

road, and instinct and hope whispered to him it was Mr. Meldon, waiting the result of his visit to Mr. Giffard D'Alton; and Mr. Meldon it was.

The very sight of so true a friend, and such an unexpected help, gave Paddy Hayes, for the moment, renewed strength, and in a few rapid strides he had reached Mr. Meldon, almost unobserved. So deep were that gentleman's meditations, as he lay back in the seat of his well appointed phaeton, leaving the reins loose to "Rois," who—entering, it seemed, into his master's humor—strolled leisurely along, and sniffed at the young green meadows, now breathing out only the richness of the midsummer night. The horse pricked his ears and gave a premonitory shake; and Mr. Meldon, aroused by the noise, turned his head to where Paddy stood, straight, stiff, and silent—a grim shadow in the silvery light.

"Well?" he said, after a slight pause, during which he waited with much anxiety for a word from Paddy.

"God's will be done, sir," answered the poor man; "'tis all over for me. He would'n't listen to anything—prayer or promise—Mr. Meldon. Nothing but 'the rint or the bailiff,' he said. Sure 'twas only yesterday, ould Nelly told me, he named three or four more. What could I expect?"

"Ay, what indeed," replied Mr. Meldon; and his voice was a curious mingling of so. row and bitterness. "What, indeed!" he repeated more softly. "After all, Paddy, it was well you were someway prepared. Come, my poor fellow, better luck next time. Jump in, or 'Rois' will lose all patience, and take the law and the road into his own discretion."

Mr. Meldon spoke lightly and even laughed, as if to dispel the tension of his own thoughts, or divert, somewhat the grief of his companion; but he was startled out of his assumed composure very suddenly.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, as he saw the poor man raise his hand to his throat, as though trying to tear away some obstacle which seemed to prevent his speaking. Then, after swaying for a moment to and fro, he threw up his arms wildly above his head; and with a

dull heavy thud he fell a lifeless heap upon the narrow mountain way.

An instant, and Mr. Meldon was kneeling once more by his side, supporting the poor grey head upon his breast, even with a son's tenderness. But this time the silver flask was produced in vain, and the needful stimulant could not pass through the firmly-clenched teeth. A slight foam gathered upon the dry lips, and the limbs quivered once or twice, only to contract again more rigidly. Mr. Meldon put one hand over the heart. It beat—and there might be hope. It hung on a mere thread, however. Many days of cruel hunger had weakened that once powerful frame, and the last few hours of fiery ordeal and crushing disaster had completed the wreck.

"Too late!" moaned Mr. Meldon, as, not without painful effort, he raised the stiff, insensible form on to the soft cushions of his phaeton. "Too late!" he murmured, as driving rapidly on, he reached the silent home of the Hayeses, in the chill grey of the dawn, and, entering softly in, laid down his burden on the little settle in the kitchen, and drove away—furiously this time—to bring priest and doctor and all needful help, as he thanked God for the impulse that had bade him wait the return of Paddy Hayes; but he, more often, and very sadly, repeated the answer to some hidden thought, "Too late, too late!"

CHAPTER V.

SHOWING HOW MR. MELDON MET "CRICHAUN," AND CHRONICLING THE DEATH OF PADDY HAYES AND THE SINGULAR THINGS WHICH FOLLOWED IT.

MR. MELDON drove along rapidly, first in the direction of Father Aylmer's, as the one of all others most necessary in the dire extremity in which he had left the much-tried Paddy Hayes. He saw, at an angle of the road, straight in his way, a very singular figure, just at a point where the bright rays of the rising sun at once heightened and magnified its original sufficiently startling effect. Mr. Meldon was in the hollow, and consequently in the dim, grey shadows, while the apparition, which had so suddenly attracted his attention, stood on the topmost curve of a rapidly