

these thoughts, fed by a frightened fancy, made her glad when her mamma-elect took to her *vide-mecum* head-ache (so to speak) and withdrew to her own chamber to nurse it, leaving forlorn little Cressy to cry till she could cry no more, and clasp her little hands, and call all equitable fairies to witness that she was the unhappiest, worst-used and hardest-fated fairy of them all. And, that much settled, to let the liquid blue eyes stray out over the valley, every nook of which told her of childhood, over the village, and the wood, and the mountain—where the children used to play in the summer evenings, where the cowslips grew goldenly in spring, where the sun played on the blue terraces the long sunny days—to the bold ruins of the Castle—farther still, to the clear, earnest face, and the deep dark eyes that seemed ever yet to be looking down on her and chiding her for a baby-coward, whose cowardice was yet a petted darling. Rejoice, Marquis of Babblington—lover that is, brother and perhaps husband that is to be—rejoice thou canst not hear the beating of that little heart, as that same clear earnest face comes in memorial view, and the sad soul-sigh as it vanishes again into the past! Verily, even to thy comprehension, there would have been *eclaircissement!*

The sound of footsteps on the staircase disturbed her meditations. She listened with a startled ear.

"Gracious, if it should be the Marquis! What will he think if he finds me this way?"

A large screen stood beside her, covering a passage to the garden. She had only time to conceal herself behind it, when the door opened and her father entered, followed by Mr. Langton, the valet.

"There is no one here," said the baronet, glancing round the room. "Now what is it you have to say?"

Cressy knew not whether she ought to disclose her presence or no, thinking that their business could not be of any possible interest to her. A moment's hesitation made it too late, and she had only to wait patiently and listen.

"Well, what's this important news you speak about? What are you mumbling about, fellow?" the baronet asked impatiently, seeing that the valet was engaged in a performance of grimaces and wriggles and other dumb show, which indicated some disinclination or obstacle to his speaking.

"You see, Sir Hablin," he explained, with many conciliatory bows and contortions. "I 'aint got my hinformation without—ahem!—

trouble and danger—horful danger, I assure you, Sir Hablin," and Mr. Langton shivered at the recollection.

"Out with it, man, and if it be worth payment, it shall be paid for."

"If you will be pleased to name hany trifling hamount, Sir Hablin—say a 'undred pound—"

"I will name nothing till I see whether you are as great an idiot as I take you for."

Mr. Langton, anxious to vindicate his character for wisdom thus broadly assailed, assumed an air of profound mystery, as coming close to the baronet he whispered in a low tone, not so low but that Cressy heard it plainly:

"Young O'Dwyer, of the Castle!"

"Well,—well,—what of him?" asked the baronet, eagerly.

Another heart beat eagerly, too, straining to catch the answer.

Mr. Langton, sensible of the impression he had created, answered in a stage-whisper of terrible import:

"That he is in Kilsheelan this minute."

Now beat the little heart behind the screen right furiously, and a fever boiled in her veins which made her quiver with a strange excitement.

But Sir Albin Artslade took the announcement more calmly.

"I know that already," he said in a tone of angry disappointment.

"Know that already!" exclaimed the valet in blank dismay.

If the truth must be known, Mr. Langton, having, after a period of hair breath dangers and terrors, made himself certain of Gerald O'Dwyer's place of concealment, thought it would be but the just reward of his own superior courage and industry if he could dissolve partnership with his worthy pal, Mr. Jer Murphy, on the principle of appropriating the undivided profits of the enterprise to himself, leaving to Mr. Murphy such high recompense for his part thereof as the approval of his own conscience and the gratitude of posterity. And with intent to strike this reasonable balance, he had come, as he thought, to give the first of the news and of course have the best of the reward. But now it seemed his worthy partner must have hit on a similar plan for himself, with the considerable advantage of having been the first to execute it.

"I—I didn't himagine as how you knew ball about it," he stammered, in crest-fallen accents, moving sheepishly towards the door. "I suppose Murphy's been and told you hall."