Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu

The House by the Church-Yard

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A PROLOGUE—BEING A DISH OF VILLAGE CHAT.

Fig. 103

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Oh! murdher;' said one.

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

'Oh! bloody wars!' exclaimed a third.

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

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

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

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

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

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

to throw any light upon the matter.

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

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

'Why not, Misther Mattocks?'

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

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

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

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

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

'Oh! Uncle Charles,' I said, taking his hand, and leading him towards the foot of the grave; 'such a wonderful skull has come up! It is shot through with a bullet, and cracked with a poker besides.'

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

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

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

I moved a little aside, with a sort of thrill, to give him freer access to my uncle, in the hope that he might, perhaps, throw a light upon the history of this remarkable memorial. The old fellow had a rat-like gray eye—the other was hid under a black patch—and there was a deep red scar across his forehead, slanting from the patch that covered the extinguished orb. His face was purplish, the tinge

deepening towards the lumpish top of his nose, on the side of which stood a big wart, and he carried a great walking-cane over his shoulder, and bore, as it seemed to me, an intimidating, but caricatured resemblance to an old portrait of Oliver Cromwell in my Whig grandfather's parlour.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'And in what capacity?' pursued his reverence.

'Drummer,' answered the mulberry-faced veteran.

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

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

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

'You see, Sir, at that time, our Colonel-in-Chief was my Lord Blackwater,' continued the old soldier, 'not that we often seen him, for he lived in France mostly; the Colonel-en-Second was

General Chattesworth, and Colonel Stafford was Lieutenant-Colonel, and under him Major O'Neill; Captains, four—Cluffe, Devereux, Barton, and Burgh: First Lieutenants—Puddock, Delany, Sackville, and Armstrong; Second Lieutenants—Salt; Barber, Lillyman, and Pringle; Lieutenant Fireworkers—O'Flaherty—'

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

'Yes, Sir.'

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

'Why, law bless you, Sir! a Fireworker! 'twas his business to see that the men loaded, sarved, laid, and fired the gun all right. But that doesn't signify; you see this old skull, Sir: well, 'twas a nine days' wonder, and the queerest business you ever heerd tell of. Why, Sir, the women was frightened out of their senses, an' the men puzzled out o' their wits—they wor—ha, ha, ha! an' I can tell you all about it—a mighty black and bloody business it was—'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER I.

THE RECTOR'S NIGHT-WALK TO HIS CHURCH.

ORNAMENTAL CAPITAL 'A'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The doctor's lantern glided by—and then across the street—and so leisurely along the foot-way,

by the range of lightless hall doors towards the Salmon House, also dark; and so, sharp round the corner, and up to the church-yard gate, which stood a little open, as also the church door beyond, as was evidenced by the feeble glow of a lantern from within.

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

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

The rector consulted his great warming-pan of a watch. It was drawing near eleven. He fell into a reverie, and rambled slowly up and down the aisle, with his hands behind his back, and his dripping hat in them, swinging nearly to the flags,—now lost in the darkness—now emerging again, dim, nebulous, in the foggy light of the lanterns. When this clerical portrait came near, he was looking down, with gathered brows, upon the flags, moving his lips and nodding, as if counting them, as was his way. The doctor was thinking all the time upon the one text:—Why should this livid memorial of two great crimes be now disturbed, after an obscurity of twenty-one years, as if to jog the memory of scandal, and set the great throat of the monster baying once more at the old midnight horror?

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

CHAPTER II.

THE NAMELESS COFFIN.

ORNAMENTAL CAPITAL 'T'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The flag that closed the entrance of the vault had been removed. But the descent of Avernus was not facile, the steps being steep and broken, and the roof so low. Young Mervyn had gone down the steps to see it duly placed; a murky, fiery light; came up, against which the descending figures

looked black and cyclopean.

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

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

CHAPTER III.

MR. MERVYN IN HIS INN.

ORNAMENTAL CAPITAL 'T'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Mighty pretty prospects about here, Sir. The painters come out by dozens in the summer, with their books and pencils, and scratch away like so many Scotchmen. Ha! ha! ha! If you draw, Sir, there's one prospect up the river, by the mills—upon my conscience—but you don't draw?'

No answer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAIR-GREEN OF PALMERSTOWN.

ORNAMENTAL CAPITAL 'T'

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sturk and Toole, behind backs, did not spare one another. Toole called Sturk a 'horse doctor,' and

'the smuggler'—in reference to some affair about French brandy, never made quite clear to me, but in which, I believe, Sturk was really not to blame; and Sturk called him 'that drunken little apothecary'—for Toole had a boy who compounded, under the rose, his draughts, pills, and powders in the back parlour—and sometimes, 'that smutty little ballad singer,' or 'that whiskeyfied dog-fancier, Toole.' There was no actual quarrel, however; they met freely—told one another the news—their mutual disagreeabilities were administered guardedly—and, on the whole, they hated one another in a neighbourly way.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'They're very grand to-day, the Chattesworths, with them two livery footmen behind them,' threw in O'Flaherty, accommodating his remarks to the spirit of his lady-love.

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

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

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

Those who suppose that all this rancour was produced by mere feminine emulations and jealousy

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

Everybody knew that Miss Rebecca Chattesworth ruled supreme at Belmont. With a docile old general and a niece so young, she had less resistance to encounter than, perhaps, her ardent soul would have relished. Fortunately for the general it was only now and then that Aunt Becky took a whim to command the Royal Irish Artillery. She had other hobbies just as odd, though not quite so scandalous. It had struck her active mind that such of the ancient women of Chapelizod as were destitute of letters—mendicants and the like—should learn to read. Twice a week her 'old women's school,' under that energetic lady's presidency, brought together its muster-roll of rheumatism, paralysis, dim eyes, bothered ears, and invincible stupidity. Over the fire-place in large black letters, was the legend, 'BETTER LATE THAN NEVER!' and out came the horn-books and spectacles, and to it they went with their A-B ab, etc., and plenty of wheezing and coughing. Aunt Becky kept good fires, and served out a mess of bread and broth, along with some pungent ethics, to each of her hopeful old girls. In winter she further encouraged them with a flannel petticoat apiece, and there was besides a monthly dole. So that although after a year there was, perhaps, on the whole, no progress in learning, the affair wore a tolerably encouraging aspect; for the academy had increased in numbers, and two old fellows, liking the notion of the broth and the 6d. a month—one a barber, Will Potts, ruined by a shake in his right hand, the other a drunken pensioner, Phil Doolan, with a wooden leg—petitioned to be enrolled, and were, accordingly, admitted. Then Aunt Becky visited the gaols, and had a knack of picking up the worst characters there, and had generally two or three discharged felons on her hands. Some people said she was a bit of a Voltarian, but unjustly; for though she now and then came out with a bouncing social paradox, she was a good bitter Church-woman. So she was liberal and troublesome—off-handed and dictatorial—not without good nature, but administering her benevolences somewhat tyrannically, and, for the most part, doing more or less of positive mischief in the process.

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

The good Mrs. Mack received the general haughtily and slightly, and Miss Magnolia with a short courtesy and a little toss of her head, and up went her fan, and she giggled something in Toole's ear,

who grinned, and glanced uneasily out of the corner of his shrewd little eye at the unsuspicious general and on to Aunt Rebecca; for it was very important to Dr. Toole to stand well at Belmont. So, seeing that Miss Mag was disposed to be vicious, and not caring to be compromised by her tricks, he whistled and bawled to his dogs, and with a jolly smirk and flourish of his cocked-hat, off he went to seek other adventures.

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

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

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

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

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

'Shall I ask Gertrude Chattesworth to speak to her Aunt Rebecca?' said Lilias slyly. 'Suppose you attend her school in Martin's Row, with "better late than never" over her chimneypiece: there are two pupils of your own sex, you know, and you might sit on the bench with poor Potts and good old Doolan.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'So I would—but by means of my example, not my preaching. No; I leave that to wiser heads—to the rector, for instance'—and she drew closer to the dear old man, with a quick fond glance of such proud affection, for she thought the sun never shone upon his like, as made Devereux sigh a little unconscious sigh. The old man did not hear her—he was too absorbed in his talk—he only felt the pressure of his darling's little hand, and returned it, after his wont, with a gentle squeeze of his cassocked arm, while he continued the learned essay he was addressing to young, queer, erudite, simple Dan Loftus, on the descent of the Decie branch of the Desmonds. There was, by-the-bye, a rumour—I know not how true—that these two sages were concocting between them, beside their folios on the Castle of Chapelizod, an interminable history of Ireland.

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

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

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

The Chattesworths by this time, as well as others, were moving away—and that young Mr.

Mervyn, more remarked upon than he suspected, walked with them to the gate of the fair-green. As he passed he bowed low to good Parson Walsingham, who returned his salute, not unkindly—that never was—but very gravely, and with his gentle and thoughtful blue eyes followed the party sadly on their way.

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

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

CHAPTER V.

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

ORNAMENTAL CAPITAL 'I'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'There is, my Lord Castlemallard, a curious old tract of the learned Van Helmont, in which he says, as near as I can remember his words, that magnetism is a magical faculty, which lieth dormant in us by the opiate of primitive sin, and, therefore, stands in need of an excitator, which excitator may be either good or evil; but is more frequently Satan himself, by reason of some previous oppignoration or compact with witches. The power, indeed, is in the witch, and not conferred by him; but this versipellous or Protean impostor—these are his words—will not suffer her to know that it is of her own natural endowment, though for the present charmed into somnolent inactivity by the narcotic of primitive sin.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'With a pudding clout,' persisted Devereux.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Hey—eh?' said his lordship, brightening up, and gazing glassily round with a wan smile; and I fancy he thought a lady had somehow introduced herself during his nap, and was pleased, for he admired the sex.

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

and getting a little awkwardly into his place.

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

Puddock began to apologise.

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

'A very pretty wine,' said my lord.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When he did, with hand uplifted, after the manner of a prisoner arraigned for murder, he pleaded

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH THE MINSTRELSY PROCEEDS.

ORNAMENTAL CAPITAL 'N'

o wonder, then, if Father Roach, when Loftus, in the innocence of his heart, announced his song and its theme, was thoroughly uneasy, and would have given a good deal that he had not helped that simple youth into his difficulty. But things must now take their course. So amid a decorous silence, Dan Loftus lifted up his voice, and sang. That voice was a high small pipe, with a very nervous quaver in it. He leaned back in his chair, and little more than the whites of his upturned eyes were visible; and beating time upon the table with one hand, claw-wise, and with two or three queer, little thrills and roulades, which re-appeared with great precision in each verse, he delivered himself thus,

in what I suspect was an old psalm tune:—

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

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

(*Loftus, solo.*)

'But to forbear from flesh, fowl, fish,
And eat potatoes in a dish,
Done o'er with amber, or a mess
Of ringos in a Spanish dress

(*Chorus of Officers.*)

'Done o'er with amber, or a mess
Of ringos in a Spanish dress.'

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

'Ha! thank you, Sir,' said his lordship.

(*Loftus, solo.*)

'Or to refrain from all high dishes,
But feed our thoughts with wanton wishes,
Making the soul, like a light wench,
Wear patches of concupiscence.

(*Chorus of Officers.*)

'Making the soul, like a light wench,
Wear patches of concupiscence

(*Loftus, solo.*)

'This is not to keep Lent aright,
But play the juggling hypocrite;
For we must starve the inward man,
And feed the outward too on bran.

(*Chorus of Officers.*)

'For we must starve the inward man,
And feed the outward too on bran.'

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

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

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

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

'You'll not like it, Sir,' said Devereux, mischievously: 'but there really is a capital one—quite of another kind—a lenten dish—fish, you know, Puddock—the one you described yesterday; but Mr. Loftus has, I think, a still better way.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'And how is that?' enquired Devereux.

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

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

CHAPTER VII.

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

ORNAMENTAL CAPITAL 'L'

oftus had by this time climbed to the savage lair of his garret, overstrewn with tattered papers and books; and Father Roach, in the sanctuary of his little parlour, was growling over the bones of a devilled-turkey, and about to soothe his fretted soul in a generous libation of hot whiskey punch. Indeed, he was of an appeasable nature, and on the whole a very good fellow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Have you ever put a marrow fat pea in it, Sir?' enquired Devereux, simply, with all the beautiful rashness of youth.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The fact was, that poor Magnolia's name came to her in no very gracious way. Young Lady Carrick-o'-Gunniol was a bit of a wag, and was planting a magnolia—one of the first of those botanical rarities seen in Ireland—when good-natured, vapouring, vulgar Mrs. Macnamara's note, who wished to secure a peeress for her daughter's spiritual guardian, arrived. Her ladyship pencilled on the back of the note, 'Pray call the dear babe Magnolia,' and forthwith forgot all about it. But Madam Macnamara was charmed, and the autograph remained afterwards for two generations among the archives of the family; and, with great smiles and much complacency, she told Lord Carrick-o'-Gunniol all about it, just outside the grand jury-room, where she met him during the assize week; and, being a man of a weak and considerate nature, rather kind, and very courteous—although his smile was very near exploding into a laugh, as he gave the good lady snuff out of his own box—he was yet very much concerned and vexed, and asked his lady, when he went home, how she could have induced old Mrs. Macnamara to give that absurd name to her poor infant; whereat her ladyship, who had not thought of it since, was highly diverted; and being assured that the babe was actually christened, and past recovery Magnolia Macnamara, laughed very merrily, kissed her lord, who was shaking his head gravely, and then popped her hood on, kissed him again, and, laughing still, ran out to look at her magnolia, which, by way of reprisal, he henceforth, notwithstanding her entreaties, always called her 'Macnamara;' until, to her infinite delight, he came out with it, as it sometimes happens, at a wrong time, and asked old Mac—a large, mild man—then extant, Madame herself, nurse, infant Magnolia, and all, who had arrived at the castle, to walk out and see Lady Carrick-o'-Gunniol's 'Macnamara,' and perceived not the slip, such is the force of habit, though the family stared, and Lady C. laughed in an uncalled-for-way, at a sudden recollection of a tumble she once had, when a child, over a flower-bed; and broke out repeatedly, to my lord's chagrin and bewilderment, as they walked towards the exotic.

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

'And so, what do you say, lieutenant, to a Welsh rabbit for supper?'

The lieutenant nodded a stolid assent.

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

'No,' said Nutter.

'And why not?' says Toole.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here several voices interposed.

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

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

'Manually malthrating his person, Sir,' repeated O'Flaherty, 'by striking, kicking, or whipping any part or mimber of his body; or offering a milder assault, such as a pull by the chin, or a finger-tap upon the nose. It is usual, Sir, for the purpose of avoiding ungentlemanlike noise, inconvenience, and confusion, that one gentleman should request of another to suppose himself affronted in the manner, whatever it may be, most intolerable to his feelings, which request I now, Sir, teeke the libertee of preferring to you; and when you have engaged the services of a friend, I trust that Lieutenant Puddock, who lodges in the same house with me, will, in consideration of my being an officer of the same honourable corps, a sthranger in this part of the counthry, and, above all, a gentleman who can show paydagree like himself [here a low bow to Puddock, who returned it]; that Lieutenant Puddock will be so feelin' and so kind as to receive him on my behalf, and acting as *my* friend to manage all the particulars for settling, as easily as may be, this most unprovoked affair.'

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

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

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

'Mr. Nutter—a—I hope things may be settled pleasantly,' said Puddock, looking as tall and

weighty as he could; 'at present I—a—that is, at the moment, I—a—don't quite see—[the fact is, he had not a notion what the deuce it was all about]—but your friend will find me—your friend—a—at my lodgings up to one o'clock to-night, if necessary.'

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

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

CHAPTER VIII.

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

ORNAMENTAL CAPITAL 'N'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Dan Loftus!' ejaculated Devereux.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Deuce take that old sneak,' whispered Toole vehemently, 'he's always in the way; the last man in the town I'd have—but no matter:' and up went a pebble, better directed, for this time it went right

through Loftus's window, and a pleasant little shower of broken glass jingled down into the street.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Well?' said Devereux, by this time recovering breath, as the little doctor, looking very red and glum, strutted up to him along the shady pavement.

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