
**THE COCK AND
ANCHOR**

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu

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CHAPTER I.

THE "COCK AND ANCHOR"—TWO HORSEMEN—AND A SUPPER BY THE INN FIRE.

Some time within the first ten years of the last century, there stood in the fair city of Dublin, and in one of those sinuous and narrow streets which lay in the immediate vicinity of the Castle, a goodly and capacious hostelry, snug and sound, and withal carrying in its aspect something staid and aristocratic, and perhaps in nowise the less comfortable that it was rated, in point of fashion, somewhat obsolete. Its structure was quaint and antique; so much so, that had its counterpart presented itself within the precincts of "the Borough," it might fairly have passed itself off for the genuine old Tabard of Geoffry Chaucer.

The front of the building, facing the street, rested upon a row of massive wooden blocks, set endwise, at intervals of some six or eight feet, and running parallel at about the same distance, to the wall of the lower story of the house, thus forming a kind of rude cloister or open corridor, running the whole length of the building.

The spaces between these rude pillars were, by a light frame-work of timber, converted into a succession of arches; and by an application of the same ornamental process, the ceiling of this extended porch was made to carry a clumsy but not unpicturesque imitation of groining. Upon this open-work of timber, as we have already said, rested the second story of the building; protruding beyond which again,

and supported upon beams whose projecting ends were carved into the semblance of heads hideous as the fantastic monsters of heraldry, arose the third story, presenting a series of tall and fancifully-shaped gables, decorated, like the rest of the building, with an abundance of grotesque timber-work. A wide passage, opening under the corridor which we have described, gave admission into the inn-yard, surrounded partly by the building itself, and partly by the stables and other offices connected with it. Viewed from a little distance, the old fabric presented by no means an unsightly or ungraceful aspect: on the contrary, its very irregularities and antiquity, however in reality objectionable, gave to it an air of comfort and almost of dignity to which many of its more pretending and modern competitors might in vain have aspired. Whether it was, that from the first the substantial fabric had asserted a conscious superiority over all the minor tenements which surrounded it, or that they in modest deference had gradually conceded to it the prominence which it deserved—whether, in short, it had always stood foremost, or that the street had slightly altered its course and gradually receded, leaving it behind, an immemorial and immovable landmark by which to measure the encroachments of ages—certain it is, that at the time we speak of, the sturdy hostelry stood many feet in advance of the line of houses which flanked it on either side, narrowing the street with a most aristocratic indifference to the comforts of the pedestrian public, thus forced to shift for life and limb, as best they might, among the vehicles and horses which then thronged the city streets—no doubt, too, often by the very difficulties which it presented, entrapping the over-cautious passenger, who preferred entering the harbour

which its hospitable and capacious doorway offered, to encountering all the perils involved in doubling the point.

Such as we have attempted to describe it, the old building stood more than a century since; and when the level sunbeams at eventide glinted brightly on its thousand miniature window panes, and upon the broad hanging panel, which bore, in the brightest hues and richest gilding, the portraiture of a Cock and Anchor; and when the warm, discoloured glow of sunset touched the time-worn front of the old building with a rich and cheery blush, even the most fastidious would have allowed that the object was no unpleasing one.

A dark autumnal night had closed over the old city of Dublin, and the wind was blustering in hoarse gusts through the crowded chimney-stacks—careening desolately through the dim streets, and occasionally whirling some loose tile or fragment of plaster from the house tops. The streets were silent and deserted, except when occasionally traversed by some great man's carriage, thundering and clattering along the broken pavement, and by its passing glare and rattle making the succeeding darkness and silence but the more dreary. None stirred abroad who could avoid it; and with the exception of such rare interruptions as we have mentioned, the storm and darkness held undisputed possession of the city. Upon this ungenial night, and somewhat past the hour of ten, a well-mounted traveller rode into the narrow and sheltered yard of the "Cock and Anchor;" and having bestowed upon the groom who took the bridle of his steed such minute and anxious directions as betokened a kind and knightly tenderness for the comforts of his good beast, he

forthwith entered the public room of the inn—a large and comfortable chamber, having at the far end a huge hearth overspanned by a broad and lofty mantelpiece of stone, and now sending forth a warm and ruddy glow, which penetrated in genial streams to every recess and corner of the room, tinging the dark wainscoting of the walls, glinting red and brightly upon the burnished tankards and flagons with which the cupboard was laden, and playing cheerily over the massive beams which traversed the ceiling. Groups of men, variously occupied and variously composed, embracing all the usual company of a well frequented city tavern—from the staid and sober man of business, who smokes his pipe in peace, to the loud disputatious, half-tipsy town idler, who calls for more flagons than he can well reckon, and then quarrels with mine host about the shot—were disposed, some singly, others in social clusters, in cosy and luxurious ease at the stout oak tables which occupied the expansive chamber. Among these the stranger passed leisurely to a vacant table in the neighbourhood of the good fire, and seating himself thereat, doffed his hat and cloak, thereby exhibiting a finely proportioned and graceful figure, and a face of singular nobleness and beauty. He might have seen some thirty summers—perhaps less—but his dark and expressive features bore a character of resolution and melancholy which seemed to tell of more griefs and perils overpast than men so young in the world can generally count.

The new-comer, having thrown his hat and gloves upon the table at which he had placed himself, stretched his stalwart limbs toward the fire in the full enjoyment of its genial influence, and advancing the heels of his huge jack

boots nearly to the bars, he seemed for a time wholly lost in the comfortable contemplation of the red embers which flickered, glowed, and shifted before his eyes. From his quiet reverie he was soon recalled by mine host in person, who, with all courtesy, desired to know "whether his honour wished supper and a bed?" Both questions were promptly answered in the affirmative: and before many minutes the young horseman was deep in the discussion of a glorious pasty, flanked by a flagon of claret, such as he had seldom tasted before. He had scarcely concluded his meal, when another traveller, cloaked, booted, and spurred, and carrying under his arm a pair of long horse-pistols, and a heavy whip, entered the apartment, walked straight up to the fire-place, and having obtained permission of the cavalier already established there to take share of his table, he deposited thereon the formidable weapons which he carried, cast his hat, gloves, and cloak upon the floor, and threw himself luxuriously into a capacious leather-bottomed chair which confronted the cheery fire.

Threw himself luxuriously into a capacious, leather-bottomed chair.

"Threw himself luxuriously into a capacious,
leather-bottomed chair."

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"A bleak night, sir, and a dark, for a ride of twenty miles," observed the stranger, addressing the younger guest.

"I can the more readily agree with you, sir," replied the

latter, "seeing that I myself have ridden nigh forty, and am but just arrived."

"Whew! that beats me hollow," cried the other, with a kind of self-congratulatory shrug. "You see, sir, we never know how to thank our stars for the luck we *have* until we come to learn what luck we might have had. I rode from Wicklow—pray, sir, if it be not too bold a question, what line did you travel?"

"The Cork road."

"Ha! that's an ugly line they say to travel by night. You met with no interruption?"

"Troth, but I *did*, sir," replied the young man, "and none of the pleasantest either. I was stopped, and put in no small peril, too."

"How! stopped—stopped on the highway! By the mass, you outdo me in every point! Would you, sir, please to favour me, if 'twere not too much trouble, with the facts of the adventure—the particulars?"

"Faith, sir," rejoined the young man, "as far as my knowledge serves me, you are welcome to them all. When I was still about twelve miles from this, I was joined from a by-road by a well mounted, and (as far as I could discern) a respectable-looking traveller, who told me he rode for Dublin, and asked to join company by the way. I assented; and we jogged on pleasantly enough for some two or three miles. It was very dark——"

"As pitch," ejaculated the stranger, parenthetically.

"And what little scope of vision I might have had," continued the younger traveller, "was well nigh altogether obstructed by the constant flapping of my cloak, blown by the storm over my face and eyes. I suddenly became conscious that we had been joined by a third horseman, who, in total silence, rode at my other side."

"How and when did *he* come up with you?"

"I can't say," replied the narrator—"nor did his presence give me the smallest uneasiness. He who had joined me first, all at once called out that his stirrup strap was broken, and halloo'd to me to rein in until he should repair the accident. This I had hardly done, when some fellow, whom I had not seen, sprang from behind upon my horse, and clasped my arms so tightly to my body, that so far from making use of them, I could hardly breathe. The scoundrel who had dismounted caught my horse by the head and held him firmly, while my hitherto silent companion clapped a pistol to my ear."

"The devil!" exclaimed the elder man, "that was checkmate with a vengeance."

"Why, in truth, so it turned out," rejoined his companion; "though I confess my first impulse was to balk the gentlemen of the road at any hazard; and with this view I plied my spurs rowel deep, but the rascal who held the bridle was too old a hand to be shaken off by a plunge or two. He swung with his whole weight to the bit, and literally brought poor Rowley's nose within an inch of the road. Finding that resistance was utterly vain, and not caring to squander what little brains I have upon so paltry an adventure, I acknowledged the

jurisdiction of the gentleman's pistol, and replied to his questions."

"You proved your sound sense by so doing," observed the other. "But what was their purpose?"

"As far as I could gather," replied the younger man, "they were upon the look-out for some particular person, I cannot say whom; for, either satisfied by my answers, or having otherwise discovered their mistake, they released me without taking anything from me but my sword, which, however, I regret much, for it was my father's; and having blown the priming from my pistols, they wished me the best of good luck, and so we parted, without the smallest desire on my part to renew the intimacy. And now, sir, you know just as much of the matter as I do myself."

"And a very serious matter it is, too," observed the stranger, with an emphatic nod. "Landlord! a pint of mulled claret—and spice it as I taught you—d'ye mind? A very grave matter—do you think you could possibly identify those men?"

"Identify them! how the devil could I?—it was dark as pitch—a cat could not have seen them."

"But was there no mark—no peculiarity discernible, even in the dense obscurity—nothing about any of them, such as you might know again?"

"Nothing—the very outline was indistinct. I could merely see that they were shaped like men."

"Truly, truly, that is much to be lamented," said the elder gentleman; "though fifty to one," he added, devoutly, "they'll

hang one day or another—let that console us. Meantime, here comes the claret."

So saying, the new-comer rose from his seat, coolly removed his black matted peruke from his shorn head, and replaced it by a dark velvet cap, which he drew from some mysterious nook in his breeches pocket; then, hanging the wig upon the back of his chair, he wheeled the seat round to the table, and for the first time offered to his companion an opportunity of looking him fairly in the face. If he were a believer in the influence of first impressions, he had certainly acted wisely in deferring the exhibition until the acquaintance had made some progress, for his countenance was, in sober truth, anything but attractive—a pair of grizzled brows overshadowed eyes of quick and piercing black, rather small, and unusually restless and vivid—the mouth was wide, and the jaw so much underhung as to amount almost to a deformity, giving to the lower part of the face a character of resolute ferocity which was not at all softened by the keen fiery glance of his eye; a massive projecting forehead, marked over the brow with a deep scar, and furrowed by years and thought, added not a little to the stern and commanding expression of the face. The complexion was swarthy; and altogether the countenance was one of that sinister and unpleasant kind which the imagination associates with scenes of cruelty and terror, and which might appropriately take a prominent place in the foreground of a feverish dream. The young traveller had seen too many ugly sights, in the course of a roving life of danger and adventure, to remember for a moment the impression which his new companion's visage was calculated to produce.

They chatted together freely; and the elder (who, by the way, exhibited no very strong Irish peculiarities of accent or idiom, any more than did the other) when he bid his companion good-night, left him under the impression that, however forbidding his aspect might be, his physical disadvantages were more than counterbalanced by the shrewd, quick sagacity, correct judgment, and wide range of experience of which he appeared possessed.

CHAPTER II.

A BED IN THE "COCK AND ANCHOR"—A LANTERN AND AN UGLY VISITOR BY THE BEDSIDE.

Leaving the public room to such as chose to push their revels beyond the modesty of midnight, our young friend betook himself to his chamber; where, snugly deposited in one of the snuggest beds which the "Cock and Anchor" afforded, with the ample tapestry curtains drawn from post to post, while the rude wind buffeted the casements and moaned through the antique chimney-tops, he was soon locked in the deep, dreamless slumber of fatigue.

How long this sweet oblivion may have lasted it was not easy to say; some hours, however, had no doubt intervened, when the sleeper was startled from his repose by a noise at his chamber door. The latch was raised, and someone bearing a shaded light entered the room and cautiously closed the door again. In the belief that the intruder was some guest or domestic of the inn who either mistook the room or was not aware of its occupation, the young man coughed once or twice slightly in token of his presence, and observing that his signal had not the desired effect, he inquired rather sharply,—

"Who is there?"

The only answer returned was a long "Hist!" and forthwith the steps of the unseasonable visitor were directed to the bedside. The person thus disturbed had hardly time to raise

himself half upright when the curtains at one side were drawn apart, and by the imperfect light which forced its way through the horn enclosure of a lantern, he beheld the bronzed and sinister features of his fireside companion of the previous evening. The stranger was arrayed for the road, with his cloak and cocked hat on. Both parties, the visited and the visitor, for a time remained silent and in the same fixed attitude.

"Pray, sir," at length inquired the person thus abruptly intruded upon, "to what special good fortune do I owe this most unlooked-for visit?"

The elder man made no reply; but deliberately planted the large dingy lantern which he carried upon the bed in which the young man lay.

"You have tarried somewhat too long over the wine-cup," continued he, not a little provoked at the coolness of the intruder. "This, sir, is not your chamber; seek it elsewhere. I am in no mood to bandy jests. You will consult your own ease as well as mine by quitting this room with all dispatch."

"Young gentleman," replied the elder man in a low, firm tone, "I have used short ceremony in disturbing you thus. To judge from your face you are no less frank than hardy. You will not require apologies when you have heard me. When I last night sate with you I observed about you a token long since familiar to me as the light—you wear it on your finger—it is a diamond ring. That ring belonged to a dear friend of mine—an old comrade and a tried friend in a hundred griefs and perils: the owner was Richard O'Connor. I have not heard from him for ten years or more. Can you say

how he fares?"

"The brave soldier and good man you have named was my father," replied the young man, mournfully.

"*Was!*" repeated the stranger. "Is he then no more—is he dead?"

"Even so," replied the young man, sadly.

"I knew it—I felt it. When I saw that jewel last night something smote at my heart and told me, that the hand that wore it once was cold. Ah, me! it was a friendly and a brave hand. Through all the wars of King James" (and so saying he touched his hat) "we were together, companions in arms and bosom friends. He was a comely man and a strong; no hardship tired him, no difficulty dismayed him; and the merriest fellow he was that ever trod on Irish ground. Poor O'Connor! in exile; away, far away from the country he loved so well; among foreigners too. Well, well, wheresoever they have laid thee, there moulders not a truer nor a braver heart in the fields of all the world!"

He paused, sighed deeply, and then continued,—

"Sorely, sorely are thine old comrades put to it, day by day, and night by night, for comfort and for safety—sorely vexed and pillaged. Nevertheless—over-ridden, and despised, and scattered as we are, mercenaries and beggars abroad, and landless at home—still something whispers in my ear that there will come at last a retribution, and such a one as will make this perjured, corrupt, and robbing ascendancy a warning and a wonder to all after times. Is it a common thing, think you, that all the gentlemen, all the chivalry of a whole

country—the natural leaders and protectors of the people—should be stripped of their birthright, ay, even of the poor privilege of seeing in this their native country, strangers possessing the inheritances which are in *all* right their own; cast abroad upon the world; soldiers of fortune, selling their blood for a bare subsistence; many of them dying of want; and all because for honour and conscience sake they refused to break the oath which bound them to a ruined prince? Is it a slight thing, think you, to visit with pains and penalties such as these, men guilty of no crimes beyond those of fidelity and honour?"

The stranger said this with an intensity of passion, to which the low tone in which he spoke but gave an additional impressiveness. After a short pause he again spoke,—

"Young gentleman," said he, "you may have heard your father—whom the saints receive!—speak, when talking over old recollections, of one Captain O'Hanlon, who shared with him the most eventful scenes of a perilous time. He may, I say, have spoken of such a one."

"He has spoken of him," replied the young man; "often, and kindly too."

"I am that man," continued the stranger; "your father's old friend and comrade; and right glad am I, seeing that I can never hope to meet him more on this side the grave, to renew, after a kind, a friendship which I much prized, now in the person of his son. Give me your hand, young gentleman: I pledge you mine in the spirit of a tried and faithful friendship. I inquire not what has brought you to this unhappy country; I am sure it can be nothing which lies not within the eye of

honour, so I ask not concerning it; but on the contrary, I will tell you of myself what may surprise you—what will, at least, show that I am ready to trust you freely. You were stopped to-night upon the Southern road, some ten miles from this. It was *I* who stopped you!"

O'Connor made a sudden but involuntary movement of menace; but without regarding it, O'Hanlon continued,—

"You are astonished, perhaps shocked—you look so; but mind you, there is some difference between *stopping* men on the highway, and *robbing* them when you have stopped them. I took you for one who we were informed would pass that way, and about the same hour—one who carried letters from a pretended friend—one whom I have long suspected, a half-faced, cold-hearted friend—carried letters, I say, from such a one to the Castle here; to that malignant, perjured reprobate and apostate, the so-called Lord Wharton—as meet an ornament for a gibbet as ever yet made a feast for the ravens. I was mistaken: here is your sword; and may you long wear it as well as he from whom it was inherited." Here he raised the weapon, the blade of which he held in his hand, and the young man saw it and the hilt flash and glitter in the dusky light. "And take the advice of an old soldier, young friend," continued O'Hanlon, "and when you are next, which I hope may not be for many a long day, overpowered by odds and at their mercy, do not by fruitless violence tempt them to disable you by a simpler and less pleasant process than that of merely taking your sword and unpriming your pistols. Many a good man has thrown away his life by such boyish foolery. Upon the table by your bed you will in the morning find your rapier, and God grant that it and you may long

prove fortunate companions!" He was turning to go, but recollecting himself, he added, "One word before I go. I am known here as Mr. Dwyer—remember the name, Dwyer—I am generally to be heard of in this place. Should you at any time during your stay in this city require the assistance of a friend who has a cheerful willingness to serve you, and who is not perhaps altogether destitute of power, you have only to leave a billet in the hand of the keeper of this inn, and if I be above ground it will reach me—of course address it under the name I have last mentioned—and so, young gentleman, fare you well." So saying, he grasped the hand of his new friend, shook it warmly, and then, turning upon his heel, strode swiftly to the door, and so departed, leaving O'Connor with so much abruptness as not to allow him time to utter a question or remark on what had passed.

The excitement of the interview speedily passed away, the fatigues of the preceding day were persuasively seconded by the soothing sound of the now abated wind and by the utter darkness of the chamber, and the young man was soon deep in the forgetfulness of sleep once more. When the broad, red light of the morning sun broke cheerily into his room, streaming through the chinks of the old shutters, and penetrating through the voluminous folds of the vast curtains of rich, faded damask which surmounted the huge hearse-like bed in which he lay, so as to make its inmate aware that the hour of repose was past and that of action come, O'Connor remembered the circumstances of the interview which had been so strangely intruded upon him but as a dream; nor was it until he saw the sword which he had believed irrecoverably lost lying safely upon the table, that he felt assured that the

visit and its purport were not the creation of his slumbering fancy. In reply to his questions when he descended, he was informed by mine host of the "Cock and Anchor," that Mr. Dwyer had left the inn-yard upon his stout hack, a good hour before daybreak.

CHAPTER III.

THE LITTLE MAN IN BLUE AND SILVER.

Among the loungers who loitered at the door of the "Cock and Anchor," as the day wore on, there appeared a personage whom it behoves us to describe. This was a small man, with a very red face and little grey eyes—he wore a cloth coat of sky blue, with here and there a piece of silver lace laid upon it without much regard to symmetry; for the scissors had evidently displaced far the greater part of the original decorations, whose primitive distribution might be traced by the greater freshness of the otherwise faded cloth which they had covered, as well as by some stray threads, which stood like stubbles here and there to mark the ravages of the sickle. One hand was buried in the deep flap pocket of a waistcoat of the same hue and material, and bearing also, in like manner, the evidences of a very decided retrenchment in the article of silver lace. These symptoms of economy, however, in no degree abated the evident admiration with which the wearer every now and then stole a glance on what remained of its pristine splendours—a glance which descended not ungraciously upon a leg in whose fascinations its owner reposed an implicit faith. His right hand held a tobacco-pipe, which, although its contents were not ignited, he carried with a luxurious nonchalance ever and anon to the corner of his mouth, where it afforded him sundry imaginary puffs—a cheap and fanciful luxury, in which my Irish readers need not be told their humbler countrymen, for lack of better, are wont to indulge. He leaned against one of the stout wooden

pillars on which the front of the building was reared, and interlarded his economical pantomime of pipe-smoking with familiar and easy conversation with certain of the outdoor servants of the inn—a familiarity which argued not any sense of superiority proportionate to the pretension of his attire.

"And so," said the little man, turning with an aristocratic ease towards a stout fellow in a jerkin, with bluff visage and folded arms, who stood beside him, and addressing him in a most melodious brogue—"and so, for sartain, you have but five single gintlemen in the house—mind, I say *single* gintlemen—for, divil carry me if ever I take up with a *family* again—it doesn't answer—it don't *shoot* me—I was never made for a family, nor a family for me—I can't stand their b—y regularity; and—" with a sigh of profound sentiment, and lowering his voice, he added—"and, the maid-sarvants—no, devil a taste—they don't answer—they don't *shoot*. My disposition, Tom, is tindher—tindher to imbecility—I never see a petticoat but it flutters my heart—the short and the long of it is, I'm always falling in love—and sometimes the passion is not retaliated by the object, and more times it is—but, in both cases, I'm aiqually the victim—for my intintions is always honourable, and of course nothin' comes of it. My life was fairly frettin' away in a dhrame of passion among the housemaids—I felt myself witherin' away like a flower in autumn—I was losing my relish for everything, from bacon and table-dhrink upwards—dangers were thickening round me—I had but one way to execrate myself—I gave notice—I departed, and here I am."

Having wound up the sentence, the speaker leaned

forward and spat passionately on the ground—a pause ensued, which was at length broken by the same speaker.

"Only two out of the five," said he, reflectively, "only two unprovided with sarvants."

"And neither of 'em," rejoined Tom, a blunt English groom, "very likely to want one. The one is a lawyer, with a hack as lean as himself, and more holes, I warrant, than half-pence in his breeches pocket. He's out a-looking for lodgings, I take it."

"He's not exactly what I want," rejoined the little man. "What's th'other like?"

"A gentleman, every inch, or *I'm* no judge," replied the groom. "He came last night, and as likely a bit of horseflesh under him as ever my two hands wisped down. He chucked me a crown-piece this morning, as if it had been no more nor a cockle shell—he did."

"By gorra, he'll do!" exclaimed the little man energetically. "It's a bargain—I'm his man."

"Ay, but you mayn't answer, brother; he mayn't take you," observed Tom.

"Wait a bit—*jist* wait a bit, till he sees me," replied he of the blue coat.

"Ay, wait a bit," persevered the groom, coolly—"wait a bit, and when he *does* see you, it strikes me wery possible he mayn't like your cut."

"Not like my cut!" exclaimed the little man, as soon as he

had recovered breath; for the bare supposition of such an occurrence involved in his opinion so utter and astounding a contradiction of all the laws by which human antipathies and affections are supposed to be regulated, that he felt for a moment as if his whole previous existence had been a dream and an illusion. "Not like my *cut!*"

"No," rejoined the groom, with perfect imperturbability.

The little man deigned no other reply than that conveyed in a glance of the most inexpressible contempt, which, having wandered over the person and accoutrements of the unconscious Tom, at length settled upon his own lower extremities, where it gradually softened into a gaze of melancholy complacency, while he muttered, with a pitying smile, "Not like my cut—not like it!" and then, turning majestically towards the groom, he observed, with laconic dignity,—

"I humbly consave the gintleman has an eye in his head."

This rebuke had hardly been administered when the subject of their conference in person passed from the inn into the street.

"There he goes," observed Tom.

"And here *I* go after him," added the candidate for a place; and in a moment he was following O'Connor with rapid steps through the narrow streets of the town, southward. It occurred to him, as he hurried after his intended master, that it might not be amiss to defer his interview until they were out of the streets, and in some more quiet place; nor in all probability would he have disturbed himself at all to follow

the young gentleman, were it not that even in the transient glimpse which he had had of the person and features of O'Connor, the little man thought, and by no means incorrectly, that he recognized the form of one whom he had often seen before.

"That's Mr. O'Connor, as sure as my name's Larry Toole," muttered the little man, half out of breath with his exertions—"an' it's himself'll be proud to get me. I wondher what he's afther now. I'll soon see, at any rate."

Thus communing within himself, Larry alternately walked and trotted to keep the chase in view. He might very easily have come up with the object of his pursuit, for on reaching St. Patrick's Cathedral, O'Connor paused, and for some minutes contemplated the old building. Larry, however, did not care to commence his intended negotiation in the street; he purposed giving him rope enough, having, in truth, no peculiar object in following him at that precise moment, beyond the gratification of an idle curiosity; he therefore hung back until O'Connor was again in motion, when he once more renewed his pursuit.

O'Connor had soon passed the smoky precincts of the town, and was now walking at a slackened pace among the green fields and the trees, all clothed in the rich melancholy hues of early autumn. The evening sun was already throwing its mellow tint on all the landscape, and the lengthening shadows told how far the day was spent. In the transition from the bustle of a town to the lonely quiet of the country at eventide, and especially at that season of the year when decay begins to sadden the beauties of nature, there is

something at once soothing and unutterably melancholy. Leaving behind the glare, and dust, and hubbub of the town, who has not felt in his inmost heart the still appeal of nature? The saddened beauty of sear autumn, enhanced by the rich and subdued light of gorgeous sunset—the filmy mist—the stretching shadows—the serene quiet, broken only by rural sounds, more soothing even than silence—all these, contrasted with the sounds and sights of the close, restless city, speak tenderly and solemnly to the heart of man of the beauty of creation, of the goodness of God, and, along with these, of the mournful condition of all nature—change, decay, and death. Such thoughts and feelings, stealing in succession upon the heart, touch, one by one, the springs of all our sublimest sympathies, and fill the mind with the beautiful sense of brotherhood, under God, with all nature. Under the not unpleasing influence of such suggestions, O'Connor slackened his pace to a slow irregular walk, which sorely tried the patience of honest Larry Toole.

"After all," exclaimed that worthy, "it's nothin' more nor less than an evening walk he's takin', God bless the mark! What business have I followin' him? unless—see—sure enough he's takin' the short cut to the manor. By gorra, this is worth mindin'—I must not folly him, however—I don't want to meet the family—so here I'll plant myself until sich times as he's comin' back again."

So saying, Larry Toole clambered to the top of the grassy embankment which fenced the road, and seating himself between a pair of aged hawthorn-trees, he watched young O'Connor as he followed the wanderings of a wild bridle-road until he was at length fairly hidden from view by the

intervening trees and brushwood.

CHAPTER IV.

A SCARLET HOOD AMONG THE OLD TREES—THE MANOR OF MORLEY COURT—AND A PEEP INTO AN ANTIQUÉ CHAMBER.

The path which O'Connor followed was one of those quiet and pleasant by-roads which, in defiance of what are called improvements, are still to be discovered throughout Ireland here and there, in some unsuspected region, winding their green and sequestered ways through many a varied scene of rural beauty; and, unless when explored by some chance fisherman or tourist, unknown to all except the poor peasant to whose simple conveniences they minister.

Low and uneven embankments, overgrown by a thousand kinds of weeds and wild flowers and brushwood, marked the boundaries of this rustic pathway, but in so friendly a sort, and with so little jealousy or exclusion, that they seemed designed rather to lend a soft and sheltered resting-place to the tired traveller than to check the wayward excursions of the idle rambler into the merry fields and woodlands through which it wound. On either side the tall, hoary trees, like time-worn pillars, reared their grey, moss-grown trunks and arching branches, now but thinly clothed with the discoloured foliage of autumn, and casting their long shadows in the evening sun far over the sloping and unequal sward. The scene, the hour, and the loneliness of the place, would of themselves have been enough to induce a pensive train of thought; but, beyond the silence and seclusion, and the falling of the leaves in their eternal farewell, and all the

other touching signs of nature's beautiful decay, there were deep in O'Connor's breast recollections and passions with which the scene before him was more nearly associated, than with the ordinary suggestions of fantastic melancholy.

At some distance from this road, and half hidden among the trees, there stood an old and extensive building, chiefly of deep red brick, presenting many and varied fronts and quaint gables, antique-fashioned casements, and whole groups of fantastic chimneys, sending up their thin curl of smoke into the still air, and glinting tall and red in the declining sun; while the dusky hue of the old bricks was every here and there concealed under rich mantles of dark, luxuriant ivy, which, in some parts of the structure, had not only mounted to the summits of the wall, but clambered, in rich profusion, over the steep roof, and even to the very chimney tops. This antique building—rambling, massive, and picturesque in no ordinary degree—might well have attracted the observation of the passer-by, as it presented in succession, through the irregular vistas of the rich old timber, now one front, now another, alternately hidden and revealed as the point of observation was removed. But the eyes of O'Connor sought this ancient mansion, and dwelt upon its ever-varying aspects, as he pursued his way, with an interest more deep and absorbing than that of mere curiosity or admiration; and as he slowly followed the grass-grown road, a thousand emotions and remembrances came crowding upon his mind, impetuous, passionate, and wild, but all tinged with a melancholy which even the strong and sanguine heart of early manhood could not overcome. As the path proceeded, it became more closely sheltered by the wild bushes and trees,

and its windings grew more wayward and frequent, when on a sudden, from behind a screen of old thorns which lay a little in advance, a noble dog, of the true old Irish wolf breed, came bounding towards him, with every token of joy and welcome.

"Rover, Rover—down, boy, down," said the stranger, as the huge animal, in his boisterous greeting, leaped upon him again and again, flinging his massive paws upon his shoulders, and thrusting his cold nose into his bosom—"down, Rover, down."

The first transport of welcome past, the noble dog waited to receive from his old friend some marks of recognition in return, and then, swinging his long tail from side to side, away he sprang, as if to carry the joyful tidings to the companion of his evening ramble.

A woman and a man standing and talking to each other.

O'Connor knew that some of those whom he should not have chosen to meet just then or there were probably within a stone's throw of the spot where he now stood, and for a moment he was strongly tempted to turn, and, if so it might be, unobserved to retrace his steps. The close screen of wild trees which overshadowed the road would have rendered this design easy of achievement; but while he was upon the point of turning to depart, a few notes of some wild and simple Irish melody, carelessly lilted by a voice of silvery sweetness, floated to his ear. Every cadence and vibration of *that* voice was to him enchantment—he could not choose but pause. The sweet sounds were interrupted by a rustling among the withered leaves which strewed the ground. Again the fine old

dog made his appearance, dashing joyously along the path towards him, and following in his wake, with slow and gentle steps, came a light and graceful female form. On her shoulders rested a short mantle of scarlet cloth; the hood was thrown partially backward, so as to leave the rich dark ringlets to float freely in the light breeze of evening; the faintest flush imaginable tinged the clear paleness of her cheek, giving to her exquisitely beautiful features a lustre, whose richness did not, however, subdue their habitual and tender melancholy. The moment the full dark eyes of the girl encountered O'Connor, the song died away upon her lips—the colour fled from her cheeks, and as instantaneously the sudden paleness was succeeded by a blush of such depth and brilliancy as threw far into shade even the brightest imagery of poetic fancy.

"Edmond!" she exclaimed, in a tone so faint and low as scarcely to reach his ear, and which yet thrilled to his very heart.

"Yes, Mary—it is, indeed, Edmond O'Connor," answered he, passionately and mournfully—"come, after long years of separation, over many a mile of sea and land—unlooked-for, and, mayhap, unwished-for—come once more to see you, and, in seeing you, to be happy, were it but for a moment—come to tell you that he loves you fondly, passionately as ever—come to ask you, dear, dear Mary, if you, too, are unchanged?"

As he thus spoke, standing by her side, O'Connor gazed on the sad, sweet face of her he loved so well, and held that little hand, which he would have given worlds to call his own.

The beautiful girl was too artless to disguise her agitation. She would have spoken, but the effort was vain—the tears gathered in her dark eyes, and fell faster and faster, till at length the fruitless struggle ceased, and she wept long and bitterly.

"Oh! Edmond," said she, at length, raising her eyes sorrowfully and fondly to O'Connor's face—"what has called you hither? We two should hardly have met now or thus."

"Dear Mary," answered he, with melancholy fervour, "since last I held this loved hand, years have passed away—three long years and more—in which we two have never met—in which you scarce have even heard of me. Mary, three years bring many changes—changes irreparable. Time—which has, if it were possible, made you more beautiful even than when I saw you last—may yet have altered earlier feelings, and turned your heart from me. Were it so, Mary, I would not seek to blame you. I am not so vain—your rank—your great attractions—your surpassing beauty, must have won many admirers—drawn many suitors round you; and I—I, among all these, may well have been forgotten—I, whose best merit is but in loving you beyond my life. I will not, then—I will not, Mary, ask if you love me still: but coming thus unbidden and unlooked-for, am I forgiven—am I welcome, Mary?"

The artless girl looked up in his face with such a beautiful smile of trust and love as told more in one brief moment than language could in volumes.

"Yes, Mary," said O'Connor, reading that smile aright, with swelling heart and proud devotion; "yes, Mary. I am

remembered—you are still my own—my own: true, faithful, unchanged, in spite of years of time and leagues of separation; in spite of all!—my true-hearted, my adored, my own!"

He spoke; and in the fulness of their hearts they were both for a while silent, each gazing on the other in the rapt tenderness of long-tried love—in the deep, guileless joy of this chance meeting.

"Hear me," he whispered, lower almost than the murmur of the breeze through the arching boughs above them, as if fearful that even a breath would trouble the still enchantment that held them spell-bound: "hear me, for I have much to tell. The years that have passed since I spoke to you before have brought to me their store of good and ill, of sorrow and of hope. I have many things to tell you, Mary; much that gives me hope—the cheeriest hope—even that of overcoming Sir Richard's opposition! Ay, Mary, reasonable hope; and why? Because I am no longer poor: an old friend of my father's, Mr. Audley, has taken me by the hand, adopted me, made me his heir—the heir to riches and possessions which even your father will allow to be considerable—which he well may think enough to engage his prudence in favour of our union. In this hope, dearest, I am here. I daily expect the arrival of my generous friend and benefactor; and with him I will go to your father and urge my suit once more, and with God's blessing at last prevail—but hark! some one comes."

Even while he spoke, the lovers were startled by the sound of voices in gay colloquy, approaching along the quiet by-road on which they stood.

"Leave me, Edmond, leave me," said the beautiful girl, with earnest entreaty; "they must not see you with me now."

"Farewell then, dearest, since it must be so," replied O'Connor, as he pressed her hand closely in his own; "but meet me to-morrow evening—meet me by the old gate in the beech-tree walk, at the hour when you used to walk there. Nay, refuse me not, Mary. Farewell, farewell till then!" and so saying, before she had time to frame an answer, he turned from her, and was quickly lost among the trees and underwood which skirted the pathway.

In the speakers who approached, the young lady at once recognized her brother, Henry Ashwoode, and Emily Copland, her pretty cousin. The young man was handsome alike in face and figure, slightly made, and bearing in his carriage that indescribable air of aristocratic birth and pretension which sits not ungracefully upon a handsome person; his countenance, too, bore a striking resemblance to that of his sister, and, allowing for the difference of sex, resembled it as nearly as any countenance which had never expressed a passion but such as had its aim and origin alike in *self*, could do. He was dressed in the extreme of the prevailing fashion; and altogether his outward man was in all respects such as to justify his acknowledged pretensions to be considered one of the prettiest men in the then gay city of Dublin. The young lady who accompanied him was, in all points except in that of years, as unlike her cousin, Mary Ashwoode, as one pretty girl could well be to another. She was very fair; had a quick, clear eye, which carried in its glance something more than mere mirth or vivacity; an animated face, with, however, something of a bold, and at times even of a haughty

expression. Laughing and chatting in light, careless gaiety, the youthful pair approached the spot where Mary Ashwoode stood.

"So, so, fair sister," cried the young man, gaily, "alone and musing, and doubtless melancholy. Shall we venture to approach her, Emily?"

Women have keener eyes in small matters than men; and Miss Copland at a glance perceived her fair cousin's flushed cheek and embarrassed manner.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" cried she; "the girl has certainly seen a ghost or a dragoon officer."

"Neither, I assure you, cousin," replied Miss Ashwoode, with an effort; "my evening's ramble has not extended beyond this spot; and as yet I've seen no monster more alarming than my brother's new periwig."

The young man bowed.

"Nay, nay," cried Miss Copland, "but I must hear it. There certainly is some awful mystery at the bottom of all these conscious looks; but *apropos* of awful mysteries," continued she, turning to young Ashwoode, half in pity for Mary's increasing embarrassment; "where *is* Major O'Leary? What has become of your amusing old uncle?"

"That's more than *I* can tell," replied the young man; "I wash my hands of the scapegrace. I know nothing of him. I saw him for a moment in town this morning, and he promised, with a round dozen of oaths, to be out to dine with us to-day. Thus much *you* know, and thus much *I* know; for the rest,

having sins enough of my own to carry, as I said before, I wash my hands of him and his."

"Well, now remember, Henry," continued she, "I make it a point with you to bring him out here to-morrow. In sober seriousness I can't get on without him. It is a melancholy and a terrible truth, but still one which I feel it my duty to speak boldly, that Major O'Leary is the only gallant and susceptible man in the family."

"Monstrous assertion?" exclaimed the young man; "why, not to mention myself, the acknowledged pink and perfection of everything that is irresistible, have you not the perfect command of my worthy cousin, Arthur Blake?"

"Now don't put me in a passion, Henry," exclaimed the girl. "How dare you mention that wretch—that irreclaimable, unredeemed fox-hunter. He never talks, nor thinks, nor dreams of anything but dogs and badgers, foxes and other vermin. I verily believe he never yet was seen off a horse's back, except sometimes in a stable—he is an absolute Irish centaur! And then his odious attempts at finery—his elaborate, perverse vulgarity—the perpetual pinching and mincing of his words! An off-hand, shameless brogue I can endure—a brogue that revels and riots, and defies the world like your uncle O'Leary's, I can respect and even admire—but a brogue in a strait waistcoat——"

"Well, well," rejoined the young man, laughing, "though you may not find any sprout of the *family* tree, excepting Major O'Leary, worthy to contribute to your laudable requirements; yet surely you have a very fair catalogue of young and able-bodied gentlemen among our neighbours.

What say you to young Lloyd—he lives within a stone's throw. He is a most proper, pious, and punctual young gentleman; and would make, I doubt not, a most devout and exemplary '*Cavalier servente*.'

"Worse and worse," cried the young lady despondingly; "the most domestic, stupid, affectionate, invulnerable wretch. He never flirts out of his own family, and then, for charity I believe, with the oldest and ugliest. He is the very person for whose special case the rubric provided that no man shall marry his grandmother."

"My fair cousin," replied the young man, laughing, "I see you are hard to please. Meanwhile, sweet ladies both, let me remind you that the sun has just set; we must make our way homeward—at least *I* must. By the way, can I do anything in town for you this evening, beyond a tender message to my reverend uncle?"

"Dear me," exclaimed Miss Copland, "you have not passed an evening at home this age. What *can* you want, morning, noon, and night in that smoky, dirty town?"

"Why, the fact is," replied the young man, "business must be done; I positively must attend two routs to-night."

"Whose routs—what are they?" inquired the young lady.

"One is Mrs. Tresham's, the other Lady Stukely's."

"I *guessed* that ugly old kinswoman of mine was at the bottom of it," exclaimed the young lady with great vivacity. "Lady Stukely—that pompous, old, frightful goose!—she has laid herself out to seduce you, Harry; but don't let that

dismay you, for ten to one if you fall, she'll make an honest man of you in the end and marry you. Only think, Mary, what a sister you shall have," and the young lady laughed heartily, and then added, "There are some excellent, worthy, abominable people, who seem made expressly to put one in a passion—perpetual appeals to one's virtuous indignation. Now do, Henry, for goodness sake, if a matrimonial catastrophe must come, choose at least some nymph with less rouge and wrinkles than poor dear Lady Stukely."

"Kind cousin, thyself shalt choose for me," answered the young man; "but pray, suffer me to be at large for a year or two more. I would fain live and breathe a little, before I go down into the matrimonial pit and be no more seen. But let us mend our pace, the evening turns chill."

Thus chatting carelessly, they moved towards the large brick building which we have already described, embowered among the trees; where arrived, the young man forthwith applied himself to prepare for a night of dissipation, and the young ladies to get through a dull evening as best they might.

The two fair cousins sate in a large, old-fashioned drawing-room; the walls were covered with elaborately-wrought tapestry representing, in a manner sufficiently grim and alarming, certain scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; a cheerful fire blazed in the capacious hearth; and the cumbrous mantelpiece was covered with those grotesque and monstrous china figures, misnamed ornaments, which were then beginning to find favour in the eyes of fashion. Abundance of richly carved furniture was disposed variously throughout the room. The young ladies

sate by a small table on which lay some books and materials for work, placed near the fire. They occupied each one of those huge, high-backed, and well-stuffed chairs in which it is a mystery how our ancestors could sit and remain awake. Both were silently occupied with their own busy reflections; and it was not until the rapid clank of the horse's hoofs upon the pavement underneath the windows, as young Ashwoode started upon his night ride to the city, rose sharp and clear, that Miss Copland, waking from her reverie, exclaimed,—

"Well, sweet coz, were ever so woebegone and desolate a pair of damsels. The only available male creature in the establishment, with the exception of Sir Richard, who has actually gone to bed, has fairly turned his back upon us."

"Dear Emily," replied her cousin, "pray be serious. I wish to tell you what has passed this evening. You observed my confusion and agitation when you and Henry overtook me."

"Why, to be sure I did," replied the young lady; "and now, like an honest coz, you are going to tell me all about it." She drew her chair nearer as she spoke. "Come, my dear, tell me everything—what was your discovery? Come, now, there's a good girl, do confess." So saying she threw one arm round her cousin's neck and laid the other in her lap, looking curiously into her face the while.

"Oh! Emily, I have seen him!" exclaimed Miss Ashwoode, with an effort.

"Seen *him!*—seen whom?—old Nick, if I may judge from your looks. Whom *have* you seen, dear?" eagerly inquired Miss Copland.

"I have seen Edmond O'Connor," answered she.

"Edmond O'Connor!" repeated the girl in unfeigned surprise, "why, I thought he was in France, eating frogs and dancing cotillons. What has brought him here?—why, he'll be taken for a spy and executed on the spot. But seriously, can you conceive anything more rash and ill-judged than his coming over just now?"

"It is indeed, I greatly fear, very rash," replied the young lady; "he is resolved to speak with my father once more."

"And your father in such a precious ill-humour just at this precise moment," exclaimed Miss Copland. "I never *was* so much afraid of Sir Richard as I have been for the last two days; he has been a perfect bruin—begging your pardon, my dear girl—but even *you* must admit, let filial piety and all the cardinal virtues say what they will, that whenever Sir Richard is recovering from a fit of the gout he is nothing short of a perfect monster. I wager my diamond cross to a thimble, that he breaks the poor young man's head the moment he comes within reach of him. But jesting apart, I fear, my dear cousin, that my uncle is in no mood just now to listen to heroics."

A sharp knocking upon the floor immediately above the chamber in which the young ladies sate, interrupted the conference at this juncture.

"There is my father's signal—he wants me," exclaimed Miss Ashwoode, and rising as she spoke, without more ado she ran to render the required attendance.

"Strange girl," exclaimed Miss Copland, as her cousin's

step was heard ascending the stairs, "strange girl!—she is the veriest simpleton I ever yet encountered. All this fuss to marry a fellow who is, in plain words, little better than a beggarman—a good-looking beggarman, to be sure, but still a beggar. Oh, Mary, simple Mary! I am very much tempted to despise you—there is certainly something *wrong* about you! I hate to see people without ambition enough even to wish to keep their own natural position. The girl is full of nonsense; but what's that to me? she'll *unlearn* it all one day; but I'm much afraid, simple cousin, a little too late."

Having thus soliloquized, she called her maid, and retired for the night to her chamber.

CHAPTER V.

OF O'CONNOR'S MOONLIGHT WALK TO THE "COCK AND ANCHOR," AND WHAT BEFELL HIM BY THE WAY.

As soon as O'Connor had made some little way from the scene of his sudden and agitating interview with Miss Ashwoode, he slackened his pace, and with slow steps began to retrace his way toward the city. So listless and interrupted was his progress, that the sun had descended, and twilight was fast melting into darkness before he reached that point in the road at which diverged the sequestered path which he had followed. As he approached the spot, he observed a small man, with a pipe in his mouth, and his person arranged in an attitude of ease and graceful negligence, admirably calculated to exhibit the symmetry and perfection of his bodily proportions. This man had planted himself in the middle of the road, so as completely to command the pass, and, as our reader need scarcely be informed, was no other than Larry Toole—the important personage to whom we have already introduced him.

As O'Connor approached, Larry advanced, with a slow and dignified motion, to receive him: and removing his pipe from

his mouth with a *nonchalant* air, he compressed the lighted contents of the bowl with his finger, and then deposited the utensil in his coat pocket, at the same time, executing, in a very becoming manner, his most courtly bow. Somewhat surprised, and by no means pleasantly, at an interruption of so unlooked-for a kind, O'Connor observed, impatiently, "I have neither time nor temper, friend, to suffer delay or listen to foolery;" and observing that Larry was preparing to follow him, he added curtly, "I desire no company, sirrah, and choose to be alone."

"An' it's exactly because you wish to be alone, and likes solitude," observed the little man, "that you and me will shoot, being formed by the bountiful hand iv nature, barrin' a few small exceptions,"—here he glanced complacently at his right leg, which was a little in advance of its companion—"as similiar as two eggs."

Being in no mood to tolerate, far less to encourage this annoying intrusion, O'Connor pursued his way at a quickened pace, and in obstinate silence, and in a little time exhibited a total and very mortifying forgetfulness of Mr. Toole's bodily proximity. That gentleman, however, was not so easily to be shaken off—he perseveringly followed, keeping a pace or two behind.

"It's perfectly uncontrovertible," pursued that worthy, with considerable solemnity and emphasis, "and at laste as plain as the nose on your face, that you haven't the smallest taste of a conception who it is you're spakin' too, Mr. O'Connor."

"And pray who may you be, friend?" inquired he,

somewhat surprised at being thus addressed by name.

"Who else would I be, your honour," rejoined the persevering applicant—"who else *could* I be, if you had but a glimmer iv light to contemplate my forrum and fatures, but Laurence Toole—called by the men for the most part *Misthur* Toole, and (he added in a softened tone) by the girls most commonly designated Larry."

"Ha—Larry—Larry Toole!" exclaimed O'Connor, half reconciled to an intrusion up to that moment so ill endured. "Well, Larry, tell me briefly how are the family at the manor, yonder?"

"Why, plase your honour," rejoined Larry, promptly, "the ould masthur, that's Sir Richard, is much oftener gouty than good-humoured, and more's the pity. I b'lieve he's breaking down very fast, and small blame to him, for he lived hard, like a rale honourable gentleman. An' then, the young masthur, that's Masthur Henry—but you didn't know him so well—he's getting on at the divil's rate—scatt'ring guineas like small shot. They say he plays away a power of money; and he and the masthur himself has often hard words enough between them about the way things is goin' on; but he ates and dhrinks well, an' the health he gets is as good as he wants for his purposes."

"Well—but your young mistress," suggested O'Connor—"you have not told me yet how Miss Ashwoode has been ever since. How have her health and spirits been—has she been well?"

"Mixed middlin', like belly bacon," replied Mr. Toole, with

an air of profound sympathy—"shilly-shally, sir—off an' on, like an April day—sometimes atin' her victuals, sometimes lavin' them—no sartainty. I think the ould masthur's gout and crossness, and the young one's vagaries, is frettin' her; and it's sorry I am to see it. An' there's Miss Emily—that's Miss Copland—a rale jovial slip iv a young lady. I think you've seen her once or twice up at the manor; but now, since her father, the ould General, died, she is stayin' for good with the family. She's a fine lady, and" (drawing close to O'Connor, and speaking with very significant emphasis) "she has ten thousand pounds of her own—do you mind me, ten thousand—it's a good fortune—is not it, sir?"

He paused for a moment, and receiving no answer, which he interpreted as a sign that the announcement was operating as it ought, he added with a confidential wink—

"I thought I might as well put you up to it, you know, for no one knows where a blessin' may light."

"Larry," said O'Connor, after a considerable silence, somewhat abruptly and suddenly recollecting the presence of that little person—"if you have aught to say to me, speak it quickly. What may your business be?"

"Why, sir," replied he, "the long and short of it is, I left Sir Richard more than a week since. Not that I was turned away—no, Mr. O'Connor," continued Mr. Toole, with edifying majesty, "no sich thing at all in the wide world. My resignation, sir, was the fruit of my own solemn convictions—for the five years I was with the family, I had no comfort, or aise, or pace. I may as well spake plain to you, sir, for *you*, like myself, is young"—Mr. Toole was certainly at the

wrong side of fifty—"you can aisily understand me, sir, when I say that I'm the victim iv romance, bad cess to it—romance, sir; my buzzam, sir, was always open to tindher impressions—impressions, sir, that came into it as natural as pigs into a pittaty garden. I could not shut them out—the short and the long iv it is, I was always fallin' in love, since I was the size iv a quart pot—eternally fallin' in love." Mr. Toole sighed, and then resumed. "I done my best to smother my emotions, but passion, sir, young and ardent passion, is impossible to be suppressed: you might as well be trying to keep strong beer in starred bottles durin' the period iv the dog days. But I never knew rightly what love was all out, in rale, terrible perfection, antil Mistress Betsy came to live in the family. I'll not attempt to describe her—it's enough to say she fixed my affections, and done for myself. She is own maid to the young mistress. I need not expectorate upon the progress iv my courtship—it's quite enough to observe, that for a considherable time my path was strewed with flowers, antil a young chap—an English bliggard, one Peter Clout—an' it's many's the clout he got, the Lord be thanked for that same!—a lump iv a chap ten times as ugly as the divil, and without more shapes about him than a pound of cruds—an impittant, ignorant, presumptious, bothered, bosthoon—antil this gentleman—this Misthur Peter Clout, made his b—y appearance; then all at once the divil's delight began. Betsy—the lovely Betsy Carey—the lovely, the vartious, the beautiful, and the exalted—began to play thricks. I know she was in love with me—over head and ears, as bad as myself—but woman is a mystarious agent, an' bangs Banagher. Long as I've been larnin', I never could larn why it is they take delight in tormentin' the tindher-hearted."

This reflection was uttered in a tone of tender woe, and the speaker paused for some symptom of assent from his auditor. It is, however, hardly necessary to say that he paused in vain. O'Connor had enough to occupy his mind; and so far from listening to his companion's narrative, he was scarcely conscious that Mr. Toole, in bodily presence, was walking beside him. That "tinder-hearted" individual accordingly resumed the thread of his discourse.

"But, at any rate, she laid herself out to make me jealous of Peter Clout; and, with the blessing iv the divil, she succeeded completely. Things were going on this way—she lettin' on to be mighty fond iv Peter, an' me gettin' angrier an' angrier, and Mr. Clout more an' more impitent every day, antill I seen there was no use in purtendin'; so one mornin' when we were both of us—myself and Mr. Peter Clout—clainin' up the things in the pantry, I thought I might as well have a bit iv discourse with him—when I seen, do ye mind, there was no use in mortifyin' the chap with contempt, for I did not spake to him, good, bad, or indifferent, for more than a fortnight, an' he was so ignorant and unmannerly he never noticed the differ. When I seen there was no use in keepin' him at a distance, says I to him one day in the panthry—'Mr. Clout,' says I, 'your conduct in regard iv some persons in this house,' says I, 'is iv a description that may be shuitable to the English spalpeens,' says I, 'but is about as like the conduct of a gintleman,' says I, 'as blackin' is to plate powder.' So he turns round, an' he looks at me as if I was a Pollyphamius. 'Mind your work,' says I, 'young man, an' don't be lookin' at me as if I was a hathian goddess,' says I. 'It's Mr. Toole that's speakin' to you, an' you better mind what he

says. The long an' the short iv it is, I don't like you to be hugger-muggering with a sartain delicate famale in this establishment; an' if I catch you talkin' any more to Misthress Betsy Carey, I give you fair notice, it's at your own apparel. Beware of me—for as sure as you don't behave to my likin', you might as well be in the one panthry with a hyania,' says I, an' it was throe for me, an' it was the same way with my father before me, an' all the Tooles up to the time of Noah's ark. In pace I'm a turtle-dove all out; but once I'm riz, I'm a rale tarin' vulture."

Here Mr. Toole paused to call up a look, and after a grim shake of the head, he resumed.

"Things went on aisy enough for a day or two, antill I happened to walk into the sarvants' hall, an' who should I see but Mr. Clout sittin' on the same stool with Misthriss Betsy, an' his arm round her waist—so when I see that, before any iv them could come between us, with the fair madness I made one jump at him, an' we both had one another by the windpipe before you'd have time to bless yourself. Well, round an' round we went, rowlin' with our heads and backs agin the walls, an' divil a spot of us but was black an' blue, antill we kem to the chimney; an' sure enough when we did, down we rowled both together, glory be to God! into the fire, an' upset a kittle iv wather on top iv us; an' with that there was sich a screechin' among the women, an' maybe a small taste from ourselves, that the masthur kem in, an' if he didn't lay on us with his walkin' stick it's no matter; but, at any rate, as soon as we recovered from the scaldin' an' the bruises. I retired, an' the English chap was turned away; an' that's the whole story, an' I tuk my oath that I'll never go into sarvice in

a *family* again. I can't make any hand of women—they're made for desthroyin' all sorts iv pace iv mind—they're etarnally triflin' with the most sarious and sacred emotions. I'll never sarve any but single gentlemen from this out, if I was to be sacrificed for it—never a bit, by the hokey!"

So saying, Mr. Toole, having, in the course of his harangue, reproduced his pipe from his pocket, with a view to flourish it in emphatic accompaniment with the cadences of his voice, smote the bowl of it upon the edge of his cocked hat, which he held in his hand, with so much passion, that the head of the pipe flew across the road, and was for ever lost among the docks and nettles. One glance he deigned to the stump which remained in his hand, and then, with an air of romantic recklessness which laughs at all sacrifices, he flung it disdainfully from him, clapped his cocked hat upon his head with a vehemence which brought it nearly to the bridge of his nose, and, planting his hands in his breeches pockets, he glanced at the stars with a scowl which, if they take any note of things terrestrial, must have filled them with alarm.

Suddenly recollecting himself, Mr. Toole perceived that his intended master, having walked on, had left him considerably behind; he therefore put himself into an easy amble, which speedily brought him up with the chase.

"Mr. O'Connor, plase your honour," he exclaimed, "sure it's not possible it's goin' to lave me behind you are, an' me so proud iv your company; an', moreover, after axin' you for a situation—that is, always supposin' you want the sarvices iv a rale dashin' young fellow, that's up to everything, an' willing to sarve you in any incapacity. An' by gorra, sir," continued

he, pathetically, "it's next door to a charity to take me, for I've but one crown in the wide world left, an' I must change it to-night; an' once I change money, the shillin's makes off with themselves like a hat full of sparrows into the elements, the Lord knows where."

With a desolate recklessness, he chucked the crown-piece into the air, caught it in his palm, and walked silently on.

"Well, well," said O'Connor, "if you choose to make so uncertain an engagement as for the term of my stay in Dublin, you are welcome to be my servant for so long."

"It's a bargain," shouted Mr. Toole—"a bargain, plase your honour, done and done on both sides. I'm your man—hurra!"

They had already entered the suburbs, and before many minutes were involved in the dark and narrow streets, threading their way, as best they might, toward the genial harbourage of the "Cock and Anchor."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SOLDIER—THE NIGHT RAMBLE—AND THE WINDOW THAT LET IN MORE THAN THE MOONLIGHT.

Short as had been O'Connor's sojourn, it nevertheless had been sufficiently long to satisfy mine host of the "Cock and Anchor," an acute observer in such particulars, that whatever his object might have been in avoiding the more fashionably frequented inns of the city, economy at least had no share in his motive. O'Connor, therefore, had hardly entered the public room of the inn, when a servant respectfully informed him that a private chamber was prepared for his reception, if he desired to occupy it. The proposition suited well with his temper at the minute, and with all alacrity he followed the waiter, who bowed him upstairs and through a dingy passage into a room whose claims, if not to elegance, at least to comfort, could hardly have been equalled, certainly not excelled, by the more luxurious pretensions of most modern hotels.

It was a large, capacious chamber, nearly square, wainscoted with dark shining wood, and decorated with certain dingy old pictures, which might have been, for

anything to the contrary, appearing in so uncertain a light, *chefs d'œuvre* of the mighty masters of the olden time: at all events, they looked as warm and comfortable as if they were. The hearth was broad, deep, and high enough to stable a Kerry pony, and was surmounted by a massive stone mantelpiece, rudely but richly carved—abundance of old furniture—tables, at which the saintly Cromwell might have smoked and boozed, and chairs old enough to have supported Sir Walter Raleigh himself, were disposed about the room with a profuseness which argued no niggard hospitality. A pair of wax-lights burned cheerily upon a table beside the bright crackling fire which blazed in the huge cavity of the hearth; and O'Connor threw himself into one of those cumbrons, tall-backed, and well-stuffed chairs, which are in themselves more potent invitations to the sweet illusive visitings from the world of fancy and of dreams than all the drugs or weeds of eastern climes. Thus suffering all his material nature to rest in absolute repose, he loosed at once the reins of imagination and memory, and yielded up his mind luxuriously to their mingled realities and illusions.

He may have been, perhaps, for two or three hours employed thus listlessly in chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy, when his meditations were interrupted by a brisk step upon the passage leading to the apartment in which he sate, instantly succeeded by as brisk a knocking at the chamber door itself.

"Is this Mr. O'Connor's chamber?" inquired a voice of peculiar richness, intonated not unpleasingly with a certain melodious modification of the brogue, bespeaking a sort of passionate *devil-may-carishness* which they say in the good

old times wrought grievous havoc among womankind. The summons was promptly answered by an invitation to enter; and forthwith the door opened, and a comely man stepped into the room. The stranger might have seen some fifty or sixty summers, or even more; for his was one of those joyous, good-humoured, rubicund visages, upon which time vainly tries to write a wrinkle. His frame was robust and upright, his stature tall, and there was in his carriage something not exactly a swagger (for with all his oddities, the stranger was evidently a gentleman), but a certain rollicking carelessness, which irresistibly conveyed the character of a reckless, head-long good-humour and daring, to which nothing could come amiss. In the hale and jolly features, which many would have pronounced handsome, were written, in characters which none could mistake, the prevailing qualities of the man—a gay and sparkling eye, in which lived the very soul of convivial jollity, harmonized right pleasantly with a smile, no less of archness than *bonhomie*, and in the brow there was a certain indescribable cock, which looked half pugnacious and half comic. On the whole, the stranger, to judge by his outward man, was precisely the person to take his share in a spree, be the same in joke or earnest—to tell a good story—finish a good bottle—share his last guinea with you—or blow your brains out, as the occasion might require. He was arrayed in a full suit of regimentals, and taken for all in all, one need hardly have desired a better sample of the dashing, light-hearted, daredevil Irish soldier of more than a century since.

"Ah! Major O'Leary," cried O'Connor, starting from his seat, and grasping the soldier's hand, "I am truly glad to see

you; you are the very man of all others I most require at this moment. I was just about to have a fit of the blue devils."

"Blue devils!" exclaimed the major; "don't talk to a youngster like me of any such infernal beings; but tell me how you are, every inch of you, and what brings you here?"

"I never was better; and as to my business," replied O'Connor, "it is too long and too dull a story to tell you just now; but in the meantime, let us have a glass of Burgundy; mine host of the 'Cock and Anchor' boasts a very peculiar cellar." So saying, O'Connor proceeded to issue the requisite order.

"That does he, by my soul!" replied the major, with alacrity; "and for that express reason I invariably make it a point to renew my friendly intimacy with its contents whenever I visit the metropolis. But I can't stay more than five minutes, so proceed to operations with all dispatch."

"And why all this hurry?" inquired O'Connor. "Where need you go at this hour?"

"Faith, I don't precisely know myself," rejoined the soldier; "but I've a strong impression that my evil genius has contrived a scheme to inveigle me into a cock-pit not a hundred miles away."

"I'm sorry for it, with all my heart, Major," replied O'Connor, "since it robs me of your company."

"Nay, you must positively come along with me," resumed the major; "I sip my Burgundy on these express conditions. Don't leave me at these years without a mentor. I rely upon

your prudence and experience; if you turn me loose upon the town to-night, without a moral guide, upon my conscience, you have a great deal to answer for. I may be fleeced in a hell, or milled in a row; and if I fall in with female society, by the powers of celibacy! I can't answer for the consequences."

"Sooth to say, Major," rejoined O'Connor, "I'm in no mood for mirth."

"Come, come! never look so glum," insisted his visitor. "Remember I have arrived at years of *indiscretion*, and must be looked after. Man's life, my dear fellow, naturally divides itself into three great stages; the first is that in which the youthful disciple is carefully instructing his mind, and preparing his moral faculties, in silence, for all sorts of villainy—this is the season of youth and innocence; the second is that in which he *practises* all kinds of rascality—and this is the flower of manhood, or the prime of life; the third and last is that in which he strives to make his soul—and this is the period of dotage. Now, you see, my dear O'Connor, I have unfortunately arrived at the prime of life, while you are still in the enjoyment of youth and innocence; I am practising what you are plotting. You are, unfortunately for yourself, a degree more sober than I; you can therefore take care that I sin with due discretion—permit me to rob or murder, without being robbed or murdered in return."

Here the major filled and quaffed another glass, and then continued,—

"In short, I am—to speak in all solemnity and sobriety—so drunk, that it's a miracle how I mounted these rascally stairs without breaking my neck. I have no distinct recollection of

the passage, except that I kissed some old hunks instead of the chamber-maid, and pulled his nose in revenge. I solemnly declare I can neither walk nor think without assistance; my heels and head are inclined to change places, and I can't tell the moment the body politic may be capsized. I have no respect in the world for my intellectual or physical endowments at this particular crisis; my sight is so infernally acute that I see all surrounding objects considerably augmented in number; my legs have asserted their independence, and perform 'Sir Roger de Coverley,' altogether unsolicited; and my memory and other small mental faculties have retired for the night. Under those melancholy circumstances, my dear fellow, you surely won't refuse me the consolation of your guidance."

"Had not you better, my dear Major," said O'Connor, "remain with me quietly here for the night, out of the reach of sharks and sharpers, male and female? You shall have claret or Burgundy, which you please—enough to fill a skin!"

"I can't hold more than a bottle additional," replied the major, regretfully, "if I can even do that; so you see I'm bereft of domestic resources, and must look abroad for occupation. The fact is, I expect to meet one or two fellows whom I want to see, at the place I've named; so if you can come along with me, and keep me from falling into the gutters, or any other indiscretion by the way, upon my conscience, you will confer a serious obligation on me."

O'Connor plainly perceived that although the major's statement had been somewhat overcharged, yet that his admissions were not altogether fanciful; there were in the

gallant gentleman's face certain symptoms of recent conviviality which were not to be mistaken—a perceptible roll of the eye, and a slight screwing of the lips, which peculiarities, along with the faintest possible approximation to a hiccough, and a gentle see-saw vibration of his stalwart person, were indications highly corroborative of the general veracity of his confessions. Seeing that, in good earnest, the major was not precisely in a condition to be trusted with the management of anything pertaining to himself or others, O'Connor at once resolved to see him, if possible, safely through his excursion, if after the discussion of the wine which was now before them, he should persevere in his fancy for a night ramble. They therefore sate down together in harmonious fellowship, to discuss the flasks which stood upon the board.

O'Connor was about to fill his guest's glass for the tenth or twelfth time, when the major suddenly ejaculated,—

"Halt! ground arms! I can no more. Why, you hardened young reprobate, it's not to make me drunk you're trying? I must keep senses enough to behave like a Christian at the cock-fight; and, upon my soul! I've very little rationality to spare at this minute. Put on your hat, and come without delay, before I'm fairly extinguished."

O'Connor accordingly donned his hat and cloak, and yielding the major the double support of his arm on the one side, and of the banisters on the other, he conducted him safely down the stairs, and with wonderful steadiness, all things considered, they entered the street, whence, under the major's direction, they pursued their way. After a silence

of a few minutes, that military functionary exclaimed, with much gravity,—

"I'm a great social philosopher, a great observer, and one who looks quite through the deeds of men. My dear boy, believe me, this country is in the process of a great moral reformation; hospitality—which I take to be the first, and the last, and the only one of all the virtues of a bishop which is fit for the practice of a gentleman—hospitality, my dear O'Connor, is rapidly approaching to a climax in this country. I remember, when I was a little boy, a gentleman might pay a visit of a week or so to another in the country, and be all the time nothing more than tipsy—*tipsy* merely. However, matters gradually improved, and that stage which philosophers technically term simple drunkenness, became the standard of hospitality. This passed away, and the sense of the country, in its silent but irresistible operation, has substituted *blind* drunkenness; and in the prophetic spirit of sublime philosophy, I foresee the arrival of that time when no man can escape the fangs of hospitality upon any conditions short of brain fever or delirium tremens."

As the major delivered this philosophic discourse, he led O'Connor through several obscure streets and narrow lanes, till at length he paused in one of the very narrowest and darkest before a dingy brick house, whose lower windows were secured with heavy bars of iron. The door, which was so incrustated with dirt and dust that the original paint was hardly anywhere discernible, stood ajar, and within burned a feeble and ominous light, so faint and murky, that it seemed fearful of disclosing the deeds and forms which itself was forced to behold. Into this dim and suspicious-looking place

the major walked, closely followed by O'Connor. In the hall he was encountered by a huge savage-looking fellow, who raised his squalid form lazily from a bench which rested against the wall at the further end, and in a low, gruff voice, like the incipient growl of a roused watch-dog, inquired what they wanted there.

"Why, Mr. Creigan, don't you know Major O'Leary?" inquired that gentleman. "I and a friend have business here."

The man muttered something in the way of apology, and opening the dingy lantern in which burned the wretched tallow candle which half lighted the place, he snuffed it with his finger and thumb, and while so doing, desired the major to proceed. Accordingly, with the precision of one who was familiar with every turn of the place, the gallant officer led O'Connor through several rooms, lighted in the same dim and shabby way, into a corridor leading directly to the rearward of the house, and connecting it with some other detached building. As they threaded this long passage, the major turned towards O'Connor, who followed him, and whispered,—

"Did you mark that ill-looking fellow in the hall? Poor Creigan!—a gentleman!—would you think it?—a *gentleman* by birth, and with a snug property, too—four hundred good pounds a year, and more—all gone, like last year's snow, chiefly here in backing mains of his own! poor dog! I remember him one of the best dressed men on town, and now he's fain to pick up a few shillings by the week in the place where he lost his thousands; this is the state of man!"

As he spoke thus, they had reached the end of the passage.

The major opened the door which terminated the corridor, and thus displayed a scene which, though commonplace enough in its ingredients, was, nevertheless, in its *coup d'œil*, sufficiently striking. In the centre of a capacious and ill-finished chamber stood a circular platform, with a high ledge running round it. This arena, some fourteen feet in diameter, was surrounded by circular benches, which rose one outside the other, in parallel tiers, to the wall. Upon these seats were crowded some hundreds of men—a strange mixture; gentlemen of birth and honour sate side by side with notorious swindlers; noblemen with coalheavers; simpletons with sharks; the unkempt, greasy locks of squalid destitution mingled in the curls of the patrician periwig; aristocratic lace and embroidery were rubbed by the dusty shoulders of draymen and potboys;—all these gross and glaring contrarieties reconciled and bound together by one hellish sympathy. All sate locked in breathless suspense, every countenance fixed in the hard lines of intense, excited anxiety and vigilance; all leaned forward to gaze upon the combat whose crisis was on the point of being determined. Those who occupied the back seats had started up, and pressing forward, almost crushed those in front of them to death. Every aperture in this living pile was occupied by some eager, haggard, or ruffian face; and, spite of all the pushing, and crowding, and bustling, all were silent, as if the powers of voice and utterance were unknown among them.

The effect of this scene, so suddenly presented—the crowd of ill-looking and anxious faces, the startling glare of light, and the unexpected rush of hot air from the place—all so confounded him, that O'Connor did not for some moments

direct his attention to the object upon which the gaze of the fascinated multitude was concentrated; when he did so he beheld a spectacle, abstractedly, very disproportioned in interest to the passionate anxiety of which it was the subject. Two game cocks, duly trimmed, and having the long and formidable steel weapons with which the humane ingenuity of "the fancy" supplies the natural spur of the poor biped, occupied the centre of the circular stage which we have described; one of the birds lay upon his back, beneath the other, which had actually sent his spurs through and through his opponent's neck. In this posture the wounded animal lay, with his beak open, and the blood trickling copiously through it upon the board. The victorious bird crowed loud and clear, and a buzz began to spread through the spectators, as if the battle were already determined, and suspense at an end. The "law" had just expired, and the gentlemen whose business it was to *handle* the birds were preparing to withdraw them.

"Twenty to one on the grey cock," exclaimed a large, ill-looking fellow, who sat close to the pit, clutching his arms in his brawny hands, as if actually hugging himself with glee, while he gazed with an exulting grin upon the combat, whose issue seemed now beyond the reach of chance. The challenge was, of course, unaccepted.

"Fifty to one!" exclaimed the same person, still more ecstatically. "One hundred to one—*two* hundred to one!"

"I'll give you one guinea to two hundred," exclaimed perhaps the coolest gambler in that select assembly, young Henry Ashwoode, who sat also near the front.

"Done, Mr. Ashwoode—done with *you*; it's a bet, sir," said

the same ill-looking fellow.

"Done, sir," replied Ashwoode.

Again the conqueror crowed the shrill note of victory.

"Again the conqueror crowed the shrill note of victory."

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Again the conqueror crowed the shrill note of victory, and all seemed over, when, on a sudden, by one of those strange vicissitudes of which the annals of the cock-pit afford so many examples, the dying bird—it may be roused by the vaunting challenge of his antagonist—with one convulsive spasm, struck both his spurs through and through the head of his opponent, who dropped dead upon the table, while the wounded bird, springing to his legs, flapped his wings, as if victory had never hovered, and then as momentarily fell lifeless on the board, by this last heroic feat winning a main on which many thousands of pounds depended. A silence for a moment ensued, and then there followed the loud exulting cheers of some, and the hoarse, bitter blasphemies of others, clamorous expostulation, hoarse laughter, curses, congratulations, and invectives—all mingled with the noise occasioned by those who came in or went out, the shuffling and pounding of feet, in one torrentuous and stunning volume of sound.

Young Ashwoode having secured and settled all his bets, shouldered his way through the crowd, and with some difficulty, reached the door at which Major O'Leary and

O'Connor were standing.

"How do you do, uncle? Were you in the room when I took the two hundred to one?" inquired the young man.

"By my conscience, I was, Hal, and wish you joy with all my heart. It was a sporting bet on both sides, and as game a fight as the world ever saw."

"I must be off," continued the young man. "I promised to look in at Lady Stukely's to-night; but before I go, you must know they are all affronted with you at the manor. The girls are positively outrageous, and desired me to command your presence to-morrow on pain of excommunication."

"Give my tender regards to them both," replied the major, "and assure them that I will be proud to obey them. But don't you know my friend O'Connor," he added, in a lower tone, "you are old acquaintances, I believe?"

"Unless my memory deceives me, I have had the honour of meeting Mr. O'Connor before," said the young man, with a cold bow, which was returned by O'Connor with more than equal *hauteur*. "Recollect, uncle, no excuses," added young Ashwoode, as he retreated from the chamber—"you have promised to give to-morrow to the girls. Adieu."

"There goes as finished a specimen of a mad-cap, rake-helly young devil as ever carried the name of Ashwoode or the blood of the O'Leary's," observed the uncle; "but come, we must look to the sport."