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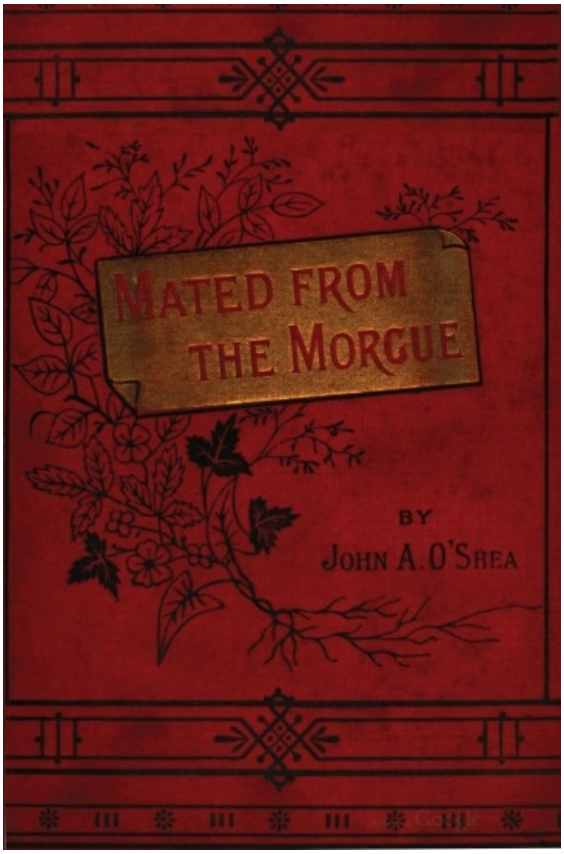

MATED FROM THE MORGUE

A TALE OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

BY

JOHN AUGUSTUS O'SHEA

AUTHOR OF

'LEAVES FROM THE LIFE OF A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT,' 'AN IRON-BOUND CITY,' 'ROMANTIC SPAIN,' 'MILITARY MOSAICS,' ETC.

'La Ville de Paris a son grand mât tout de bronze, sculpté de victoires, et pour vigie Napoléon.'—De Balzac.

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MILTON HOUSE, 35, ST. BRIDE STREET, E.C.
1889

APOLOGETIC.

———

This tale, such as it is, has one merit. It is a study of manners, mainly made on the spot, not evolved from the shelves of the British Museum. There is in it, at least, a crude attempt at photography, a process in which sunlight and air have some part, and, therefore, liker to nature than the adumbrations of the reading-room. The localities are faithfully drawn, the persons are not dolls with stuffing of sawdust, but human animals who might have lived—and, mayhap, did live. If the volume does not kill an hour, the writer is murderer only in thought.

TO MY FRIEND,

COLONEL THE BARON CRAIGNISH,

EQUERRY TO

HIS HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF SAXE-COBURG-GOTHA,

This Little Book,

IN TARDY THANK-OFFERING FOR THAT LARGE LEG OF MUTTON.

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MATED FROM THE MORGUE.

CHAPTER I.

A HOUSELESS DOG.

THE scene is Paris, the Imperial Paris, but not a quarter that is fashionable, wealthy, or much frequented by the tourist. It is the wild, slovenly, buoyant quarter of the Paris of the left bank, known as *le Pays Latin*—the Land of Latin. The quarter of frolic and genius, of vaulting ambition and limp money-bags, of generosity and meanness, of truth and hypocrisy; the quarter which supplies the France of the future with its mighty thinkers, the France of the passing with the forlorn hopes of its revolutions, the world—and the *demi monde* too—very often with its most brilliant and erratic meteors.

The time is the spring of 1866. The chestnut-tree, called the Twentieth of March, in the Champs Elysées, has shown its first blossoms. But the weather is cold and damp in spite of these deceitful blossoms: the skies weep, and chill winds blow sullenly along the Seine. It is just the weather to make the blaze of a ruddy fire a cheerful sight, and the hiss of the crackling logs a cheerful sound; but there is neither fire nor, indeed, grate or stove wherein to put it, in the cabinet numbered 37, on the fifth story of the Hôtel de Suez, in the Rue du Four, into which we ask the reader to penetrate. A portmanteau, whose half-opened lid betrays 'the poverty of the land,' lies in a corner, a shabby suit of man's wearing apparel hangs carelessly on a chair, and a head, thickly covered with hair, protrudes from the blankets in a little bed in a recess, and out of the mouth in this head protrudes a Turkish pipe of exaggerated length, and out of the same mouth at regular intervals filters a slender thread of smoke. The lips contract and open again, and no smoke comes. The head is elevated, the blankets thrown back, and the shoulders and torso of the smoker appear rising gradually from the bed till they are erect; the bowl of the Turkish pipe is regarded a moment deprecatingly (as if the pipe could have been kept alight without tobacco), and the lips move again, this time to soliloquy:

'Mr. Manus O'Hara, I have a great respect for your father's son: you come of a fine proud spend-thrift old Irish family; but I tell you what, my brilliant friend, if you don't replenish the exchequer I shall be obliged to cut your society. You're not in a position to pay any more visits to that interesting elderly female acquaintance of yours, your aunt.[1] Realize your position, sir, I beg of you. You're in a most confounded state of impecuniosity; you haven't a sou left, and I'm afraid your pipe is finally extinguished. Then, that delightful lady in the den of Cerberus below, who was one long smile when you and the sack,[2] now that you are *en dèche*,[3] is an eternal snarl like a very dog of Hades. When you had money you had a room on the first floor at thirty francs a month; now that you are poor she stuffs you into a garret on the fourth at thirty-five. Perdition catch it, Mr. O'Hara, it's very expensive to be poor. Without cash or credit! Charming position for a young man of genius! If you had a good suit of clothes you might have a chance of getting into the *hôtel des haricots*,[4] but with your present raiment there is no danger of your encouraging that horrible temptation of ingenuous youth known as running into debt. It's my private opinion you wouldn't get a box of matches on your solemn oath, let alone your word, at the present crisis in your chequered career. Good heavens! How cold it is! Without cash or credit. That's the burden of the litany. Shall I pray? Bah! Who could pray with hunger gnawing his vitals? Forty-two hours without food, and still without cash or credit to procure a bite.'

The head was dipped suddenly and violently under the blankets.

A long pause.

The bed-covering billows as if stirred by some strong agitation of the form beneath.

All is quiet again.

Now a stifled sound as of sobbing comes from under the blankets. They are forcibly flung back, and a pale face, one feverish flush on each cheek, emerges. The eyes flash with a sharp fitful light amid the quick-darting big tears, and the breast heaves with convulsive sobs. At length amid the sobs rise broken words:

'Too proud to beg, and not paid for working. Must I die, then? A hound is fed; 'tis only man is let perish by his fellow-beings!'

Silence again; and suddenly and startlingly on the air to the silence succeeds a mocking, hysterical laugh. The form springs from its recumbent position on to the bare floor, and approaches a small mirror fixed against the wall.

That laugh again.

'Ha, ha! Manus, my boy, die game!' and with the expression of this advice, or rather intention, calm seems to come to the troubled spirit of our poor friend. He takes his clothes off the chair and dresses himself, keeping up a jeering comment of self-ridicule, as he puts on each shabby article of attire.

'Ha! my pretty paper collar, I must turn you. You'll never die a heretic. By Jove! paper collars were a great invention: they emancipate the lord of creation from the thraldom of the washerwoman. Better to face the free sky than to pine in this stuffy cell. Your toilette is finished, Manus, my friend, and now to pass under the Caudine forks.'

The Caudine forks was the term he applied to the passage leading by the *concierge's* narrow office to the open street—a humiliating passage enough, it is made, to any man of proud spirit and slim purse by the voluble Parisian *concierge*, the warder of the entrance to the lodging-house. The *concierge* is a perennial fountain of gossip, the demon of grasp personified, and is popularly supposed always to have a daughter at the Conservatory of Music. Watching his opportunity, crouched at the bottom of the dark stairs, O'Hara bolted at a mad rush through the hall, and never ceased running until he had gained the Boulevard St. Michel, after traversing the intervening Rue de l'Ecole de Médecine.

He stopped a minute, laughed, tightened the belt which supported his trousers, cried in a light voice, 'Blockade safely run!' and resumed his way rapidly along the boulevard till he came to the quay, then turned to the right, past Notre Dame, until he reached the Pont d'Archevêche, whereat he stopped. The Morgue was near—gloomy receptacle of the unclaimed dead, sent to their God before their time by crime, starvation, or despair, or by some of the accidents which often-times cut short the span of the happiest human life. He looked at it with a desperate, desponding, forlorn look for a little time, and then broke out as if in sequence of some train of thought:

'No; it's no use thinking of it. I couldn't do it. If it weren't for the immortality of the soul, and that inconvenient religious training I've got! Now if I were a Pagan, I could freely end my woes in that silent river; but I'm a Christian, and must suffer them, and curse my kind.'

A mournful yet affectionate whine at his feet attracted his attention. He looked down. A lank, ugly cur, of

unassignable breed, but unmistakably currish—a rank, unmitigated cur, with melancholy visage and moist eyes—returned the look.

'Poor dog, you, too, have hunger in your face. The world has deserted you!'

The dog whined again, and rubbed his thin sides familiarly and confidently against the bottom of O'Hara's trousers.

'Alas! friend, I am like yourself—a wretched, friendless dog. Your imploring looks are lost on me, though, Heaven knows, I would relieve you if I could. *Haud ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.* Faith! the gender is wrong there. My grammar is going with everything else. I suppose I should have said *ignarus*.'

He faintly smiled at the notion.

'But I have nothing—absolutely nothing,' running his hand expressively across his waistcoat-pockets. It stopped—his face lit up joyfully; then fell. 'Blessed,' continued he, 'are those who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed,' and slowly putting his hand into the pocket he extracted, with difficulty, a silver piece of ten sous. He looked at it steadily, almost incredulously, then at the dog. 'Come, my friend,' he cried, 'companion in misfortune, you must share my luck.' And five minutes afterwards O'Hara and his dumb acquaintance might be seen in the nearest *crêmerie*, O'Hara munching a roll of bread and the houseless dog greedily lapping a bowl of hot milk.

And both of them looked very happy dogs.

CHAPTER II.

A CRUSH AT THE MORGUE.

When the stray dog had finished his welcome repast, licking the sides of the bowl which had contained it with a gusto which many a dyspeptic favourite, fondled on the velvet cushion of my lady, and carried about by my lady's footman, would have envied, O'Hara began to talk with him; yes, to talk with him—and the dog answered him, as far as eyes and tail could speak.

'Well, my poor fellow, you seem to like that!'

The dog curled his tail and licked his lips.

'What's your name? You don't know, nor where you were born. You're as ignorant as Topsy.'

The dog sought the ground with his eyes.

'I must give you a name. Suppose I call you Chance, to mark how I found you; or Bran, like the dog in Ossian; or Hector—no, that's too bumptious a name, and you're no bully.'

The dog wisely shook his head, as if he looked on the idea of bullyism with pity.

'Let me see; egad, I'll naturalize you! I think you have a very Irish face—an honest, open, grateful face—and I'll call you Pat.'

The dog wagged his tail joyfully, stood on his hind legs, and stretched out a paw.

'Wonderful creature! can it be that I have hit on your name? Well, Pat'—again the tail wagged—'if you belonged to a rich family you would be housed, perhaps, in that hospital for indisposed gentlemen of your breed I see advertised on a kiosk near the Palais Royal; but, because you really want a friend and a crust, you are left without either. That's the way with the world, Pat,[5] and you're a vagabond, though goodness knows you're ugly enough to be a pet. I declare you're as ill-favoured as any pug I ever met sitting on a Brussels hearthrug, if it were not for that face.'

The dog gave an assenting bark.

'But we mustn't be stopping here too long, Pat, though our time isn't very precious. George Francis Train says the next best thing to money is the suspicion of money, and I say the next best thing to occupation is the suspicion of occupation; and, by my word, they lock you up for having no occupation in England, though you may be wearing the soles off your feet to get one. In the great world they go to the theatre or the opera or the circus after dinner to promote digestion, and I think I know where we can enjoy ourselves cheaply after our banquet. Hi! Pat, come along.'

And, rising, our friend retraced his steps towards the bridge, stopping for a moment at a tobacco-shop, where he purchased and lit a cigar at a sou, at the same time giving loud expression to his regret that he had forgotten his Turkish pipe.

'We must be economic, you know, and tobacco goes farther than a weed,' and seeming mentally to calculate the state of his finances—'three sous for milk and two for bread, five, that leaves five'—previous to hazarding the investment.

The open space in front of the Morgue is a favourite 'pitch' of the mountebanks who earn their livelihood on Paris streets. At the time our pair made their appearance, it was occupied by a number of the tribe in full swing. In one corner a low-sized, deformed figure, recalling the Quasimodo whom Victor Hugo's genius has made historic in connection with the neighbouring church of Notre Dame, was appealing to a crowd of bystanders to jerk ten sous more into the ring, and he would transfer the hump on his back to his breast. O'Hara did not wait for the tardy money to come in; he had no taste for the crooked talents of the posture-master.

A group in another corner surrounded a tanned fellow, with long hair and an eye like an onyx, who beat time on a drum, as he chanted a merry skit on a Paris by-word of the season—'*Avez-vous vu Lambert?*' to the air of '*Maman, le mal que j'ai*,' while the woman who accompanied him sold copies of it by the sheaf to laughing workmen, soldiers, and nursery-maids.

But by far the largest assemblage was drawn to a stout acrobat in faded tights, which might have been washed at some remote era, bedizened with spangles that revealed a faint tradition of glitter. He had an amazing flow of impudent 'patter,' this acrobat, and let it spout uninterruptedly as he flung up little metal rings, in quick succession, high in the air, catching them as they fell on a tin cone, strapped to his forehead, in the fashion of a unicorn's horn. Sometimes he missed them, and they slapped with a crack on his skull, and rolled off behind by a bald channel, which frequent misadventure of the kind had worn in his hair. But the spectators were as highly amused when he failed as when he succeeded—indeed, more so, if the truth must be told—for had they not a hit and a miss together?

When the cone was encircled with rings, he flung up a monster potato, impaling it on the spike as it descended, amid the acclamations of his admirers.

'Come along, Pat,' said O'Hara; 'here is something more in our line,' as he passed to another group, before which the owner of a troop of educated dogs and cats was performing.

'This is M'sieu Rigolo,' cried the showman, as he placed one chair reversed on another, and taking a poor cat, that looked as if it couldn't get up an emotion at a family of mice round a Stilton cheese, balanced its claws consecutively lengthwise and crosswise on the upstanding legs. When the cat had been sufficiently tortured it was dismissed, to its evident satisfaction, to the basket which served as green-room to the perambulating theatre.

'Present yourself, M'sieu Romulus,' cried the showman, and a poodle of remarkably subdued mien reluctantly entered the arena, much as a slave who was devoted to the lions might have done in the old Roman times. M'sieu Romulus had not the boldness of his illustrious namesake of antiquity, but he had more than his sagacity. His strong point lay in detecting the most amorous man, the most beautiful lady, the greatest idler and so-forth in the surrounding company. The showman, putting a card in his mouth, asked him to point out such a one. Romulus stood up in the attitude dogs are wont when asked to beg, moved carefully round and finally trotted off in the way he should go, and dropped the card at the feet of the chosen person.

Romulus was dismissed in his turn to the green-room, and the showman called for Mademoiselle. The call was responded to by one of the saddest short-eared dogs ever seen, girt round the middle with a miniature crinoline which made the creature a grotesque caricature of a woman in the prevailing fashion as she hopped into the circle painfully on her hind-legs.

'*Salut*, Ma'amselle!' said the showman; 'we want to see you dance a minuet,' and he commenced playing on a pandean pipe. But Ma'amselle did not dance long. Pat, who had been watching the whole performance with canine amazement from between O'Hara's legs, suddenly rushed in, extended his paws and lowered his head in front of the disguised member of his species, and barked a good-natured bark. Ma'amselle dropped on all fours, and looked up inquisitively at the showman's face. The showman flung his pandean pipe at Pat's snout, and the poor intruder ran howling round the amused throng. No one would make room for him to escape, until at last a short thickset man, in a long frieze coat caught him, pulled him to himself, and cried to the showman, in a foreign accent, 'It is not French to strike a dog for gallantry; he simply entered because he didn't like to see Ma'amselle dance without a partner. Didn't you see him make his bow?'

'Pardon me, sir,' said O'Hara, who had been shut out from the inner circle by the forward rush, as he made his way to the friendly stranger; 'but I believe I am the next of kin to this unfortunate animal.'

'Have him, sir, and welcome,' said he in the frieze. 'I never like to see an animal struck that can't strike back for itself.'

'Thanks, sir,' said O'Hara, and then, turning to Pat, he continued, speaking this time in English, 'Come, my companion, we'll leave that brute of a showman: every dog has his day, and perhaps you'll have yours yet.'

The stranger looked after the pair sharply as they turned towards a crowd where a little old man was expatiating on the marvellous abilities of Madame La Blague, the celebrated clairvoyante, and muttered something between his teeth. The celebrated clairvoyante was seated on a chair in the centre of a crowd, her eyes bandaged like those of the figure of Justice, and her hands crossed on her lap in the attitude of Patience on the monument.

'Now then, messieurs,' said the little old man, 'take a ticket and have your fortune told. Only ten centimes. Tell me your hopes, your fears, your desires, and madame will at once read the answer in the Book of Fate when I ask her.'

'Hark you, friend, I want my fortune told.'

It was the man in frieze who spoke. He had moved up after O'Hara and the dog.

'Take a ticket, sir, and wait your turn,' squeaked the little old man.

'Is it so? That's a thing I never do. Ten centimes, you charge; now I'll give ten francs—that's a thousand centimes—if madame is able to return me a single true answer to five plain questions I'll put to her myself.'

'I'll try, at all events, sir,' said the woman with bandaged eyes.

'I like that. To start—how old am I?'

'Forty-four,' answered the woman, after a pause.

'You don't flatter. I'm between the thirties and the forties still. Guess again—what's my disposition?'

'Impatient,' was the immediate answer.

'You've got to earn the money yet. My profession?'

'Soldier.'

'What regiment?'

'The Foreign Legion.'

'Ha! Then you've found out I'm a foreigner. From what country, pray?'

'From Ireland.'

The stranger in frieze started, gave an ejaculation of surprise, and, taking out a ten-franc piece, advanced towards the woman, and said he could understand her guessing he was a military man from his tone of voice, and the further fact that he had served in the Legion from his foreign accent; but he demanded in a puzzled tone that she would explain how she had discovered his country before he redeemed his promise.

'We show-folk travel a great deal, sir,' she said in a low voice. 'I have been in Ireland, and I recognised the accent.'

'That explains the mystery. Like Columbus's egg, all things are easy when they're known. Well, madame,' he continued aloud with a chuckle, 'if you've been in Ireland you know us. When we promise France we give the Isle of St. Louis.[6] Here is a ten-sous bit for you.'

Her countenance fell until her delicate fingers conveyed to her senses that it was, indeed, ten francs she possessed. The crowd applauded, said he was as witty as he was generous, and the man in frieze turned on his heel. He looked curiously towards the neat white one-storied structure beside the footpath from the Pont d'Archevêche to the Pont St. Louis, into which a stream of wayfarers was continually flowing, and finally directed his steps thitherward too. It was a cheerful-looking building that, which drew so many visitors, but, nevertheless, it was the Morgue—half-way house between untimely death and the outcast's grave. The stranger entered the wide door—a tall

partition divided what was inside from his view; he passed around it and was within the grisly hall. O'Hara mechanically followed; he had no curiosity to scan the lineaments of the naked corpses which awaited recognition within—he was rather *blasé* of sights of the kind, and regarded a body on a Morgue slab as he would a carcase on a butcher's stall; but he felt a something impelling him towards this stranger who had discovered himself to be a countryman. As he entered, reading, perhaps for the hundredth time, the inscriptions on the wall, which told friends who identified the deceased that they could establish their identity with the greffier free of charge, he caught an exclamation of surprise in English in the brusque voice of the man in frieze.

'Hah! so you've shuffled off this mortal coil, Marguerite.'

O'Hara turned in the direction from which the voice came; he distinguished his compatriot in the middle of an unusually excited mass which pressed against the bars of this loathsome cage of mysterious horrors, a grim smile twisting his features. He could not see any of the twelve sloping tables on which the bodies were laid out in their last toilette—their stiff limbs stretched, hair combed back, hands fixed by their cold sides, and squares of black boarding covering the stomach and thighs—because of the intervening crowd. The clothing of the unclaimed dead, hats, jackets, and blouses, suspended from racks overhead, alone was visible.

'What's the excitement?' he asked of a grizzled soldier, who edged his way back from the bars.

'Oh, it's only a *cocotte* of the quarter, who's been fool enough to go to the devil before the devil came to her. Sapristi! but she's been a well-favoured wench, and's got a well-turned leg even on her calafaque.'[7]

'Marguerite, Marguerite,' said O'Hara, as if recalling some train of thought.

'Yes, that's what's yonder individual, who pretends that he knew her, denominated her; but I inflect he's a joker.'

'Tall, with an Italian face and black hair?' asked O'Hara eagerly.

'Ay, ay, tall, with a handsome, despising face, and long hair, as black as a grenadier's bearskin.'

'I, too, think I know her—if it be the same.'

'If it be the same! It strikes me, jokers are consolidating in the Morgue to-day. Good-morning, bourgeois, I'm an old soldier,' and away marched the veteran.

A pretty little girl, coquettishly clad in the costume of the grisette, a well-fitting robe of gray, relieved by a tidy patent leather belt with clasp, setting off her figure, and large imitation coral drops glistening under her bright chestnut hair, entered at the moment, a basket on her arm, as if returning from her work.

'Have you seen the bodies yet, please, sir?' she said to O'Hara.

'Not yet, mademoiselle,' he replied graciously; 'but if you wait a little, I shall get a place for both to see them.'

She smiled her thanks.

'Now, then, forward. It's the first time I have ever seen a crush at the Morgue;' and they perseveringly made their way to the front.

On a black slab lay extended the nude limbs of a woman who had been taken from life before she had reached its noon, whilst she might have been full of strength and lusty joy. They were bloodless to the view, but round and beautiful of proportion, and clean of colour as a statue of purest marble by a master hand. The head was pillowed on a luxuriant mass of wet, matted raven hair. There was a smile on the face (which was wickedly handsome, as the soldier had described it), even in death, and a proud, disdainful curl had left its unchangeable impress on the mouth.

'By Jove, it *is* Marguerite!' cried O'Hara involuntarily.

At the same instant the little grisette, whom he had helped to a place, turned pale and trembled, and falling back in a faint, sank into his arms as she murmured from between her white lips, 'Merciful God! Caroline, poor Caroline!'

CHAPTER III.

LE VRAI N'EST PAS TOUJOURS VRAISEMBLABLE.

THE crowd immediately gathered round the fainting grisette as she lay in the arms of our friend, forgetting, in their eagerness for this fresh excitement, the morbid spectacle on the slab. With the same idle gaze of curiosity which they had bestowed on the dead girl they turned to the inanimate form of the living. O'Hara gently permitted the body to lapse on the ground, and quickly divesting himself of his coat, folded it in the shape of a bolster under her head—and then looked at her and felt embarrassed how further to act. Above all things he abhorred a 'scene' and here he was fairly constrained to sit for one of the leading figures in the picture. He lost his presence of mind amid the multifarious inquiries and suggestions and proffers of help of the craning spectators who pressed upon him and his breathless charge; and, to complete his humiliation, he awoke to the fact that he had a piece of canvas sewed on where the back ought to have been in the waistcoat he exposed, just as a well-dressed lady put a bottle of eau de Cologne into his hand, telling him to apply it to the lips of the sufferer. How soon he might himself be in a condition to require a restorative we might have to tell, had not an imperious voice commanded the crowd to make way, and a man, following it into the centre of the group, proceeded to put his orders into force by a vigorous and skilful application of his elbows.

'Stand back,' he cried; 'all the creature wants is air, and ye're getting up a competition to smother her.'

Turning to one of the busiest on-lookers, he urged him towards the door of the greffier's office, directing him, as he was a smart fellow, to fetch a carafe of cold water in a hurry; and then, leaning over O'Hara, as he held the pungent bottle to the girl's nostrils, he said in English, accompanying his words with an impatient gesture, 'Drat that stuff; here's what'll revive her!' at the same time producing a brandy-flask.

O'Hara looked up and recognised the sturdy stranger of the frieze coat.

'Well, how long will you keep staring at me? Ay, boy, that's right with the water—see, she opens her eyes. Now to slip a little of the water of life down her throat. Keep her mouth open with your penknife. Ho, ho! she'll come round in a jiffy. See here, mister, you with your coat off, will you help me to trundle my sister out of this infernal hole? Catch up her legs, man. Hang it! one would think you were handling glass marked "This side uppermost."'

Partly in obedience to this torrent of words, and partly because he had, for the time being, no will of his own, his

self-possession completely gone, O'Hara obeyed the stranger, and between them the girl, still pale and prostrate, was lifted to the door. The stranger hailed a hackney carriage which was passing, and, helping the grisette in and pushing O'Hara after her, he mounted beside the coachman, and drove in the direction of the Place before the gate of Notre Dame.

When they had arrived opposite the Hôtel Dieu, he stopped the carriage, dismounted, looked in at the window, and burst into a roar of laughter.

O'Hara turned from the girl, who was leaning back in a corner, her eyes open in a wide, wondering way, and confronted the stranger with a fierce yet perplexed look. But he only renewed his laughter.

'Is it at me or your sister you're laughing, sir?' O'Hara found words at length to say.

'My sister! Ha, ha! never saw her in my life before,' and he resumed his guffaw.

'Open the door,' cried O'Hara, at last thoroughly roused.

'Who's your tailor?' said the irrepressible man in the frieze coat.

The pride of the poverty-stricken Irish gentleman was touched; his shame overcame his anger, and, foolish fellow! he blushed for that of which he had no need to be ashamed.

'That's the loudest thing in vestings I know; you've got the falls of Niagara on your back, man.'

O'Hara, removing his waistcoat in a flurry of confusion, discovered that the painted side of the old canvas, the remains of some artist friend, had been, indeed, turned outwards when he had put it for a patch to his waistcoat a few days before in his blundering amateur tailor fashion.[8] Looking at it, he could not help laughing himself.

'When a man wears that pattern of waistcoat, he shouldn't forget his coat after him.'

To heighten his difficulties, O'Hara now discovered for the first time that he had left his coat behind him at the Morgue.

'Can't go back,' said the stranger. 'Here, coachman, to *la Belle Jardinière*.' (This was the name of a famous clothing warehouse in the quarter.)

'But I've no money, sir, to buy a coat, if that be what you mean by going there,' said O'Hara.

'Tell me something I don't know; you're a poor devil!'

'Ah! you've discovered that,' exclaimed O'Hara, nettled.

'Knew it by intuition—been one myself.'

'But I am not a mendicant.'

'Who said you were?'

'I have money coming to me—I'll have it—in a few days.'

'I know it, and I'll lend you the price of a coat in the meanwhile.'

'Thanks,' cried O'Hara, with effusion, for he couldn't help feeling the terrible awkwardness of his loss, and he began to see that his new acquaintance was a humorist. 'What might your name be, sir?'

'What might it be! It might be Beelzebub, but it isn't.'

'What is it, then, if that pleases you better?'

'What's in a name?'

O'Hara paused a moment. 'Right!' he answered at last; 'a name is nothing without money behind it.'

'Ay, ay, my lad; "what's in a name?" as the divine Williams says: it's nothing, as you remark—just about as much as your purse holds at present. Don't be angry with me; been that way myself. Know Goldsmith?—

'"Ill fares the cove, to hastening duns a prey,
Whose bills accumulate and bobs decay."

'Ha, ha!—see the point—Bills and Bobs. But look to the lassie; she's going off again, I fear;' and the queer stranger handed him the brandy-flask in which he had such faith.

'Caroline,' the grisette again murmured, and dropped off with glassy eyes into a tranced sleep, irregularly punctuated with sighs.

'Here you are, sir,' cried the coachman—'*la Belle Jardinière*.'

'Stay where you are,' said the stranger. 'I'll fetch you out a fifty-franc coat; can size you at a glance. Shake up that girl;' and he disappeared rapidly.

The girl, fully roused by the sudden stoppage of the vehicle, gazed round her with a lost look, as if to collect her scattered senses, and vainly endeavoured to realize how and why she found herself in a state of exhaustion in a carriage with a strange man. At last, under the influence of O'Hara's kindly reassuring face, she began to recall what had happened. The slab in the Morgue, with its burden, which had robbed her of her senses and strength, rose before her eyes, and she shuddered.

'Courage, my dear,' cried O'Hara firmly; 'drink,' pressing the flask of brandy to her lips; 'you are with friends!'

The girl did as desired, and looked her thanks. O'Hara commenced chafing her hands. She smiled faintly, uttered a few gracious words, in which the magic syllable 'home,' a spell in every land, alone could be distinguished.

'Ha! you want to get home, my pretty one; we'll take you,' said the rough yet good-natured stranger, popping in his head at the window. 'What's the neighbourhood?'

'Place du Panthéon,' whispered the girl.

'All right, catch your coat and I'll follow it,' flinging the purchase on O'Hara's lap, then turning to the coachman to give him his directions before entering, he exclaimed, 'Hallo! What's the row?'

The coachman either didn't hear him or was so busy with some object at the other side of the carriage, which he was endeavouring to reach with the lash of his whip, that he didn't mind him.

'I'll put a flea in your ear,' and with the expression of this benevolent intention, he jumped on the box, doubled his fist, and was about to apply it to the side of the unconscious Jehu's head, when he suddenly arrested it in its progress, snatched the whip out of the uplifted hand before him instead, and broke into a hearty laugh.

O'Hara felt more and more puzzled at the extraordinary conduct of this extraordinary person, and couldn't help looking out after him, when he heard the unexpected merriment. The stranger was descending and encountered his bewildered stare.

'Look out of the other window,' cried he; 'blessed if it ain't that inquisitive dog!'

O'Hara complied, and discovered the cause of all the commotion.

It was Pat, the foundling dog, who was panting on the pavement, the threadbare coat of the man who had befriended him held between his teeth![9]

The faithful creature was at once, of course, received into the carriage, and the driver was ordered to proceed rapidly to the Place du Panthéon, taking the Boulevard St. Michel on his way.

'We shall call into *la Jeune France* on the route,' said the stranger, 'and get this poor little wench something to revive her.'

The girl caught the words and made signs of dissent at the mention of *la Jeune France*, which is a famous coffee-house much affected by roystering students and the frail partners of their revels. As soon as she could find language, she uttered a feeble but emphatic 'No.'

'What! You turn up your nose at *la Jeune France*. Well, we'll cut it. Driver, straight to the Panthéon. Nevertheless, my child, it was there I met your dead friend first!'

'No, never,' cried the girl with gathering energy. 'Poor Caroline!' and she burst into a comforting flood of tears.

'Poor Caroline, indeed! How many aliases had she? When I knew her last she was called Marguerite *la modiste*,[10] and that was no later than last night.'

'You met her last night?' inquired the girl in excited tones.

'I danced with her at the Closerie des Lilas!'

'Oh no! Say you didn't. Caroline never frequented such a place,' pleaded the poor girl in the beseeching tone of one praying for mercy from a threatened weapon.

'It was there I made her acquaintance, too,' remarked O'Hara.

'There must be some mystery here,' said the stranger, pausing; 'you call your friend Caroline. I call her Marguerite, and she's known to the entire quarter by that name. We shan't speak about her reputation.' With a wink at O'Hara, '*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, with Swift's translation. Not meaning any compliment, she was more beloved than respected.'

'I don't understand you, monsieur, but I'm grateful to you both for your kindness. I'll thank you to let me alight as we arrive at the Place du Panthéon.'

The girl arose, but the effort was too much for her strength, and she tottered back helpless to the seat, crying:

'Oh, I am so weak! My head is on fire!'

'Rest where you are; we'll see you to your own door, and I'll have a doctor by your bedside in five minutes,' insisted the stranger with gentle violence. 'What's your street and number?'

'Rue de la Vieille Estrapade, thirty.'

The carriage was quickly driven to the street indicated, which runs quite near, in close parallel with the temple of St. Geneviève on its southern side, and the Jehu, with a crack of his whip, drew up before number thirty—a tall, substantial, square-built house.

'Now, my child, take my arm,' said the stranger in the frieze coat, rising and assisting his wearied charge to the door.

No sooner had the faltering creature reached the steps of the carriage, than a blithe female voice rang out from a window on the third story:

'Welcome, Berthe—welcome, our little song-bird.'

The girl raised her eyes in a stupefied daze, her frame quivered, the blood fled from her cheeks, and for the second time she sank into the arms of our friend, who stood luckily behind her, in a profound swoon; but this time it was a swoon of joy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SONG-BIRD'S NEST.

Joy seldom kills. Before the female figure, whose apparition at the window had thrown the girl, so strangely fallen under O'Hara's protection, into her second swoon, had time to trip down the stairs, the attack had spent itself, even without the intervention of the brandy-flask of him whose name was not Beelzebub. The sensitive creature was smothered with kisses by her friend, the while the two male observers of the situation looked on and at each other with a comical stare of envy. The newcomer was a slender, willowy woman, of a meridional cast of countenance—hair rich and dark in hue, features proud and delicately chiselled, and complexion swarthy. She was tall in stature and gracefully built, but rather inclined to the meagre, and seemed as if she had aged before her time. She might not have been more than twenty-three, but she looked as if verging on thirty, and yet there was quite a youthful impetuosity in her manner, and springiness in her movements, as she literally devoured her little friend in her embraces. In the middle of this tantalizing greeting, he whom we shall call Friezecoat, for want of an introduction, called out in his rough and ready voice:

'Ho, ho, my pets! I protest against this, unless we lords of creation are admitted into the arrangement.'

The brunette turned a look of chilling surprise at him, as if questioning who was this intruder who spoke so familiarly. Then, holding the little girl of the chestnut hair, whom she saluted as Song-bird, at arm's-length, as if to examine the Song-bird's plumage, she exclaimed:

'Berthe, you little fool, why did you faint? How do you account for coming home thus?'

The only answer Berthe made was to lean her head forward on her friend's breast and burst into tears.

'How like that woman is to Marguerite *la modiste*!' whispered O'Hara to Friezecoat. 'I'm not astonished at her she calls Berthe having mistaken the body in the Morgue.'

'Oh, Caroline dear, then you are alive!' said little Berthe, at length finding words amid her sobs.

'Alive!—yes, really alive, *ma mignonne*, and I shall be chastising you presently to prove it, if you don't dry those tears. Why do you weep?'

'I went into the Morgue to see the body of a girl who had drowned herself, and, oh! it was so like you; and then, you know, Caroline, you've been away those three days.'

'And have I never been at Choisy-le-Roi for three days before? Giddy—giddy girl, you've been to the Morgue. Don't tell this to the grand-père.'

'Yes, and I have had such a fright. Don't frown, Caroline. I thought 'twas you I saw laid out, and when I awoke I was in a carriage with those gentlemen, who have been very kind to me and brought me home.'

The brunette bowed graciously to Friezecoat and O'Hara, and said:

'I thank you infinitely, messieurs, for your kindness to my young friend; and if you'll have the goodness to wait a little, I'll call my grandfather, and he will thank you too, and pay for this vehicle.'

'Madame, you offend me,' said Friezecoat gruffly.

'Pardon,' said the brunette, colouring a deep red; 'I see I have made a mistake. At least, gentlemen'—with an emphasis on the latter word—'you will step up to our apartment until grandfather returns you thanks in person.'

The four mounted by broad stairs to the third story, and entered a small, lightsome chamber, neatly furnished. The scent of violets was in the air. The window was draped with white curtains, the walls were hung with engravings of military subjects, a cottage pianoforte lay open at one side of the window, a comfortable armchair was set at the other, while high in a wicker-cage a throstle fluttered in the rosy light between. Plaster busts of the first and third Napoleons were set on brackets, and flanked a large print of the Imperial House, from its founder and Josephine, Marie Louise, the King of Rome, and Hortense Beauharnais, down to the youthful Prince Imperial, in his uniform as corporal of Grenadiers of the Guard.

After motioning them to seats, the girls disappeared into an inner room, and almost immediately a tall, old man, with head held erect, white hair and moustaches lending him a venerable appearance, the chocolate-coloured ribbon of the St. Helena medal in his button-hole, stood in its doorway.

'Messieurs,' said the old man, advancing stiffly, 'you have been kind to my grand-daughter, and I, Victor Chauvin, officer of the First Empire, thank you. I am at your service for any duty you can ask me in return;' and the rigid body was bent with soldierly angularity in what was intended to be a very ceremonious bow.

'And we—that is, the men of our country—are always at the service of distressed females without expecting or asking any return,' said Friezecoat as formally.

'What countryman are you, sir?'

'We are Irish.'

O'Hara regarded Friezecoat with surprise. How had this bizarre personage discovered his nationality? He forgot that he had heard him speak.

'Ah! lusty comrades as ever I met at assault on battery or bottle. I knew some of them in the Legion in the Man's time,' said the old soldier.

'The man—who was he?'

'Who was he? There was only one man in this century, and his name was Napoleon. Sir, I'm afraid you've learned history from Père Loriquet;' and the old soldier smiled.

'Yes, he was a man.'

'Sir, shake hands with me for that,' said Victor Chauvin, evidently flattered. 'But you must let the old soldier show his gratitude for your kindness to his child. I insist on it.'

'Well, if you will have it so, tell us why your grand-daughter is called the Song-bird, and we're repaid?'

'Because she sings like the nightingale; no, that's too sad. Like a canary; but that's a prisoner. I have it—like the morning-lark, for its song, fresh and pure, goes up to God's gates! Berthe, enter.'

At the call, our young acquaintance, the traces of her recent infirmities entirely removed, came radiantly into the room, smiling with an arch smile.

'Berthe, my Song-bird, treat those gentlemen, who, you have told me, have been so good to you, to a sample of your voice.'

'What shall I sing?' asked Berthe, approaching the piano.

'Sing the romance that friend Bénic wrote for you—*le Vieil Irlandais*—for these gentlemen are from that brave and faithful land; ay, brave and faithful, for it has known how to carry the sword without taking the cross from its hilt.'

The girl skilfully passed her fingers over the instrument, executing a tremulous prelude, and in a soft, sweet voice, trilled, to a pathetic air, the following touching verses, the old soldier joining in at the refrain which ended each:

Mon fils, écoute un vieillard centenaire.
Tu nais à peine et moi je vais mourir,
Fuis, sans retour, par l'exil volontaire,
Le sol ingrat qui ne peut te nourrir.
Sur ce navire, où la foule s'élance,
Tu vas vogeur vers les États-Unis;
Dans ces climats, au sein de l'abondance,
Vivent heureux vingt peuples réunis.
Des flots de l'Atlantique
Ne crains pas le courroux;
Émigré en Amérique,
Ton sort sera plus doux.

Au jour naissant tu commençais l'ouvrage,
Sous un ciel gris, pendant un rude hiver;
J'ai vu faiblir ta force et ton courage
A défricher les champs d'un duc et pair.
Jamais ses pas n'ont foulé son domaine,
Loin de l'Irlande il voyage en seigneur.
Infortuné, la disette est prochaine,
Quitte à jamais ce séjour du malheur.
Des flots, etc.

En cultivant des savanes fertiles,
Garde ta foi, si tu veux prospérer;
Fais tes adieux a nos sillons stériles;
Sans espérance il faut nous séparer.
Prends cet argent, fruit de longs sacrifices,
Au centenaire un peu de pain suffit,
La mer est belle, et les vents sont propices;
Pars, mon enfant, ton aiëul te bénit.
Des flots, etc.[11]

There were tears in the woman's soft voice, and when she finished there were tears in the eyes of at least one of her listeners.

'Thanks, mademoiselle,' cried O'Hara, with emotion; 'thanks for that little tribute to the sorrows and affection of poor Ireland. He who wrote it knew the land, at least, in spirit.'

'He has never been there, sir, has not my friend, Laurent Bénic; he is but a humble carpenter, but he has learned to love the green Erin, the younger sister of our France, as I have.'

'Is that the Bénic who wrote "Robert Surcouf," a rattling corsair ballad?' demanded Friezecoat.

'The same, sir.'

'Will you ask Mademoiselle Berthe to make me a copy of it, words and music, and will you allow me to send her a present of some of our Irish music in return?'

'Certainly; shall we not, Berthe?' Berthe smiled happily. 'And I'll ask you, sir, to come to hear her play your country's music. He who has been kind to the old soldier's grand-daughter is welcome to the old soldier's hearth.'

Shortly afterwards the two Irishmen, who had made such a rare rencontre, bade their farewells to the Frenchman and his grand-daughter, and left.

'He's a regular old brick, that Chauvin,' said Friezecoat on the doorstep, 'and I'll remember that song to his grand-daughter. If she wasn't my sister to-day, she may be something nearer some day. Good-night.'

'You're going, and you've not told me——'

'Not to-night. Search the side-pocket of that coat, and you'll find fifty francs in it. *Au revoir*.'

And this strangest of strange characters jumped into the hackney-carriage and disappeared by a street leading to the Panthéon, leaving O'Hara in a brown study in the brown shadows of the Rue de la Vieille Estrapade.

He was roused from his reverie by an affectionate whine, now become familiar. It was the dog, forgotten when they entered the house, and who had been lying patiently by its threshold. He returned the creature's welcome with a caress, and determined, as he had fallen in with him so curiously, and as he had shown so lively a sense of gratitude and fidelity—much more than humanity usually permits itself to be betrayed into—to take Pat back to his lodgings and adopt him. He did not fear the Caudine forks now, for he had the grand passport, the jingling gold, in his pocket, and the old pride returned to his port and the jovial defiance to his eye. Gaily he strode down by the Rue Soufflot to the Boulevard St. Michel—we believe he might even have been heard whistling 'Rory O'More,' to the huge delight of the dog, who capered at his heels—until he reached the café of *la Jeune France*, where he came to a dead stop on the pavement, as if debating something in his mind.

'No,' he said at last, 'I shan't go in; I'll see, for once, if I can keep a good resolution when I have the means of breaking it. Egad, this is a day of adventures for me. If half these things were written down in a story, the world would say the author was a lunatic, or imagined he was writing for fools!'

Not the least grateful surprise awaited him at his hotel in the Rue du Four when he re-entered. It was a letter of credit for twenty pounds from a debtor in Ireland, which the *concierge*, who knew the handwriting, smilingly slipped into his fingers.

CHAPTER V.

NAPOLEONIC IDEAS.

Few who saw the miserable despairing lodger in the Hôtel de Suez, who looked out sadly from his thin blankets on the prospect of hope vanishing with the last vapour of his pipe, would have recognised the same entity a week afterwards in the gay, buoyant, flushed youth seated, choice Havana idly turned between his lips, deep in an armchair, soft dressing-gown falling around in showy folds, and his feet cased in embroidered slippers, resting, American-wise, on the marble top of a stove wherein the live logs cheerily hissed and blazed. The man was the same; that is the form, the cubic extent of flesh and blood and bone—but money had effected the grand transformation; money had made out of the wretch, fearful of the shadow of a sharp-tongued *concierge*, a very cavalier in lightsome

spirit, airy courage, and happy way of looking at life in general. Twenty pounds had done this; gold had done it—the true philosopher's stone, whereat we be tempted to moralize much, to ask was not this human being as much entitled to human respect and more to human sympathy when he was forlorn? and all that sort of thing, and to put on our grave censor's cap and reproach the world. But we resist the temptation. For, indeed, is not money truly great? is it not the outward and visible representation of intrinsic worth always, and is not the man who has made it by trafficking in cloth or herrings, or some other articles for the good of society over a counter, infinitely to be preferred to him who thinks, and feels, and dreams much, and does not make money? Is he not of vastly more value to his kind than the mere scholar or martyr, the doer of high deeds or utterer of high thoughts? Is not the alderman—the Lord Mayor, perhaps, of next year—riding in his gilt chariot, more worthy much than Samuel Johnson in the attic vegetating on fourpence-halfpenny a day? For what is the worth of anything but its money value in the market?

But let us cease this teasing worn-out cynicism, which all will applaud in theory, and in practice all will repudiate, and return to our friend, O'Hara.

He sat, gay as he looked, surrounded by lights and such flowers as the early season furnished; a burning pastille poured out a thick unctuous stream of perfume; fruits were on the table by his elbow, and in companionship beside them slender bottles of sparkling wine. He had a sensuous appreciation of the beautiful, had our friend; but not a selfish, for he did not sit alone. At his feet, curled like a hedgehog on a luxurious mat, snored Pat, the foundling dog, a half-eaten bone held between his paws. Pat had evidently fallen upon pleasant lines; he was plump and sleek as an incipient alderman after his seven days' good treatment, and now, as aspirants to the dignity of the fur collar and the rapture of turtle-soup are wont, he was enjoying the snooze of satisfaction after the repast of repletion. Then, again, another of our acquaintances was present. Stiff and stately, as a bare old oak in winter, on the opposite side of the fire, sat Captain Chauvin—white-bearded, the chocolate-coloured ribbon on his breast, his stick held bolt upright between his legs—a figure of dignity and firmness in the frivolous air of this bachelor-chamber in gala; yet, somehow, he did not look out of place. There was sweetness in the old man's face, and benevolence and truth, which is beautiful everywhere.

'You do not smoke, captain—you a *militaire* of the First Empire. I wonder at that,' said O'Hara, languidly puffing the light cloud upwards in fantastic wreath from his Havana.

'No, *mon enfant*; there is a reason for it,' and the captain sighed.

O'Hara finished his cigar in peace—not that he did not notice the sigh of his guest, but he had too much delicacy to seek to fathom its cause.

'At least,' he said when he resumed conversation, 'you will not refuse to join me in a bumper.'

The captain shook his head.

'It is the first time I've caught you at my fireside, Captain Chauvin, and in my land we account it the reverse of good-fellowship not to hobnob at such a meeting. We shall drink together, as the Arabs break bread, to friendship and better knowledge of each other.'

The captain smiled—how charming is a smile on the face of manly masculine age!—and bowed.

'As it is the custom of your land, and as it is to be a gage of friendship, I even will,' said he, at the same time proffering a worn snuff-box, rudely wrought of horn, which he drew out of a gold case. '*Mon enfant*, a pinch.'

O'Hara took of the snuff, though he found some difficulty in performing the operation of conveying the dust to his nostrils, sniffing it and afterwards sneezing. To tell the truth, he did not take snuff, considering it a dirty habit; but he felt constrained to do much to gratify the old man.

'Hola, you sneeze!' remarked the captain, surprised. 'It's rare fine snuff.'

'And that's a rare fine box you have it in; not the box, I mean, but the casket which holds it,' answered O'Hara, taking the gold case in his hands.

'What's this? The bees which the Bonapartes brought from Corsica, the eagle with the thunder-bolt in his talons, and the Imperial cipher. I'm not a judge of goldsmith's work, but I should say that's a piece of some value.'

'And the horn box—the box for which all this finery is the covering. What d'ye think of that?'

'It is not valuable in material nor artistically, and yet it may be valuable as a souvenir,' said O'Hara, after regarding it.

'Ah! I would not give that box for ten—what?—a thousand times its weight in gems,' said the old man, kissing it reverently. 'There's a story attached to it.'

'Yes, yes, how we do cling to the relic of what has passed from us, and each day, as we look upon it, it becomes more precious in our sight!' said O'Hara, half in soliloquy, drawing a little parcel from his breast. 'Here it is now, only a lock of woman's hair, faded, flattened out of curl, and she—where is she?—what does she? Does she ever think of me? Bah!'—with a violent jerk thrusting back the parcel to its resting-place; 'you're a fool, O'Hara! Come, captain, let me fill you a bumper of the grape-juice.'

The captain had been watching the by-play with the tress of woman's hair with an amiable, almost sympathizing, eye. 'Young friend,' said he, 'you've loved and been disappointed, I take it; but do not despair.' O'Hara blushed. 'At your time of life,' continued the captain, 'one does not die of those crosses. I know them. Do not blush; I, too, have been disappointed in what my heart had set its affections upon, and, alas! it has coloured my whole existence.'

'A good blood-colour, I fancy,' said O'Hara with a sardonic humour.

'Ah! you are disposed to take a cynical view of the sex. That is too soon. Life for you should be a comedy, as yet violet-crowned; a toying with honey goblets and rose-leaves; it is too soon to bring in the daggers and the cups of gall and the cypress-wreaths.'

'Life violet-crowned for me!' said O'Hara mockingly. 'It is a vile, malodorous sham; there is nothing true, nothing sincere in it but sin and death. The world is a mercenary, peddling world—the one only trade which is not meanness and fraud is the soldier's trade, where man is paid for cutting the throat of his fellow-man.'

'Let us drink,' said the captain, perceiving that the better way to alter his young friend's mood was to steal him away on other paths, not to dip into deep reasoning with him.

'Ay, ay, *mon ami*,' cried O'Hara with a return of the reckless spirit we remarked in his character when he lay seemingly without a sou in his pocket on his bed of bitterness, 'that is the disappointed man's friend. We will drink, drink, not to woman who drove Adam out of Paradise and your humble servant out of Ireland, but to man, to the real

practical man, the man who tramples humbug and pretence under foot, and believes in himself alone, the solid, hard-hitting, clear-seeing man. Captain, here's to his health!'

'To his memory, rather,' said the captain, rising and touching the outstretched glass of his host with his own, 'for his soul is lost to us these five-and-forty years. Here's to Napoleon!'

'Yes, to Napoleon!' and they both drained their glasses to the lees. The captain resumed his seat as stiffly as ever; O'Hara took a cordial glance at the bottle, and replenishing his glass, cried as he held it aloft between him and the light, and watched the amber beads frothing in creamy tumult on its surface, 'Beautiful to the sight and to the taste, strange that that liquid should be the one sure friend to whom we can fly for the means to forget the world and its sorrows, our only certain refuge——'

'My young friend,' said the old man gravely, 'it seems to me you forget God!'

The tone in which these words were spoken was gentle rather than monitory. They fell on our friend's troubled soul like the rain which refreshes, not as advice too often does, and too often is meant to fall, like blistering drops of hot wax.

The youth, who had been contemplating the sparkling liquor as an artist might a great artist creation of beauty, looked at it a moment longer, then slowly lowering it, he said, in the calm voice of conviction, to his aged guest:

'You are right; God is *the* refuge; we should not forget Him,' and the spirit of the grape blazed vividly up as it was spilt on the burning logs. 'I was wrong, we were both wrong, even in drinking to the memory of Napoleon.'

'Not in that, *mon enfant*; all great men such as he was, men who sink themselves into the time and mark it as theirs even as the maker does his name into the sword-blade—all such men are messengers from God.'

'And his nephew?'

'God's messages do not come by hereditary office. He is auspicious for France; it is strong and feared and full of prosperous life to-day; and he is Emperor of the French. That is enough for me.'

'The philosophy of a soldier' was the only comment of O'Hara.

'Are you of the Opposition?' queried the captain, fancying he detected a latent sneer at the ruling dynasty in the latter expression.

'Ah I my friend,' remarked O'Hara with a smile, 'that is a delicate question. How shall I answer it? Like an Irishman, by asking another. Do you not know that I am a foreigner? I love your France, but I do not meddle in its politics. If I did, I suppose I should belong to the Opposition, for I was born in the Opposition in my own country, and as the sum of evil is greater than the sum of good, and usually preponderant, I take it that it is pretty safe ground to go on that whatever is, is wrong.'

'Have another pinch of snuff,' said the captain, shaking his head and proffering the golden box with its horn enclosure.

'This great N,' said O'Hara, again examining the ornamented outer lid with curiosity—'is that for the nephew or the uncle?'

'It is for the Man,' said Monsieur Chauvin, almost offended.

'Did you not say there was a story attached to it?' continued O'Hara.

'Yes; but would you laugh at an old man?'

'Captain Chauvin!'

'Pardon, my good young friend. I will tell it you. On the day of Mont St. Jean, the 18th of June, 1815, I was a sub-lieutenant of artillery in the column of our glorious Ney—the laurel to his ashes! Ah! your Wellington let him be slain like a dog; that was not soldierly. The Emperor directed a false attack on the château of Goumont; while the Englishman was gathering the best of his forces to its defence, the Man stood, pale and weary, with the same quiet, steady gaze, a smile fixed into the earnestness of a frown, which my comrades told me he had worn at Austerlitz, hands behind his back, and his gray great-coat lying moist over his boots. My battery was near, and I was on its right, quite close to the staff. "Messieurs," said he, as he saw the scarlet masses pressing around Goumont, "we make our game. Where is Ney?" An aide-de-camp galloped off for the Marshal, who was close at hand. The Man, surveying Goumont with his glass, and occasionally looking intently at La Haie-Sainte, gradually approached to where I stood. A soldier of the battery lay dead on the ground before me—a veteran whom we all loved. Feeling that we should shortly get the order to advance, I resolved to secure some souvenir of Tampon, as we called him. I found a horn snuff-box in his hand, clenched in death. The Man happened to turn towards me, and observed the act.

'"Comrade, a pinch," he said, and I handed him the box—that box; look at it,' and the old soldier, the fire of foughten fields in his eyes, hung over it with tenderness as over a loved living object—'that box was in his fingers—out of it he took a pinch of snuff on the day of Mont St. Jean.'

'Did you see him after?'

'Not that day. We advanced on La Haie-Sainte ten minutes after and gave them a hail of hell-fire. Our heavy artillery crashed through their ranks like bolts of thunder. They shook; Ney seized the moment to bring our guns right into the enemy's position, but we had a ravine to traverse; our pieces of twelve settled down in the muddy rye, a regiment of infantry came up from the rear to cover us, but Wellington was quicker. He saw our difficulty and poured a host of dragoons in on us in the valley. They cut our traces, overturned our guns, sabred our men. But, sapristi! they paid for it—paid for it dearly. Our cuirassiers rushed to the rescue like a whirlwind and swept them from earth to the last man. Brave fellows they were! No, I did not see him after, until all Paris turned out, six-and-twenty years ago, to welcome his remains to the Church of the Invalides. You know his will, Monsieur O'Hara: "I desire that my dust may rest on the banks of the Seine, in the midst of the French people whom I loved so well."'

The enthusiastic young Irishman could not but be affected at this reminiscence of an era which appeals to all that is romantic in our nature, told, too, by one who was an actor in it, and who carried in his heart, still vivid and strong, the proud affection for Napoleon with which that genius of war inspired his followers to the humblest. Nor was his sole motive that of gratifying the captain when he demanded the horn-box for another pinch, and, to the exuberant delight of the old man, with it in his hand sung *Les Souvenirs du Peuple* of Béranger.

'Thanks, thanks, my young friend!' cried the captain, the tears streaming down his cheeks; 'what a happy evening!'

'But, captain, you don't enjoy yourself; you don't drink, you won't smoke. True, you told me there was a reason for

it.'

'Yes, and as we are together in free friendship, I'll tell you, my dear child, you who have sung such a beautiful song for the old soldier.'

But we must reserve the captain's story for another chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD BONAPARTIST'S STORY.

'WHEN I was young like you,' began the captain, 'I had my illusions. I came of a royalist family which had suffered much by the Revolution, and had stood up for the cause of the king as long as La Vendée was able to keep a square league of ground to itself or a square inch of its flag flying. But we had to give way; we could not conquer impossibilities: Fortune always sides with the big battalions, as the Man used to say. The domain passed from the hands of the Chauvins, and I, the heir of the house, was obliged to take service with those who had helped to uproot the family tree. I had no other alternative; my parents were dead; I, the only scion of the ancient stock left, owed my life to the care of my nurse, a brave peasant woman, who was married to a burly grenadier of the Republic. They were kind in their way to the young aristocrat, and they loved France. Poor Céline, to-day I could drop a tear over your quiet grass-covered grave down in Burgundy: and Tricot, too, he was a thorough soldier. He died on the retreat from Moscow the same day that Schramm—you know Schramm, who is president of an army commission here now—was made brigadier-general.

'Did you ever hear the story of his promotion?

'He was a colonel when we made that fatal invasion, and in one of the bloody fights on our retrograde march, fell, pierced by a bullet. The blood bubbled in hot gouts from his wound, but the tears came faster from his eyes. The Man saw him.

'"What, weeping!" he said. "Why do you cry?"

'"Because I'm going to die only a colonel," said Schramm.

'"We'll settle that," said Napoleon, and made him a brigadier-general on the spot. Schramm has not died since.

'But to return to myself. I showed a mathematical taste, and early was sent, at the expense of the commune in which Céline lived, to the Polytechnic School. They did not keep us long over our course in those times, and I was shortly appointed to a corps on active service. It was there I learned to love the Man who was then leading France to a higher eminence on the path of glory than she had ever reached. He was the idol of the army. I had my ambition, and I often recollected with a thrill of pride and hope that he, too, was a mathematician, and commenced his career as a subaltern of artillery. But, as I told you, I was only sub-lieutenant at Mont St. Jean, and that day finished the soldier's chances for that era in France—put a quencher on his aspirations. To one passion succeeds another. Our life is a series of agitations, coming changeful in aspect but regular in period as the tides of the sea—sometimes smooth and glistening under a bright sun, sometimes restless, sullen, heaving under the strong breath of the storm. To glory, in my breast, followed love. I had met the daughter of another Vendéan family in Paris, where she supported herself by giving lessons in music. Her mother received me (she had known my mother), and encouraged my little attentions to Caroline with her smiles. Alas; had I been rich, at that time, what happiness might not have been mine, what sorrows might not have been spared to her and me!'

Here the aged officer stopped and busied himself with his handkerchief about the region of the eyes.

'But, sir, an officer with us who has to live on his pay cannot afford himself the luxury of a wife. Caroline had no dowry, and I had no position. If we had espoused each other she would have had to do without a *trousseau*, and I certainly would not have been able to present her with a *corbeille*. We loved each other, and we parted—not without some sighing, and many wishes for our meeting again under happier circumstances. I was very fond of my cigar, and Caroline's mother detested smoking. It was a mania with her. She had an unaccountable, almost diseased, aversion to the habit. One evening, Caroline, out of play, induced me to light a cigar in the chamber while she was looking out of the window. I can never forget the fierce, pallid face with which her mother turned on me and ordered me to leave the room on the instant. It was only by a plentiful sprinkling of tears from Caroline that her heart was softened to accept my excuses.

'"It is his first fault, and I tempted him," said Caroline; "will you not give him absolution, mamma?"

After a while the mother relented, but said she would not admit me to the same position in her esteem again, unless I consented to accept the penance she would impose on me. The penance was never to smoke again. I promised. This was when the wreck of our army was being re-formed at Paris, under Louis XVIII., and the allies who had violated our capital were beginning to get confident on the news which each ship conveyed from St. Helena of the hastening end of the Man whom Sir Lowe was doing to death. There was no chance of promotion for us if he did not come back; for the soldiers who loved Him, his death would indeed be the setting of the sun of Austerlitz. I had long given up the expectation of that marshal's bâton which every conscript fancies he carries in his knapsack; but still I had the conviction that some chance of distinction would present itself, even under the pacific Restoration, that might lead me to a rank sufficient to maintain my beloved Caroline in comfort as my wife. My regiment was ordered to Metz. The night I parted from her I confided to her ear the idea that was before my mind, and she looked such a cheerful, hope-inspiring look from her large liquid eyes into mine as would have put fire into a breast of stone. It was the pure lustre of a fresh innocent love, and as earnest that I accepted it as sacred, I gave her my first and last kiss of holy affection. Her mother reminded me at the door of the promise I had made about smoking, and gave me a letter of introduction to a cousin of hers who was an officer in the garrison to which we were ordered. This cousin, as I learned from a comrade who knew him, was of a haughty, overbearing temper, and I was in no hurry to hand him my credentials. About a week after my arrival I was strolling about the fortification in the cool breezy twilight of a sultry day, thinking of my future and of my Caroline, and looking up to the stars in the mood of the poet, to whom the lover is so like. I tried to shape out, in the light clouds that were flitting across the heavens in white flakes, some clue to my fortune. There that pale star, which is so small and distant to-night, but will go on steadily increasing in brightness and size until it attains its zenith, is the star of my destiny. At the instant I gazed on it a wanton scud shut

it out from view; I tried to laugh, but I couldn't help feeling as if it were a presentiment of coming gloom. Then I turned towards a bank of cloud rising fantastically on the edge of the far blue horizon, and in fancy pictured to myself that a pair of jagged peaks projecting from its surface were the epaulettes of a general which awaited me; and, still looking, until my eyes had almost got as visionary as my mind, I framed out of a loose irregular mass of fleecy vapour the beamy figure of a woman, whom I had persuaded my senses into identifying as the genius of glory.

'"It is our Napoleon who comes back to France," said I; "the soldier will have his meat to carve again."

'At the moment a tall figure passed, and recalled me from my dreaming. I walked on, but somehow I was melancholic. I couldn't shake off the impression which that star, blotted out of sight as I looked, had made on my mind. I put my hand in the pocket of my uniform and involuntarily took something out of it. It was my cigar-case. Involuntarily still, I opened it—there was one cigar left. I was depressed in spirits, thinking sadly—and smoking, you know, kills thought.

'The bribe was strong. I forgot my promise to Caroline's mother, or encouraged myself to look upon it as a mere puerile engagement to humour a woman's whim, and lit the cigar. Scarcely did the red fire take at its end, and the first puff of smoke escape from my lips, when it was pulled out of my mouth and cast on the ground, and a tall man stood frowning before me, as well as I could distinguish in the dim light. My hand immediately flew to my sword-hilt, and I put myself in an attitude of defence.

'"How dare you smoke here? don't you know the magazine is beside you?" said the stranger, in a harsh voice.

'"I did not know it," I answered; "nor will I allow any fellow to make the fact known to me in that brutal manner."

'"Fellow!" and the stranger laughed; "*ma foi*, that's amusing; and the cockchafer has his hand on his butter-blade. Is your honour wounded, my gallant sir?"

'"Your body will be wounded shortly if you don't endeavour to civilize your tongue," I answered, enraged.

'"I positively think," said he, coolly twirling his moustaches, "that the Gascon would fight. Does your fancy run on being impaled like a frog? If so, follow me, Sir Braggart," and he moved off.

'I followed, wrath boiling in every vein. He stopped when he came to an angle in the works, totally secure from observation from any side. The moon burst out in full splendour; he cast a look upward, made a jesting remark on the politeness of the higher powers in lighting folk to kingdom come; and, throwing off his cloak, I discovered him to be a staff-officer of rank by the uniform underneath.

'"Has your courage failed yet?" he tauntingly asked, as he dexterously detached his sword from the scabbard.

'I was too vexed to speak. I said nothing, but fixed myself in the best position I knew to receive his expected attack.

'"Ha! Is that it?" he exclaimed, "think of your *maître d'armes*, and recommend your soul to God, if you believe in Him."

'At the last word he sprang forward, made a feint at my left leg, but carried his weapon round in a circle in the one swing, and was bringing it down on my sword-arm. But I knew the trick of old, and instead of attempting to parry the feint, I turned my body aside to the left, and held my weapon extended with a quick lunge to the front. He ran in straight upon it with a force that made it shiver. His sword fell from his grasp; his hands were thrown up over his head; he fell back, gave one convulsive shake of the limbs, and his life's blood gushed over the lips on which the taunts that brought him to his fate were yet trembling.

'I do not know how I found my way to my quarters on that dreadful night. The next thing I recollect was rising in the morning exhausted as if after the delirium of a fever, and descending feebly to my breakfast at the café opposite. A knot of officers were eagerly conversing outside the door.

'"Chauvin," said a comrade of mine from amongst them, "have you presented that letter yet?"

'I shook my head.

'"You may spare yourself the trouble; your friend was found at daybreak in a corner of the ramparts, dead as a burst shell, run through the right lung."

'I shuddered and felt as if my spine were turned to ice. Feigning urgent private business, I sought leave of absence, and flew to Paris to acquaint the mother of her whom I looked upon as my *fiancée* with the dreadful secret. She heard me, never changed colour, said she believed me; his conduct was in keeping with his character, which was head-strong; she did not blame me for killing him—it was done in self-defence; but, added she in the end, this would not have happened if you had kept your promise not to smoke. "The man who cannot keep his word shall be no suitor for my daughter's hand—never again approach me or mine——"

'"But Caroline whom I love," I cried.

'"Whom *you* love," she said, in a cutting voice—"there, there, take your mistress to your breast," and she cast an old cigar-case at my feet as she shut the door in my face.

'I never saw Caroline again. I returned to my regiment, said nothing about the fatal duel—nay, even wore mourning for my adversary, who was not very much regretted. He left after him one pretty boy, a love-child; I was not able to adopt him myself, but I watched over him and got him admitted into the regiment as *enfant de troupe*—a brave, truthful, but hot-headed, passionate boy. He died a soldier's death at the taking of the Smala of Abd-el-Kader, under Lamoricière. His daughter has his candour and generosity, without his ebullitions of temper. She's somewhat giddy, perhaps, but very good-natured. Don't you think so?'

'How should I know, captain?' said O'Hara, who had been a patient listener to this moving story.

'Ah, me! How an old man's brain wanders! Do you know,' he continued, after a little hesitation, 'I feel the better for having opened my bosom to you, my young friend, and I don't care for making half-confidences. I may trust your discretion, I think,' and he smiled amiably. 'Berthe, my Song-bird, the sunbeam in my house, is the daughter of the boy, the grand-daughter of him I had the misfortune to slay at Metz. No, not to slay,' he added quickly, correcting himself, 'I did not slay him; he rushed on his own death.'

'Did Caroline's mother ever divulge the secret of your confession?' inquired O'Hara.

'Never, oh no! She was one of the old nobility, the mirror of honour. She would not look upon any casualty in an affair of the kind other than as a matter of ordinary course, even of professional necessity, in the life of a soldier.'

'And you never saw Caroline? Did she learn anything about it, do you think?'

Captain Chauvin sighed.

'Sometimes I think she did, but I am sure she forgave me if she heard all as it happened. She was too good in herself to think evil of anyone. Ah! my dear sir, she was a woman. The sex, the sex! we, soldiers and men of feeling, ought to have no commerce with it, but be let walk our ways straightly.'

O'Hara was fiddling with a certain parcel which he had stolen from his bosom.

'She married a rich politician, one of the damn—— pardon me, my dear sir, one of the bourgeoisie class, and as Louis Philippe was king, the bourgeoisie was everything, and Caroline's husband was a favourite and a great man. I think she married him out of duty to her mother, to save her declining days from poverty. When Louis Philippe was sent to the right-about, the mean bourgeois politician went to the right-about too, and his fortune with him. Poor Caroline had died in giving birth to daughters, twins. Luckily, their nurse, one of the people, had a heart; she kept a wine-shop at Choisy-le-Roi, and she took care of the two poor orphans: yes, they were orphans, for that shabby Orleans rascal, who skirted, was never a real living man, nor his master either. Damn—— pardon me, sir, but Louis Philippe was no king—he was a grocer, sir, a grocer.'

'At best he was a usurper, but a singularly mild one,' remarked O'Hara.

'We shall not talk of him, sir,' said the captain; 'but now let me complete an old man's confidences. I adopted one of those twins, she was so like her mother in manner; she is my housekeeper. If Berthe is my Song-bird, it is Caroline who keeps the nest tidy.'

'That superb brunette!'

'Ah! you think her superb,' cried the aged officer, pleased. 'Superb—that's right; she is the born image of her mother.'

'And the other,' pursued O'Hara eagerly, a dark suspicion taking hold of his imagination.

A shade passed over the old man's face. 'Ah! I know nothing of her. She was her father's daughter, not her mother's. She preferred the noisy wine-shop to my quiet home, and three years ago she disappeared from our sight altogether. But the night waxes late. I must be going. So you haven't seen your friend since?'

'No, and I have anxiously desired to see him, to clear off some obligations I am under to him.'

'Well, again good-night. I pray you don't be such a stranger as he; but sometimes call up to Victor Chauvin's humble quarters. It gladdens his spirit to converse with youth.'

O'Hara gave assurance that he would esteem it a happiness and an honour to visit one with whom he had so many kindred sympathies.

'It grows late' said the officer, 'and my pair of pretty birds will be anxiously looking out for me if I delay. Good-night, my child, good-night.'

And as O'Hara escorted Captain Chauvin to the door, Pat accompanied them, but only with a valedictory bark. The truth is he was too well fed, and he was not used to it. With dogs, as with men, high feeding begets indolence, and the indolent are not over-polite.

CHAPTER VII.

FRIEZECOAT AT HOME.

The morning after Captain Chauvin had admitted the young Irishman into his confidences was wet and gloomy. At half-past ten a.m. O'Hara was seated in front of his dressing-table engaged in an unpleasant operation entailed by the usages of modern society, that of shaving himself. He wore moustaches and mouche, but fashion in the French capital necessitated the removal of the whiskers, and, razor in hand, skimming over a surface of lathered skin, he peered into the toilet-glass, when a loud tap resounded on the panel of the door. Before he had time to make answer the lock was turned, the door thrown open, and the applicant for admittance had entered with heavy step. O'Hara turned round and stared at him.

It was the very man whom he had been wishing to see, the stranger, whose name was not Beelzebub, clad in the same long frieze coat, the skirts of which were met by spatterdashes, which totally shut out his trousers from view. His boots were covered with mud, his face perspiring from exercise; he took off his hat and sat down abruptly by the table, on which a pile of loose journals, letters, and other literary matter was strewn.

'Welcome,' said the interrupted shaver with cheerfulness (although he had gashed his jaw), advancing towards his visitor.

'Stay where you are, Mr. Manus O'Hara, and finish your shaving. Passing by this way—thought I'd call in to see you.'

O'Hara regarded him with a broad stare of wonderment. How had this stranger found out his name and lodging? His looks must have conveyed the questions.

'How do I know your name and where to find you? you would ask,' said the stranger. 'Spiritual clairvoyance. Shave yourself.'

O'Hara smiled, said nothing, but determined to deal with the humorist in his own coin, and resumed his position before the glass.

Friezecoat commenced fumbling amid the letters and papers on the table. O'Hara saw the movement reflected in the mirror, turned round, and said calmly:

'There are private documents there.'

'You have no right to leave them exposed,' retorted the stranger imperturbably.

'Most of my visitors are gentlemen; at least, in their habits,' said O'Hara with quiet irony.

'Not all,' said the stranger as quietly.

'So I see.'

'For instance, I'm not a gentleman—don't want to be one,' said the stranger. 'I'm content to be a man. Finish your

shaving.'

O'Hara looked at him, undecided whether to lose temper or laugh; finally, again turned to the glass and resumed the operation on his beard with a studious show of deliberateness. He could see, however, with pleasure, in the reflection of the table, that the stranger had not chosen to meddle a second time with the loose manuscripts before him. After removing the last wanton hair, disburdening his jaws of the accumulated lather, wiping his cheek with the towel, softly dusting the irritated flesh with powder, carefully drying the razor and returning it to its case, he turned round in his seat, faced his whimsical visitor, and said deliberately:

'I have finished.'

'Come away,' said the stranger, and he descended the stairs. 'You must accompany me to the wild beast's den. I have something to say to you.'

O'Hara followed him; they entered a *voiture*, and the stranger gave the word, to the Rue des Fossés St. Victor. The street which was called Loustarol in the revolutionary times corresponds with the Rue des Fossés St. Victor of to-day. It lies in the thick network of schools behind the church of St. Etienne du Mont, between the thoroughfares named in honour of the great French mathematician, Déscartes, and the great Swedish naturalist, Linnæus. Its site was formerly occupied by the cloisters of Philippe Auguste, and here stood the convent of *Les Dames Anglaises* and the Scotch College. Even still there is a scholarly sedateness in the neighbourhood. The house to which they were driven was entered by a long-walled avenue with prison-like wickets at intervals, ending in an open iron gate, which permitted a view of a blooming flower-garden. To the left, just before reaching this gate, was a door painted *Pension Bourgeoise*, the sort of establishment in Paris which corresponds with our boarding-house. Friezecoat raised the latch and led in his companion.

A narrow courtyard, weakly vines trained along the wall on one side and a range of rooms destined for lodgers on the other, conducted to the Pension, which was a tall, narrow house, surmounted by a belvedere. A few noisy fowls in a preternatural state of activity promenaded the yard; a lazy dog, preternaturally lazy, too lazy even to bark, lay curled in a corner. But the grand feature of the pension was a one-storied wooden house, such as are frequently to be met with in Switzerland, containing two bedrooms underneath and two in the upper floor, which was approached by a staircase from the outside, prolonged into a balcony, which ran in front of the structure under the shelter of the over-hanging eaves. Friezecoat lived in this châlet. As they drew near, the cock, at the van of his plumed seraglio, crowed like a proud French cock; the dog moved his head and gave an indolent growl.

'Let us go aloft,' said Friezecoat, stepping on the staircase.

'I pay for these two rooms on the top, I tenant but one,' continued he; 'I have the staircase to myself, so that I can be isolated when I like.'

'You are comfortably situated,' said O'Hara, glancing round the room into which they had entered, which was a square cleanly-papered bed-chamber plainly furnished. A timepiece ticked on the mantel-shelf under a neat mirror, a secretaire stood between it and the window, which was furnished with *persiennes*, adding to the general appearance of rusticity. A book-case, over which was disposed a trophy of pistols, foils, and boxing-gloves, and having on either side prints of Protais' celebrated sketches of the Chasseurs de Vincennes at work, *Avant l'Attaque* and *Après le Combat*, was fixed against the wall directly opposite the door. A fauteuil, four rush-bottomed chairs, and a commode completed the inventory of the furniture. A screened alcove concealed the bed, and a nook in the same side of the room was cut off by a partition and apportioned to the services of ablution.

'The view is not splendid,' said the stranger, seating himself in the fauteuil and motioning O'Hara to a rush-bottomed chair: 'that wall with the high trellis confines it; outside is the playground of some sort of an institution. I like to hear the buzz of the boys amusing themselves; it brings back my youth; then the green trees, as I see them waving through the lattice, call up the country. Altogether,' with a tone of enthusiasm in his voice, 'I like the shanty; it's a bit of Switzerland in this Paris.'

'You go in for muscularity,' hinted O'Hara, glancing at the trophy of arms.

'I have found it necessary in my career,' replied the stranger quietly. 'Smoke?'

'Yes.'

The stranger brought out a superbly-mounted Turkish pipe from a drawer, and handed it to his visitor. 'Will you try hasheesh?'

O'Hara declined.

'I like it now and again. It lifts me into an ideal world—makes me forget the real. Drink?'

O'Hara accepted.

The stranger produced a dust-covered bottle with a yellow seal from the same drawer as before, and placed it before his companion. 'Comes from Pfungst Brothers,' was the only recommendation he ventured; but that was enough. The bottle was fitted with a false neck, to which a siphon, closing hermetically, was attached, so that the champagne could be sipped glass by glass, if desired, without loss of first freshness and that titillating effervescence which makes its charm.

O'Hara drank.

'Drink again. 'Twill sweep the cobwebs from your throat.'

'Do you ever feel lonely?' demanded Friezecoat, after a pause.

'Yes, sometimes very much. Like most Irishmen, I am changeful in my moods; to-day I find myself in the height of good spirits, to-morrow in the lowest depths of depression.'

'That is because you are not in your native land—have no home here—no interior. It is not well to be alone.'

The pair continued smoking. They smoked as connoisseurs, enjoying each particular puff, following it with dreamy eyes as it ascended, until it lost itself in gradually widening rings of lessening haze, and they embraced the stems of their pipes for a new pull with gloating lips.

'Do you like the furniture of this room?' abruptly inquired the stranger.

'Yes,' replied O'Hara; 'rich, not gaudy, as Shakespeare says.'

'See any want?'

'Not particularly.'

'Ah! there is one piece of furniture particularly wanting,' said the stranger, with the manner of a man who endeavours to master bashfulness by an exaggerated show of good-humoured, rude self-possession.

'What's that?'

'A wife!'

O'Hara turned his eyes from the pipe to Friezecoat, and Friezecoat—the gruff, blunt-mannered, muscularly-educated Friezecoat—was positively embarrassed, blushed like a callow boy.

'Were you ever in love?' said Friezecoat, probably with a sly view of diverting the enemy's attention by a movement in flank.

The answer was an involuntary sigh.

'Is that it? Do you believe in love at first sight?'

'I believe in anything where love exists; it makes fools of the wisest of us.'

'That's right; and now that the cat's out of the bag I may as well tell you that I have fallen in love at first sight, and that's what I have to say to you.'

O'Hara removed his pipe, and gave a long, low, significant whistle, which reached even unto the dog in the yard, and stimulated him into an inquisitive yelp, which might have been heard had it not been stifled in its birth.

'Who has glamoured you—a Frenchwoman?'

'Yes; Chauvin's grand-daughter.'

'The little Song-bird?'

'The same; and I intend to go to-morrow—no, perhaps this very night, to make a formal proposal for her hand to the old soldier.'

'In that instance, I believe, I am justified in telling you what I know of her history, as Captain Chauvin told it to me himself,' said O'Hara, laying down his pipe. Simply and briefly he proceeded to narrate to his companion the story which had been confided to him. 'So now you are the best judge,' he finished, 'whether you are justified in offering your hand to the daughter of a—a—to a woman who will bring a bend sinister to your escutcheon.'

'Who will bring cheerfulness to my fireside, you meant to say, sir,' said Friezecoat, with a certain tone of displeasure in his voice. 'Bend sinister! There's your virtuous, charitable world, that would exact penalty of an innocent child for the sin of a progenitor who was mouldered in his tomb before she was born. Bend sinister be blowed! Thank God, I'm burdened with no escutcheon to put it on. There's the coat of arms of the O'Hoolohan Roe,' stretching out his open palm, 'and there are its supporters,' pointing to the trophy and opening a drawer, filled with thick rouleaux of yellow Napoleons—'steel on one side and gold on the other.'

After finishing the bottle in conjunction, they parted in good fellowship. We were near forgetting that O'Hara mentioned something about paying one hundred francs for which he was indebted, but the democrat thrust back the purse which was produced, and said, 'Whenever it suits you;' and as it didn't happen just then to suit the aristocrat, he returned the purse unopened to his pocket. There was not a syllable more of argument, if we except a friendly quotation which Friezecoat sent as a parting shot from his balcony to his retiring friend: 'Hallo! Mr. O'Hara—

'When Adam dolve, and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?'

followed by a loud laugh.

'The O'Hoolohan Roe!' said O'Hara to himself, as he lingered at the gate of the Pension; 'that's what he called himself. Who the deuce can the O'Hoolohan Roe be? I have heard of the M'Carthy More, of the O'Conor Don, and of the O'Donoghue of the Glens; but never of him before.'

In the interests of our readers, we, too, must endeavour to find out who the O'Hoolohan Roe really was.

CHAPTER VIII.

POPPING THE QUESTION.

On the following day, true to his word, the O'Hoolohan Roe might be seen pulling the bell at the door of No. 39, in the Rue de la Vieille Estrapade. He was elaborately got up in a suit of brand-new garments of blue cloth, which did not fit his short, stout form too nicely. He had bought them at a cheap slop warehouse, and doubtless paid more than he would have been asked at one of the modest, humdrum establishments where clothes are made to wear as well as sell. His hat was new and glistened in the sunshine, for the day was one of those pet days which surprise us in early spring; in his gloved hands (yes, absolutely gloved) he flourished a silver-headed Malacca cane; on his broad breast were ranged in rainbow row, under a nosegay, perhaps a little too large, the vari-coloured ribbons of innumerable decorations. He marched up the staircase with a firm, a pretentiously firm step, until he reached the corridor, off which lay the apartment of Captain Chauvin; and then he stopped and listened. The tinkle-tinkle of a piano, lightly touched on the treble, reached his ears through the keyhole. He halted and blushed—searched in the back-pockets of his new coat for his handkerchief—drew it out and vehemently rubbed his face. His face looked hot; the application of the handkerchief seemed to make it hotter. When he put back his handkerchief, a waft of perfume rested on the air. Scarcely had he restored it to his pocket, when his hand sought the pocket again. What! can he be going to display it anew? How fidgety the man looks! No; that is not the loud-patterned square of cambric, three horses' heads printed on its corner, which he brings forth this time, but—it can hardly be believed—an oval pocket-mirror. He inspects his hot, red face in its disk, goes through the motion of raising his shirt-collar, brushes back his hair, replaces his hat on his head, and the mirror in his pocket, and coughs.

'Amour, amour, quand tu nous tiens.'

What it is to be in love!

Hist!—he speaks. Is he formulating the compliments he is about to make? No; he soliloquizes, and in what a curt,

unnatural voice—a shamefaced voice! Listen:

'I'm a fool. Rather lead a forlorn hope!'

And then he raps at the door with a desperate audacity, with the air of a man who had nerved himself to something heroic.

The door swung back on its hinges, and the tall brunette, with the proud melancholy face, she who was like to the dead Marguerite, stood before him. She did not know him at first, so completely had love and the new suit of clothes transformed him.

'Good-morning, ma'amselle; how is grandfather?'

Old Chauvin, who was seated in his armchair beside Berthe at the piano, rose at the sound of the voice, and, advancing to the door, grasped him by both hands and drew him into the middle of the room.

'Welcome, welcome, my Irish friend; I was afraid you had forgotten us. I was with Monsieur O'Hara, and he did not know your address, or I would have called on you in person to render you my thanks for your present to my little Song-bird. See, she was practising one of your plaintive airs as you entered. What a world of sadness is in your Irish music! It is like the sighing of the wind through a lonely forest in the night-time.'

The O'Hoolohan Roe approached the piano. A richly-bound volume of Gaelic music, a harp rising in golden relief from its ground of green on the cover, lay before Berthe. The page at which it was open was headed, in illuminated letters, *Eiblin-a-ruin*. The white neck of the maiden suffused with a delicate pink, such a pink as we see sometimes colouring the sea-shell, at the undisguised glance of admiration of the Irishman. She tossed up her pretty head, looking so classic under its canopy of chestnut hair, and regarded him with frank eyes as he began to speak. It was too much for the O'Hoolohan Roe; he was not proof against woman's gaze; he got embarrassed, stuttered in the middle of some phrase of congratulation about the correctness of her taste, and finally fell back *hors de combat*. To add to his confusion, there was a traitorous crash as he flopped down in a chair—the hand-mirror in his back-pocket was broken! She followed him with an arch, wicked smile; her brown eyes wilfully sparkled, and a line of ivory showed itself between the cherry bordering of her lips.

It was a critical moment. But the *esprit Français* is not wanting in ingenuity. It is equal to every occasion.

'Shall I play this beautiful air for our kind friend, grandfather? It is a poor way to show my gratitude, but it is the best and only way I have.'

The O'Hoolohan Roe opened a sentence which, we dare say, might have been very eloquent had it been completed, but unluckily a severe fit of coughing arrested him mid-way, and necessitated the production of the perfumed handkerchief.

'Do, dear,' said Captain Chauvin.

'I am in love with it; I think I could almost play it in the dark.'

The O'Hoolohan Roe seemed as if he would have no particular objection to a nether darkness—a darkness that would shut out his presence even from himself—falling on the scene.

Berthe commenced playing. The spirit of music lives and moves and has its being in the Gaelic air, and she played as one who felt, admired, and held communion with that spirit—not with her fingers merely, but with her soul, a beautiful, sensitive, emotional soul. The chords thrilled like sentient creatures, and voiced their melodious plaints, now one by one, now in murmuring volume, until the very atmosphere was languid with the melting sweetness, and the pathetic notes stole out by the flowers and the enraptured throstle in the window to soar upwards to the clouds.

The O'Hoolohan Roe listened entranced. As the last note died away he grew more fidgety than ever, and moved about uneasily in his chair. The perfumed handkerchief was scarcely ever out of his hand. Evidently, he was endeavouring to screw his courage to the sticking-place.

The brunette, ostensibly busy over an embroidery-frame, watched him with an amused look. Berthe toyed with the keys of the piano.

'Captain Chauvin,' he began at last, 'I have something important to say to you—something private.'

The brunette rose and left for the inner room. Berthe was preparing to follow her, but the Irishman, whose courage fortunately appeared to re-assert itself as the emergency neared, interposed.

'Stay, ma'amselle,' he said; ''tis of you I would talk; perhaps I may want your assistance.'

She sank back in her seat with a puzzled look, regarded him a moment, and reddened with the characters of virgin modesty. Why? The quick instinct of woman had divined the meaning of his visit in his countenance. She was not displeased; who could be displeased at discovering that they are loved? As Berthe turned her eyes from this robust, square-built man, in the palmy vigour of his manhood, and felt that he, so strangely weak and confused at sight of her, did indeed truly, passionately love her with the force of his sanguine temperament, there was a pit-a-pat under her bosom which made it visibly undulate; the blood rose to tropic heat in her veins and poured its tell-tale tide in rosy current over her neck and arms. She was loved—ineffable happiness for woman! Could she help loving in return? There is a yearning in every female breast for sympathy, a sense of void to be filled. Her naïve purity could not refuse the gift she had long desired, long dreamed of; she filled with a gladness which she averted her face to conceal.

'Captain Chauvin,' resumed the Irishman, 'you have been a soldier.'

The old Frenchman bowed acquiescence.

'So have I. You have fought under many generals?'

'I fought under the greatest master of war France ever produced, or the world ever crowned with glory!' and the aged voice swelled and the aged eye brightened.

'Did you ever remark that, while some would be cautiously laying their parallels and making all the preparations of military science to take a fortified town, others would trust to luck, rush to the attack at once, and seize the citadel by storm? The gods often favour audacity.'

'The audacity of genius—such audacity as Napoleon possessed. Oh! I admire the brave man who rushes forward boldly to his aim.'

The O'Hoolohan Roe was getting more at ease; a smile might even be detected lurking at the corners of his mouth.

'The soldier's life is not always happy, captain; the camp and the barrack have their excitement, but there is a—a—

a sort of an emptiness.'

'Alas! yes,' and the old man sighed and carried his hand to his face. 'Alas! yes'—he brushed away something from the neighbourhood of his eye; 'these pestering flies, how early in the season they come this year! Here is one has got under my lashes and brings the water down my cheeks. We were speaking about the soldier's life. Have you ever read Michelet's treatise on Love?'

The voice was broken.

'Never.'

The O'Hoolohan was beginning to be curiously fidgety again.

'I have been reading it these latter days. A wise, affectionate book written by a wise, affectionate man. It was in it I found an Indian maxim referred to which says *la femme c'est la maison*: "the wife is the home." There, sir, you have the whole philosophy of the soldier's unsatisfying life. He has no home; he wants the wife to make it.'

The old man buried his face in his hands.

There was a long pause, during which Berthe, agitated at the turn the conversation had taken, could count the throbbing of her pulse. Her grandfather, no longer able to dissemble his anguish, silently nursed his grief in the cradle of memory. The suitor, who had been craftily leading up the dialogue to the avowal he wished, yet feared to make, if his face were index, was a prey to a violent mental struggle. At length, with an effort, which made itself physically perceptible in a jump on his chair, he broke the silence:

'Captain Chauvin, you're listening. About this private business I would speak with you.'

The old man raised his head.

'You have a grand-daughter.'

Berthe tried to rise from her seat, but found herself unable. Poor, pretty creature, she had miscalculated her strength. She had yet to learn that there are other feelings that can rob the limbs of their functions than terror or ecstasy of joy.

The Irishman resumed:

'I want a wife. *Voilà toute l'affaire!*'

Sure never was a maiden wooed in such a fashion; sure never was a hand so demanded. 'Faint heart never won fair lady,' saith the proverb, and there is truth in it. The old man looked from his visitor to Berthe, and from Berthe to his visitor.

'You have an open face,' he said at length; 'you have been a soldier, and I trust a soldier's honour not to betray the confidence of a comrade. I feel that I am getting old, and my Song-bird will want a protector. You would guard her ——'

'As the apple of my eye.'

'You can guard her?'

'I would not lead those I love on the path of misery.'

'Seek your answer from the child herself; I can read it already.'

Gently the strong man approached the girl, reverently almost, as one would approach a sanctuary. He laid his hand on the soft wavy surface of her chestnut hair, and in a voice whose soldierly firmness was modulated to gentlest coaxing persuasion he whispered:

'Darling, I wait on thee. Wilt thou accept the hand of an honest man? 'Tis rough, but there is no stain of dishonour upon it.'

'*J'accepte!*' murmured the girl in reply, and raised her face aglow with passionate trustfulness to his, and as he imprinted the kiss of betrothal on those candid lips, innocent of contact with man's lips before, the door of the inner room opened, and the brunette, who had been reared with Berthe, worn out probably with waiting for her little friend, stood transfixed, a picture of amazement, on its threshold.

CHAPTER IX.

A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.

On the day following the events detailed in our last chapter, O'Hara was seated in his chamber, hard at work at his desk, when a visitor announced himself at the door. It was the O'Hoolohan Roe—in the old suit.

'Take a seat—scribbling away for the bare life, as you see. Just finished.'

'I've come to ask you a favour. I presume you'll grant it.'

'Certainly, always presuming that it is such as a gentleman can grant.'

'Still harping on the old string.'

'Sir,' said O'Hara, getting annoyed, 'I have the misfortune to a certain extent to be your debtor; but I am not your valet. Here, take back the hundred francs you lent me, and we shall speak on more equal terms,' holding out his purse.

'Did I ever ask you for it?'

'I insist on your taking it.'

'If I do, I'm blest if I don't give it to the first beggar I meet on the highway.'

'That as you like, sir. I'm not a beggar—nor yet a barbarian.'

'Ha, ha, ha! That's really good. Now, tell me, who should lose his temper? Here, I take the money and beg your pardon. I didn't think you were so thin-skinned.'

'Thin-skinned! Thank you for that expression.'

'What better could you expect from a barbarian?'

O'Hara could not resist a smile.

'Well, now,' continued his visitor, 'that you're getting into better humour I'll try and put on my good manners. The favour I'm going to ask of you is not much; but it's hardly fair to ask it of you without telling you who and what I am. Would you like to hear my history?'

'Candidly, I would.'

'Then, attend,' said his visitor, assuming a more serious air, and after a short pause, in which he seemed to be running over the hoards of memory, he thus commenced:

'My life is briefly told. It has been a hard life, a life of struggling, written in plain black and white, and as such I'll tell it to you. I haven't the genius of a romancer to make it picturesque. I was born in Cork——'

'The city?'

'Yes, the beautiful city.'

'Some of our most eminent literary worthies came from Cork.'

'Well, I'm not one of them—my father was, though, in a way. He kept a classical and mathematical school which was well supported, and called himself a philomath, whatever that meant. My mother was a big-hearted, kind woman who never sent a beggar empty-handed from her door, and believed her husband the most learned man the world ever saw. But if she worshipped her husband, she adored her son.'

'She was a woman,' sententiously remarked O'Hara.

'That's it, I suppose,' resumed O'Hoolohan with a sigh. 'Of course she must have been,' he added, after thinking a little, as if a new revelation had dawned upon him. 'Anyhow, he wasn't as good a boy as he ought to have been, and 'tis sorry he is to-day to have to own it. Well, it's no use crying over spilt milk. To get on with my tale. I raked and I rambled—I may as well make a clean breast of it—and in the end I took a liking to a cavalry uniform I saw in Ballincollig, and I 'listed. My father paid the smart-money, my mother cried, and I was lugged home. Then they bound me to a saddler. After a month I 'listed again: he bought me off again, and the old game of tears from the mother and promises of repentance from the hopeful youth, and stern majesty from the father, was repeated. Six months after, the quicksilver got up in my constitution again. I determined not to be balked this time, so I went to the old fellow, said I was going to 'list, and wouldn't be bought out.

'"Mother'll buy you out," says he.

'"I'll 'list again," says I; "see who'll get tired of that trick first."

'"She prevailed on you to leave off your soldiering notions twice before," said he again.

'"The third time has the charm," was my answer.

'He reflected awhile: "Well, if you will be a soldier, I suppose it's wrong to bar such a fine fellow the chance of getting a bullet in his head."

'"Oh!" said I gaily, "the man that is born to be hanged will never be shot."

'"Go your way, then," said he.

'"You'd better let me have that one-and-twenty shillings smart you used to pay, to drink your long life, and a healthy thirst for learning to the rising generation of Corkonians."

'If I hadn't ducked my head at the moment, I mightn't be here to tell you. He had levelled "lamb and salad," as he used to call his slapper—the superannuated bolt of an outhouse—at the place where my brains ought to have been. The good man had a temper of his own.'

'Is he no more?'

'These ten years. So is my mother, and if I ever go back to Ireland again, one of the businesses that will take me there is to put a stone over their graves. The regiment which I joined was one of the medium cavalry, and my knowledge of saddlery stood me in good stead. Because of it I got promoted, which was not an ordinary piece of luck, for the corps was an English one, and a Paddy had little chance of the stripes anywhere except on his back. It was in the Tangiers Horse I learned to be a rebel and a democrat. To see young spooneys, fresh from their mother's apron-strings, spooneys not able to grow a beard, hemming and hawing on a parade-ground, and strutting about in command of old soldiers that were black with powder before they were born! It sickened me, I tell you Pshaw! All men are equal.'

'As all the fingers of our hand are of the same length,' quietly observed O'Hara.

The democratic dragoon did not regard the interruption, but continued:

'It was during the Repeal Agitation I enlisted, and our regiment never left the shores of England. We moved about from Manchester to Sheffield, and from Sheffield to York, but never too far from Ireland. I watched the excitement as it grew, and waited the moment till it would come to blows. I was an Irishman before I was a soldier, thought I, and I'll never wear a sabre against my country. I went to the colonel and demanded my discharge. I had saved enough in the saddlery workshop to pay for it.

'"Can't give any men their discharge now, especially a useful man like you."

'My resolution was taken on the spot. "All right, sir," I said; "I suppose I must put up with the disappointment."

'That night I deserted and put a letter with the money I had saved to buy myself out in the Post Office, and started for this city. I was always anxious to see foreign parts. I soon ran through my rhino, and then, although I couldn't speak the language, the trade I had at my fingers' ends stood my friend. But the old passion grew on me, and I joined the Foreign Legion in the French Service. I campaigned four years among the Kabyles in Algeria, and then, the Crimean War breaking out, I was taken as volunteer into the battalion of ours that went out with the Army of the East. I served through the awful winters before Sebastopol, served from the Alma to the Tchernaya, and came back with an honourable discharge, and not a scratch on my body. I stopped in Paris again awhile—I make this city my harbour of refuge, the place where I put in to refit always—but the Lombardy campaign of '59 broke out. I didn't care to enter into another engagement under the tricolour—it was too long—so I applied for a commission in a guerrilla corps in the Italian Service, and they were glad to take me on. We finished Austria at the double-quick; I was into the thick of the whole bloody six weeks' work from Turbigo to Solferino, and came off with the medal for military distinction and a sabre-cut on my left elbow. I laid up for awhile, nursing my wound and spending my money in old Paris. In 1860 I was in harness again, but this time a free-lance. I was one of the thousand of Garibaldi, landed with him at Marsala, marched with him through Palermo, crossed over with him to the mainland, fought by his side

at the Volturno, and entered Naples in his triumphal procession on the Via Toledo, after he had driven out Bombalino, the dirty Bourbon.'

'Why, you have been a regular soldier of fortune! What a lot of fighting you have seen!'

'There is more to come, on the other side of the ocean. After a short stay in Paris again, I left from Havre by the *Pereire* for New York; didn't like it, and travelled down South to Carolina. I was there when the first shot was fired at Sumter, and I threw in my fortunes with the Palmetto flag.'

'I wonder at a democrat doing that,' remarked O'Hara.

'Oh! you are of those who imagine the North was fighting to put down slavery in that war,' said his visitor.

'Not entirely, but I'd expect an Irish democrat would range him under the Stars and Stripes.'

'And I might have expected that the natural place for an Irish rebel to have ranged himself was on the side of the "rebels," as they were called. But to cut that matter short, it was very much a question of locality with most Irishmen.'

'I am satisfied. Go on.'

'There is not far to go now. I'm nearly at the end of my tether. I got a captain's command in the cavalry, served under General Stuart, and left a colonel, but broken-down in health, spirits and purse, like most of the noble fellows who strove to lift on high the bonnie blue flag. Fortunately I had secured some money behind me here in Paris before I had left for America—I had always an eye to the main chance in my campaigning, and had been able to save enough to sign myself *rentier*—my annuity had been accumulating in my absence, and I found myself comparatively well off. I have been gathering health in the two years since, and now I sometimes itch for work again. I should embark for Mexico, to join the guerrillas, but that I scruple fighting against my old comrades of Africa, the Crimea, and Italy. Sentimental, isn't it?'

'No; on the contrary, a quite healthy feeling, and I respect you for it,' said O'Hara.

'Well, I have told you my history.'

'Without telling me your name.'

'You knew that already. I dropped it the other night casually in the heat of conversation.'

'And, pray, how did you discover mine?'

'Nothing simpler in the world. You remember the famous old coat of yours that the dog carried from the Morgue. Your last card fell out of it.'

'How did you know it was my card?'

'It was wrapped in tissue-paper. Men are not in the habit of keeping their neighbours' cards with so much care.'

O'Hara gave a long low whistle.

'And now that I have told you so much about *my*self, will you answer me a question about *your*self?' resumed O'Hoolohan.

'You know my conditions.'

'Well, then, why were you so poor when I first met you?'

'I will answer you truly. Because I haven't self-control and firmness of mind enough to keep money when I get it—in a word, because I'm an Irishman. I receive a monthly allowance, and, as I wrote to a friend the other day, the first week in the month I am the King of Yvetot, the second comes good resolution on the heel of terrible reaction, the third is my week of work and philosophy, and the fourth——'

'Aye, the fourth?'

'Why, in the fourth I generally think of throwing myself off the Pont Neuf.'

'Ha! and I came upon you at the close of your fourth week?'

'That's just it.'

'Alas!' said O'Hoolohan, rising, 'that is one of our national failings. We never think of to-morrow. I had it myself, but the discipline of the barrack-yard made me methodical and gave me habits of order that grew into my nature. If I hadn't some foresight when I had the means of earning money; I would be in debt to-day and the debtor is a slave. I tell you what, sir, one of the worst lessons we Irish want to learn is the lesson of thrift—to put by something when the sun shines against the rainy day.'

O'Hara felt himself colouring, but his visitor had delicacy enough to pretend not to see it.

'Now, may I crave the favour I came for?' asked O'Hoolohan as he rose to leave.

'Assuredly.'

'Will you be my best man at the church of Saint Etienne du Mont in a certain ceremony one of these mornings?'

'With a heart-and-a-half; but have you really proposed?'

'Aye, and been accepted. I never fight my battles by halves.'

'Then,' said O'Hara, grasping his hands in a cordial grip, 'I sincerely wish you joy. Count upon me to turn up at the wedding in full fig with my holiday face on.'

'Thanks,' said O'Hoolohan, 'thanks. I knew you were a brick. For the present, farewell. The splicing will take place as soon as it can be managed—but be sure I'll let you know in time;' and he moved towards the door. As he reached the threshold he suddenly stopped and exclaimed, 'By Mars the immortal! I was near forgetting. This is what comes of being in love. I have another service to ask of you.'

'Name it, by all means.'

'Oh! it's a mere formality. Will you be my second in a duel?'

'With the greatest pleasure in life,' said O'Hara; 'but, stay, which comes off first, the wedding or the duel?'

O'Hoolohan cogitated for awhile as if he had not given that a thought before.

'The duel first—of course, the duel first!' he exclaimed. 'The wedding can wait, but the other, you know, is an affair of honour.'

'Hadn't you better let me know something about the quarrel? We may be able to arrange it.'

'Not likely,' said O'Hoolohan drily. 'I must be fairly bothered,' he added. 'Now that I recollect, it was to tell you all

about the quarrel I came here expressly, but one thing has driven the other clean out of my mind.'

'Sit down,' said O'Hara, 'and go ahead.'

CHAPTER X.

'LA JEUNE FRANCE.'

If this were not a veracious history, in the customary order of events as they occur in the construction of fiction, the reader should have gone straight from the quick and gracious acceptance of O'Hoolohan's proposal of marriage to the old-fashioned formula of ringing the wedding-bells, and leaving the united pair to the enjoyment of the honeymoon, with the tag: 'If they don't live happy, may we!' That would be the artistic conclusion. But we are copying from nature, and have no pretensions to art. And O'Hoolohan's nature was one of surprises. That phenomenally-constituted being had been very busy secretly prosecuting researches into the manner in which the girl he had recognised in the Morgue had come by her death, and the mode in which her body had been disposed of.

A great city like Paris, with its never-ending rush of activities, is like to a whirlpool. It is always in surging motion; the figures that rise to the surface for awhile and attract a passing notice as they circle giddily round are thought no more of, when they sink from view, than the flotsam and jetsam sucked into the oblivion of the Maelström.

Marguerite (for it was she) had run her course, and nine days after she had disappeared from the haunts that knew her she was forgotten. How she had died was never ascertained; but there was narrow scope for conjecture. It was only too evident that she had committed suicide. In the multitude of her facile acquaintances she had met one for whom she had conceived a real attachment. He pretended to reciprocate it, and he did, seemingly, until his student's career was finished, and he had received his doctor's degree, and was summoned to his home in the provinces to begin his dull professional life. The consecrated preliminary to that in France is to marry a neighbour's daughter with a snug dowry, who has been provided of long date by the prudence of family councils, tenacious of tradition. The youthful doctor duly led his destined help-meet to the altar, and by the same act consigned her erring sister in Paris, whose very existence she had never suspected, to the cold Seine and the nameless burial-pit.

That is no novelty in the Latin Quarter, nor will ever be while woman, degraded soever though she be, is not utterly heartless.

The deserted Marguerite *had* committed suicide. She had sallied out in the blackness of midnight, when the quays were silent and lonely, and, watching her opportunity till the policemen and roysterers and rag-pickers were distant, she had stealthily clambered the parapet of a bridge and dropped into the river. That must have been the end. So it had been settled over pipes and cards and Strasburg beer in the *brasseries* of the Boulevard St. Michel; and so, truly, it might—nay, must have been.

O'Hoolohan had learned this from a knot of premature cynics in the café of *la Jeune France*, where he had been in the habit of calling in among other gay resorts of the district to pick up what information he could on a matter that affected him much, for under his stone-like, soldierly exterior there were hidden springs of tenderness.

The café which is called after young France is much affected by those promising pillars of the future, the students of law and medicine, especially the latter, who reside in the Latin Quarter of Paris. A light, varied of blue and red, blazes like a pharos over its portals to entice the customers. It lies to the right a few hundred yards up the Boulevard St. Michel, as it is entered from the side of the quays. Here may be seen congregated, after dinner-hour in the evening—under the warm chandeliers in the winter, out in the fresh air of the thoroughfare in the finer season—the future Berryers and Lamballes of the most civilized nation in the world. Only they do not look like it always, carelessly chatting behind their modest glasses of beer, often from amid the clouds of incense floating from cheap cigars, or the equally economic *caporal* tobacco. A gay and spacious café it is; well lit, well furnished with softly-padded cushions, and lined with rows of mirrors reflecting the intellectual group around busily engaged wasting the hours in everything but the study of comparative anatomy or the subtleties of the Code Napoleon. Dominoes and picquet are more in vogue than jurisprudence, and the only books which are read by the novices of the learned professions who frequent the place are woman's looks, and folly—the loss of time and money—invariably all they teach them.

The night before that on which O'Hoolohan paid his last visit to O'Hara's chambers, the soldier of fortune had sauntered into the café early, but it was almost deserted. It was the *mi-carême*, that oasis in mid-Lent for the Paris student, when he avenges himself for the enforced abstinence from his usual enjoyments by the indulgence in riot in the interval of saturnalia allowed by custom. The habitués of the Young France were not there. They were dancing merrily in one disguise or other at the ball-room higher up in the same boulevard, the Closerie des Lilas.

Why, it may be asked, did not O'Hoolohan go to the ball-room where he had first seen her whose fate he was inquiring into? and why, knowing that she was dead, did he seek to know more?

The one answer may serve for both questions. He looked upon himself already as a member of Captain Chauvin's household. He would not dishonour her he loved by showing himself in any of the notorious haunts of loose womankind now that he was her accepted suitor. But having come to the inevitable conclusion that Marguerite was the lost sister of Berthe's friend, Caroline, he was anxious to obtain some memorial of her, and, if possible, to rescue her remains from the *fosse commune*, and put over them a simple tomb. He was emotional, was this battered campaigner, who had buffeted about the world so much, and had an infinite pity for human weakness—and chiefly for the weaknesses of maidenhood beset by temptation. He hung about the café until groups returning from the Closerie in every variety of carnivalesque costume had filled it with a noisy company. Close to the table at which he sat, three students, disciples of Æsculapius, from their conversation, took up their position and ordered a frugal supper before retiring to roost in their attics hard by. They were talkative, and talked as if they were not very particular who listened. Our friend could not help overhearing them, and out of their conversation had sprung the proposed 'affair of honour.'

'Ah, *ma Marguerite*,' said one pale-faced, blear-eyed stripling, as he rolled a cigarette, 'little I thought as I whirled you in a waltz a twelvemonth ago that I'd be having a hand in your dissection to-day. She makes a splendid subject.'

'The proud minx, she never would take my arm,' said a sentimental gentleman with blue spectacles. 'D'you know,

Eugène, I cut enough of her hair off when I got the chance, two hours after they brought her in, to plait me a watch-guard. Garçon, a bock! Don't you think it a famous idea?'

'*Ma foi!*' said Eugène, a black-bearded fellow with a Gascon accent, robust of frame, and several years older than his companion, 'the idea is tolerable, but mine is better. I bought a member of Marguerite and took it home. *Tiens*, see this paper-knife,' producing one from his pocket. 'I thought I'd like a souvenir of *la modiste* in memory of old times. This is made out of her tibia; I had the fibula removed. Please to observe the beautiful polish the internal malleolus takes!'

'Is that true?' exclaimed O'Hoolohan angrily, starting forward to the table.

'What business of yours is it?' retorted the Gascon.

'Is it true?'

'I have said it, Mr. Insolent.'

'Then you're a beast, d'you hear?'

'And you, sir, are an intermeddling hound!' shouted the Gascon, foaming at the mouth in a spasm of fury.

O'Hoolohan shut his lips firmly a moment, and clenched his hands as if struggling to suppress his wrath. Then, having apparently succeeded, he said quietly and deliberately, while a smile that was near akin to a sneer played about his lips:

'You are a braggart and a bully, like most Gascons, and it is my private opinion at present that you are a coward into the bargain.'

There was an immediate springing to the feet of all present, and a confused hubbub of voices, everyone speaking at once.

'Silence!' shouted the Gascon. 'This is my concern. You'll have to answer for this, sir. Here is my friend's address.'

'I'm at your service, and the sooner the better. Your friend will not have to wait long for a visit from a friend of mine.' And O'Hoolohan handed his adversary his card, and took the proffered address with a bow. Then, removing his hat with a sarcastic coolness, he saluted the company and left.

Idiots, you will say, my dear sir or madame, to pick up this quarrel on such foolish grounds! I admit it. But do not most quarrels rest on the basis of folly? and are not most disputants idiots? So it has been, and so will it be to the crack of doom.

The three students were right in one point, however. Marguerite did not even tenant a grave in the paupers' corner of a cemetery. Her body was not claimed; in the darkness it had been bundled in a sack, and trotted to the Ecole Pratique in the Rue de l'Ecole de Médecine, there to contribute to the enlightenment of the rising generation of surgeons. From the slab in the Morgue to the slab in the dissecting-room! Gruesome journey and grim destiny!

CHAPTER XI.

THE BONE OF CONTENTION.

'Poor Marguerite!' ejaculated O'Hara, when he had heard from his visitor an account of the scene in *La Jeune France*. 'So this was her kismet! *Sic transit gloria Aspasiæ.* Well, at all events, she may be more useful in death than ever she was in life. To think of Marguerite becoming a hand-maid of science! The wilful wench! How she would glory in the thought of setting two men by the ears, if she could only learn it in the sphere she now adorns! But do you know, O'Hoolohan, on reflection, I can't help thinking you are in the wrong. How does it harm the woman to have her shin-bone ministering to the needs of literature? Ulric Zuingli bequeathed his skin to be made into a drum-head to rouse his followers; and Byron, if I'm not mistaken, was fond of taking his tipple out of a neatly-scooped skull.'

'Will you act for me? Right or wrong now the thing has gone too far for retreating.'

'I fear that is only too true. Of course I'll act for you. Let me see. You're sure he called you Mr. Insolent first.'

'Certain.'

'That's one point in our favour. As we are the offended party, we have the choice of weapons. Have you any preference?'

'Cavalry pistols. French duellists, as a rule, have a rooted dislike to facing a bullet. As for small swords, that's only child's play. A scratch, and honour is satisfied.'

'Cavalry pistols be it. I shall let you know the time and place of rendezvous, at four this afternoon, at your boarding-house.'

'All right,' said O'Hoolohan; 'meantime I shall go and take a look at the bears in the Jardin des Plantes.'

'There goes a character!' muttered O'Hara to himself, as his visitor descended the stairs. 'Hang me if I can fathom him!'

The young Irishman dressed himself in his best, and was punctual in his call at the rooms of the youth in blue spectacles. The blear-eyed stripling was also present. Business was at once opened in a business-like manner. Explanations were tendered on neither side. The mutual insults were too gross and public to be blotted out except by blows. Apology was not asked or offered. The details of the hostile meeting were gone over with overwhelming affability and owl-like gravity. In negotiations of this kind, to smooth the passage of one or two men to a premature eternity, the extremest forms of politeness are invariably observed. If there was to be a fight, the earlier it came off the more agreeable it must be to all concerned. Eight o'clock the next morning was fixed as the hour of rendezvous, by unanimous consent. As Eugène the Gascon, as his friends took care to remark, was a crack shot, they had no prejudice against the cavalry pistols.

The first discussion was on the question of the distance at which the adversaries should be placed from each other. O'Hara, with a charming readiness to oblige, suggested that shots should be exchanged across a table-napkin.

The Frenchman demurred.

'That would be slaughter,' said Blue Spectacles.

'Undoubtedly it would be very like it,' agreed O'Hara; 'but my man is used to slaughter on a wholesale scale—an old soldier of Africa, the Crimea, and Italy. Does your principal object to being shot?'

'If he does not, most certainly I do, to being arrested as accessory to murder,' chimed in Pale Face.

Finally it was decided that the adversaries should be placed twenty paces apart, with privilege to each to advance five paces before delivering his fire, if he so elected. There was to be no toss-up as to who was to fire first; they were to consult their own judgment as to that from the instant the signal for action, the dropping of a handkerchief, was given. If the first exchange was harmless, the renewal of the combat was to be left to the discretion of the witnesses.

'With your permission, messieurs,' said O'Hara, 'I vote for Clamart as the place of rendezvous. I know a retired garden there, walled round and perfectly secure from observation. It is a most convenient spot; looks as if it were designed by nature for the purpose. Besides, there is a deep disused draw-well there, so that we can get rid of any dangerous evidence of the morning's work in case of a fatal issue.'

The Frenchmen winced, but as they knew of no better site for the encounter, they agreed—provided there was a good restaurant in the vicinity. It was contrary to all the etiquette of the code of honour in Paris to have a duel without a breakfast after. In fact, a duel would not be a duel if it were not followed by a comfortable repast.

O'Hara eased their fears on this score.

'And now, messieurs,' he added in conclusion, 'I have two conditions to impose, in the interests of our own safety. The first is, that no one will seek to publish an account of this meeting in the papers; the next, that each of the principals will sign a paper to the effect that he was tired of a hollow and deceitful world, and meant to make away with himself, so as to exonerate his antagonist from all responsibility in the future.'

There was a twinkle in O'Hara's eyes as he spoke. He suspected the Gascon's witnesses would not relish assisting at the combat unless they were to borrow some reflected renown from it; and he knew that a document such as he mentioned would be valueless, seeing that the quarrel had been public, and the probable result was the common gossip of the quarter. But he plausibly wheedled the Frenchmen into assenting to his propositions by putting the terrible perils that would accrue to them in the event of a death in very strong light.

As he was leaving, Blue Spectacles bethought him that they might have some trouble in finding cavalry pistols. Eugène had none, he thought, and it might lead to unpleasant consequences if they were to purchase the weapons at a gunsmith's; they would be sure to be identified by the prying *mouchards*.

'I can oblige, messieurs, if you will trust me,' said O'Hara. 'My friend has a brace in capital order. You can make your choice of them on the ground.'

This satisfied all requirements. O'Hara was thanked for his courtesy, and was ushered to the landing with an exquisite urbanity that was touching in its kindly, well-bred thoughtfulness; it positively recalled the manner in vogue when the Roi Soleil shed the lustre of his countenance on Versailles. As he briskly descended the stairs, the students shut the door and looked at each other with faces overshadowed with anxiety.

'*Pardi!*' said Blue Spectacles, 'this is serious.'

'Serious!—'tis awful!' said Pale Face. 'I feel as if I must have an *absinthe pure* at the Mère Moreau's. I would not be in Eugène's boots for a milliard. Come on.'

* * * * * * *

The morning of the duel broke with all the freshness and warmth and brilliancy of the genial spring in the latitude of Paris. In the picturesque Clamart suburb, with its market-gardens and white villas, its plantations, its windmills, and its vine-clad slopes, the aspect was one of ripe loveliness. It was a rosy, odorous, appetizing morn; a morn for a pleasant woodland walk under the branches where small birds chavished; a morn to drop gently down the river and ply the indolent rod; a morn for a canter on a brisk cob across the sweet-scented meadows; a morn for plucking flowers, smoking choice cigars, love-dreaming, or poetic musing—for anything, in fact, but thoughts of sudden and violent death. It has been remarked by some moralists that sunny, innocent, enjoyable morns, when the blood seems to bound joyously in the veins, and the very act of breathing is a vivid pleasure, have an ugly habit of intruding themselves unbidden when armies are about to join in strife or criminals are about to tread the scaffold.

The Gascon never before realized how very comfortable a world it is, and how very disagreeable it would be to leave it while he was yet young and healthy, with a sound stomach and a liver unconscious of derangement. But his pride was greater than his fears, and coating his doubts and apprehensions under a veneer of indifference, he was the first to warn his friends of the necessity of being punctilious at the trysting-place. As punctuality is the courtesy of kings, so also is it of duellists.

The Gascon and his party were first on the ground—four of them, the principal, Blue Spectacles, Pale Face, and a young medical practitioner with an ominous set of surgical instruments cunningly hidden in a fiddle-case to disarm suspicion.

Hardly had they alighted from their *voiture*, and walked towards the village where O'Hara had arranged to meet them, when a singular approaching whir of wheels was heard, blent with the noisy ululation of a dog. Turning the corner, there came into view O'Hara and the O'Hoolohan riding to the rendezvous on bicycles! They had adopted this original method of evading the prying gendarmes of the locality. Pat had followed them—followed them perforce; for the now lazy animal had been tied by a rope to the tool-box of a machine, and was forced to keep pace with the 'steel steed.'

'Pardon, gentlemen,' said O'Hara, jumping from his tiny saddle, 'but if we are a little late it is my fault I did not think the gradients on the road were so trying.'

The Gascon's friends advanced, accepted the excuse with excessive show of politeness, and Blue Spectacles, as the senior, presented the doctor in form.

'Very thoughtful of you, indeed!' said O'Hara, in an undertone. 'My man never hires a surgeon—never needs one, for the matter of that. Have you that letter I spoke of ready?' at the same time handing the young Frenchman a document to the following effect:

'This is to certify that the bearer, O'Hoolohan, 35, Irish of origin, and annuitant by station, unmarried, committed

suicide on the 5th day of April, 1866, at Clamart, in the Department of the Seine, and that nobody is blamable for the despair which led him to the act.'

As Blue Spectacles read this curt, legally-framed document, he quaked and whitened, and a quiver of his eyes might be detected under their ultramarine protectors. But he nerved himself for the worst; after all, it is much easier to be brave when your bosom friend's fate is in the balance than when your own precious carcass is in peril. The Frenchman, in return, handed O'Hara a perfumed, gilt-edged billet, with an arrow-pierced heart in chromo-lithography at the top of it. As it was characteristic of the Gascon, it may be interesting to give its contents:

'Away, thou hollow world, with all thy vain pomps and glittering gauds! Farewell the friendship that is false, the love that is venal, the happiness that deceives like the desert mirage! Dash down the cup of revelry that brings but the fitful doze; welcome the bullet of relief that summons repose eternal! With my own hands I sign my doom; by my own hands I die! Not for me the roses of hope or the laurels of ambition, but the cypress of despair and disappointment. Cut off a tress of my hair and send it to my mother; a locket with a portrait will be discovered over my heart—bury it in my grave.

'Eugène Siraudin.'

'That will do very nicely,' remarked O'Hara as he read this valentine from beyond the tomb; 'it is tenderly written—Lamartine with a flavour of De Musset. I should like to have a copy to send to the Manuscript Room of the British Museum. I suppose we're all here?'

'Where's your other witness?' asked Pale Face.

'In England we consider one enough; but if you insist upon it, we shall look upon my dog as discharging the duty.'

Pale Face grew white as a Pierrot. As for Blue Spectacles, the devil-may-care ease of the Irishman had put him into a blue funk.

All this time the principals stood apart, acting the *rôle* of unconcerned spectators. That is the correct deportment in duels. Eugène Siraudin puffed away at a cigarette; the O'Hoolohan, who was hot and ruddy after his exertions on the bicycle, stretched himself on his back on the turf by the trunk of a roadside poplar.

'Gentlemen, it's getting late,' cried O'Hara. 'We had better to business,' and he led the way, thrusting his bicycle by his side, through a gap in the field across to a postern in the wall of a villa garden, which was all he had described it—perfectly secure from the notice of passers-by. The doctor laid his fiddle-case on the grass, opened it, and displayed the shining instruments. The ground was stepped by the young Irishman. Traces were made with chalk at the extremities, twenty paces asunder, and at the further five paces, in front of each adversary's position, beyond which they were not to advance. O'Hara loaded the pistols and gave them to the Gascon's witnesses to examine. This they did in a very perfunctory way. The truth is, both were ignorant of the manner of loading a pistol, and, if they had the task to accomplish themselves, were as likely as not to put in the wad before the powder. The pistols were of the percussion and ramrod type, and the charges of powder and ball were supposed to be put in separately and driven home.

'Take your choice,' said O'Hara to Blue Spectacles.

Blue Spectacles took the first to his hand, adding that with such an honourable man there was no room for choice.

'Let your principal take what position he pleases,' said O'Hara, bowing; 'it's immaterial to us.'

They got into their places, each in that nearest to where he was standing at the moment.

'Ready?' asked O'Hara.

Both nodded acquiescence.

'Who shall drop the handkerchief?'

'Will you oblige?' prayed Blue Spectacles, with a tremor in his voice.

'All right!'

The handkerchief was dropped.

Almost instantaneously the Gascon fired. The smoke lifted. O'Hoolohan stood erect, unhurt, a placid self-possessed expression on his set features.

O'Hoolohan slowly moved five paces, halted; gradually raised his weapon, and deliberately aimed first at the Gascon's heart, then at his brain. It was a cruel experiment, but the Gascon bore it with splendid courage. His complexion paled, it is true, and his mouth was restive, but his gaze was bold and almost disdainful. O'Hoolohan raised the pistol still higher, turned its muzzle perpendicularly, and discharged it into the air, quietly saying, 'You are no coward; I am sorry for the expression!'

After such a scene it was impossible to renew the combat. The Gascon, in his turn, retracted the hasty language he had used, and the entire party betook them to the hostelry where breakfast had been ordered by O'Hara's care, all satisfied—except the surgeon, who had theories about gunshot wounds, and was not averse to having practice in their treatment.

The breakfast put them all—even the surgeon—into good humour. O'Hara knew how to draw up a bill of fare, and O'Hoolohan had given him *carte blanche* as to the outlay. There was everything at the repast, in season and out of season, that could be had for money—truffles of Perigord, melons of Cavaillon, oysters of Cancale, Montmorency cherries, and Montreuil peaches, beside vintage and viands generous of quality and copious in quantity.

When the repast was finished, and the customary *demi-tasses* of black Mocha, with the small glasses of liqueur beside, were laid upon the table, O'Hara gravely stood up in his place at the head, which had been tacitly conceded to him, and demanded the word—the French parliamentary equivalent for asking permission to make a speech.

The permission was cordially granted by word of mouth from those whose mouths were empty, by token of assent from those who were still cracking nuts or coaxing tobacco into vaporous circulation.

'Messieurs,' he began, 'having satisfied honour and our appetites, I claim a few words on behalf of common-sense and conservatism. Firstly, I am a Conservative—that is to say, I am tenacious of traditions among other things; and it

is a tradition of my country never to loose a chance of making a speech. Several of my relatives carried the habit to such an extent that they made public discourses on their dying day—discourses which were discourteously interrupted by vile public functionaries. (Emotion.) Messieurs, you who are not vile, and who are not public functionaries, and, indeed, who are never likely to be public functionaries—you, I trust, will not interrupt me. (Cries of 'No, no.') I was sure of it. You yourselves are disciples of this great art of oratory. You cultivate it at the risk of coryza over the newly-filled graves of dead friends. (Here Blue Spectacles and Pale Face winced.) Much as I admire eloquence, I am sincerely glad that there was no occasion for rhetorical display of that kind this morning, and this it is which brings me to the common-sense side of my subject. Messieurs, in the light of pure common-sense, I have a proposition to lay before you. It is this:—We are all asses. (Astonishment and attention.) Asses, if not worse, I repeat. If either of the principals in this morning's work were to have killed the other, he would be now a homicidal ass, and that other would be that very rare animal—a dead ass. (Sensation.) As I should be one of the accessories, I refrain from dwelling on what their position would be. Messieurs, the duello is a folly—nay, more, it is a crime. What does it prove? Not that the survivor is truer or better than the slaughtered, but that he is luckier, or more skilful, or has less command of the nerves that are in him, not of himself so much as of nature. Both of you, gentlemen (addressing the Gascon and O'Hoolohan), have good command of nerves. Let me hope in the future you will have better command of temper. To resume my thesis, the merits of a quarrel are not affected by the issue. They remain as they were before. Dismissing the artificial accretions to the quarrel we so pleasantly settled an hour ago, to what does it reduce itself? Two grown men, with friends, with duties in life, with ambitions and affections, deliberately seek to slay each other for the sake of the shin-bone of a woman that neither would have dared to introduce to his mother. (Sensation.) Both knew her equally well, perhaps; both liked her, admired her beauty, pitied her misfortunes; but could either respect her character? No! I will answer for all, no. Messieurs, I perceive you agree with me; and as I understand from my friend in the blue spectacles that he has the bone of contention in his possession, may I crave it from him, and do with it as I like?'

The Gascon said he might.

The O'Hoolohan cried 'All right!'

Blue Spectacles handed him the paper-knife.

'Then, messieurs,' exclaimed O'Hara, opening the window, 'away with it. Thus out of sight with aught that might cause malice between honest men.' And he flung it spinning through the air, amid shouts of 'Bravo! Good, good!' from all except O'Hoolohan, whose face was twisted into a queer look of deprecation.

But it had not gone out of sight. Pat the dog was watching it, and, as it fell, sprang through the open casement and bounded after it in the grass. O'Hara was about to whistle him back, but he sniffed a moment at the spot where the blade had dropped, and then turned and trotted back with an air of pitiful contempt.

'That is singular!' soliloquized O'Hara aloud. 'I never knew a dog to refuse a bone before.'

He tapped on the table with a knife-handle, and on the waiter answering to the call he requested him to fetch the paper-knife he would find in the grass outside.

The waiter brought it back after a short search, and O'Hara carefully examined it.

'This, you are sure,' he asked of Blue Spectacles, 'was the original bone of contention?'

'Certainly,' was the ready answer.

'Then there is some mistake here. Surely, monsieur,' turning to Eugène Siraudin, 'you cannot have confounded an elephant with a human being? *This knife is of ivory!*'

O'Hoolohan jumped to his feet and snatched it. The Gascon reddened and stammered, 'I knew it all along; I said what I did about it through mere brag, to cap my friend's boast about the watch-guard of her hair, and I was ashamed to explain afterwards, lest it should look like cowardice.'

O'Hara sat down, ordered drinks all round, and then threw himself back in his chair, cocked his feet upon the table, and laughed a Homeric laugh. That laugh was contagious. Everybody laughed in a perfect gamut of laughter, from the shrill treble of Pale Face to the morose baritone of the surgeon, and the deep watch-dog basso-profondo of the O'Hoolohan. And then everybody, save the surgeon, embraced everybody else; and then everybody, the surgeon inclusive, drank their drinks.

'How lucky it was, gentlemen, you did not both kill each other!' exclaimed O'Hara, and he burst into a franker, more joyous guffaw than ever.

The sly rascal! They little knew that he had provided himself with pistols from a conjuring friend, and had withdrawn the bullets before their eyes by the aid of a ramrod ending in a screw. The duel had been fought, like that of Jeffreys and Tom Moore, with leadless weapons.

And thus ended the hostile meeting at Clamart, and thus was Marguerite, like a soldier, committed to oblivion with a discharge of harmless gunpowder.

CHAPTER XII.

ORANGE-BLOSSOMS.

THERE be marriages which are made in heaven, some poet tells us, but in France they are more usually negotiated over the desk of the notary public. This is the system: Monsieur A—— wants a wife, he goes to Lawyer B——, says:

'Old friend, you are aware of my pecuniary circumstances—it is time for me to think of getting mated—do you know any lady with an eligible fortune in your *clientèle*?'

'Let me see,' says B——, taking a pinch of snuff. 'Oh! there's C——'s widow, a capital alliance; got a good annuity in her own right.'

Perhaps A—— is particularly nice, doesn't like widows.

'Then, what d'ye think of D——'s daughter?' continues the lawyer.

'Faded and ugly.'

'But rich, accomplished, and of good family.'

A—— shakes his head negatively.

'Hem, so we must have beauty! What do you say to E——'s sister?'

'Do you want me to marry my grandmother—don't like the reigning toasts of the last generation. Good-morning.'

'Stay, there's F——'s niece; that's your mark.'

'Ah! now you're getting reasonable; think I could like the woman; saw her once at the opera.'

'And she has a pretty dowry and big expectations.'

A——'s face is getting radiant.

'Where can I meet her?'

'Madame B—— will give a little *soirée* on Thursday night; we shall invite her.'

Mdlle. F—— is trotted out like a filly at Tattersail's—her paces are shown—report favourable.

'Have you any objection to receiving Monsieur A—— as a suitor?' asks the nearest of kin.

Mademoiselle blushes, but is too well-bred to say no. Monsieur comes, dressed to death, spruce as if he stepped out of a bandbox, and mademoiselle is prepared to receive him, nearest of kin being always present. Mademoiselle has got her instructions; they were somewhat in the key of the admonition little boys make to the bears in the Jardin des Plantes: *fais le beau*, 'do the handsome.' Monsieur pays compliments to mademoiselle, always through the nearest of kin, and she, dear, well-bred creature, listens to monsieur with sweetest politeness, never betraying a vulgar desire to look into the face, much less into the heart, of the man who is to be her future guide through life, her partner in the tomb. Thus the comedy proceeds. Nearest of kin does the courting, which is not too painfully elongated. The *trousseau* is bought and exhibited. Monsieur buys the *corbeille*, which is ordinarily expected to amount in value to one-tenth of the dowry he gets with his wife (which dowry particular care is taken to settle on the wife herself). The banns are published; one day a party appears before the Mairie, and a commercial—we beg pardon, a marriage contract is signed, a supererogatory gallop to a neighbouring church takes place to satisfy conventionalism, and Mdlle. F—— becomes Madame A——. There is no love before marriage in nine cases out of ten; of the love which grows up after marriage we are too delicate to speak. It is understood—only sometimes it will happen that monsieur has a club and madame a *cavalier eservente*. And madame, dear, well-bred creature, endeavours to make up for the reserve imposed on mademoiselle, and it is perfectly astonishing to discover what a profound knowledge of the world and its schemes and slanders the shy young maiden of last week contrives to develop all at once in her married household.

The reader will have remarked that O'Hara received the announcement that his Irish friend had succeeded in his proposal without surprise. The sole reason was that O'Hara had been living sufficiently long in France to know that marriages are arranged with the same celerity that one would toss a pancake, and that if the financial requirements are satisfied it is easy to fulfil the exigencies of affection.

During the interval that preceded the interesting ceremony (to borrow a phrase from the newspapers), which was not to take place until after Easter, the O'Hoolohan Roe was a constant visitor at the Rue de la Vieille Estrapade, only now he called himself the O'Hoolohan Dhuv, his sly countryman having bantered him on the affix Roe, which applies only to a light-complexioned, red-haired man, while he was tawny of complexion and black-haired as a Spaniard of the south. A most unmerciful bantering he did give him anent his assumption of the *The*.

'You a democrat!' he said, 'how is it that you cling to that particle?'—and then he told him the anecdotes of the English officer in charge of a detachment of troops at Bruff, one Captain Bull, upon whom the O'Grady of Kilballyowen left his card, who had scribbled The Bull of Bruff on the pasteboard he left in return; and of Sir Allan M'Nab, who had had the good taste to write on his card The *other* M'Nab, after he had received a visit from *The* M'Nab in Scotland. But O'Hoolohan was proof against satire, and retorted to his friend's joking that Mr. Bull and the Canadian knight were snobs, and deserved to be horse-whipped by The O'Grady and The M'Nab—that he was The O'Hoolohan, and that though his father chose to call himself Holland, he reverted to the old Irish name, O'Hoolohan, for which it was the substitute, and which meant 'proud little man.' He repeated the lines:

'By Mac and O
You'll always know
  True Irishmen, they say;
But if they lack
Both O and Mac,
  No Irishmen are they.'

And in the end O'Hara, who was also proud of his Milesian patronymic, was obliged to admit he was right.

The banns were published at the church and at the Mairie, and at the close of the necessary three weeks, during which Berthe received a delicious fresh bouquet every morning from her lover, and then secluded herself over some mysterious female work with Caroline, the happy day (we draw on the newspapers again) arrived. Two carriages were marshalled before the municipal institution in the Place du Panthéon; two charming girls in white and a venerable, stately, white-haired man descended from the one; a man in the prime of life, with a younger companion of the same sex, both in suit of ceremony, alighted from the other. There was a brief series of interrogatories and a jotting down of signatures inside, and the party emerged, re-entered the carriages in the same order, and leisurely drove to the Church of St. Stephen of the Mount at the other side of the square. A beadle, magnificently attired, awaited and conducted them with pompous air, pounding his staff of office at intervals on the sacred pavement, to a little altar, where the priest stood ready-vested. The ceremony by which two are made one was solemnized: there was blushing as a ring was pressed on a little finger, and a few tears as a little hand parted from the tight grasp of Captain Chauvin; and then the nuptial Mass was said and the Benediction pronounced in which God is prayed to make the newly-wedded amiable to her husband as Rachel, wise as Rebecca, and faithful as Sarah. Again the party emerged, but this time Captain Chauvin, Caroline, and O'Hara entered the second carriage together, for the first was occupied by Monsieur and Madame O'Hoolohan.

Half an hour afterwards there was solemn silence in the apartment in the Rue de la Vieille Estrapade, for Mr.

Manus O'Hara, in a particularly neat and appropriate speech, had proposed the memory of the Man, and Captain Chauvin was crying, but—the wicked old man!—there was more gladness than sorrow in his tears. The Irish are born orators. Nobody who heard the brilliant discourse in which Monsieur O'Hoolohan gave France, and eulogized the *entente cordiale* which had been made that morning before the altar between it and Ireland, could deny that fact. His voice, like O'Brien's of the Irish Brigade, in the lyric of Thomas Davis, was 'hoarse with joy,' as he fondly regarded his bride, and wound up a florid and flourishing peroration by a marked allusion to future alliances between the countries which he hoped to live to see, illustrated by playful winks at O'Hara and the brunette. But the brunette kept never minding, and O'Hara's hand rose involuntarily to his shirt-bosom, under which reposed a certain tress of woman's hair. As for Pat, who was among the guests, he had feasted so heartily in honour of the occasion that he fell asleep while his master was on his legs.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HONEYMOON TRIP.

It is a mistake to begin married life by gormandizing, by an outlay which one cannot afford, by affectation of a social position to which luxuries are common, or by servility to the despotism of fashion. Our friends in the Rue la de Vieille Estrapade knew and dreaded all this. They owned that the ostentatious enjoyment which brings remorse at its heels is not worth the cost. Therefore, though they 'did the thing,' as the bridegroom put it, properly—that is, not shabbily—they did not put on airs and ape the grand. They did not gormandize, for gluttony leads to a fit of indigestion, and that leads to bad temper. They did not waste economies that might be needed after; but they had a jovial party conducted on the principles of prescient generosity. To be paradoxical, the wedding-breakfast and surroundings were a sample of thrifty extravagance. No more was spent on dresses and favours, bouquets and gloves, than could well be avoided without the semblance of meanness. No big man of the quarter was invited to the feast simply because he was a big man—wore massive gold trinkets, had a balance at his banker's, a prominent pew in church, a seat at the council of Paris magnates, or a villa in the suburbs with a large garden. These people condescend; curse people who condescend, but compassionate not the people who stand condescension! They are treated as they deserve.

The custom in Paris is that those who cannot go for the honeymoon to Baden, or to a friend's country-house, pass it apart in some secluded suburb. O'H. and Madame O'H. were not such fools; they resolved to pass it under the captain's roof—their future home; they had no particular wish or necessity to confine themselves to each other's society till they lost novelty and palled on each other, seeing that they were linked while they breathed, and would have ample leisure to improve acquaintance, and spy out small imperfections. For, look you, this is no romance; our heroes and heroines are real, which is saying they are human and weak. The way to celebrate the marriage-day is just as one celebrates any ordinary holiday; the way to enjoy the honeymoon is in activity in the midst of bustling life, not in mooning indolence. The place for both is at home, amongst those whom we know and who are attached to us.

This is what our friends did. They drove to the Mairie and the church as we have described; they had a hearty breakfast, at which none were present but the five of the wedding party. Caroline did not fling a shower of rice at the retreating figure of the O'Hoolohan as he left for his château in Spain, but sensibly put the rice in a pot to boil for a supper pudding. Nor did the captain throw an old slipper at the poll of his departing Berthe, for old slippers are useful when one is gouty, and, besides, they sometimes disarrange a head-dress and hurt a little head.

Rice and old slippers! What superstitious folly! And yet some very eminent men, wise and no way credulous, have been burdened with the log of superstition. Tyco Brahé was afraid to lay the first stone of his observatory till the stars were in a 'happy conjunction.' The astronomer who discovered the spots on the sun wiped his spectrum fifty times before he could persuade himself to believe his own sight. Sainte-Beuve, sceptic though he was, grew pale if the salt were spilt.

O'Hoolohan and O'Hara were not superstitious. They were of the school which believes that it is unlucky to walk under a ladder—only when an awkward workman is handling bricks overhead; unlucky to sit down thirteen at table—only when there is not food enough for more than twelve.

But Captain Chauvin was superstitious, after a kind. Like his idol, he held by destiny, and had faith in his planet. On all high days and holy days it was his wont to make pilgrimage to the shrine of his patron saint. Call this whim if you like, superstition if you will. On this happy day his secretly-cherished idea was to carry out his habit, and the moment he spoke of it his friends agreed to humour him. And in this wise it came to pass that there was a honeymoon trip, but a brief one in limit of time and travelling.

Now, where should the honeymoon trip be taken? In London, that is a question easier to answer than in Paris.

'Anywhere, anywhere *out* of London,' would be the answer.

But in Paris the air you breathe is pure and brisk; the flowers in the city grass-plots are fresh and fragrant; the waters of the Seine course swiftly on with sparkling movement; the tall trees on the boulevards make friendly rustle; there are wide shady shrubs, clad in thick mantle of emerald, varied with citron and flecked with brown, in the public gardens; silvery fountains seem to dance to inaudible music; the shafts of sunshine play through clustering branches in the Elysian Fields and the Luxembourg, and make fretwork of black and gold on the smooth sward. This happens when Nature is in gracious mood and scatters broadcast her charms from her bounteous lap. In Paris her mood is usually gracious, for Paris is the favoured city, the queen-city, the one haunt of the multitude where you can meet the Rus in Urbe, where you can salute the pets of art in the bosom of the Benign Mother.

In two open victorias the party started on the trip. Captain Chauvin and Caroline were on the seat of the first, and O'Hara on the strapontin in front of them, dangerously near to the tempting hands of the tall girl and in full range of her witching eyes. The bridegroom and bride were in the second victoria. The captain went foremost, for he was *cicerone*. To the Champ de Mars they drove first and entered the Military School, the Chelsea Hospital of France.

'Go up, my children,' said Captain Chauvin; 'I am too feeble to accompany you. Mount one hundred and seventy-three steps and you will find the cell my saint occupied when he was a boy. There he lay in his camp-bed; there he dreamed dreams, and there he made his first sketch. Till your return, I shall fight an old fight with—a comrade.'

When they descended, the captain escorted them to the adjoining church.

'Here,' he said, 'he rests, the mortal part of him; here he was carried to his tomb by the heirs of the dynasty he helped to overthrow. You see, my children, he sleeps in the midst of the ancient braves at whose head he once marched to victory; there, on the bronze tripod, is the sword he wore at Austerlitz; look above, where those dusty trophies droop, ah! sixty of them—this poor arm helped to win some few—they are flags taken from the enemy in fair fight. They are—torn, bullet-pierced, and time-mouldered as they are—the emblems of a glory that will live while lives the world!'

The O'Hoolohan was getting excited. His brow flushed and his eyes flashed. He tapped one foot on the marble floor like a restive charger awaiting the trumpet-call to advance. He scanned the aisles and niches of the sacred building as if he were searching for some lurking foe; he clenched his right hand on an imaginary sword-hilt as if on the point of rushing into some shock of battle. With all his calmness in actual combat, such as we saw him at Clamart, this man was capable of being roused to a flood-tide of passion, when his heart and imagination were touched.

'Glory, grandfather,' urged Berthe; 'is it not very dearly bought, sometimes? Suppose we kneel and pray that France may have a crop of glory that is not so dreadful in the offering or so sad in the fruit for the future.'

'You are right, my child,' acceded the captain, for this time it was not the old soldier, but the old man who spoke, and they all knelt and prayed, though it would be unsafe to pretend that they prayed with equal fervour, or that the object of their petitions was the same.

The next stage in the pilgrimage was the Quai Conti, opposite the statue of Henry IV., on the Pont Neuf. Here, on the fifth story of the house, No. 5, a young officer of artillery, lately commissioned from the school of Brienne, lived in 1785. A struggling painter poked the fire in the garret, haunted by the shadow of the ambitious Bonaparte, the awkwardly built, dwarfish stripling, with high cheek-bones, sallow complexion and deep-sunken orbs, who came to the window at nights and gazed palace-wards and sky-wards so long and earnestly, his hands clasped behind his back, and then broke into a hurried, jerking, sentry-walk to and fro in his circumscribed chamber.

To the Hôtel de Metz in the Rue du Mail next, where Bonaparte lodged, at No. 14 on the third story, in 1792. At that period he dined at a restaurant in the Rue des Petits-Pères. The dishes there were cheap. They cost but six sous each. Cheap as they were, he had once to make a forced march with his watch upon the nearest pawn-office before he could raise means to stay the calls of appetite.

At the corner of the Rue du Mail and the Rue Montmartre is, or was, the Hotel of the Rights of Man. By the time Bonaparte had got thus far, he had made comparatively good progress on the ladder of fortune. He had four windows in a row now in his apartment, and three chambers, two of which were shared with his brothers Louis and Junot.

Three years later, Bonaparte, now a general of artillery, resided in No. 19, Rue de la Michodière, in a small furnished room. He was going up, but he was no wastrel. Not till later on did he choose to change his dwelling to the Hôtel Mirabeau, in the Alley of the Dauphin, near the Tuileries. An episode of his career is laid in this hotel, which the dramatists should seize and turn to their purposes. It might have influenced the fate of nations. Had it come to its natural issue, the maps might be drawn otherwise to-day. Fanchette, the daughter of Père Thouset, the landlord, took a liking to the young general of the Republic. She was not ill-favoured; and he might make a steady husband. The general tried his arms in a field other than his, and, with his usual luck, he made a conquest. Father-in-law, who was rich, consented to a marriage, on two conditions: the first, that Bonaparte should quit the army; the second, that he should become an hotel-keeper! But an accident befell Fanchette which put Cupid's nose out of joint, much to the benefit of his brother Mars.

The time came when Napoleon mounted to the topmost rung, lived in castles and palaces, was guest and host of kings; but our friends were satisfied—indeed, were more pleased with visiting his humble habitations—the cell of the student, the airy garrets of the adventurous soldier. The struggles of greatness to the light awaken emotions more touching than all the magnificence of assured success.

They trended by the Rue St. Honoré to the church of St. Roch. There it was the tide turned—there the hero had his first chance. It was the twelfth Vendémiaire of the year IV., that is to say, the 22nd October, 1795. Thirty-three sections of the population rose in discontent at a decree reserving to the Convention two-thirds of the places in the Council of the Five Hundred. They were thirty thousand strong, and marched on the Tuileries. The Convention had but twelve thousand men to oppose them, and gave the command to Barras, who called in Bonaparte. The captain, obscure till then, notwithstanding his services at Toulon, put forty-two pieces of cannon round the palace, and mowed down the insurgents. Their headquarters was the church of St. Roch. Bonaparte, with correct, remorseless aim, pointed two guns with his own hand on the crowd collected on the steps of the edifice and fired. The sections were defeated; the corner-stone was laid of the reputation that was to mount so high.

'I vote we wind up by paying a visit to the column in the Place Vendôme,' said the O'Hoolohan, who was an admirer of Napoleon, but who was getting hungry and who began to think he had enough of hero-worship for his marriage-day.

'No, my son,' said Captain Chauvin, 'I always make it a point of hanging a wreath of immortelles on the rails at the base of the column on the 5th of May, the anniversary of his death; but I never like to go there but that one day of the twelve months. No, we shall first try a visit to the Louvre—it is not yet closed—and I love to show, to those who can value relics of the kind, the statue of the one man I reverenced, when he was in the beauty of his manhood.'

They went and saw the statue. It represents Napoleon as he might have been at the epoch of Lodi, before he had trained his features to the impassiveness of stone, before he had waxed dumpish, and wore a stiff curl on his broad, bald forehead. An idealized Napoleon this, impetuous energy in his gaze, expression, attitude; mastery in the eagle eyes; vigour in the gaunt limbs; resolution in the big lean jaws; dogged obstinacy in the close-shut lips and close-cut chin. What an irresistible forcefulness in the balance of the eager pose! what a cloudy-and-lightning poetry in the long wild hair sweeping like a mane over his shoulders!

Thus should heroes be eternized in brass, or granite, or marble, while they are instinct with the glory of action, not when they are aged and fatten and grow bilious and use ear-trumpets. They should be given to posterity in their prime, when they did the great things for which posterity will remember them. Great is the anointed of Notre Dame; but greater is the victor of Lodi!

This O'Hara said, first warming with the associations of the Napoleon room of the Louvre, and then kindled into enthusiasm by the applause of Captain Chauvin, whose heart was so young for all his white beard and deep wrinkles; and Caroline looked at the speaker approvingly, and he looked back, and suddenly it was revealed to him that she was strikingly handsome.

That night when he retired to rest in his hotel in the Latin Quarter, the tress of hair he had long kept warm at his breast was missing.

Was this an omen?

CHAPTER XIV.

VANITAS VANITATUM.

THERE is a certain poet whose free-and-easy philosophy expressed in verse, rippling and silvery, but slightly too luscious for Sunday reading in a boarding-school conducted on correct principles, holds that when far from the lips we love, we have but to make love to the lips we are near. Our friend O'Hara, we fear, was much addicted to reading that erotic bard, and had been so long removed by time and so far by distance from his mistress, to whom belonged the tress of hair he wore over his heart and under his watch-fob—fob without a watch—that he had not many obstacles to conquer in persuading himself that Captain Chauvin's unmarried *protégée* was strikingly handsome. There was that high-bred air about her, too, which plays such havoc with the feelings of a race accustomed to set more store by blood than pelf. Her manners were stamped by a refined self-respecting reserve not chilled to the point of *hauteur*. She had a commanding figure, with brilliant eyes, and that feature which is the greatest charm in woman—an even and undamaged set of almond-white teeth, when her lips parted. Her hair, besides, was the colour of his tress—as ebon and full, as thick and glossy.

'Frenchwomen make good housewives,' reflected Manus to himself, as he smoked the pipe of meditation the morning after the marriage. 'They're not very expansive at home, it is true, but they do adore their children. Caroline is not insipid, anyhow. In case anything happened to Bidelia, she would be just the woman to fall back upon. Besides, I have neither leisure nor liking for billing and cooing. How is Bidelia, by the way? What is she doing? Egad! I'll write to London, to my cousin Hyacinth, to ask him.'

And he did write.

And this was the answer he got eight-and-forty hours afterwards:

'Doughty Street, London, W.C.
'April 27th, 1866.

'DEAR MANUS,

'Confound you, why don't you write oftener? As we used to say on the old sod (by-the-way, is Ireland really older than any other place?)—as we used to say, I repeat, only twisting the phrase—it's good for sore eyes to see your crabbed fist. How am I getting on? *More Hibernico*, I shall answer, your question by asking one of my own. How are *you* getting on? You haven't taken your degree yet, with or without honours, that I can plainly discern, *ma bouchal*. Taking lessons in anatomy from the living subject at Bullier, I'm afraid, eh? you born divil of the O'Hara breed and the pedigree without a blemish. Now, if you were a suckling barrister you might have a chance of getting at the head of your profession by phrenologically investigating the Chief Justice's noddle; but studying the symmetry of the human form divine from the contortions of Rigolboche and her friends is hardly the way to rival Butcher or Brunton.

'Chaffing apart, old man, I do hope you stick to your profession, and are not carried away by your ill-starred passion for Literature. Like Art, she is but a sorry, wanton jade to pay court to, and leaves you in the lurch when most you stand in need of a helping hand. Better be a mediocre sawbones than a mediocre paper-stainer. The mediocre sawbones can always take a shop, go to India, marry a sickly widow, or invent a patent medicine. As for poor paper-stainer, every day that he lives he is eating his way into his capital. My boy, they won't lend money to a pressman in this town, even on solvent security. The other day I went myself *in propria personâ* to ask for a small advance from an advertising firm of usurers close to London Bridge, and after I had filled and signed a pile of scored fools-cap, what did they tell me?—"If you had informed us that your were a journalist at first you might have saved yourself all that trouble. We make it a rule to have no business transactions with journalists!" There was a pewter inkstand at my elbow, and I imagine it would have had a business transaction with a greasy little Hebrew's countenance if I didn't happen to catch a glimpse of a couple of others, who were hiding behind the tall desks, cut-and-dry witnesses in the event of assault and battery, I presume. Here I must stop to drink a glass to the memory of Titus. Wasn't he the fellow that brought about the destruction of Jerusalem? Glory be his bed and birthright this blessed day!

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'Well, 'tis time to tell you how I am getting on. *Imprimis*, I have *not* set the Thames ablaze, and, honestly, I must admit that it was not for the lack of inflammable properties in the liquid. One may be a Triton in his own parish pond, and a very minute minnow in this huge ocean of London. The streets are not paved with gold, nor the houses roofed with rubies. The streets are more usually paved like those of another spot, but with big ambitions instead of good intentions, and as to the houses, he's a lucky dog who has one he can call his own. I have tried my hand at anything and everything not requiring a strict preliminary training—bar stone-breaking. I had aspirations towards the stage, but I never got beyond the front door—that is to say, I was hired as a check-taker at the Vaudeville once. I thought I would write a melodrama—an Irish one, of course—and I took it to one Mrs. Selby, a dear old lady, who had a house devoted to comedietta and extravaganza, legs and upholstery—how innocent of all these things I was, you may guess from this—and she kindly recommended me to cart it to the Surrey. I did. It was accepted on conditions, after sundry hums and haws. The theatre was burnt down two nights afterwards. The theatre was insured, but, alas! the manuscript of "The Terryalts" was not, and I hadn't a copy of it.

I next became a cab-driver; that is, as soon as I got to have the map of the town sunk in *bas-relief* on my cranium. A hard life, precarious, harassing, and not very profitable. The novelty of the thing kept me up for a while, but I had to give in after a course of three months. The deuce of an adventure I had but once, and that was with a distinguished member of the craft I at present honour with my patronage. It was outside Stone's, in Panton Street. A portly man, with a nose the hue of a danger-signal, hailed me. "Barnes, cabby," he said, "and look alive about it." "All right, sir," and away I rattled till I got to Barnes, a village on the south bank of the river, between Putney and Mortlake. I opened the spy-hole at the top of the hansom to ask at what house I was to stop, and, lo and behold you! there was my fare snoring the snore of the just. I got down and roused him. "Where are we?" he asked. I told him. "Drat you!" he cried, "I meant Barnes' Tavern, in the Haymarket—I wanted to borrow some tin there." I apologized. "All right, watchman," he cried, "drive on!" and dropped back again into the corner as sound asleep as a curled hedgehog. I drove to the middle of Barnes Common, tenderly lifted my customer out of the cab, and gently bedded him on his back in the shadow of a furze-bush.

'My next essay at fortune took a military turn. I went down to Charles Street, Westminster, met a recruiting sergeant, declared my enthusiastic yearning to join the sappers and miners, and soiled my palm with the Saxon shilling. My martial career was not remarkably lengthened. I failed to "pass the doctor" next morning—he told me I had varicose veins! Bad manners to his impudence, the pursy little humbug! I only wished you and I had him alongside us up Keeper Hill, on one of our boyhood's rambles, and we'd soon take the wind and the conceit out of him.

'What was I to do now? I was fairly at my wits' end. To rob I was not able—it requires genius here; to beg I was ashamed. I had serious thoughts of trying my hand at the fine arts. I heard that those fellows who chalk mackerel on the pavement make a tidy living out of it, and it struck me that a new departure in that direction might bring me fame and fortune. My notion—it may turn up a trump yet for somebody—was to paint caricatures in distemper on the backs of tortoises. But I had no spare cash to lay out on stock, either in pigments or specimens of the genus *testudo*.

'At last I met Providence in the form of Dan McCarthy, of Doonas. "Hyacinth," said he, "do you know anything of boxing?" I was puzzled, for I wasn't sure but he meant boxing the compass, but I found I had got into the wrong box there. The long and short of it was, a friend of his had asked him to look up a smart man with a ready pen and a vigorous imagination, who would undertake to write racy accounts of some of the renowned fisticuff fights of old, for a publican's newspaper. That's what I am doing now, God forgive me! The pay is good, but the work does not like me, I am wise in the "upper-cut," and am known to every "scrapper" in the "drums" of the East and West End, and all the rest; in short, I am comparatively comfortable, but completely demoralized. When you come over next, I can take you, perhaps, to a "merry little mill," for I am always in the "know."

'Don't come, though, an you're sensible, in such weather as we have now. Fog! fog!! fog!!! How I envy you the clear skies of the one city in the world outside Ireland worth living in—wicked, delightful Paris. D——n the London fog! It caught me by the larynx and laid me by the heels three days last November. It steals on you like a garrotter, throttles you, chokes your lungs, clogs your fancy, clouds your good-humour, and sets your drunken landlady stealing your coal by the scuttle and your gin by the quartern.

'Your affectionate coz,
'Hyacinth Blake.

'P.S.—And so it is after Bidelia Blake you'd be asking, Mr. Slyboots? Faith! she has changed her name. Bidelia, or "Biddy," as we knew her, transmogrified herself into Beatrice when she came over here. Not satisfied with that, she has altered her surname to Clarke. A fine, handsome, wealthy, warm-hearted husband he is, and no fool. He's a deal better than Biddy deserved. They have a mansion in Mayfair, and I have the run of the house, but I seldom go there, as I do not wish to make myself too cheap. I met them in the Park yesterday. Dash my buttons! as Li-Chung, the Chinaman, says, if you'd recognise Biddy. She was rosy with health and spirits (Nature's, not Kinahan's), and burning with jewels. I don't know if her husband chains her up at night, but she had a something like a brass dog-collar round her neck. And her wool—I believe you got a tress of it once—is not black now, but yellow—the effect, I am seriously afraid, not so much of London sunshine or London fog, as of golden hairwash. You had better ask her for another tress.

'H. B.'

O'Hara's face, as he perused this letter, would have served as a model for an actor charged with the duty of reading a similar epistle on the stage. He liked his cousin, but he did not seek to conceal his impatience—nobody else was present—at Blake's recital of his meanderings in quest of a social position. The letter was humorous here and there, but he did not appreciate the humour. He wanted to hear of Bidelia; and when he did hear of her, in the abrupt way Hyacinth put it in his postscript,—well, his face was a study. He coloured, he re-read the passage, he clutched the paper tightly in his palm, he laughed, he sat down in his arm-chair, he read the postscript for the third time, and then he lit his pipe.

It is an excellent plan to light one's pipe in moments of vexation.

O'Hara *was* vexed, more vexed than sorry. He puffed and thought, and thought and puffed, and knit his brows, and occasionally took the amber mouthpiece from between his lips and grinned in a scornful fashion, like the baffled villain of tragedy in a show-booth. He stood up at length, took the paper in which the tress of hair was confined, did not kiss it as his wont was, but flung it into the stove, where it lit up, as if it were well preserved in pomatum, crackled crisply, flared, and left a sharp ugly smell of singed goose behind it. O'Hara thought there was a peculiar repulsiveness in the odour. It was the result of his frame of mind. The perfumed locks of Cleopatra would have smelled as foul. The laws of nature are not affected by our prejudices. The body of the hero putrefies by the same process as the body of Hodge.

O'Hara then sat down and set himself a-thinking anew. This was the sum of his thoughts; being literary, they wandered into quotation:

'"Frailty, thy name is woman!"' (Shakespeare; this is good to begin with!) 'Bidelia never had an ounce of sentiment in her. D——n sentiment! I don't regret her. Pshaw! not I; in fact, I'm pleased—pleased, no, rejoiced, that she's well married. What's this Noll says? "She who makes her husband happy leaves nowhere in the running the novel-reading

hussy, whose sole aim is to murder mankind with shafts from her quiver."' (This is better: substantially, it is Goldsmith, but it has been very, very queerly committed to memory. Poor fellow! his nerves must have been unstrung.) 'To Connaught with Bidelia I'll marry the Frenchwoman through spite. I'll throw myself at her feet next week, or next year—I'll swear I love, I do love her—that is to say, I do not dislike her—and I'll send Missus Beatrice Clarke—oh, the short-sightedness of some girls!—an invitation to the ceremony and the wedding-breakfast to follow, with a promise of a bit of bride-cake to cheer her if she is debarred by previous engagements from the pleasure of accepting my very kind invitation. Good! "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me."' (Holy Writ; this is getting serious, friend O'Hara.) 'Caroline was evidently designed for me by nature. My mind is made up.'

O'Hara rose, and nearly tripped over Pat, his faithful dog, the last henchman of the clan. He stroked him fondly on the back; and Pat, jumping up, licked his master's hand with his moist red tongue, and then went through a favourite gymnastic exercise—that of pursuing his own tail. When he was tired of this canine form of search for a chimera, he stood still, panting, and yelped and agitated his tail like a fan.

'Biscuits as usual,' said O'Hara to the quadruped. 'By my troth, it would be a great saving to me if *you* were in love, but you're not. You've the appetite of an ogre.

* * * * * * *

O'Hara and the O'Hoolohan might have been discovered outside the Café de Suède one evening a month afterwards. They were deep in conversation.

'I do not believe in the constancy of woman—you know my reasons; but I do in the necessity of marriage. You know Caroline intimately now. Do you admire her?'

It was O'Hara who spoke.

'Much,' answered O'Hoolohan; 'but some people are prejudiced in favour of brunettes.'

'Ah! you mistake me. I referred to disposition, to mind—which, after all, counts more in a union than complexion, or figure, or hair. Can I confide in you?'

'You are not obliged to give your confidence if you mistrust.'

'Then I shall give it. I have spoken to her of marriage. She frankly told me that she felt she could not love, and I as frankly told her that neither could I.'

'Then the affair is finished?'

'Yes, but not as you think. We have agreed to marry, and trust to love to come afterwards.'

'Mother of Moses! I hope it may,' and O'Hoolohan leant back surprised. 'Ah! friend, have you forgotten what Moore sang?'

'That poodle of literature,' said O'Hara, 'he sang any amount of nonsense, like the rest of them. Which of his verses are you thinking of now?'

'Have it, if you must:

'"In France, when the heart of a woman sets sail
On the ocean of wedlock its fortune to try,
Love seldom goes far in a vessel so frail,
But just pilots her off, and then bids her good-bye!"'

'Is that *your* experience?' queried O'Hara.

'Respect your seniors, *blanc-bec*,'[12] growled O'Hoolohan.

'At your excellency's orders,' returned O'Hara, with mock obsequiousness. 'But I can cap your quotation with another from Master Tommy Little, which will give us an excuse for fresh bocks at all events:

'"——fill the cup—where'er, boy,
Our choice may fall, our choice may fall;
We're sure to find Love there, boy,
So drink them all, so drink them all!"'

'I don't mind pledging that,' assented O'Hoolohan, 'but I wish all the same the lass and you had got spooney on each other. This sort of nuptial knot has a kink in it. As for Berthe and myself, we're happy as Midsummer Day, but conscientiously I can offer *you* no congratulations.'

'Your good wishes are all I want. There are marriages of affection, of interest, of spite, and of necessity; but this is the first time, I venture to say, you have heard of a marriage of esteem,' and O'Hara folded his arms and looked philosophic.

'By my hand,' remarked O'Hoolohan, 'you're an original. I can't make you out. I give you up.'

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIFTH OF MAY, 1870.

It was the forty-ninth anniversary of the death of the eagle chained to the rock—of the Prometheus who was not unbound—of Napoleon Bonaparte imprisoned at St. Helena. Captivity, despair, dropsy—these were the last scenes in the great world-drama of the modern Cæsar, the little lieutenant of artillery, who sprang from the obscurity of his islet-home in the Mediterranean to the perilous eminence of the purple. This was the end of the spoiled child of victory.

On this day the veterans of his wars, 'the old of the old,' mustered at the foot of his monument in the Place Vendôme, in the core of the busy city—the monument which typified him as the Conquering Hero, who was the ideal of French martial aspirations—the being after the nation's heart. Proudly uprises in the middle of the square the tall pillar—an immense trophy covered with plates of bronze from the monster crucible in which the captured cannon of the Austrians were melted down. The statue of the Imperial soldier is on the summit, laurel-crowned, garbed in regal mantle, the sceptre in one hand, the orb in the other. It would have been better if it were sword or *bâton*, instead of sceptre or orb—the chasseur's jacket of Marengo, instead of the regal mantle—the three-cornered hat, instead of the garland of Roman triumph.

On this day the statue holds levée. Stooped veterans draw their old uniforms from the bottom of musty drawers, put on the plumed shako pierced with bullets, and the belts blackened with the powder of twenty battles, and march with tottering step to lay their memorial wreaths of the yellow-budded immortelles on the railings at the base.

'Tap! tap!' brattle the drum-sticks, plied by wrinkled fingers, and slowly comes in sight the slender company from the Hôtel des Invalides, for some of these warriors have to hobble to the rendezvous on crutches. The sight is one to thrill and sadden, as these glorious relics of an era that is past file feebly by, in every variety of military dress that recalls the First Empire. There are about five-and-thirty of them—no more. They halt and form into line in front of the entrance to the monument. The stalwart Municipal Guard on sentry presents arms; the withered commander of the band advances and hangs his huge votive circlet of flowers on a rail, the drummer makes his most vigorous attempt at a roulade, but there is the tremor of palsy in the sound; it is as the rattling of clay on a coffin-lid.

'*Vive l'Empereur!*' pipes the commander, and a faint cheer, a cheer as if from out the dimness of some distant vault, is the response from his companions.

'Live the Man!' exclaims a stooped officer in cocked hat, brandishing his stick as if it were a battle-blade. The stooped officer was Captain Chauvin. Having acquitted themselves of the duty of loyal love, the veterans broke up and dispersed, and our friend joined four bystanders on the pavement of the Rue Castiglione. They were M. and Madame O'Hoolohan, and M. and Madame O'Hara. They helped the aged warrior into a close carriage—for he had grown sadly helpless of late—and drove quietly to his apartment near the Panthéon. He complained of a coldness in the limbs. They sate him in an easy-chair before the stove, and wrapped him round with a warm cloak. He fell into a child-like slumber. This may have lasted an hour, and then, with a loud voice, a voice with the vibration of young manhood, the veteran exclaimed:

'Farewell, my friends; they are beating the *appel* on high.'

Lifting himself to his feet, by a superhuman effort, he stood straight as a lance for one moment, then flung out his arms and fell back dead.

There was a smile on his wan thin lips, and a hectic glow on his cheeks. He was happier than his comrades, who did not follow him till another year had driven France to grief and Paris to delirium, had wiped out the legend of the Empire as with a bloody sponge, and had torn down the monument to The Man.

THE END.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] In Paris the pawn-office is called 'my aunt,' as it is nick-named 'my uncle' in England.

[2] 'To have the sack,' Paris slang for 'to be in funds.'

[3] To be out of money.

[4] The debtors' prison.

[5] The typical name of the Irishman, but spelt 'patte' (paw), is a common word to dogs in France. This may explain why O'Hara fancied he had hit on the animal's name.

[6] The smaller island close by the Morgue.

[7] The soldier must have meant catafalque. The French *militaire* from the country is as fond of words of learned length as Goldsmith's village schoolmaster.

[8] An anecdote of this nature is also told of Wilson, the eminent landscape-painter. Doffing his coat one day for a game of tennis at Rome, the picture of a splendid waterfall was discovered by way of lining to his waistcoat.

[9] This may strike such of my readers as never have enjoyed the confidence of a canine friend, as drawing too largely on their credulity; but I assure them, and 'I'm serious—so are all men upon paper'—that I had a dog once, of the Irish retriever breed, which carried my hat after me for the length of two streets from where it had been knocked off my head by some ruffian in an affray. I lost the same dog in Whitechapel, and it found its way home to St. John's Wood, across the breadth of crowded London.

[10] Margaret the milliner.

[11] My son, hearken to thy aged grandsire. Thou wert born but yesterday, and I am nearing the gate of death. Fly, for ever fly, this ungrateful soil that refuses thee life. On yonder ship, where the crowd embark, thou goest to seek the United States, those climates in the bosom of plenty, where twenty united peoples live happily together. Fear not the storms of the Atlantic; seek America; there thy lot will be sweeter. At the dawn of day thou hast commenced thy work under the gray sky in the bleak winters. I have seen thy strength and courage worn out tilling the fields of some duke and peer, whose steps have never trodden his domain; far from Ireland he travels in state. Unfortunate, the dearth is near. Quit for ever this sojourn of misery. In cultivating the fertile savannahs, preserve thy faith if thou wouldst prosper: make thy adieus to our barren furrows; we must part. Take this silver, the fruit of long sacrifices, a crust of bread is enough for me; the sea is fair, the winds blow soft;

go, my child—thy grandsire blesses thee!

[12] Greenhorn, Johnny Raw.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MATED FROM THE MORGUE: A TALE OF THE SECOND EMPIRE ***

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