TALES OF THE JURY ROOM

By Gerald Griffin

THE EIGHTH JURYMAN'S TALE

MR TIBBOT O'LEARY, THE CURIOUS

CHAPTER I — CONTINUED

One of his numerous daily practises was to walk down as far as the gate of his own avenue, which opened on the mail coach road, at 9.30 every morning, and at 3.45 every evening, these being the two diurnal periods at which the coach passed, or ought to pass on its way to and from the nearest county town. And if he were too early for the coach (he never was too late) he would wait patiently with his back against the pier of his gate until the "conveniency" made its appearance, and at the very instant it was passing his own gate, he would draw out his silver hunting watch and mark the time, and then leisurely walk home and compare his watch with the dial, and then compare the dial with the almanac, making allowance to the fourth place of decimals for difference of longitude, and thus discover exactly how many minutes, or fractions of minutes, the coach had been "behind time" in its progress for that day. Nor was he a jot disconcerted by observing, (indeed he did not observe at all) that in progress of time the automatom-like regularity of his appearance and of his movements, the punctual apparition of his figure seen afar off leaning against the pier, the motion of the hand to the watch-fob as the coach drew nigh, the production of the time piece, and the glance at the coach, to observe the precise moment when they were in a direct line opposite the gate, all became matter of undisguised amusement to the coachman and his passengers, who might be seen looking back with laughing countenances, as he put up his watch with the air of a philosopher and walked up the avenue to complete the troublesome process which he had imposed on himself as a morning and evening recreation.

"Have you any news?" was at this time the second or third, and often the first question which he put to every acquaintance at meeting. Having, unlike busybodies in general, brought his own affairs into tolerable order, little remained for him to do besides interesting himself in those of the world outside, and his feeble mind, like a creeping shrub, unable to suppose itself, went throwing its tendrils about in all directions, seeking for events and circumstances to prevent it from falling back an inert mass upon itself. Fortunately his hunger for novelty was of a kind which was easily appeased. His more observant friends soon remarked that any answer satisfied him, except a direct negative, and this was his aversion. To tell him of a sick cow, a dog strayed or poisoned, a servant turned off, a leg of mutton spoiled in the cooking, anything was preferable to the barren and unwelcome "No." Indeed, to those who knew him, few things could be more painful than its infliction; and, accordingly, where it was understood that nothing more was requisite than merely to keep the sense of hearing in play for a certain portion of time, there was scarcely any one who had not got news of some kind for Tibbot O'Leary. Those who did *not* know him, were not so well aware of the nature of the food for which he craved, and were not so prompt in satisfying his hunger, as was exemplified in his first meeting with his man, Tom Nash.

One morning Mr. Tibbot O'Leary arrived a few minutes before 9.30 o'clock at his own pier gate gate Crossing the stile he was surprised and disconcerted to find his place occupied by a young country lad, who seemed to have made a long and wearisome journey, and was now resting in Tibbot's favorite attitude, and against his favorite pier. The lad touched his hat respectfully, but did not move. Mr. O'Leary began to grow fidgetty, but felt as if it would be inhospitable to desire him to change his quarters; besides, that it would look somewhat ridiculous to turn him away from the pier merely for the purpose of taking the place himself, and the fellow had an arch eye which looked as if nothing ridiculous would be likely to escape it. The exclusive possession of the pier of the gate could hardly be an object of ambition to any being, except a cow to whom the sharp angle at the corner might be a temptation, or a human being inclined to indulge in the same pastime. Mr. O'Leary, however, had no such inclination, so on that morning, the coachman the guard, and the passengers were astonished to behold Mr. O'Leary for the first time go through his customary evolutions on the opposite side of the gate to that at which he was wont to stand After the coach had passed, and the watch was put up, Tibbot glanced at the individual who ornamented the opposite pier, and said:

"Well, my man, who are you?"

"A poor boy, plase your honour."

"Have you any news?"

"Not a word! your honour."

"No news! What's your name?"

"Tom Nash, sir," (respectfully touching the leaf of his hat with the tip of his forefinger.

"Where do you come from?"

"E'stwards, your honor."

And where are you going?"

"Westwards, your honour."

"And you have no news?"

"Not a word, plase your honour."

"How far do you mean to go?"

"Why then, just until somebody axes me to stay."

And who do you expect to 'ax' you, as you call it?"

"Wisha, some gentleman that'll have an open heart and house by the road side. Sure 'tisn't any close fisted neger I'd expect to ax me."

"Umph! And why do you imagine would give a night's lodging to a person like you, who hasn't got a word of news or anything to say that would make his company entertaining or desirable?"

"Wisha, that's as it falls out. If they doesn't do it for God's sake, I don't expect they'd do it for mine. 'Tisn't any fault o' mine. If I hard any news goin' I wouldn't begridge tellin' it."

"But you didn't hear it?"

"I did not."

"Not a word?

"Not one."

"Don't you come from town?"

"I does."

"And didn't you hear any news there?"

"I did not."

"That's very strange. They almost always have news in town of some kind or another."

"If they had it, they were very sparin' of it this turn, for they didn't give me any."

"Did you ask for it?"

"Wisha, then, not to tell your honor a lie, I didn't. I had something else to think of."

"What else had you to think of?"

"Oh then, my poverty and my hunger' an' the distance that was betune me an' home."

"Where is your home?"

"Wisha, no where, until some one makes it out for me. But my native place is behind near Kenmare."

"How long is it since you left it?"

"Six years."

"And you are now going back?"

"I am."

"I suppose you had a great many strange adventures during your absence from home?"

"Oh then, not belyin' your honor, sorrow a'venther, 'cept that it was a venthersom thing o' me ever to think of lavin' it."

"And did you never hear anything worth relating during all those six years?"

"Sorrow ha'p'orth."

"Did nothing ever happen to any of your friends or acquaintances that may be worth mentioning?"

"Sorrow ha'p'orth ever happened any of 'em as I know."

"Nor to yourself?"

"Not a ha'porth. What should happen me?"

"Did nobody ever tell you a story of any kind that was worth listening to?"

"I never heard one."

If ever there was an individual less likely than another to get into the good graces of Tibbot O'Leary, it was the uninquisitive, incommunicative being who now stood before him. After contemplating his figure in silence for some moments, he turned away, saying:

"Upon my word, my man, if you have no more than that to say to your friends when you get to Kenmare, you'll be no great prize to them when they have you, or to any one you meet on the way either."

By this time the traveller began to form a better estimate of the man with whom he had to deal. Seeing the iniquisitive gentlemen turn up the avenue with a discontented air, he thrust his head between the bars of the gate, and called aloud:

"Please your honor!"

"Well?" said Tibbot turning and looking over his shoulder.

"I have some news, plase your honor."

The brow of Mr. O'Leary relaxed.

"Well," said he, "what is it?"

"I was comin' through a part o' the County Tipperary the other day, and passing near the foot o' the Galteigh mountains, what should I see only a power o' people with horses and tacklin' an' they dhraggin' after 'em the longest bames o' timber I ever seen upon the road—great firs and pine trees fit for the mast of a man of war, an' bigger, that looked as if they were just cut down for some purpose or another, an' so they wor. I wondhered greatly, an' I axed one o' the people where is it they wor goin' with the big threes. 'We're goin' to plant 'im on the top o' the Galteighs,' says he. 'What to do?' says I. 'A big split that come in the sky,' says he, 'an' 'tis only lately we observed it. So we're getting the tallest threes we can find to prop it up, for the split is incraisin', an' there's no knowin' the minute it may fall.' When I hard that I axed him no more, but left him and come away."

"Well," exclaimed Mr. O'Leary, "and why didn't you tell me that at first?"

"Oh sure, 'tisn't every news a *keowt* o' my kind would hear, that would be worth relating to larned quolity like your honor."

"Come along, come along and get your dinner," said Mr. O'Leary. "You should never say you have no news, man."

They went up the avenue together, and so well did the traveller contrive to obliterate the bad impression he had made in the first instance, that before the day was over he was formally inaugurated into the post which he ever after continued to hold in Mr. O'Leary's household.

It was very shortly after this auspicious meeting that Mr. O'Leary made the visit to the metropolis, which was the subject of so much mysterious whispering, and question, and conjecture in his own neighborhood long after his return. And about the period of this last event, likewise, it was that the vane of Tibbot O'Leary's curiosity (to the great joy and relief of all his living friends,) began to steam backward steadily towards the past, and ceased to interest itself as much as before in the petty affairs of his contemporaries, on which his genius had been hitherto exhausted. It was hinted that it would have been happier for him had his inquiries taken this turn before his return from Dublin. The fair cause of his disappointment and retreat, had, it was said, no other ground of dissatisfaction, on her own admission, than poor Tibbot's ruling foible, which had become more and more intolerable as their intimacy increased. Many a characteristic scene, whether real or imaginary, was retailed among the fireside circles in the neighborhood as having led to the lachrymose result which exercised so strong an influence over O'Leary's subsequent fortunes. If poor Tibbot was fidgetty and inquisitive with his acquaintances in general, there was no end to his queries in the company of one in whom he felt a particular interest, and without having a particle of jealousy in his constitution, all his conduct was like that of a jealous person. Now, without having anything the least in the word criminal to conceal, all ladies know, and gentlemen too, that a thousand things happen in the customary routine of life, which it may not suit one's purpose to speak of even to one's most intimate friend. Even the poet who insists most strongly on the merit of confidential frankness, advises you, though in the company of "a bosom crony," to

still keep something to yourself
Ye'll scarcely tell to ony.

If Tibbot saw Miss Crosbie talking to a stranger in the street he should know who he was; who was his father and his mother; what was his business in town, &c., besides a thousand similar queries, the repeated answering or evading which was found so burthensome, that it finally outweighed all the good qualities of the querist. Among many appropriate speeches which were kindly ascribed to the hero and heroine of their fireside romance, by the tattlemongers in the country side, there was one which was said to have produced a powerful effect in making poor Tibbot look like a fool at the time it was uttered:

"If notes of interrogation were as current as other notes, Mr. O'Leary," said the lady, "what an immense capital you could set afloat!"

Others averred that there was no such exclusive feeling of disappointment whatever on the part of the gentleman, and that it was quite as much in accordance with his own desire as with that of the lady, that the affair ended as it did. However this might be, Tibbot did not seem to allow the event to weigh very heavily upon his spirits, and it was with much equanimity that he subsequently even heard of her marriage to another. His beloved studies supplied to him the place of all other domestic happiness, and but for one of those accidents, which so much more frequently determine the fortunes of men than any efforts of prudence or foresight, he might have continued his solitary pursuits until he had become himself as venerable a relic of the past as any of the weather-worn *dallans*, or *trilithons*, or musty manuscripts over which he was accustomed to consume his youthful hours with all the devotion of an enthusiast.

It was late on an autumn evening, and throughout the lonesome apartments of Mr. O'Leary's dwelling, that interval of stillness reigned which precedes the hour of general nightly rest. Tom Nash was getting out turf for the next morning. The old woman was raking the kitchen fire in the huge ashpit. The proprietor of the mansion was in a distant corner of the building, with a chamber candle in his hand, looking over the precious antiquarian treasures contained in that apartment which he called his library, but which had much more the appearance of a museum, or the cabinet of a dealer in the black art. Here stood the jaw bones of an enormous grampus which was stranded on the coast of Dingle half a century before, there a huge stalactyte from some inland cavern, here a penny struck in Galway when Edward IV. had a mint in that town, there a thigh bone of heaven knows what animal, with a neck and head of a moose deer, here a model of the five-inch hailstones which fell in 1748, there a massive silver brooch which had figured on the breast of some Kerry chieftain of the middle ages, here a whole array of battered trumpets, rusty swords, wicker targets, skeans, bows and arrows, bells, crosses, other momentos, to show how our ancestors used to live, and how people used to kill one another in former times; there a row of fossils, Kerry diamonds, pyrites from Bantry, mare asites from Carberry, and so forth.

Nor was his library less curious. Heaps of Irish manuscript songs, and metrical histories of the ancient bards and senachies of historiographers of the isle, volumes, the contents of which, like the vane of a vessel sailing against the wind, still pointed backwards towards the year of the creation, huge folios in various languages, and above all, a whole shelf of learned treatises on the probable use and origin of round towers were arranged against the walls of his apartment.

On a sudden, the unusual sound of a horse's hoof was heard upon the avenue. Mr. O'Leary in his room, holding the candle in his hand, and Tom Nash in the kitchen, at the same instant paused to listen. What belated wight could it be, who sought so unfrequented a place of shelter, as Chore Abbey, at this lonesome hour. It was evident the rider was a man, and a merry fellow too, for as he drew near the house, they could hear him singing at the top of his voice, a burlesque Latin version of a popular song:

Quum tyrocinii tempus in Droghed
Impiger egi ut ullus in oppido.
Magistri filia Bidelia Doghertidas
Foramen fecit in corde Raffertidis.

Both the voice and the words seemed familiar to the ear of Tibbot O'Leary, for his countenance immediately exhibited a mingled expression of pleasure and alarm.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed, "it is he sure enough. Was ever anything more unfortunate? How did he find me out here, and what shall I do with him?"

"Why then, who in the airthly universe is that, that's comin' singin' to the doore at such an hour?" ejaculated Tom Nash, below stairs.

"Now for an arrowy shower of ridicule, and shallow derision," said the master above.

"Now for another job o' work after I thinkin' all my business was done for the night," said the servant below.

Unconscious of this querulous duet, which his arrival occasioned within door, the *sans souci* horseman, instead of taking the trouble to alight at the hall door; continued to shout and sing alternately at the top of his voice:

"What ho! house! Why, house! I say! is there anyone within?

Eu! Eu! Patrici Raffertides!
Macte virtute, Patrici Raffertidis!
Magistri filia,
Pulchra Bidelia,
Foraman fecit in corde Raffertidis.

What! house!"

In the meantime Tom Nash had made his way to the presence of his master.

"The key of the hall doore, sir, if you pleaze."

"Oh, Tom, I'm ruined."

"How so, sir?"

"This is Mr. Geoffrey Gunn, an old college chum of mine, and the last person in the world whom I would have find me in this place."

"Well, sure 'tis aisy for me to give him the *nien shesthig*, or for us all to hould our tongue, an' purtind we don't hear him, an' lave him bawlin' an' singin' abroad there till he's tired. The Gunns arn't only a modhern stock in these parts. The first of 'em come over ondher Queen Lizabit."

"Nay, nay, that would never answer; I am very glad to meet him, though I could wish—there he calls again, run—run and open the door. And stay, have you got anything for supper?"

"Lashing and lavins."

"Very well, have it ready, and bring it when I call!"

If it be true, as some wise men have asserted, that the more a man does, the more he is able to do, it is no less a fact, that the less a man does, the less he is inclined to do. The comparatively idle life which Tom Nash led under his studious master, had strengthened to the utmost, a powerful natural taste for doing nothing, and rendered him proportionably unfriendly to any demands upon his labour, especially when they happened to be unforseen, or out of course.

"Why then your welcome, as the farmer said to the tithe-procthor," he muttered, going down stairs, "what a charmin' voice you have this evenin'. I must go make up your horse now and get him a feed, and be cleanin' your boots, an' stirrups, in place o' bein' where I ought to be this time o' night in my warm bed; an' all on account of a roystherin', bawlin' bedlamite that——What's wantin', plaze your honour?" he added in an altered tone, as he opened the door and confronted the belated horseman.

"Is your master at home?"

"He is, plaze your honour."

"Will you tell him that his old friend Mr. Gunn is come to see him."

"He knows it already, plaze your honour. He hears your honour singin' on the aveny, an' he knows the voice. Tom Nash, says he (mainin' myself), that's Mr. Geoffrey Gunn, my old friend, an' I'm very glad to meet him, says he, take care an' have supper ready when I call!"

"It appears to me, Tom," said the stranger, and he dismounted, and gave the bridle to Nash, "that you cannot be much troubled with visitors in this place."

"Only middlin', sir, of an odd turn. The last we had was Aisther two years, a very civil aisy spoken gentleman indeed. He stopped only the one night, an ga'e me a half crown in the mornin' when he was goin', although I never seen any one that gave so little throuble. I wanted not to take it, but he wouldn't be said by me."

"Um. And where am I to find your master?"

"If your honour will condescend to take the light in your hand, an' go sthrait up stairs, while I'm takin' round the horse, you'll find him above in the library. That's the place for you to visit. He has all the ould rattle-thraps, an' curiosities up there, that ever was dug out o' the bowls o' the earth since the creation. That's the man that has the long head. Take care of the hole upon the first landing. You'll see yoursel' where there's a step wantin'—in the second flight. You can see the kitchen down through it. The gentleman we had here last was near breakin' his leg in it, comin' down stairs in the mornin'. We forgot to tell him about it."

Taking the candle in his hand, Mr. Gunn proceeded to ascend the venerable staircase, with all the caution which these hints were calculated to excite. It is curious to think of what materials we are made, and how apt we are to consider an object rather as it appears to men, than as it really is in itself. The idea that there could be anything absurd or ridiculous in his present pursuits, had never once occurred to Mr. O'Leary, yet now that he found himself and them about to be subjected to the eye of one, who, whatever he might think of the present or the future, did not, as he knew, care, a button for the past, he felt as much ashamed as if he were conscious himself that his life was spent in a very silly manner. Whether it was however that it is not so easy or so amusing to quiz a man in his own house as elsewhere, or that the world had altered him, Geoffrey Gunn did not manifest the least inclination to turn his old companion or his "curiosities," as Nash called them, into ridicule. On the contrary, he even manifested a degree of interest about them, and after mutual and cordial inquiries had been interchanged between them, he had the civility to ask the names of two or three of the most fantastic-looking objects which he beheld around him. Charmed the more with his complacency, as it was so wholly unexpected, Mr. O'Leary explained their uses and history, much admiring the change which time had wrought in his old friend, since the period when himself was wont to form the target of his merriment.

"And that curious looking thing—that long spike with the ring and two heavy balls at one end of it. It seems of silver."

"The purest silver. It is a brooch."

"A brooch!" exclaimed Gunn, placing it against his shirt frill. "Why it weighs half a pound!"

"The more nearly resembling the menial, but necessary utensil, from which it derives its name," said Mr. O'Leary. It is the dealg-fallain, or ancient Irish cloak bodkin, worn at the cosherings or feasts of the nobility."

"Bless me!" said Gunn, "who would have thought it! I say, O'Leary, what a figure a man would cut goin' to a subscription ball at the Rotunda, with such a thing as that stuck in his button hole! Well, you have a complete museum here, a second Noah's ark. What a time it must have taken you to get them all together! And you have them all so pat at your fingers end. (Here he yawned slightly.) Well it is all very curious I dare say, and very entertaining to those who have a talent for such studies. Besides it is so much more interesting and instructive to spend one's time amid the relics of the past—the memorials of the mighty dead, as somebody calls them, than amongst the frivolous beings, who usurp the name of men in our own degenerate time. As Tully says, "*Heu quante minus est cum iis versari quam te meminisse!*"

Mr. O'Leary made no reply, unwilling to interrupt a flow of sentiment which he could not sufficiently admire.

"Yes," said Geoffrey Gunn, "there is a grandeur about the past, which the more one thinks of it, makes him shrink with distaste from the pettiness and littleness of the present. There is a sublimity of feeling associated with the preterite *Was* which its fellow tense *Is* can never produce. The very sound of the words indicate, a superiority in the former. *Was*, full-toned and broad, opens the whole mouth. *Is*, comes forth between the teeth, like the hiss of a goose. How pleasing to turn from the tiresome, matter of fact illumination of our own times, that spread of dry practical knowledge, which takes away from learning half its importance, by removing its singularity, and contemplate the beautiful gloom of those majestic ages, when the very alphabet itself, to the mass of mankind was invested with all the interests of mystery!"

"My dear Geoffrey," said Mr. O'Leary, "I forgot to ask have you dined?"

"Psha, a fig for dinner or breakfast either," said Gunn, after another stifled yawn, "I am not so entirely void of taste, as to think about eating, while such a mental treat as this is spread before me. And not to speak of the pleasure, the utility of such pursuits must be apparent to every body. For instance, but for the fortunate recovery of those silver bodkins, would not the knowledge of the manner in which the old O'Donoghues and their contemporaries fastened their cloaks be lost for ever to the world? Besides it is so much more useful to study, how people lived a thousand years ago, than it is to reflect, how we are to live ourselves. Any fool can know his own business, but it is only men of sense and understanding, as well as charity, who take an interest in that of persons who are no longer able to take care of it themselves," (Another heroic effort to suppress a yawn.)

"You must be hungry however. It is a good step from Killarney here. (He rung the bell.) Besides we can so much more agreeably talk over old times at a supper-table by the fire-side."

Geoffrey Gunn suffered himself to be prevailed upon, and a very tolerable supper was speedily laid before the pair, to which Gunn did such justice, as showed that his antiquarian enthusiasm had not taken away his appetite. On a sudden, while they conversed upon indifferent subjects, Gunn raised his head and said, as if a sudden thought had struck him.

"Apropos of antiquities, Tibbot, you are acquainted with this great female antiquarium, who lives in your neighborhood?"

"Not I. Whom do you mean?"

"Why, now, that's very odd. I have only come down to this part of the country, to snatch a peep at the lake during the vacation, and I know more of your neighbours, than you who live on the spot; but then, rogue as you are, I would be a fool to you, I warrant, if we came to question about the court of the Ptolomies or Phamesas. But indeed it was accidentally I heard of her first. She is a Miss Moriarty (a genuine west country stock), and a very witch at the books; knows Hebrew, and can even scrawl a hieroglyphic or two of the Chaldaic and such things. As for Greek and Latin, she makes no more of them than a squirrel would of cracking a nut.

"Is it possible? How odd I should never have heard of her?"

"Not at all odd, my dear fellow, you were busy about more important things. It is only for us ephemeral beings to have our ears cocked for such every day novelties. But indeed you ought to know her. She lives not more than half a mile from here, on the Kenmare road, in a humble farm house, tenanted by the husband of a relative, where she has a couple of rooms filled with all the antediluvisa rarities in the world. You should have heard her upon the round towers."

"You don't tell me so?"

"She has a theory of her own about them. I had the full benefit of it, for, a few days since, I was compelled to take shelter in the house from a shower of rain, and had the honor and happiness of hearing, during the half hour I remained, more words I couldn't understand than I did the whole time I was in college."

A lady in his neighborhood who knew Hebrew, and had got an original theory upon the origin of round towers! Little more was said upon the subject during supper, unless that a particular description was given of the lady's residence; but Tibbot O'Leary was far from letting it slip out of memory. On the following morning, after Geoffrey Gunn had taken his leave (not forgetting the gentleman who had given Nash a half crown "last Aisther two years,") he remained, as that faithful domestic conceived, unusually pensive and silent though loquacity, indeed, was never amongst his failings. Let us however follow Mr. Gunn. He was one of a class of persons very common in Ireland—and for aught I know as common elsewhere. He was a liberal dealer in what might be called white lies. Dining out, or paying a visit, or breakfasting, or even meeting a friend in the street, he seemed to consider his time thrown away, if he did not leave a few such fictions behind him, nor was it necessary that they should be in any degree humorous, or have any particular object in view; it was quite sufficient if they had no foundation in truth. A foreign potentate dead—a coach upset — Mrs. O'What d'ye call, brought to bed of twins—Mr. So and so killed in a duel—such were the species of inventions which rolled from his lips like a little torrent, whenever he found himself amongst a civil set of hearers, and in which he was encouraged by the laughter of some friends with whom he passed for a genuine wit. The instant he turned from Tibbot O'Leary's avenue, he trotted briskly away and slackened not his speed until he pulled bridle at the door of a Mr. O'Connor, who was not less a gentleman for being a farmer, and not less a farmer for being a gentleman. This gentleman farmer appeared to have observed his approach from the windows of the sitting room, for Geoffrey Gunn had no sooner pulled up his horse than the hall-door opened, and Mr. O'Connor appeared with outstretched hand and smiling countentance.

"Good-morrow, good-morrow! you are welcome. Well?"

"I told you I'd do it."

"But have you done it? Have you seen him?"

"Seen him! If *you* see him not here before a month is at an end, I'll give you leave to say this head is good for nothing more than slashing wheat upon."

"You're a non-pariel. And is *she* to know anything about it?"

"As much as your love of small talk may induce you to communicate; provided always, and be it excepted, that no mention be made of a preconcerted plan. One word of *that* would ruin us for ever."

"I understand—trust me for the discreet thing. But come in, come in, we are just going to luncheon. She'll be delighted to see you."

"To tell you the truth," Gunn continued in a lower tone, as he entered the little hall and took off his great coat, "it is partly a matter of conscience with me, for I had a greater share than sits easy on my memory in that former transaction, so that I have something like a personal interest in seeing—Ah, Miss Moriarty, how dy'e do? &c.. &c., and all sat down to luncheon.

There is generally a degree of decorous silence attending the commencement of any serious meal (such as luncheon often is in a mountainous country,) which gradually wears off accordingly as the motives diminished which stimulate to action rather than to dialogue. Accordingly for some time little was heard except the tingle of knives and forks interspersed with an occasional sentence or, two in the way of courtesy. At length the attention of the company to the business before them appeared to relax, and conversation gradually became general.

"A shocking accident I witnessed this moment on the road, Mrs. O'Connor," said Mr. Gunn, "a child ran over by a wheel-barrow—never saw such a spectacle—driven by a blind man. Unfortunately it was loaded with stones—saw the infant — the wheel passed over its neck."

"Had they medical aid in time?" asked Mr. O'Connor.

"Why, no—unfortunately the doctor was out of the way, attending a lady who required his services, under very peculiar circumstances. She had taken her passage hither in the canal boat at Shannon Harbour, paying cabin fare for one of course, when, lo and behold you, before they had got half way she thought proper to fall ill and add two fine boys and a lovely girl to the number of her Majesty's subjects. However, all was well until she came to settle with the captain at parting, when he insisted on being paid his fare for the whole force. She refused—he insisted—and was for keeping possession of the three young defaulters until he should be paid. However, on second thoughts, reflecting that he would probably be no gainer by such an arrangement, he preferred suing for the amount. The case is to come on next term—'tis a very knotty question—bets are even upon it all over the country—the curiosity is most intense, Apropos of curiosity, Miss Moriarty, I saw a friend of yours lately."

"A friend of mine?"

"One at least who ought to be so—as great an antiquarian as yourself—a terrible fellow for round towers—Mr. Tibbot O'Leary."

"Is it possible?" How I should like to see him."

"Like all very clever people, he has some oddities; amongst others I hear he can't bear the idea of a wig or a false tooth—has some extraordinary prejudice about them." Here the speaker and Mr. O'Connor exchanged significant looks, which seemed to indicate that their last remark had a meaning or a purpose beyond what it might bear upon the surface.

While this was passing, Mr. O'Leary continued silent and reflective as he had been ever since Geoffrey Gunn's departure. Days passed away, and the same moodiness of mind continued. Tom Nash knew not what to think of it. It was in vain that he strove to draw him into a communicative humor, in vain did he even call the talismanic round towers to his aid. From the moment in which Mr. O'Leary first heard of this female Pundit he was smitten with a desire to hold some conversation with her, and learn her opinion of past ages and matters before the flood. It was not easy, however, to accomplish this, for there was nothing in the world, which he abhorred at any time, more than a visit of ceremony, and even if it were otherwise, what formal motive could be assigned for such a visit as this? Geoffrey Gunn however had thrown out a hint which recurred to the memory of the Irish antiquarian. For many days Nash observed him consulting the weather glass, with a frequency which betokened a secret solicitude of mind. It continued during the space of about a month, hovering between the degrees Fair and Set Fair, with a constancy which did not seem to afford his master any considerable degree of satisfaction. At length about the end of the month, the mercury began to fall, and his master's spirits to rise in an inverse ratio, which was exceedingly puzzling to Nash.

"Tom," said his master, with a look of sprightliness and glee, such as he had not manifested before since the visit of Mr. Gunn, "Tom, I'm in hopes we'il have rain to-morrow."

"In hopes, masther? 'M sure 'twould be our ruination. Sure 'tis to-morrow we have men hired to have the piaties dug in the next field."

"Hang the potatoes!" exclaimed Mr. O'Leary.

"Hang the piaties! Millia murder! I never heard so foolish a speech as that from him before. Hang the piaties! The whole stock we have again' the winter! Lord send them ould books an' round towers arn't makin' a whirligig of his brains," Nash muttered, as he left the room. "Wisha, we never heard more than that any way. Hang the piaties!"

Early on the following morning, Nash went into his master's room as usual to take his clothes to brush. While he emptied the pockets and laid the contents on the table, Mr. O'Leary, awoke by the jingling of keys and half-pence, turned his head and asked:

"Well, Nash, we are likely to have rain?"

"I never seen such a mornin,' sir. The sky is all one cloud from east to west, an' so low that I could a'most tetch it with my hand. I don't know from Adam, what we'll do about the piaties; the men won't be able to give half a day with the weather, a clane loss of half a guinea at the laste."

"That's delightful."

"Delightful!" Nash repeated involuntarily, looking over his shoulder with surprise. "He's purse-warin in it, I see."

"Nash," said Mr. O'Leary, pulling back his nightcap and sitting up, "have both horses saddled and fed. I intend riding out immediately after breakfast."

"Is it in the rain, masther?"

"It is. Make haste and do it as I desire you."

"Pursewarin' all through!" ejaculated Nash, as he went out and shut the door behind him. "A whole month of the fairest weather that ever came out o' the sky, he laves the horses in the stable without stirrin,' an' now the first day he hears