

the room, tottered as if in a last effort, and fell exhausted on the floor.

Gerald needed not his gasping "Masther Gerald," to recognise Tade Ryan!

"Tade, Tade, for God's sake, what's the matter?" cried the young man as he ran to lift him and restore him.

Between fatigue, and breathlessness, and choking grief, the poor fellow could barely articulate:

"The masther!"

"Good Heaven! is he dead?" cried Gerald, pale as death.

"Not dead, sir— not dead—but—"

"Oh! enough, Tade, enough. He has sent for me?"

"He's longin' to get a sighth o' you. 'I'm ridin' since twelve o'clock last night to have you in time. The poor masther!' and the big tears trembled in his eyes.

"God grant I may not be too late!" cried the young man, rushing madly from the room.

He was not too late. But those few months had wrought appalling changes in O'Dwyer Garv. The fire of his eyes was nearly extinguished; his brow and cheeks were seamed deep with wrinkles; and his features shrunken to emaciation. Serene dignity was all that remained of his proud bearing; but that shed a noble lustre around the ruin.

"Gerald," said the old man, "I am glad you have come so soon. I have something to say to you, and I have not long to stay here."

Gerald listened in speechless grief.

"My boy, you will have to leave Kilsheelan—to give up all the old place. I have nothing to leave you but my blessing—"

"Father do not trouble yourself about this," said Gerald. "I can carve my own way in life."

"Still, my boy, you will not be altogether unprovided for. Your mother settled on you the little poperty at Farran. Thank God! I have left that unencumbered. It will, at any rate keep you above want. But, Gerald, if ever you are able,—if fortune ever should favour you— you will think of my last wish—recover Kilsheelan!"

"Father, it will be the first object of my life," cried Gerald, earnestly.

"And if it should come back to the old race," said the old man, his face lighting up at the thought. "If you should be master here again, Gerald, be wiser than I was, boy—be wiser than I was! Do not love wealth, but do not abuse it."

Choking with tears, the young man could only press the wasted hand that lay in his.

"God bless you, my boy! I know you will be an honour to us yet."

His eyes closed and his features relaxed into a calm repose. Gerald thought he was dying; but he was only in a peaceful slumber.

In the evening he felt so much better that he would insist on being carried to his favourite bay-window—to see how the valley looked. No remonstrance could dissuade him. He was with difficulty transferred to a portable couch, and gently borne to the window.

An expiring sunset poured its light over all the valley, making a mellow, golden haze, high up into which curled the blue smoke from the farmsteads. The grassy uplands, the river, the groves and hills seemed to slumber in the balmy light. There was no stir, no jarring sound; all was peace.

The dying man surveyed every feature of the scene with melancholy satisfaction: then he looked towards the eastern wing where he knew horse and hounds were pining for the old time sport; then a glance round the oaken dining-hall, at its ancient trappings and at its empty chairs. Then again towards the expiring sun.

"Poor Kilsheelan!" he said faintly, yet not painfully. "Gerald—Gerald, you 'll remember?"

He saw the valley no more. His eyes closed softly and opened in another country.

## CHAPTER X.

### GERALD'S LITTLE ENEMY.

Gerald O'Dwyer sat in the shadow of death—that awful presence in which the Future half reveals itself, and the Past shrinks into a mite of nothingness. The pride of Kilsheelan lay shrouded with the dead man, dead as he. Yet Gerald O'Dwyer shed no tears for the pride that was passed away; he wept for the man, not the Lord—for the kind heart that was broken, not the proud spirit that was humbled.

He was almost a mystic in elevated, immaterial thought, and he found no difficulty in mounting to the refined upper atmosphere of sorrow, high above thought of the ruined fortune and sordid troubles he had to face. So infinitely mean a thing is pride at the gateway of eternity! So little does it concern those few happy souls who can look beyond!

The night closed, and Kilsheelan Castle became a fit abode of death. Darkness and Death occupied all the vacant chambers, all the silent corridors, all the gasping staircases,