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THE BRIDEGROOM OF BARNA. Begone!—outstrip the fleet gazelle— The wind in speed subdue; Fear cannot fly so swift, so well, As vengeance shall pursue! —MRS. HEMANS.

CHAPTER I.

What traveller that is familiar with Ireland, and has walked or ridden among the roads of that country, has not remarked the unwearied disposition the peasantry who happen to journey in the direction he is proceeding in, evince to enter into conversation with him, or failing that, to at least shorten and sweeten their way by following close at his heels, whether he be on horseback or a pedestrian? As they are naturally a most inquisitive, as well as social race, this disposition on their part is peculiarly favorable to the gratification of their propensities. Should you, for instance, be accompanied by a friend, there are nine chances to one that they become familiarly acquainted with your private business or family history; and even if alone, and disposed to repel all attempts to be communicative, they are sure not to quit you, without being enlightened upon some part of your personal affairs. If you ride, they will 'take the weight' of your horse, calculating by the state the animal is in, the exact distance you have travelled; by its breed and grooming, the probable amount of your property; and as they are resolved not to give up the chase until you are run to earth at the next park-gate or market-town to which you are bound, they leave you with a tolerable guess at the cause of your journey. If you walk, the matter is still more easily settled; you have less chance of baffling them; and the style of your dress, the appearance of energy or fatigue, the knapsack of a tourist, or the unencumbered ease and delicate carriage of a morning visitor, are all satisfactory manifestations of your intentions or pursuits. How often have I amused myself in crossing the scent, by suddenly stopping short, and affecting to wait for some invisible acquaintance in the rear, and thus letting these persecutors get ahead, where I endeavored in vain to keep them—they will still linger behind, and if you hasten to outstrip them by superior speed, you but overtake a fresh group of tormentors, nor can you reasonably expect any relief, until the close of the day, or the arrival at your destination, effects your deliverance. I had just pulled up at the summit of a long hill, in one of the wildest districts of the county Tipperary, which I had been ascending for a tedious half-hour, in a chill, though bright March evening—in order to alight and walk my mare down the corresponding declivity, that unveiled its lengthy and precipitate way into a champagne country of extensive and bleak appearance. Having loosened the saddle-girth a little, to relieve my faithful steed, I turned to pursue my way, when I perceived still lingering near me a stranger who had kept close upon my track with unwearied pertinacity, from the town of Ballymore, a distance of seven or eight Irish miles, and all whose attempts to enter into conversation, however graciously offered, I had most perseveringly resisted, not from a feeling that there was anything obtrusive in the individual, but simply that I was 'not 't' the vein. As, however, I perceived that although we were at a cross-road (a spot where four roads meet) my fellow-traveller was about to take the one I had selected, and I was now induced to bestow a little more attention upon him. He was an under-sized, athletic-looking young man, perhaps about twenty years of age; bull-necked, with a powerful chest, his countenance harsh and massive beyond his years, with a mouth which would have indicated undisguised ferocity, were it not that the upper part of his face in some degree relieved this expression, or rather diverted attention from it by a broad forehead, and a quick, bright, but restless eye. Altogether he would have given assurance of a tremendous physical maturity, but either naturally or accidentally the mould had been marred—his right arm was wanting, as an empty sleeve pinned to the breast of his jacket too plainly showed;—but as if determined to compensate the loss by all the means in his power, he carried in his left hand a club, or, as it is termed all over Munster, a 'wattle,' of such prodigious dimensions, and so loaded at the heavier end with lead, as at once to excite my surprise and—shall I own it?—distrust, in a country where I know by a recent police enactment, such murderous weapons were prohibited. And yet there was something fantastic about the fellow's appearance notwithstanding.—Instead of the customary frieze dress of the peasantry, he wore an old and much rubbed shooting jacket of black plush, in the button-holes of which he had arranged sandy gay feathers, the ultimate use of which might be inferred from a quantity of fishing-tackle twisted round his cap, which was huntsman-shaded, and covered with a bristling fox-skin of a fiery red hue; his feet were bare, and he had his strong corduroy trousers tucked up very high, probably to afford him the greater facility in travelling. As the gaze with which I regarded my companion was not to be mistaken, even by stronger

assurance than he was able to muster in his face at the moment, he very civilly touched his cap and said— 'He'd be bound he knew where I was going, and he'd be proud to show me the way.' 'And pray, my fine fellow, where do you suppose I am going?' I had the curiosity to ask;— 'or how have you been able to learn anything of my movements?' 'O by gounies!' he said, 'I know well. Didn't I see your honor in Ballymore this morning talkin' to Father O'Hea, and laughin' with him; and by the same token you'd be sure to meet him this evening, as, of all things, you'd like to see an Irish weddin'; and then I knew at wunst that you'd be at Hugh Lawlor's weddin'. 'Tis there half the parish 'll be this evening, and there 'll be myself, with the help of God. See,' he added, not waiting to learn how this introduction was received—'see, sir, over the hill yonder, about a mile and a half, you can just spy the smoke of the doin's at Davy Nugent's. Hugh Lawlor is to have Miss Ellen after all, and 'tis the boys of Eliogarty are glad to have him back at last; they thought they'd never see him agin, good, bad, or indifferent.' 'And do they all carry such slips of palm as that pretty one in your fist, I could not help saying, when they go to welcome back a friend?' The fellow grinned. 'What business would I have up in this country without my wattle, sir, when they're all Cumminses about us here, and I a Dharrig (the two principal factions of the county of Tipperary). Only to be shure, now that Master Hugh is back, and to be married to a Cummins, I suppose we'll have some sort of peace and quietness. Give me the rem, your honor, and I'll lead the mare easy, and you can keep off the stones on this smooth bit o' road.' 'No, I thank you; but let me ask what was the interesting business that deprived the barony so long of Mr. Hugh's presence?' 'Yes, sir.' 'You don't hear me, I believe. Pray, what kept Master Hugh away so long?' 'Tisn't myself very well knows, sir,' was the reply, after a slight pause and an inquisitive glance. 'People said a deal about his being away. He was fond of Miss Ellen since they wor childer; but his being a Dharrig, and all belongin' to her Cumminses, of course they wor mortal enemies. But Hugh, havin' neither father nor mother, nor no one belongin' to him since he was a gorsoun; and havin' fine farms, and bein' his own master, nothing could keep him from goin' about Barna, that's Nugent's—just yonder—and bein' a great scholar, fit for Trinity College, Ellen was breakin' her heart for him, and used to meet him out late in the evenin' unknown to her family—and she caught cold, and was near dyin', (shure she was never well since) and then Hugh came offtener to find out how she was—and her brother Tom watched him, and they had desperate murder about it. Lawlor wanted to go away quietly, and not to mind Tom Nugent's blackguardin' till he drew a cane-sword upon Lawlor, and told him he was a Captain Rock, and was out with the Whiteboys the night— The mare has a stone, by your leave, sir.' Before I had time to see what the matter was, he had disengaged a stone from the off hind hoof of the animal, and resumed. 'And so, whatever struggle they had betwixt them, Tom Nugent was run through with the sword, and left for dead, and wasn't expected for a long time. And Lawlor kep' out o' the way, and Mrs. Nugent, who was on her deathbed, gave him her curse, and the same to her daughter if she ever had anything to do with him ever after. Still, for all that, when the old woman was gone, and when Miss Ellen kep' always so bad, dyin' in love for Hugh, the father and the brother thought it a sin to see her goin' to the grave before their face and she the only girl o' the whole family, and a fine fortune, and a great education entirely at the nunnery in Thurles—so, at long an' last, they forgiv and forgot—and Tom Nugent died of a decline, and then the sister was the only one left to the old man—and Lawlor kep' back to Barna; and be gounies! you and I'll see their weddin' this blessed night, please God.' 'But how do the Dharrigs like Master Hugh's match, my friend?' I asked. 'He must, I suppose, be a great favorite with them.' At once I perceived a strong change to pass over his face. His countenance fell, and a hideous expression of hate fastened on it; but, as if afraid to let the feeling be observed, he quickly resumed his lively tone. 'A great favorite is it? Ah, 'twas he that was! There wasn't such a boy in the five counties for ruinin' leapin', throwing a stone, or any one thing; but, O th! th! th! see what a sight o' people are crowdin' down yonder in all directions, to Barna.' By this time we had descended the declivity, and had gained the level road, which, after strag-

gling for about half a mile over a sullen moor, led into traces of cultivation, and finally opened through broad fields, gay-looking, and green with the early wheat, occasionally absorbing into its line a boreheen, or by-road, with an additional share of travellers, wending in the direction we were going, until by the time we had passed the gentle ascent, above which the chimneys of Barna had long been peering, the numbers had increased to a goodly crowd of the most diversified appearance; and all, as my companion asserted, evidently found festivity. Snug-looking farmers on horseback, with their wives mounted behind them; jaunty young men of that doubtful rank, known nowhere but in Ireland, designated 'half-sirs,' conspicuous by the ambitious cut of their bottle-green or stone-blue riding coats and peppery nags; jingles, laden with gentry from the neighboring towns; quilt-covered carts, filled with colonies of village coquette, clad in all the awful armor of rural beauty; with a host beside. Amongst the foremost of the scambing pedestrians, were to be seen two or three couples of burgeois—the sturdy beggars of the country—one acting a stone-blind object, in a long loose coat of grey frieze and a litty nightcap, led by another with a shrivelled arm, which he thrust, with little ceremony, upon the attention of the passengers. Great was the commiseration bestowed upon those afflicted sufferers by the tender-hearted of the softer sex, as they hurried on. Upon the masculine portion of the crowd, they appeared to produce little effect; and the stroller at my side—who, by the way, seemed to knock every one, and to be universally known—evinced a most unqualified contempt for those mendicants. 'Bad 'cess to you! Bryny Boccooch, you villyn; 'tis you that'll have another tug in your throat to-night after you clear your sight with eight or ten dandys of punch;—here a fresh group of characters caught his attention—'Ah, Jacky-the-Dance, no fear you should miss Lawlor's weddin'. What a double shuffe you'll cut upon the barn floor by-a-by. Padeen-na-wep-rah, how is every bit of you? Oh, murder, what a call there'll be to-night upon your chanter. Kathleen ashore, take care of your father's pipes and keep the childer away from him when he's playin', fear they'd make a hole in his music. Bah, he exclaimed of a sudden—'Look at all the Cumminses going yonder the field—'tis a black day for some one the day he took up with them.' Thus my itinerant acquaintance rambled on, occasionally receiving the salutations of his neighbors, in the shape of an 'Ah, Bush, are you there?' 'Yerrah, Bush, what brings you to this quarter?' 'Bush, you villyan, you're up to some mischief now, I'll be bail, and so forth; and it was observable that the heartiness of Mr. Bush produced by no means a corresponding share of jealousy on the part of his acquaintances. On the contrary, I thought they seemed to regard him with coolness, and some to shrink from his recognition altogether with aversion. We had now approached the scene of intended festivity. Turning short off the high-road, a narrow lane or avenue, skirted by clumps of elder and blackthorn trees, brought us to a rude open gateway, passing through which, the house and messuages of Barna stood before us. The dwelling was a long, irregular building, no doubt formerly of only one story, but which appeared in later years to have been raised another, enlarged and dignified with a slated roof; a neglected flower-bed or two sloped below the windows, and a screen of climatis and woodbine, that clambered over the door, showed some softer spirit had once shed an influence about a spot sufficiently harsh in its general features. A huge range of buildings, as usual in Irish farm-houses, projected at right angles, like wings, from the dwelling, and with the main building formed three sides of a square; the fourth being occupied by an immense stone-paved yard, at the extremity of which were piled a heap of ploughs, carts, and other utensils of husbandry, that had been hastily cleared away to leave the area free upon this festive occasion. The building was enfolded by an extensive garden and orchard, and sheltered in the rear by some venerable haw-trees and elms. All within and around the place was a scene of the highest bustle and animation; the yard was thronged with the country guests getting themselves to rights after the journey, and resounded with laughter, congratulation, and music. The humbler class of visitors were ushered at once to the banquet prepared for their reception in the long range of lateral buildings already mentioned; while those of a higher rank, or the immediate connections of the family, were introduced to the dwelling-house, and received by the host themselves. On my arrival, I was met by Father O'Hea, the worthy priest, under whose auspices I ventured, prompted by curiosity, to appear at Barna, an unwitted guest. He had already been occupied—for it was Shrove-tide—in uniting several

other creatures, impatient for happiness, in different parts of the country, and had just arrived in time to be my chaperon to the bridal circle. It requires slight preface to establish my claim at any time to Irish hospitality, above all, upon a wedding occasion; I therefore felt no surprise on receiving at the threshold a cordial welcome and shake of the hands from old Davy Nugent himself, a ruddy, respectable little man, in a cauliflower wig and top-boots. We were ushered, by him, to an interior apartment, which, though of capacious dimensions, was crowded with the elite of Mr. Nugent's fellow-parishioners. My attention, however, in the midst of this gay, but incongruous assembly, was at once riveted by the bride and bridegroom; and whether the sequel of their extraordinary story has had anything to do in heightening the interest they excited, I know not; but it seems to me now, after the lapse of several years, that they appeared from the moment I first beheld them two things totally different from the class to which they belonged—a pair marked out, as it were, by nature to be memorable in their generation. As young Lawlor, the bridegroom, advanced to assure me, being a stranger, of his satisfaction at meeting any friend of his respected pastor, he necessarily first engaged my attention.—There was something indescribable in the man. Scarcely arrived at maturity, his frame had all the fullness and development of one in the prime of life; and aided by a commanding stature, and an ease of manner and fluency of address, which courts will not sometimes bestow, and which yet sometimes may be found in cottages, he was admirably calculated for making an impression upon those he addressed. I was about to say an agreeable one—but it was not so; his dark handsome face and flashing eye would have been resistless but for a certain lurid expression that every now and then—at all times—in the repose of thought or excitement of argument, hastily overshadowed them, causing the smile to vanish, and the glance to shrink from yours, and then was gone in a moment; but not until it had jarred the pleasure reflected by his presence, as the dip of a blitting wind breaks up the surface of a summer lake. I saw him but this evening, yet in that brief space I hoarded the vivid recollections of an age of observations. I could not but remark him if it were only for the strong relief in which he stood out from the crowd around, and an air of abstraction, from which he was never entirely divested through all the festivity, save when his eyes rested upon the form, or his voice responded to the accents of Ellen Nugent; 'for then ear, eyes, and heart, would all awake.' 'This,' he said, bringing me forward, 'is the fair girl who has condescended, to take charge of my happiness; and I bowed low before one of the brightest and most delicate creatures I have ever beheld. Her pale gold hair, deep blue melancholy eyes, and pure colorless cheek, combined with a form light and fairy-like as ever danced in a moonbeam, reminded me less of an earthly being, than mournful angel doomed for a while to hover amongst mankind, waiting for the appointed moment to wing home to its native world. As Mr. Bush had intimated, I perceived traces of recent ill-health in this interesting girl, whose excessive fragility of frame might well awaken apprehension. While her betrothed lingered at her side, she looked one of the happiest of the happy. It was only during his momentary absence that her spirit seemed to waver; she then evinced symptoms of anxiety and dejection, such as persons exhibit who are conscious that a beloved object is exposed to danger that by their presence only can be averted. Knowing the peculiar circumstances of her story, I was not surprised at this; but I could not avoid feeling there was less appearance of heart-felt felicity about this young couple than the agreeable termination of so disastrous a courtship might warrant. After waiting some time for the village doctor a principal accessory, I understood, to all merry-meetings, it was announced that this important personage had arrived, and a summons to dinner was the immediate consequence. 'Mrs. Mackesy, allow me the pleasure, ma'am—to the big parlor, ladies and gentleman, if you please—Tim Carroll, see that the neighbors outside are comfortable—Father Hennessy (to the coadjutor) you're young and hearty, will you help Miss Nelly (a venerable spinster) to do the honors to the boys and girls that haven't room with us?' Thus spoke old Davy Nugent, as he marshalled us to the big parlor, which well deserved the appellation; at all times a goodly-sized apartment, even in Eliogarty, where architects are less circumscribed than in Marylebone the room had been hastily enlarged to three times its dimensions, by the very simple principle of removing a partition, and letting into it what very much resembled a beautified barn. Here the chief banquet was spread, and graced by the presence of

the most important guests, amongst whom, probably as being the greatest stranger, I found I had a distinguished place. After events have so impressed upon my recollection every trifling detail of a scene which would otherwise have melted into indistinctness among the occurrences of an active life that I must be pardoned such reminiscences. Yet, under the most ordinary circumstances, a genuine Irish wedding is a scene not easily forgotten; and the present one might have served as a specimen par excellence of that high festival of good fellowship and fun. 'Father O'Hea, grace, if you please; and in a moment the hundred and odd eyes faces and voluble tongues were seized with a becoming gravity while the priest uttered a benediction less characterized by its length than fervor; and plump we all sat down, and then the long array of turkeys, hams, and sirloins, no longer smoked in vain. Dure was the tumult—the windows of the apartment, though it was chilling spring, were necessarily open to temper the atmosphere within; and the pronouncing of grace was at once the signal to our fellow travellers in the adjacent buildings to sympathise with us, and to a brigade of pipers to open their harmonious batteries upon every quarter of the establishment. They were ably supported by a reserve of beggars, who, the moment attention was properly diverted from matters of minor importance, best every window and avenue, and with their squabbling, shouting, and oburgations, literally filled up each pause the bagpipes had made.' 'Tim Carroll—will you go out and see that Bill Pagan keeps away them vagabonds from the windows—let him get a flail—do you hear me—a flail.' 'Father,' interjected the gentle voice of Ellen Nugent, 'not on this evening—let the poor creatures have it their own way to-night.—I see that sad boy Tim Bush is back again in the country; I thought,—she suddenly stopped and looked away. 'Ellen my pet—that fellow was never born to be drowned—Mrs O'Shanghnessy the pleasure of a glass of wine, if you please—Doctor my I trouble you; Mrs. O's glass; now, good people, take care of yourselves, see if ye can make your dinners!' &c. As I happened to sit near young Lawlor, I had occasionally some chat with him, as well as his manifold occupations would admit, and found him as superior to his class in intelligence as in appearance. I took an opportunity to ask respecting my pedestrian acquaintance, of whom I had just heard mention, and received by no means a satisfactory character of him. He was a founding, and derived his name from the bush or thicket in which he had been discovered; had been brought up in the evil, unaided, wretched childhood and youth of an Irish country pauper; had got into habits of the most inveterate vice; was turbulent and brutal in his conduct; and, in an affray between the faction to which he attached himself and their opponents received an injury which led to the loss of his arm. He was skillful, Lawlor added, as a marker for the country gentlemen, and generally knowing about field sports; but he had lately been imprisoned for some offence, and had, my informant supposed, but just now returned. These remarks induced illusions to the present state of the country, a subject upon which Lawlor was not communicative. He seemed careless of disclosing his opinions to a stranger, and confined himself to comments on the supineness of the neighboring magistrates, to which he principally attributed the increase of crime and insubordination; an opinion in which he was supported by no less an authority than the vicaroy himself, who, on a late occasion, had expressed his sense of the service of those functionaries, in terms that pretty plainly implied he considered they loved their own barn better than the public weal. Though Lawlor was 'one of the people,' and a Catholic, with, it might be supposed, all the prejudices and sense of wrongs of his class and creed, I found him disposed to impress me with an idea of his liberality in politics. He painted Whiteboyism and secret meetings in the most odious colors, until the very force of his language led me to suspect its earnestness. We had not, however, much time for such disquisitions; the mirth without and around, waxed 'last and furious.' We had dined, and were lapped in the joyous indulgence of the hour succeeding dinner; the port and sherry were lubricating the tongues inside, while poteen and porter were lending tone to the throats without.—A ring having been cleared before the windows, in the midst of it was placed a smooth wooden platter or treacher, and Mr. Bush coming forward, made his best bow to the gentry in the parlor, and flourishing his wattle, proceeded to dance a hornpipe upon the dish, carefully confining the sphere of his salutation to its limited circumference. This, in more senses than one is the neplus ultra of an Irish peasant's accomplishments; and to do Tom Bush justice, he performed his task to perfection, concluding, as they say in the playbills, with a 'paralyzing' braudish