

to recover her self-possession, and she had just begun to say the words the Priest had advised, when, to her infinite terror, Edward flung himself before her on his knees, took out a revolver from his breast, and swore, by oaths too profane and terrible to repeat, that he would shoot himself dead on the spot, if she did not promise to be his wife.

Ellie had hardly time to suspect what, indeed, was the case, that her young master was not quite in his sober senses when the crash of broken glass, a rush of snowy air, and the presence of Ned Rusheen gave a finishing stroke to her already overstrung nerves, and she fell back almost senseless on the floor.

"Take that, and that, and that, you blackguard gentleman," roared Ned, as he belabored the unfortunate young man with a loaded stick, which he "kept handy" for poachers heads, in cases where the use of firearms was not advisable. The loud report of the contents of the revolver, which had received the full force of one of Rusheen's most vigorous blows, brought the two men to their senses.

In a moment, at most, they might expect every member of the castle to appear on the scene, and Elmsdale had his own reasons for not wishing the events of the night to be made public. "For God sake Ellie, fly from this," he exclaimed, as, with the speed of lightning, he extinguished the light, and disappeared, as expeditiously as the bruising he had received would allow him. Ned vanished through the window as suddenly as he had entered. Ellie hastened to her own room, which she happily reached without notice, and when Lord Elmsdale and the startled servants arrived in the dining-room, all they could discover was the evidence that some struggle had taken place: the furniture was disarranged, the window was half-opened, and broken glass lay on the ground. If robbery had been the object, clearly it had not been accomplished: costly plate lay untouched upon the sideboard; the massive vases which stood at each side had been overturned, but were not even broken. The servants were perplexed. But Lord Elmsdale had a more stern and grave look than even such an event might be supposed to warrant. The servants had

no suspicion of the truth. Lord Elmsdale *had*.

He had seen the revolver which Edward had forgotten in his flight, and he knew whose it was. The nearest approach to angry words which had ever passed between father and son was on this very subject. Edward had taken it into his head to carry a revolver about with him constantly. This annoyed Lord Elmsdale exceedingly. They had discussed the subject very hotly—but Edward would not yield.

"It is useless to remain up longer; we can get no further information to-night," observed his Lordship motioning the servants from the room.

They left reluctantly.

Barns ventured to remain: there was something in the tone of his master's voice that pierced the old man to the very heart.

"My Lord," he began, "the revolver—"

"Then Barns had seen it also. There was no use in further concealment, or attempt at concealment.

Involuntarily he moved towards the dark corner of the room, where it had been flung by the blow of Ned Rusheen's cudgel. But Barns anticipated him, taking it up from the ground, and then almost letting it fall again, as he exclaimed, "Oh, my Lord, it is Mr. Elmsdale's."

"I knew it."

They were silent a few moments; while the unhappy father, losing for the time the natural pride of birth and feeling for which he had been remarkable, looked hopelessly at his servant, as if asking for his advice and help.

Barns answered the look, for no word was said.

"I would not take on about it, my Lord; Mr. Elmsdale was not quite right when he came in to-night;" and then he added, with an attempt at consolation "things may not be as bad as they look."

"Who was keeping up the fires to-night?"

"Ellie McCarthy, my Lord," and as Barns replied a glimmering of the possible truth flashed on him for a moment, and he looked as white as his master. To get away quickly and find out what had become of Ellie, and if she was safe,