

Ireland.

A Tale.

Harriet Martineau

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Preface.

THOUGH it is my business to treat of the permanent rather than of the transient causes of the distress of Ireland, of her economy rather than her politics, I have been perplexed by some of the difficulties which at present beset all who would communicate with the public on her behalf. It is impossible to foresee while writing what may have happened, before our thoughts are printed, to change the aspect of affairs, and modify the counsel we would offer. No pains have been spared to ascertain the correctness of the data on which my story is constructed ; yet I have felt through the whole course of it that I might finally resolve to keep it back as useless, there being a strong probability that it might, a few weeks hence, appear antiquated in comparison with the treatises which may then be wanted. I cannot but trust, however, that leisure will soon be spared from the consideration of emergencies for an investigation into the long-subsisting causes of Irish distress ; that the painful labour of punishing crime may give place to the more hopeful task of superseding it; and that the government may ere long turn from enforcing obnoxious laws to fostering the resources of the country.

Many will think with me that the title of this story is too grand for its contents ; and more may be disappointed on finding how few are my personages, and how little I have dealt with the horrors of the time. The purpose of my title is to direct the work into the hands of those whom it most concerns ; and my personages are few because it is my object to show, in a confined space, how long a series of evils may befall individuals in a society conducted like that of Ireland, and by what a repetition of grievances its members are driven into disaffection and violence. As for the incidents of the tale, my choice was influenced by the consideration, not of what would best suit the purposes of fiction, but of what would most serve the cause of the Irish poor. A much more thrilling and moving story might have been made of conspiracy, rebellion, and slaughter by weapon and by gibbet ; but these scenes want no further development than may be found in our daily newspapers ; while the silent miseries of the cottier, the unpitied grievances of the spirit-broken labourer cannot have been sufficiently made known, since they still subsist. These miseries, protracted from generation to generation, are the origin of the more lively horrors of which everybody hears. Let them be superseded, and there will be an end of the rebellion and slaughter which spring from them.

Now that it is the fashion with a certain portion of society to denounce every exposition of state impolicy as inflammatory, I may be exposed to the common charge of attempting to excite the disaffection, some of whose causes I have attempted to expose. Since it is no longer a secret, however, that Ireland has been and is misgoverned, and since the readiest method of winning back the discontented to their allegiance is to allow those things to be grievances which are felt to be so, and to show a disposition to afford redress, I cannot but hold the part of true loyalty to be to expose abuses fearlessly and temperately, and to stimulate the government to the reparation of past errors and the improvement of its principles of policy. Such should be my loyalty if I had access to the councils of the state ; and such it is now that I can speak only as a well wisher to Ireland, and an indignant witness of her wrongs.

Irish Economy.

THE Glen of the Echoes,—a title which conveys more to an English ear than its Irish counterpart, is one of the most obscure districts of a remote county of the Green Island, of which little is heard on this side the Channel except during the periodical returns of famine, when the sole dependence of its miserable population is on public benevolence. This glen probably owes its name to its vicinity to the sea, whose boisterous waves, keeping up a perpetual as-sault, have worn the coast into deep bays from the North Cape to Mizen-head, and whose hoarse music is chaunted day and night, summer and winter, from steep to steep along the shore. It is a rare thing for a traveller in the western counties of Ireland to behold a calm sea. Whatever the features of the land may be,—whether he passes through meadows and oat-fields, with villages and towns in the distance, or over black mountains and across shaking bogs, where a mud cabin here and there is the only vestige of human habitation,— the Atlantic is still swelling and lashing the cliffs, as if bringing its mighty force to a perpetual war against the everlasting hills. Such a traveller would have pronounced that the Glen of the Echoes was designed for no other purpose than to give perpetual tidings of this warfare ; for no place could be more wild in aspect, or less apparently improved by being inhabited. It was a tract lying between the cliffs and the mountains, consisting partly of bog, and partly of cultivated patches of land, divided one from another by ditches, and here and there by a turf bank, which was the best kind of fence used within many miles, except on the grounds belonging to one or two mansions within sight and reach. Scarce a tree or a shrub was to be seen within the bounds of the glen, though tradition related that a vast forest had once extended along the sides of the mountains ; which tradition was confirmed by the circumstance that trees were easily found in the bog as often as the inhabitants were at a loss how to pass a ditch or drain, and there happened to be hands enough near to make a half-buried trunk into a temporary bridge, for the advantage of a short cut to any given spot. A resident proprietor, Mr. Rosso, had surrounded his house with young plantations ; but as these were intercepted from view by the shoulder of the mountain, they did not relieve the bleakness of the glen itself. The woods of another proprietor, Mr. Tracey, who had been for some years on the continent with his family, had been so effectually thinned by his agent, that little of them remained, and, in consequence, his mansion, Woodland Lodge, might now have better borne the name of a lodge in the wilderness. Woodland Lodge was about half a mile distant from Mr. Rosso's dwelling, and the contrast between the two was remarkable. The riding, driving, shooting, and fishing parties, in which the young Rossos were perpetually engaged, gave an appearance of bustle to the neighbourhood of their residence; and the fine growth of the plantations, the entireness of the stone fences, and the verdant crops of the surrounding fields, betokened good management : whereas the shutters of the Lodge were for ever closed ; grass flourished on the door-steps, and moss on the window-sills ; lean cattle were seen lying about in the woods, or rubbing themselves against the bark-bound trees ; and goats, the most inveterate of destroyers, browsed among the ruins, which alone remained to mark the boundaries between cornland and pasture, plantation and bog. The traveller's greatest perplexity was as to where the people dwelt whom he saw scattered in the fields or lying about on the only visible track by which he could traverse the glen, or assembled around the Lodge chapel, if it chanced to be a holiday. It was only by close observation that he could perceive any other erections than the little school-house, built by Mr. Rosso, and the farm-house, where a tenant of the better sort lived, and where the priest boarded. To the accustomed eye, however, a number of huts were visible on the mountain side, which were more like tufts of black turf than human dwellings. An occasional wreath of smoke, the neighbourhood of goats, pigs, or a starved cow, marked them as the abodes of the tenantry of the glen,—a tenantry neither better nor worse off than that of many a district in the island.

The school-house just mentioned had been built by Mr. Rosso, who, though himself a Protestant, wished his poor neighbours to have such an education as they were willing to receive, though it was mixed with much that appeared to him very baneful superstition. To the

astonishment, first, of the objects of his bounty, and, next, of his Protestant visitors, he appointed a Catholic teacher to this school, and interfered no further in its management than to see that the teacher was diligent, and that the school was kept open to as many children as chose to attend. The reasons he gave were, that there were none but Catholics within five miles, out of his own house, and that as his neighbours would at all events be Catholics, he saw no harm in giving them reading, writing, and arithmetic, in addition to that instruction, of a different kind, which their zealous priest, Father Glenny, took care that they should not be without. These reasons, whether sound or not, had no weight with his Protestant friends, who might, as they said, have forgiven him, if he had had the good of a tenantry of his own in view, but who began to doubt the goodness of his religion, morals, and politics, when they considered that he had no tenantry but a farmer's family or two, who did not need his assistance ; and that he was, therefore, gratuitously offering support to the most damnable faith in religion, and the most iniquitous creed in politics, that had ever deserved the wrath of God in heaven and of man upon earth. Mr. Rosso very quietly went on, holding an occasional conference with Father Glenny on the state of the school, and stepping in sometimes as he passed, to hear how the spelling improved, and whether the children could be induced to give attention to something besides arithmetic, which is, almost universally, the favourite accomplishment of the Irish who have had the advantage of any schooling at all. Father Glenny, and the young schoolmaster whom he had trained, always appeared glad to see Mr. Rosso, and even asked him occasionally to address the children, which he always took care to do so as to convey to them some useful information, or moral impression, which Protestant and Catholic would equally allow to be good. Thus, as the parties concerned wrought their benevolent work without jostling or jarring, it mattered little what any one else had to say about it. When importuned upon the subject, Mr. Rosso endeavoured to appease the inquirer by an acknowledgment that he might have found some difficulty if Protestant children had been brought to learn with Catholics, within so small a space, and with so few resources in the way of instruction; but he never could admit the doubt of its being right to supply a Catholic education to a purely Catholic population.

It was a much easier matter to the neighbouring cottiers to spare their children to the school, than it would have been if they had enjoyed a more prosperous condition. An English labourer employs his boys and girls as soon as they are strong enough for work ; or, at least, has the excuse that he may do so : but an Irish cottier finds his business finished when he has dug and planted his potato-field, and lounges about till harvest ; or, if he hires himself out to labour, does not find out that there is anything for his girl to do but to milk the cow and boil the pot ; or for his boy but to feed the pig. This leisure, joined with the eagerness for learning which subsists among the Irish poor, kept Mr. Rosso's school always full, and might, under good management, have wrought a material improvement upon the rising generation : but it is too much the way with Irish " scholars" to be always reading, never learning ; to be listening to legends, when they should be gaining knowledge ; and invoking the holy blood of Abel, instead of improving the powers which God has given to each of them for a far more natural and effectual dependence. The real advancement of the young folks of the glen was, therefore, much less than it ought to have been, in return for the time bestowed ; and though some came out ready readers, and most fluent story-tellers, there was but little knowledge even among the oldest of them.

Dora Sullivan was one of the most promising of the troop, and the master praised the prudence of her parents, and her own docility, for coming to the school as regularly as ever when she was past sixteen. It was feared that she would disappear when her only brother departed for England, in hopes of making a little money to bring back to his father ; but Dora's parents were proud of her, and anxious that the most should be made of her, and, therefore, spared her from home for the greater part of every day, though she was now like an only child to them. There was another reason for their not grudging her absence, which was, that Dan Mahony, who lived in the next cabin, and had frequent access to Dora's society, from being the son of

her father's partner in his lease, had been long in love with Dora, and would have married her out of hand, if he had had so much as half an acre of ground to marry upon. All parties approved of the match ; but would not hear of its taking place till Dan had a roof of his own to lodge a wife under, and did what they could to separate the young folks, by keep-ing Dora at school, and encouraging Dan to go and seek his fortune at a distance for a while ; which the young man, after much murmuring, consented to do, upon a promise from both fathers that they would abstain from quarrelling about their partnership, or anything else, during his absence : a promise which they afterwards declared it was rash to have given, and next to impossible to observe. They contrived, however, to keep within the terms of their vow, by venting their wrath, in all difficulties, upon the third partner in their lease, Tim Blayney, who made an opportunity to elope before rent-day came round, leaving nothing but an empty cabin and a patch of exhausted soil for his creditors to wreak their vengeance on.

These partnership tenancies were almost universal in the district. In one or two cases there were as many as fourteen or sixteen tenants associated in one lease : in which case the disputes respecting the division of their little meadows, or the payment of dues, became so virulent, that the agent could get no rest from squabbles and complaints in his occasional visits ; and the middlemen, to whom the rent was paid, adopted the practice of getting it as they could, without waiting for the decision of opposing claims, or regarding the protests of those whose property they seized. Sullivan might think himself fortunate in having no more than two partners, since he could not be made to pay more than three times his share of rent ; and being under vow not to quarrel with one partner, and the other being beyond the reach of his ears and tongue, he was in an enviable situation compared with many of his neighbours. As to the middlemen who were over them, indeed, there was little to choose among them. All pleaded alike that they had their rents to pay to other middlemen, or to the landlord ; all were too busy to hearken to excuses,—too determined to be diverted from seizures,—too much accustomed to their business to regard appeals to their justice or their compassion. They were not all, or on all occasions, equally pressing as to time. Their urgency about their dues depended somewhat upon their own resources, and much on those of the people under them. If they could afford to wait, and their debtors were likely not to be totally destitute sometime hence, the middlemen mercifully consented to wait, for certain considerations, and with the prospect of extorting rich interest upon the payment thus delayed. The middleman, Teale, to whom Sullivan, Mahony, and Blayney paid their rents, was one of this merciful class.

When Dora came home from the school one fine afternoon, she perceived from a distance, that Mr. Teale's horse was standing within the inclosure, and grazing the roof of her father's cabin. Her approach was seen by Teale from the door, for there was never a window in the place. His humour being propitiatory this day, he assailed Sullivan's weak side :—

“ Here she comes,—the pretty creature she is, that Dora of yours.”

“ She's good, let alone her being pretty ; and 'tis she will write the note and sign it all the same as me. Here, Dora, my darling, hold the pen and write as you're bid, and show what a scholar Father Glenny has made of you.”

Dora, who was remarkably quiet and thoughtful for her years, and suited her deportment to the gravity of her mind, did not quicken her movements, but prepared to obey her father's request. She slipped down the petticoat tail which she had worn as a hood, gave the pig a gentle rebuke with her bare foot, which sent him out at the door, and room being thus found to turn about in, she made a table of her mother's low stool, took the paper Mr. Teale offered, dipped her pen in his inkhorn, and waited for directions.

“ You have only to sign, you see,” said Mr. Teale, “ ‘ Dora Sullivan, for John Sullivan,’ that's all.”

“ Hold your whisht,” cried the father : “ you have had your time to write promises for me, Mr. Teale ; but I’ve a scholar now of my own kin, and no occasion to be taken in with a scrap, when I don’t know what’s in it. So let Dora write after your words, Mr. Teale.”

“ Pho, pho, Sullivan ;—for what and for why do you misdoubt me this day ? Miss Dora will be more polite—and I so pressed for time.”

Dora’s politeness, however, disposed her to do as her father desired, and did not prevent her doing more. She wrote to Teale’s dictation ; and, before signing, looked up at her father, and asked if it was meant that he should promise to pay, both for himself and partners, all that should be in arrears, as well as all presently due (including the interest of the arrears), immediately after harvest, under penalty of seizure.

“ I’m not clear of the meaning of it all, but I’m thinking it is much to pay, and more than we have to pay with, father ; that’s all.”

“ Be easy, Miss Dora, since it comes out of your own mouth that the meaning is not clear. Only sign, my jewel ; that’s what is still to be done.”

“ But, father——”

“ Quiet, my darling of the world, quiet ! for what should I do ? Here’s Blayney, the scatter-brain ! gone, the devil knows where, and left not a rag behind him ; and Mahony has left the whole to me, entirely, the ruffian. And you wouldn’t have the beasts driven away, Dora, and we left without a sup to sleep upon — you wouldn’t, Dora ?”

“ Come, sign, my jewel,” said Teale, “ and up with your pail to be milking the creatures, Dora, and that’s better than seeing them lifted to the pound.”

Dora still balanced the pen, vainly wishing that Dan was at hand to fulfil his father’s part of the contract. Sullivan urged her to finish. She begged to read it over once more aloud, and at the end asked if there was no way of making such an agreement as many made, that certain kinds of produce should constitute the rent, while the family lived as they could upon the rest, and so have nothing to do with coin, which she simply supposed was the cause of all the misery in the world. Some middlemen, she knew, took butter and pigs for the rent, and oats where there were any, and then there was no trouble about money.

“ With your leave, Miss Dora, we’ll hear what the priest has to say about that another time for I suppose what you say is all one as listening to him ; and very natural : but I must be going, my jewel ; so give me my scrap, and no more words.”

As there was no help for it, Dora signed, and then saw the pen put into her father’s hand, that he might make his mark, without which Mr. Teale would not allow the business to be finished. She did not smile, as her mother did, at Sullivan’s joke about a raking fellow, like him, sitting clown with a pen, like a priest or one of the priest’s scholars. When the middle-man was gone, and her father laughed at the easiness of putting a man off with a scrap of paper instead of the rent, she took up her pail to go and milk her lean kine.

“ Off with you, honey, and leave your sighs behind you,” said her mother. “ If I had begun as early as you, sighing and sighing, there would have been little breath left in my body by this. To-morrow or next day will do for care, honey. Go to your milking to-day, anyhow.”

“ By dad, honey, your mother known more trouble and sorrow by your time nor you, by reason she was my wife, and had babbies to lose in the fever. I would have dried up her tears in a hurry if she had had no more to bestow them on nor you ; and so will Dan, by dad, if you’ve no better a welcome for him.”

Dora smiled, and went about her dairy affairs, her father following to help, in case the kine wanted lifting ; that is, in case they should be too weak from starvation to rise up at bid-ding to be milked. The poor animals being fairly set upon their legs, without much fear of falling, Sullivan directed his steps towards the last bush which was left in his field, and cut it down for fuel, not having turf enough dried to boil the pot this evening.

Sullivan was not very fond of looking about him on his little farm, or of observing the portions of his partners. It was hard to say which was in the worst condition, or which might have been in the best if properly cultivated. Their nearness to the coast put them in the way of manure ; such part of the soil as was dry might have been made into fine grazing land by the frequent rains which fell in that district, or have answered for the growth of various crops in rotation ; and such as was wet might have been improved, to almost any extent, by the limestone from the neighbourhood, or by fine sand from the beach. Instead of laying plans with prudence for their common advantage, however, and prosecuting them in harmony, the three partners made choice each of what his land should produce, and neither varied his crop from first to last. Their only agreement was to divide their portions by ditches, pronouncing a stone fence a trouble not to be thought of, turf banks a botheration, and a ditch the most “ asy and nate to the hand.” This done, Mahony sowed barley every year, and every year less and less came up ; and that which did make a shift to grow yielded less and less meal, till he began to wonder what ailed the crop that it had come down from being food for man, to be nothing better than pig’s meat. Blayney tried his hand at oat culture with no better success than his neighbour, the produce being such as many a horse on the London road would look upon with disdain. Sullivan grew potatoes, as we have seen. While the land was in good heart, that is, for a season or two from the commencement of his lease, he had grown apple potatoes ; but when the soil became exhausted, he could raise only an inferior kind, which is far more fit for cattle than for men, and on which he and his family could not have subsisted, if it were not for the milk with which they varied their meals. Sullivan’s acre and half did not yield now more than eleven hundred stone ; and as the consumption amounted to more than four stone a-day, at fourteen pounds to the stone,—a very moderate allowance for three hearty people,— there was no chance of paying the rent out of the crop, even if Sullivan had been answer-able for nobody’s dues but his own. He depended upon his live stock to clear him with the middle-men ; or, rather, he depended upon nothing, but made a shift, when the time came near, to sell and raise the money somehow ; and when that could not be done, he deferred the evil day, by giving his note of hand, as we have seen. Half these difficulties might have been avoided, if no one had stood between Sullivan and his landlord ; and the other half, if he had known how to make the best of his own resources. In the first place, Mr. Tracey would never have thought of asking such a rent as eight pounds per acre for such land ; and, in the next place, he would have been so far considerate as to encourage Sullivan to improve the land ; whereas the middleman under whom Mr. Teale held the place, paid the landlord a moderate rent, and made his profit out of the higher rent he asked of Mr. Teale, who, in his turn, did the same by Sullivan and his partners : so that the poorest tenant paid the most, and the landlord got the least ; or, to put the matter in another light, the little farm was expected to support three families of tenants, and to pay rent to three landlords. Again : two of these landlords, having only a temporary interest in the place, cared only for getting as much out of it as they could while connected with it, and had no view to its improvement, or regard for its perman-ent value. This ruinous system has received a check by the operation of the Subletting Act ; but not before it has inflicted severe injuries on the proprietors of the soil, and never-to-be-forgotten hardships on their tenantry.

Irish Liabilities.

DAN MAHONY being fairly out of the way, Dora's parents agreed to her earnest request, countenanced by Father Glenny, that she might leave school, and try to earn somewhat wherewith to help the rent. Dora now sat at her spinning-wheel almost the whole day ; and her mother doing the same, a respectable addition was made by them to the few shillings Sullivan had been able to muster. The next was a fine potato season moreover, and Sullivan reasonably reckoned on being able to sell a considerable portion of the produce of his land, and thus preventing any addition to the arrears already due, even if he could not discharge some part of them. The gentle Dora now smiled, instead of sighing, when her father asked where was the good of "troubling the brain at all at all about what was to come, when the good and the bad was hid entirely ;" and answered only by a kiss, when he inquired for any good that had come out of the hitherto grave looks of his "darlin' o' the world."

The rent for the year was made up just in time by the sale of only one pig ; and Mr. Teale was surprised, and looked as if he did not know whether or not to be pleased, when the sum was forthcoming. He congratulated Sullivan on having got a solvent partner in Blayney's place, and on Dan Mahony having sent his father the means of paying his share ; so that Sullivan was free from all encumbrance but that for which he had given his note of hand. Dora's heart leaped within her, while she listened to the facts, and to her father's fervent blessing on her lover, whose heart was evidently still at home, wherever his feet might be wandering. She did not know,—for her father had actually forgotten to tell her,—that the tithe was not yet paid, nor had been for two years ; the tithe-proctor having accommodated him by taking his note-of-hand for the amount, and for various incidental charges. Bitterly did Dora afterwards grieve that she had been for a while spared this additional anxiety.

The next time she returned from confession, it was with a light heart and a tripping step approaching to a dance. Father Glenny had readily absolved her from the sins of mistrusting heaven in regard of her father's rent, and mistrusting a holy and solemn oath in regard of Dan Mahony, having, in dark hours, been tempted to doubt his remembering the Glen of the Echoes, and all that was in it ; which was a great sin, inasmuch as Dan had vowed a solemn vow, which heaven would guard, to look upon himself as a banished wanderer, till she should, face to face, release him from the oath. Father Glenny not only gave her absolut-ion, and taught her how to keep the tempter at a distance next time, by repeating the oath, and recalling the circumstances under which it was made, but spoke well of Dan, and seemed to think the sooner all doubts were laid, by their being made man and wife, the better.

Dora immediately began to obey his directions by recalling, during her walk home, the minutest circumstances connected with the vow. She could just discern, at the highest point of the rugged mountain-road, the big stone under which they knelt when she was obliged to leave him to pursue his way alone : she could mark the very spot where she had given him the "Poesy of prayers," and where they had exchanged their crucifixes, and called six very choice saints to witness the vow. While gazing in this direction, shading her eyes from the setting sun, she perceived men driving two cows up this very road, sometimes pulling the poor creatures by a noose over the obstructions in their way, and sometimes lifting them up as fast as they fell. Dora's lightness of heart was gone in a moment. From the circumstance of there being several men to take charge of two cows, she was convinced that the cattle had been distrained from some tenant in the Glen ; and she had a misgiving that they might be her own father's.

When she came within sight of home, she did not know what to make of the appearance of things. The cows were not visible ; but they were apt to disappear among the ditches, or be-hind

the cabin. Her father gave tokens of merriment ; but with rather more activity than was natural to him. He was throwing stones and bits of turf at the pigs in the ditches, so as to make them run hither and thither, and singing, to drown their squeaking, in the following strain :—

“ You’re welcome to the beasts for sale ;
For the devil take me if I go to gaol.
My wife and they riz a mournful lowing.
And they looked jist in my eyes so knowing.
So now keep away, if you plase, that’s all ;
And the curse o’ Jasus light on ye all !”

This song, as soon as the words were distinguishable, told a pretty plain story, and the occupation of Dora’s mother told a yet plainer. She was breaking up the milk-pails to feed the fire ; and, in answer to the girl’s remonstrance, demanded what was the use of vexing their sight with what “ would be tempting them to thirst, and putting them in mind to curse the “ scruff of the earth” that had robbed them of their kine ? But could not the cattle be got back again ?—Lord save her! when did she ever know Mr. Teale give up anything he had clutched ? Mr. Teale ! he who had just been paid ? Even so. He was behind-hand with his dues, like the people he scorned beneath his feet ; and instead of seizing his car, horses, or the luxuries of his house, the man who was over him distrained upon the poor tenants, who had already paid their rents ; while Teale looked on, amused to see the Sullivans and others com-pelled to pay rent twice over, while he escaped. The people having, in former cases, discovered that this monstrous grievance is not known in England, had, for some time, come to the conclusion that England is favoured by Government, while there is no justice to be had in Ireland ; not being aware that the law is the same in both countries, and that the exemption from this fatal liability which English cultivators enjoy, is owing to the rarity of the practice of subletting in their island.

It soon appeared that Teale was disappointed in the amount of the levy upon his tenants, since the same men returned early in the morning to take what else they could get, by virtue of the note-of-hand. The crop, just ready for gathering in, was dug up and carted away, a small provision only being left for the immediate wants of the family. The fowls and pigs disappeared at the same time ; and to all the hubbub which disturbed the morning hours, the deep curses of Sullivan, the angry screams of his wife, the cackling of the alarmed poultry, the squealing of the pigs, and the creaking of the crazy cars, there succeeded a hush, which was only interrupted by the whirring of Dora’s wheel. She had taken to her spinning, partly to conceal her tears, partly to drown thoughts which would otherwise have almost distracted her.

The ominous quiet of the cabin did not last long. Sullivan was sitting, so as to block up the doorway, with his back against the mud-wall ; he was chewing a straw, and looking out vacantly upon his trampled field, when his wife started up from her seat beside the fire-place, where the pot of cold potatoes was hanging over an extinguished fire. She greeted him with a tremendous kick.

“ Get out o’ that, you cratur !” cried she.

“ I’m thinking there’s room and a plenty beyond there, let alone the styes with not a soul of a pig in them. Get out with ye !”

“ Give over, honey, or it will be the worse for ye,” said Sullivan. “ It’s my own place where I’m lying entirely, and the prospect beyond is not so pleasing to the eye as it was, honey : that’s all.”

“ The more’s the reason you should be bestirring yourself, like me, to hide what’s left us in the bog.”

“ What do you mean, if your soul is not gone astray ?” inquired the husband.

“ Work, work ! if you’d save a gun, or a bed, or a bottle of spirits from the proctor. Into the bog with ’em, if you wouldn’t have him down upon you, hearing, as he will, how little is left to pay the tithe. Leave off, I tell you,” she shouted to poor Dora ; “ whisht, and give over with your whirring and whirring, that wearies the ears of me. Leave off, or by this and that. I’ll make you sorry.”

Dora did her best to understand the evil to be apprehended, and to guard against it. She roused her father from his posture of affected ease, sought out a hiding-place among the rushes in a waste tract, where they might stow their household goods, and helped to strip the dwelling as actively as if they had been about to remove to a better abode. While her father and she were laden with the chest which contained her mother’s bridal provision of bed-linen, which had thus far been preserved from forfeiture, a clapping of hands behind them made them turn and observe a sign that enemies were at hand.

“ By the powers, here they come,” cried her father. “ Work, work, for the bare life, my jewel. In with it, and its back we’d be going with as innocent faces as if we’d been gathering rushes. Here, pull your lap full.”

Dora could not at first tell whether their movements had been observed.

“ God save you, kindly, Mr. Shehan,” said Sullivan to the proctor. “ Its just in time you’d be come to see the new way of thatching we have got, and these gentlemen to take a lesson, may be. Dora, my jewel, throw down the rushes and get some more out of hand.”

“ One of my gentlemen shall go with her,” said Shehan. “ There are things among the rushes sometimes, Sullivan, that fill a house as well as thatch it.”

Dora invited any of the gentlemen to help her, and led the way to a rush bank, in an opposite direction ; but, declining to follow her lead, they entered the house, and laughed, when they found it completely empty.

“ You’re grown mightily afraid of the sky, Sullivan,” observed Shehan, “ since you’d be after mending your thatch, sooner than getting a bed to lie on, to say nothing of a bit and sup, which I don’t see you have to be boasting of.”

All Sullivan’s good reasons why he should suddenly mend his thatch with rushes that lay “ convaynient” went for nothing with the proctor, who had caught a glimpse of the stratagem.

The claim for tithes, arrears, and fees was urged, certain ominous-looking papers produced, and no money being forthcoming, the goods were found and carried off, even down to Dora’s wheel, with the flax upon it. The proctor gave no heed to the despair of the destitute tenants, but rather congratulated himself on having heard of the former seizures in time to appropriate what remained.

Of those whom he had left behind, the father lay down once more in the doorway, declaring himself nigh hand brokenhearted, and melancholy entirely ; his wife went about to interest the neighbours in their wrongs ; and Dora kneeled at her prayers in the darkest corner of the cabin. After a time, when the twilight began to thicken, her father started up in great

agitation, and dared somebody outside to come in and see what he could find for rent, or tithes, or tolls, or tax of any kind. His creditors might come swarming as thick as boys going to a fair, but they would find nothing, thanks to the proctor : unless they carried him off bodily, they might go as they came, and he would try whose head was the hardest before it came to that. Dora perceived that her father was in too great a passion to listen to one who seemed not to be a creditor ; and she went to the door to interpose. More quick-sighted than her father, she instantly saw, through the dim light, that it was Dan ; and not even waiting for the assurance of his voice, threw herself on his neck, while he almost stifled her with caresses.

“ Dan, are you come back true ? Just speak that word.”

“ True as the saints to the blessed, darling of my heart.”

“ Then God is merciful to send you now, for we want true friends to raise us up, stricken as we are to the bare ground.”

“ Bare ground, indeed,” cried Dan, entering and looking for a resting-place, on which to deposit the sobbing and clinging Dora. “ They have used you basely, my heart’s life, but trust to me to make it up in your own way to each of you. You trust me, Dora, don’t you, as the priest gave leave ?”

Dora silently intimated her trust in her lover’s faith, which it had never entered her head to doubt—love having thus far been entirely unconnected in her mind with thoughts of the world’s gear. She wept on his shoulder, leaving it to her father to tell the story of their troubles, and only looked up when she heard her mother’s voice approaching, to ask, with great simplicity, what they were to do next ?

“ To be married in the morning, if father Glenny was at hand, and consenting,” her lover replied. He had two guineas in his pocket for the fees ; and then they would be all on a foot-ing, (as he had no more money,) and must help one another to justice and prosperity as well as they could. Sullivan interposed a few prudent objections, but soon gave up when he found his little Dora was against him. The fact was, that her filial duty, religion, and love, all plied her at once in favour of an immediate marriage. She had always had a firm faith that Dan could achieve anything he pleased ; a faith which was much confirmed by his having paid his father’s rent, and saved, moreover, enough for his marriage fees. It appeared to her that Providence had sent this able helper in the time of her parents’ need, and that it was not for her to prevent his lifting them out of poverty as speedily as might be.

Dan told them that there was to be a letting of land in the neighbourhood, the next day ; and that if he was made sure in time of having Dora for his cabin-keeper, he would bid for an acre or two. and did not doubt to do as well in the world as his father before him. Of all this, Dora’s mother, on her return, seemed to have no more doubt than the rest of the party ; and she immediately dismissed all her cares, except the regret that she could not walk so far as to see her daughter married. Dan was now requested to name his hour for departure in the morning, and to go home to his father, who had had but a hasty glimpse of him on his return. He busied himself in obtaining some clean dry straw and, a rush candle for his poverty-stricken friends, over-whelmed Dora with caresses, and ran home.

Dora had little imagined, two hours before, with what a light heart she should lie, this night, on the cold floor of their bare cabin. To have Dan to lean upon was everything. She could not admit any further fear for the future. They had only to begin the world again, that was all ; and with the advantage, too, of Dan’s experience and skill in getting money ; which it did not occur

to her, might be of no avail, where no money could be got, or where it passed immediately into the hands of one tyrannical claimant to another. This ease from apprehension formed the substratum of her happy thoughts of this night ; and it was her filial piety, only, which made her matter of so much importance to her. For herself, it was enough that Dan was her own. She had not a wish beyond what would be bestowed by the priest's office and blessing, which she hoped so soon to have obtained.

Father Glenny, though at first surprised at being called on to perform the marriage ceremony so early in the morning, and before so few witnesses, and mortified on behalf of the young folks, that the customary revelry and sanction of numbers must be dispensed with in their case, had nothing to say against the proceeding. Having ascertained that the friends of both parties approved, he went on to exhort the young couple to remember that they were now in the act of fulfilling a divine command, and to trust for the blessing of God on their union accordingly. He then performed the ceremony and dismissed them ; the bridegroom having taken care, as a point of honour, that the priest should not lose much in respect of fees, the amount being tendered by the parties instead of collected from an assemblage of guests. Father Glenny did not refuse the offering. He was unwilling to wound the feelings of the offerers : he was not aware of the extent of their poverty ; and, moreover, considered the fees his due, even more than a Protestant clergy man would have done in a similar instance,—the remuneration of the Catholic clergy in Ireland being principally derived from marriage fees.

The pressure of the times obliged the proceedings of the whole party to be more business-like than is at all usual on the day of an Irish wedding. The bridegroom stayed but to give his Dora into her mother's arms, and then set off, accompanied by Sullivan, for the place where two or three lots of ground were to be let by auction, or, as the phrase goes, by cant.

They were just in time to take a survey of the lots before bidding. There was small choice of advantages ; for the preceding tenants, knowing that they need not hope for a renewal, and that the mode of letting by cant would, in all probability, turn them out of the place, had ex-hausted the land to the utmost for the last two or three years. This measure not only gave them as much as they could obtain for the time, but afforded a chance of getting the lot back again on cheaper terms. The excessive competition which is usual on such occasions, how-ever, made this last hope a very doubtful one. The only thing that was certain beforehand was, that the affair would prove a very bad bargain to all parties :—to the landlord, because his land was nearly ruined, and little rent would, therefore, be paid, however much was promised ; to the successful bidder, because he would be unable to fulfil his absurd promises about the rent, and be therefore liable to driving, distraint, or ejection ; and to the unsuccessful bidders, because they had come a great way, full of hopes and visions of being able to settle on the land, and must return destitute as they came, and disappointed.

A crowd surrounded the man of power, as soon as he appeared on the ground. Many an offering had he had that morning of dutiful service, of overstrained civility, or of something more substantial, from those who could afford it, with the hope of inclining him to favour their particular bid. The most diversified claims to a preference were whispered into his ear, or exhibited before his eyes, wherever he went. One had picked up the landlord's heir, when thrown by his pony into a bog in childhood ; another had had the honour of lodging the agent, one stormy night, among the mountains. One limped ostentatiously before Mr. Flanagan, to remind him that the lameness happened from one of the landlord's fences having fallen upon him, while dozing beneath its shelter ; another, a feeble old man, pleaded a yet unfulfilled promise of a Mr. Tracey who had been in his grave nearly thirty years,

Mr. Flanagan took no further notice of all this than to bid the people get out of his way. From many a clutch did he disengage his skirts ; on many a petition, savoured with a scent of potheen, did he turn his back ; many a venerable blue top-coat, and gray cloak, did he elbow from his side, before he could proceed to business. When once begun, it required an eye as practised, and an ear as inured, as his, to distinguish that any business was proceeding, amidst the hubbub of voices, the shoving, jostling, and scrambling, which took place while the bidding went on. The confusion fairly baffled some lookers on, who stopped their horses on the outskirts of the crowd to observe the scene. Mr. Alexander Rosso, just from college, his brother Henry, and a foreign gentleman, a college friend of the former, were taking their morning ride, surrounded by their dogs, when it occurred to Alexander, that this was the occasion on which to exhibit to his friend the resemblance between the Irish and his countrymen. He was scarcely aware that the occasion on which the people were assembled was similar to that which often collects the Italian peasantry in groups, to contend with equal vehemence for slips of land, which they hold on the same terms. The Irish cottier is of the same class with the metayer of Italy ; and middlemen are, with few exceptions, alike all the world over : they are what it is natural to expect men to be under circumstances of strong temptation to oppression and of absolute impunity.

The Italian gentleman, after gazing with fixed attention, and an amused expression of countenance, for some minutes, used an expressive gesture, to intimate that he could make nothing of it.

“ The first lot is disposed of, Henry, is it not ?” asked Alexander. “ That half-naked, capering fellow bid highest, I think.”

“ Yes,” replied Henry ; “ and he looks as if he had just had the mines of Peru given him.”

“ He !” exclaimed the foreigner, in astonishment. “ And how will he pay ?”

“ No one will pay all,” replied Henry, laughing. “ The agent can only weigh probabilities ; and if he happens to know that that poor fellow has a little coin hidden somewhere, to help him on for a year or two, he will stop at his bidding as the highest.”

“ But why stop ? Is it not the people’s part to stop ?”

“ We might wait long enough for that,” replied Alexander. “ They will bid against each other till midnight. They will offer a hundred per annum per acre rather than lose their chance of getting the land. Our people are very rich in promises.”

“ And how much has the ragged man promised ?”

“ Flanagan !” shouted Henry, above the din, which sank to silence in a moment, “ how much has your first lot brought you ?”

“ Nine pounds per acre, Sir. and yonder stands the tenant.”

The successful bidder, came forward, smiling and scraping, not a whit ashamed of the bare knees which had burst through what had once been breeches, or of the tatters which were bound about his person, in various directions, by hay-ropes, there being no other way of keeping them together.

“ Ask him,” urged the eager foreigner, “ ask him where his pounds are to come from, and why he wishes to be a farmer.”

“ There is most likely a lady in the case,” observed Henry ; and then turning to the man, he inquired whether he had not done a very daring thing in engaging to pay so high a yearly sum ?

“ God save your honour kindly, the mother is turned out of her own, beyond there ; and its a cabin I’m wishing to give her, old creature as she is, and a bite and sup with me.”

“ And is there nobody else, friend, likely to be your cabin-keeper ?”

The man’s countenance fell, and he replied that there was to have been one last Shrove-tide, but that she was forcibly carried off, and married to another man, before he could over-take her, Henry turned the subject hastily, shocked at his own curiosity, which had led to such a disclosure, he asked the man whether he could honestly say that he had a week’s provision beforehand for his mother and himself ? The tenant laughed and pointed to his new ground, saying that they might glean potatoes enough among the ridges, after the digging, to keep them for a few days till they could look about them a bit. His mother moreover had a cow, and a slip of a pig. He ended by bewitchingly asking for the “ blissen” on his enterprise. The foreigner was amused to observe that in Ireland a blessing comes out of the pocket instead of the mouth ; not that the verbal blessing is absolutely worthless ; but it is considered merely as an accessory to something more substantial.

The process of giving the blessing quickened the bidding, as it was feared the gentlemen might leave the ground before the next successful candidate was ready to pay his smiling service. The lot was awarded to Dan, who, after tossing up his hat, advanced towards the horsemen, followed by his father-in-law. They observed to one another that he looked better qualified than his predecessor to pay rent, his dress being decent, and his manner betokening more forethought and experience.

“ Have you an old mother to find a shelter for, too ? ” inquired Alexander.

“ There’s the mother and the father too that’s to the fore,” replied Dan, turning to introduce Sullivan.

“ And the darling too that’s been his wife almost since the sun rose,” added Sullivan. “ Dan has had the priest’s blessing this morn, and sure your honours’ won’t be long in following ?”

“ I would have married in the evening, Dan, if I had been you,” said Henry. “ The land first, and then the girl, is the prudent way, you know. How would you have managed, if you had had the girl without the land ?”

Dan could not pretend to guess what Providence’s other way of providing for him and Dora would have been ; the actual case was as much as any man had to do with. This reasoning put him in the actual case of receiving a large blessing from the foreigner, who then rode off with his companions, notwithstanding the vehement prayers of the crowd that they would stay till the third and last lot was disposed of. They had neither time nor further blessing to spare this day. They did not, however, escape by turning their backs. The third new tenant was posted in the middle of their road homewards, and on their approach, extended his arms, as if to embrace the three horses with their riders, praying for an infinity of blessings on their

merciful and tender and bountiful hearts, and expressing his expectation that he should begin the world with a trifle from their honours, like Pat and Dan.

“ See what you have done, Henry,” said his brother. “ We shall be expected to pay tribute, henceforward, to every new tenant, as often as a cant takes place within twenty miles.”

Henry set himself seriously to explain that their bounty of this day was purely accidental, and that none of the party meant to give again on a similar occasion. He would not dismiss the present applicant without a gift, since his companions had had one ; but he gave him less than the others, in order to enforce what he had said. The man followed for some way, keeping close in their rear in hope of their relenting, and then retired to the road side, grumbling as if defrauded of a right.

“ It is the most difficult thing in the world,” observed Henry, “ to deal with these people ; they have such strange notions of *right*. Every favour is immediately considered as a precedent to be for ever acted upon : every change in our methods of doing kindness is looked upon as caprice, and every suspension of a gratuity as an injury.”

“ The same is the case in all regions,” observed the foreigner, “ where the people have other dependence than on themselves. If it is remarkable in Ireland and in Italy, it is because the people of these unhappy countries have been long educated by political injury to servile dependence. It is for you to rectify their notions of *right*.”

“ How must we do so ?”

“ You must make their little possessions secure, and also fortify their labours with the moral certainty of a due reward. While this is being done,—and it will be long in the doing,—you must vary your modes of charity perpetually, in testimony of its being optional : and O, above all things, save your poor from the blight of a legal charity ! Save them from the delusion that they have a right, which, among a reckless people, would presently absorb all other rights, making cottiers of your middlemen, and beggars of your landlords, and converting this fertile region into a wilderness, which shall but echo the wild cry of famine.”

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