

"What d'ye mean? If honest Pat would come over and serve me as he serves you, I should'n't consider him either hard or cruel."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Sir Charles, "I am not talking of cruelty on his part, but on my own. Ned, I am a beggar."

"A beggar! Come now, Charley, what new jest is this?"

"No jest, dear old fellow, but solemn, sober truth. That is to say, not a beggar quite; for no man can call himself a beggar who has youth and health and strength, and a stout heart and a fixed purpose—together with a couple thousand pounds in his pocket. But you remember that formidable packet in blue-tinted paper, with the great red wax seal on it, which I received last evening. Well, that was the usual form of notification from the Encumbered Estates Court, that my lands, the lands of my princely forefathers, are to be brought under the hammer. My good friend Mulligan, who has been our family solicitor for two generations, tells me that the most I shall realize for myself when all is sold, will be somewhere between two and three thousand pounds."

"My poor, dear friend!"

"Not poor, Ned, dear old boy," said O'More, grasping his hand—"not poor whilst I am rich in friendship like yours; not poor whilst I have health and strength and youth and manhood; not poor whilst I have a faithful friend like my foster-brother Pat, who swears to stick by me through evil fortune and good. I feel, as it were, as if I were dragging him down, poor fellow!—but remonstrance of mine is useless. Wherever I go he swears he will go, too."

"Good fellow! good fellow!" said Mr. McManus. "But where are you going, Charley?"

"To the far West, my boy," replied O'More, with a gay, careless laugh. "Wherever Irish element grows strong, there go I, to help in making it stronger, and more resolute for ends that are coming. Yet, in the meantime, I shall travel many a weary mile of country road before I settle down, whilst you will be sharing all the joys of your

young married life with the beautiful woman you are about to make your own."

Edward McManus paused, drained his glass to the bottom slowly, and then as slowly laid it down, ere he spoke:

"Charley, you and I have been companions from childhood. I have never concealed a thought of my heart from you. Indeed, you have always been, as it were, my master and father confessor, combined. You know that this letter"—producing it—"is from Clara Calthorpe, from Berkshire. I know the contents of this letter almost by instinct. See, I break open the seal for the first time; and look! what do I find? A dozen lines! Was ever love-letter like this before?"

"Well, certainly, Ned, 'tis brief; but very probably to the point."

"Hear me out, Charley. Clara is a very beautiful girl, gay, brilliant, fond of society and amusements of all kinds, whilst I am quiet, sober, and occasionally inclined to melancholy—I know not why. I do not love this girl as I instinctively feel a man should love his wife. The intended marriage was not of my proposing. It was all arranged by Calthorpe and my father—nearly a year before my father died—and one thing or another delayed it. But now there is no longer cause of delay; the contract must be fulfilled. I marry Clara Calthorpe, and my fate is sealed."

"And a miserable fate it is," said O'More, with a mocking laugh. "To be chained for life, in fetters of roses, to one of the loveliest women in England—and one, too, with a fortune of fifteen thousand pounds—is very hard lines, indeed. My poor Ned! I pity you."

"Ah! Charley," replied his friend, "your jest may cut more keenly than you think. Listen, my friend. Clara Calthorpe's father and mine were companions in arms, and fought side by side in many a hard contested field. This marriage was arranged between them whilst Clara and I were yet children. I like her, and I have always liked her, and I know she likes me after her manner. And then I have never loved another woman in all my life. Yet I feel a strange misgiving at my heart, and, though (shame to me!)