. I shall not permit this any longer—I came not here to listen to—”



“But, Curzon, my boy, you’re not angry?”

“Yes, sir, I am angry.”

“Why, surely, you have not been serious all this time?”

“And why not, pray?”

“Oh! I don’t exactly know—that is, faith I scarcely thought you were in earnest, for if I did, of course I should honestly have confessed to you that the lady in question struck me as one of the handsomest persons I ever met.”

“You think so really, Hal?”

“Certainly I do, and the opinion is not mine alone; she is, in fact universally admired.”

“Come, Harry, excuse my bad temper. I ought to have known you better —give me your hand, old boy, and wish me joy, for with you aiding and abetting she is mine to-morrow morning.”

I wrung his hand heartily—congratulating myself, meanwhile, how happily I had got out of my scrape; as I now, for the first time, perceived that Curzon was bona fide in earnest.

Page 59

"So, you will stand by me, Hal," said he.

"Of course. Only show me how, and I'm perfectly at your service. Any thing from riding postillion on the leaders to officiating as brides-maid, and I am your man. And if you are in want of such a functionary, I shall stand in 'loco parentis' to the lady, and give her away with as much 'onction' and tenderness as tho' I had as many marriageable daughters as king Priam himself. It is with me in marriage as in duelling—I'll be any thing rather than a principal; and I have long since disapproved of either method as a means of 'obtaining satisfaction.'"

"Ah, Harry, I shall not be discouraged by your sneers. You've been rather unlucky, I'm aware; but now to return: Your office, on this occasion, is an exceedingly simple one, and yet that which I could only confide to one as much my friend as yourself. You must carry my dearest Louisa off."

"Carry her off! Where?—when?—how?"

"All that I have already arranged, as you shall hear."

"Yes. But first of all please to explain why, if going to run away with the lady, you don't accompany her yourself."

"Ah! I knew you would say that, I could have laid a wager you'd ask that question, for it is just that very explanation will show all the native delicacy and feminine propriety of my darling Loo; and first, I must tell you, that old Sir Alfred Jonson, her father, has some confounded prejudice against the army, and never would consent to her marriage with a red-coat—so that, his consent being out of the question, our only resource is an elopement. Louisa consents to this, but only upon one condition—and this she insists upon so firmly—I had almost said obstinately—that, notwithstanding all my arguments and representations, and even entreaties against it, she remains inflexible; so that I have at length yielded, and she is to have her own way."

"Well, and what is the condition she lays such stress upon?"

"Simply this—that we are never to travel a mile together until I obtain my right to do so, by making her my wife. She has got some trumpery notions in her head that any slight transgression over the bounds of delicacy made by women before marriage is ever after remembered by the husband to their disadvantage, and she is, therefore, resolved not to sacrifice her principle even at such a crisis as the present."

"All very proper, I have no doubt; but still, pray explain what I confess appears somewhat strange to me at present. How does so very delicately-minded a person reconcile herself to travelling with a perfect stranger under such circumstances?"

Page 60

"That I can explain perfectly to you. You must know that when my darling Loo consented to take this step, which I induced her to do with the greatest difficulty, she made the proviso I have just mentioned; I at once showed her that I had no maiden aunt or married sister to confide her to at such a moment, and what was to be done? She immediately replied, 'Have you no elderly brother officer, whose years and discretion will put the transaction in such a light as to silence the slanderous tongues of the world, for with such a man I am quite ready and willing to trust myself.' You see I was hard pushed there. What could I do?—whom could I select? Old Hayes, the paymaster, is always tipsy; Jones is five-and-forty—but egad! I'm not so sure I'd have found my betrothed at the end of the stage. You were my only hope; I knew I could rely upon you. You would carry on the whole affair with tact and discretion; and as to age, your stage experience would enable you, with a little assistance from costume, to pass muster; besides that, I have always represented you as the very Methuselah of the corps; and in the grey dawn of an autumnal morning—with maiden bashfulness assisting—the scrutiny is not likely to be a close one. So, now, your consent is alone wanting to complete the arrangements which, before this time to-morrow, shall have made me the happiest of mortals."

Having expressed, in fitting terms, my full sense of obligation for the delicate flattery with which he pictured me as "Old Lorrequer" to the Lady, I begged a more detailed account of his plan, which I shall shorten for my reader's sake, by the following brief expose.

A post-chaise and four was to be in waiting at five o'clock in the morning to convey me to Sir Alfred Jonson's residence, about twelve miles distant. There I was to be met by a lady at the gate-lodge, who was subsequently to accompany me to a small village on the Nore, where an old college friend of Curzon's happened to reside, as parson, and by whom the treaty was to be concluded.

This was all simple and clear enough—the only condition necessary to insure success being punctuality, particularly on the lady's part. As to mine I readily promised my best aid and warmest efforts in my friend's behalf.

"There is only one thing more," said Curzon. "Louisa's younger brother is a devilish hot-headed, wild sort of a fellow; and it would be as well, just for precaution sake, to have your pistols along with you, if, by any chance, he should make out what was going forward—not but that you know if any thing serious was to take place, I should be the person to take all that upon my hands."

"Oh! of course—I understand," said I. Meanwhile I could not help running over in my mind the pleasant possibilities such an adventure presented, heartily wishing that Curzon had been content to marry by bans or any other of the legitimate modes in use, without risking his friend's bones. The other pros and cons of the matter, with full and accurate directions as to the road to be taken on obtaining possession of the lady, being

all arranged, we parted, I to settle my costume and appearance for my first performance in an old man's part, and Curzon to obtain a short leave for a few days from the commanding officer of the regiment.

Page 61

When we again met, which was at the mess-table, it was not without evidence on either side of that peculiar consciousness which persons feel who have, or think they have, some secret in common, which the world wots not of. Curzon's unusually quick and excited manner would at once have struck any close observer as indicating the eve of some important step, no less than continual allusions to whatever was going on, by sly and equivocal jokes and ambiguous jests. Happily, however, on the present occasion, the party were otherwise occupied than watching him—being most profoundly and learnedly engaged in discussing medicine and matters medical with all the acute and accurate knowledge which characterises such discussions among the non-medical public.

The present conversation originated from some mention our senior surgeon Fitzgerald had just made of a consultation which he was invited to attend on the next morning, at the distance of twenty miles, and which necessitated him to start at a most uncomfortably early hour. While he continued to deplore the hard fate of such men as himself, so eagerly sought after by the world, that their own hours were eternally broken in upon by external claims, the juniors were not sparing of their mirth on the occasion, at the expense of the worthy doctor, who, in plain truth, had never been disturbed by a request like the present within any one's memory. Some asserted that the whole thing was a puff, got up by Fitz. himself, who was only going to have a day's partridge-shooting; others hinting that it was a blind to escape the vigilance of Mrs. Fitzgerald—a well-known virago in the regiment—while Fitz. enjoyed himself; and a third party, pretending to sympathise with the doctor, suggested that a hundred pounds would be the least he could possibly be offered for such services as his on so grave an occasion.

"No, no, only fifty," said Fitz. gravely.

"Fifty! Why, you tremendous old humbug, you don't mean to say you'll make fifty pounds before we are out of our beds in the morning?" cried one.

"I'll take your bet on it," said the doctor, who had, in this instance, reason to suppose his fee would be a large one.

During this discussion, the claret had been pushed round rather freely; and fully bent, as I was, upon the adventure before me, I had taken my share of it as a preparation. I thought of the amazing prize I was about to be instrumental in securing for my friend—for the lady had really thirty thousand pounds—and I could not conceal my triumph at such a prospect of success in comparison with the meaner object of ambition. They all seemed to envy poor Fitzgerald. I struggled with my secret for some time—but my pride and the claret together got the better of me, and I called out, "Fifty pounds on it, then, that before ten to-morrow morning, I'll make a better hit of it than you—and the mess shall decide between us afterwards as to the winner."

Page 62

"And if you will," said I, seeing some reluctance on Fitz.'s part to take the wager, and getting emboldened in consequence, "let the judgment be pronounced over a couple of dozen of champagne, paid by the loser."

This was a coup d'etat on my part, for I knew at once there were so many parties to benefit by the bet, terminate which way it might, there could be no possibility of evading it. My ruse succeeded, and poor Fitzgerald, fairly badgered into a wager, the terms of which he could not in the least comprehend, was obliged to sign the conditions inserted in the adjutant's note-book—his greatest hope in so doing being in the quantity of wine he had seen me drink during the evening. As for myself, the bet was no sooner made than I began to think upon the very little chance I had of winning it; for even supposing my success perfect in the department allotted to me, it might with great reason be doubted what peculiar benefit I myself derived as a counterbalance to the fee of the doctor. For this, my only trust lay in the justice of a decision which I conjectured would lean more towards the goodness of a practical joke than the equity of the transaction. The party at mess soon after separated, and I wished my friend good night for the last time before meeting him as a bride-groom.

I arranged every thing in order for my start. My pistol-case I placed conspicuously before me, to avoid being forgotten in the haste of departure; and, having ordered my servant to sit up all night in the guard-room until he heard the carriage at the barrack-gate, threw myself on my bed, but not to sleep. The adventure I was about to engage in suggested to my mind a thousand associations, into which many of the scenes I have already narrated entered. I thought how frequently I had myself been on the verge of that state which Curzon was about to try, and how it always happened that when nearest to success, failure had intervened. From my very school-boy days my love adventures had the same unfortunate abruptness in their issue; and there seemed to be something very like a fatality in the invariable unsuccess of my efforts at marriage. I feared, too, that my friend Curzon had placed himself in very unfortunate hands—if augury were to be relied upon. Something will surely happen, thought I, from my confounded ill luck, and all will be blown up. Wearied at last with thinking I fell into a sound sleep for about three-quarters of an hour, at the end of which I was awoken by my servant informing me that a chaise and four were drawn up at the end of the barrack lane.

"Why, surely, they are too early, Stubber? It's only four o'clock."

"Yes, sir; but they say that the road for eight miles is very bad, and they must go it almost at a walk."

That is certainly pleasant, thought I, but I'm in for it now, so can't help it.

In a few minutes I was up and dressed, and so perfectly transformed by the addition of a brown scratch-wig and large green spectacles, and a deep-flapped waistcoat, that my



servant, on re-entering my room, could not recognise me. I followed him now across the barrack-yard, as, with my pistol-case under one arm and a lantern in his hand, he proceeded to the barrack-gate.

Page 63

As I passed beneath the adjutant's window, I saw a light—the sash was quickly thrown open, and Curzon appeared.

“Is that you, Harry?”

“Yes—when do you start?”

“In about two hours. I've only eight miles to go—you have upwards of twelve, and no time to lose. God bless you, my boy—we'll meet soon.”

“Here's the carriage, sir; this way.”

“Well, my lads, you know the road I suppose?”

“Every inch of it, your honour's glory; we're always coming it for doctors and 'pothecaries; they're never a week without them.”

I was soon seated, the door clapped to, and the words “all right” given, and away we went.

Little as I had slept during the night, my mind was too much occupied with the adventure I was engaged in, to permit any thoughts of sleep now, so that I had abundant opportunity afforded me of pondering over all the bearings of the case, with much more of deliberation and caution than I had yet bestowed upon it. One thing was certain, whether success did or did not attend our undertaking, the risk was mine and mine only; and if by any accident the affair should be already known to the family, I stood a very fair chance of being shot by one of the sons, or stoned to death by the tenantry; while my excellent friend Curzon should be eating his breakfast with his reverend friend, and only interrupting himself in his fourth muffin, to wonder “what could keep them;” and besides for minor miseries will, like the little devils in Don Giovanni, thrust up their heads among their better-grown brethren, my fifty-pound bet looked rather blue; for even under the most favourable light considered, however Curzon might be esteemed a gainer, it might be well doubted how far I had succeeded better than the doctor, when producing his fee in evidence. Well, well, I'm in for it now; but it certainly is strange, all these very awkward circumstances never struck me so forcibly before; and after all, it was not quite fair of Curzon to put any man forward in such a transaction; the more so, as such a representation might be made of it at the Horse-Guards as to stop a man's promotion, or seriously affect his prospects for life, and I at last began to convince myself that many a man so placed, would carry the lady off himself, and leave the adjutant to settle the affair with the family. For two mortal hours did I conjure up every possible disagreeable contingency that might arise. My being mulcted of my fifty and laughed at by the mess seemed inevitable, even were I fortunate enough to escape a duel with the fire-eating brother. Meanwhile a thick misty rain continued to fall, adding



so much to the darkness of the early hour, that I could see nothing of the country about me, and knew nothing of where I was.

Troubles are like laudanum, a small dose only excites, a strong one sets you to sleep—not a very comfortable sleep mayhap—but still it is sleep, and often very sound sleep; so it now happened with me. I had pondered over, weighed, and considered all the pros, cons, turnings, and windings of this awkward predicament, till I had fairly convinced myself that I was on the high road to a confounded scrape; and then, having established that fact to my entire satisfaction, I fell comfortably back in the chaise, and sunk into a most profound slumber.

Page 64

If to any of my readers I may appear here to have taken a very despondent view of this whole affair, let him only call to mind my invariable ill luck in such matters, and how always it had been my lot to see myself on the fair road to success, only up to that point at which it is certain, besides—but why explain? These are my confessions. I may not alter what are matters of fact, and my reader must only take me with all the imperfections of wrong motives and headlong impulses upon my head, or abandon me at once.

Meanwhile the chaise rolled along, and the road being better and the pace faster, my sleep became more easy; thus, about an hour and a half after I had fallen asleep, passed rapidly over, when the sharp turning of an angle distended me from my leaning position, and I awoke. I started up and rubbed my eyes; several seconds elapsed before I could think where I was or whither going. Consciousness at last came, and I perceived that we were driving up a thickly planted avenue. Why, confound it, they can't have mistaken it, thought I, or are we really going up to the house, instead of waiting at the lodge? I at once lowered the sash, and stretching out my head, cried out, "Do you know what ye are about, lads; is this all right?" but unfortunately, amid the rattling of the gravel and the clatter of the horses, my words were unheard; and thinking I was addressing a request to go faster, the villains cracked their whips, and breaking into a full gallop, before five minutes flew over, they drew up with a jerk at the foot of a long portico to a large and spacious cut-stone mansion. When I rallied from the sudden check, which had nearly thrown me through the window, I gave myself up for lost: here I was vis a vis to the very hall-door of the man whose daughter I was about to elope with, whether so placed by the awkwardness and blundering of the wretches who drove me, or delivered up by their treachery, it mattered not, my fate seemed certain; before I had time to determine upon any line of acting in this confounded dilemma, the door was jerked open by a servant in a sombre livery; who, protruding his head and shoulders into the chaise, looked at me steadily for a moment, and said, "Ah! then, doctor darlin', but ye're welcome." With the speed with which sometimes the bar of an air long since heard, or the passing glance of an old familiar fact can call up the memory of our very earliest childhood, bright and vivid before us, so that one single phrase explained the entire mystery of my present position, and I saw in one rapid glance that I had got into the chaise intended for Dr. Fitzgerald, and was absolutely at that moment before the hall-door of the patient. My first impulse was an honest one, to avow the mistake and retrace my steps, taking my chance to settle with Curzon, whose matrimonial scheme I foresaw was doomed to the untimely fate of all those I had ever been concerned in. My next thought, how seldom is the adage true which says "that

Page 65

second thoughts are best," was upon my luckless wager; for, even supposing that Fitzgerald should follow me in the other chaise, yet as I had the start of him, if I could only pass muster for half an hour, I might secure the fee, and evacuate the territory; besides that there was a great chance of Fitz's having gone on my errand, while I was journeying on his, in which case I should be safe from interruption. Meanwhile, heaven only could tell, what his interference in poor Curzon's business might not involve. These serious reflections took about ten seconds to pass through my mind, as the grave-looking old servant proceeded to encumber himself with my cloak and my pistol-case, remarking as he lifted the latter, "And may the Lord grant ye won't want the instruments this time, doctor, for they say he is better this morning;" heartily wishing amen to the benevolent prayer of the honest domestic, for more reasons than one, I descended leisurely, as I conjectured a doctor ought to do, from the chaise, and with a solemn pace and grave demeanour followed him into the house.

In the small parlour to which I was ushered, sat two gentlemen somewhat advanced in years, who I rightly supposed were my medical confreres. One of these was a tall, pale, ascetic-looking man, with grey hairs, and retreating forehead, slow in speech, and lugubrious in demeanour. The other, his antithesis, was a short, rosy-cheeked, apoplectic-looking subject, with a laugh like a suffocating wheeze, and a paunch like an alderman; his quick, restless eye, and full nether lip denoting more of the bon vivant than the abstemious disciple of Aesculapius. A moment's glance satisfied me, that if I had only these to deal with, I was safe, for I saw that they were of that stamp of country practitioner, half-physician, half-apothecary, who rarely come in contact with the higher orders of their art, and then only to be dictated to, obey, and grumble.

"Doctor, may I beg to intrude myself, Mr. Phipps, on your notice? Dr. Phipps or Mr. It's all one; but I have only a license in pharmacy, though they call me doctor."

"Surgeon Riley, sir; a very respectable practitioner," said he, waving his hand towards his rubicund confrere.

I at once expressed the great happiness it afforded me to meet such highly informed and justly celebrated gentlemen; and fearing every moment the arrival of the real Simon Pure should cover me with shame and disgrace, begged they would afford me as soon as possible, some history of the case we were concerned for. They accordingly proceeded to expound in a species of duet, some curious particulars of an old gentleman who had the evil fortune to have them for his doctors, and who laboured under some swelling of the neck, which they differed as to the treatment of, and in consequence of which, the aid of a third party (myself, God bless the mark!) was requested.



As I could by no means divest myself of the fear of Fitz.'s arrival, I pleaded the multiplicity of my professional engagements as a reason for at once seeing the patient; upon which I was conducted up stairs by my two brethren, and introduced to a half-lighted chamber. In a large easy chair sat a florid-looking old man, with a face in which pain and habitual ill-temper had combined to absorb every expression.

Page 66

"This is the doctor of the regiment, sir, that you desired to see," said my tall coadjutor.

"Oh! then very well; good morning, sir. I suppose you will find out something new the matter, for them two there have been doing so every day this two months."

"I trust, sir," I replied stiffly, "that with the assistance of my learned friends, much may be done for you. Ha! hem! So this is the malady. Turn your head a little to that side;" here an awful groan escaped the sick man, for I, it appears, had made considerable impression upon rather a delicate part, not unintentionally I must confess; for as I remembered Hoyle's maxim at whist, "when in doubt play a trump," so I thought it might be true in physic, when posed by a difficulty to do a bold thing also. "Does that hurt you, sir?" said I in a soothing and affectionate tone of voice. "Like the devil," growled the patient. "And here?" said I. "Oh! oh! I can't bear it any longer." "Oh! I perceive," said I, "the thing is just as I expected." Here I raised my eyebrows, and looked indescribably wise at my confreres.

"No aneurism, doctor," said the tall one.

"Certainly not."

"Maybe," said the short man, "maybe it's a stay-at-home-with-us tumour after all;" so at least he appeared to pronounce a confounded technical, which I afterwards learned was "steatomatous;" conceiving that my rosy friend was disposed to jeer at me, I gave him a terrific frown, and resumed, "this must not be touched."

"So you won't operate upon it," said the patient.

"I would not take a thousand pounds and do so," I replied. "Now if you please gentlemen," said I, making a step towards the door, as if to withdraw for consultation; upon which they accompanied me down stairs to the breakfast-room. As it was the only time in my life I had performed in this character, I had some doubts as to the propriety of indulging a very hearty breakfast appetite, not knowing if it were unprofessional to eat; but from this doubt my learned friends speedily relieved me, by the entire devotion which they bestowed for about twenty minutes upon ham, rolls, eggs, and cutlets, barely interrupting these important occupations by sly allusions to the old gentleman's malady, and his chance of recovery.

"Well, doctor," said the pale one, as at length he rested from his labours, "what are we to do?"

"Ay," said the other, "there's the question."

"Go on," said I, "go on as before; I can't advise you better." Now, this was a deep stroke of mine; for up to the present moment I do not know what treatment they were

practising; but it looked a shrewd thing to guess it, and it certainly was civil to approve of it.

“So you think that will be best.”

“I am certain—I know nothing better,” I answered.

“Well, I’m sure, sir, we have every reason to be gratified for the very candid manner you have treated us. Sir, I’m your most obedient servant,” said the fat one.



Page 67

"Gentlemen, both your good healths and professional success also:" here I swallowed a petit verre of brandy; thinking all the while there were worse things than the practice of physic.

"I hope you are not going," said one, as my chaise drew up at the door.

"Business calls me," said I, "and I can't help it."

"Could not you manage to see our friend here again, in a day or two?" said the rosy one.

"I fear it will be impossible," replied I; "besides I have a notion he may not desire it."

"I have been commissioned to hand you this," said the tall doctor, with a half sigh, as he put a check into my hand.

I bowed slightly, and stuffed the crumpled paper with a half careless air into my waistcoat pocket, and wishing them both every species of happiness and success, shook hands four times with each, and drove off; never believing myself safe 'till I saw the gate-lodge behind me, and felt myself flying on the road to Kilkenny at about twelve miles Irish an hour.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ELOPEMENT.

It was past two o'clock when I reached the town. On entering the barrack-yard, I perceived a large group of officers chatting together, and every moment breaking into immoderate fits of laughter. I went over, and immediately learned the source of their mirth, which was this: No sooner had it been known that Fitzgerald was about to go to a distance, on a professional call, than a couple of young officers laid their heads together, and wrote an anonymous note to Mrs. Fitz. who was the very dragon of jealousy, informing her, that her husband had feigned the whole history of the patient and consultation as an excuse for absenting himself on an excursion of gallantry; and that if she wished to satisfy herself of the truth of the statement, she had only to follow him in the morning, and detect his entire scheme; the object of these amiable friends being to give poor Mrs. Fitz. a twenty miles' jaunt, and confront her with her injured husband at the end of it.

Having a mind actively alive to suspicions of this nature, the worthy woman made all her arrangements for a start, and scarcely was the chaise and four, with her husband, out of the town, than was she on the track of it, with a heart bursting with jealousy, and vowing vengeance to the knife, against all concerned in this scheme to wrong her.



So far the plan of her persecutors had perfectly succeeded; they saw her depart, on a trip of, as they supposed, twenty miles, and their whole notions of the practical joke were limited to the eclaircissement that must ensue at the end. Little, however, were they aware how much more nearly the suspected crime, was the position of the poor doctor to turn out; for, as by one blunder I had taken his chaise, so he, without any inquiry whatever, had got into the one intended for me; and never awoke from a most refreshing slumber, till shaken by the shoulder by the postillion, who whispered in his ear—"here we are sir; this is the gate."

Page 68

"But why stop at the gate? Drive up the avenue, my boy."

"His honor told me, sir, not for the world to go farther than the lodge; nor to make as much noise as a mouse."

"Ah! very true. He may be very irritable, poor man! Well stop here, and I'll get out."

Just as the doctor had reached the ground, a very smart-looking soubrette tripped up, and said to him—

"Beg pardon, sir; but you are the gentleman from the barrack, sir?"

"Yes, my dear," said Fitz., with a knowing look at the pretty face of the damsel, "what can I do for you?"

"Why sir, my mistress is here in the shrubbery; but she is so nervous, and so frightened, I don't know how she'll go through it."

"Ah! she's frightened, poor thing; is she? Oh! she must keep up her spirits, while there's life there's hope."

"Sir."

"I say, my darling, she must not give way. I'll speak to her a little. Is not he rather advanced in life?"

"Oh, Lord! no sir. Only two-and-thirty, my mistress tells me?"

"Two-and-thirty! Why I thought he was above sixty."

"Above sixty! Law! sir. You have a bright fancy. This is the gentleman, ma'am. Now sir, I'll just slip aside for a moment, and let you talk to her."

"I am grieved, ma'am, that I have not the happiness to make your acquaintance under happier circumstances."

"I must confess, sir—though I am ashamed"—

"Never be ashamed, ma'am. Your grief, although, I trust causeless, does you infinite honor."

"Upon my soul she is rather pretty," said the doctor to himself here.

"Well, sir! as I have the most perfect confidence in you, from all I have heard of you, I trust you will not think me abrupt in saying that any longer delay here is dangerous."

“Dangerous! Is he in so critical a state as that then?”

“Critical a state, sir! Why what do you mean?”

“I mean, ma’am, do you think, then, it must be done to-day?”

“Of course I do, sir, and I shall never leave the spot without your assuring me of it.”

“Oh! in that case make your mind easy. I have the instruments in the chaise.”

“The instruments in the chaise! Really, sir, if you are not jesting—I trust you don’t think this is a fitting time for such—I entreat of you to speak more plainly and intelligibly.”

“Jesting, ma’am! I’m incapable of jesting at such a moment.”

“Ma’am! ma’am! I see one of the rangers, ma’am, at a distance; so don’t lose a moment, but get into the chaise at once.”

“Well, sir, let us away; for I have now gone too far to retract.”

“Help my mistress into the chaise, sir. Lord! what a man it is.”

A moment more saw the poor doctor seated beside the young lady, while the postillions plied whip and spur with their best energy; and the road flew beneath them. Meanwhile the delay caused by this short dialogue, enabled Mrs. Fitz.’s slower conveyance to come up with the pursuit, and her chaise had just turned the angle of the road as she caught a glimpse of a muslin dress stepping into the carriage with her husband.

Page 69

There are no words capable of conveying the faintest idea of the feelings that agitated Mrs. Fitz. at this moment. The fullest confirmation to her worst fears was before her eyes—just at the very instant when a doubt was beginning to cross over her mind that it might have been merely a hoax that was practised on her, and that the worthy Doctor was innocent and blameless. As for the poor Doctor himself, there seemed little chance of his being enlightened as to the real state of matters; for from the moment the young lady had taken her place in the chaise, she had buried her face in her hands, and sobbed continually. Meanwhile he concluded that they were approaching the house by some back entrance, to avoid noise and confusion, and waited, with due patience, for the journey's end.

As, however, her grief continued unabated, Fitz. at length began to think of the many little consolatory acts he had successfully practised in his professional career, and was just insinuating some very tender speech on the score of resignation, with his head inclined towards the weeping lady beside him, when the chaise of Mrs. Fitz. came up along-side, and the postillions having yielded to the call to halt, drew suddenly up, displaying to the enraged wife the tableau we have mentioned.

“So, wretch,” she screamed rather than spoke, “I have detected you at last.”

“Lord bless me! Why it is my wife.”

“Yes, villain! your injured, much-wronged wife! And you, madam, may I ask what you have to say for thus eloping with a married man?”

“Shame! My dear Jemima,” said Fitz. “how can you possibly permit your foolish jealousy so far to blind your reason. Don't you see I am going upon a professional call?”

“Oh! you are. Are you? Quite professional, I'll be bound.”

“Oh, sir! Oh, madam! I beseech you, save me from the anger of my relatives, and the disgrace of exposure. Pray bring me back at once.”

“Why, my God! ma'am, what do you mean? You are not gone mad, as well as my wife.”

“Really, Mr. Fitz.” said Mrs. F. “this is carrying the joke too far. Take your unfortunate victim—as I suppose she is such—home to her parents, and prepare to accompany me to the barrack; and if there be law and justice in—”

“Well! may the Lord in his mercy preserve my senses, or you will both drive me clean mad.”

“Oh, dear! oh, dear!” sobbed the young lady, while Mrs. Fitzgerald continued to upbraid at the top of her voice, heedless of the disclaimers and protestations of innocence



poured out with the eloquence of despair, by the poor doctor. Matters were in this state, when a man dressed in a fustian jacket, like a groom, drove up to the side of the road, in a tax-cart; he immediately got down, and tearing open the door of the doctor's chaise, lifted out the young lady, and deposited her safely in his own conveyance, merely adding—

“I say, master, you're in luck this morning, that Mr. William took the lower road; for if he had come up with you instead of me, he'd blow the roof off your scull, that's all.”

Page 70

While these highly satisfactory words were being addressed to poor Fitz. Mrs. Fitzgerald had removed from her carriage to that of her husband, perhaps preferring four horses to two; or perhaps she had still some unexplained views of the transaction, which might as well be told on the road homeward.

Whatever might have been the nature of Mrs. F.'s dissertation, nothing is known. The chaise containing these turtle doves arrived late at night at Kilkenny, and Fitz. was installed safely in his quarters before any one knew of his having come back. The following morning he was reported ill; and for three weeks he was but once seen, and at that time only at his window, with a flannel night-cap on his head, looking particularly pale, and rather dark under one eye.

As for Curzon—the last thing known of him that luckless morning, was his hiring a post-chaise for the Royal Oak, from whence he posted to Dublin, and hastened on to England. In a few days we learned that the adjutant had exchanged into a regiment in Canada; and to this hour there are not three men in the ___th who know the real secret of that morning's misadventures.

EBOOK EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Air of one who seeks to consume than enjoy his time
Always a pleasure felt in the misfortunes of even our best friend
Chew over the cud of his misfortune
Daily association sustains the interest of the veriest trifles
Dear, dirty Dublin—Io te salute
Every misfortune has an end at last
Fighting like devils for conciliation
Half pleased and whole frightened with the labour before him
Hating each other for the love of God
He first butthers them up, and then slithers them down
He was very much disguised in drink
Least important functionaries took the greatest airs upon them
Might almost excite compassion even in an enemy
Misfortune will find you out, if ye were hid in a tay chest
Profoundly and learnedly engaged in discussing medicine
Rather a dabbler in the "ologies"
Recovered as much of their senses as the wine had left them
Seems ever to accompany dullness a sustaining power of vanity
The tone of assumed compassion