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TURLOUGH O'BRIEN; OR, THE FORTUNES OF AN IRISH SOLDIER. CHAPTER X.—CAPTAIN BOWSHANKS AND DICK SLASH.

As Tisdal approached the strong and formal farm-house of Drumgunnol, his quick eye was attracted by the glow of an unusually fierce and ruddy fire, streaming from the narrow windows of the kitchen, and flooding the stones and bushes of the opposing hillock with a blush and dusky red, which contrasted cozily with the cold spectral lights and shadows of the misty moon-shine.

By my troth, muttered the master of the mansion, as he drew nigh, 'this is but ill husbandry of turf and firewood. Master Bligh, methinks your supper must needs be something of the largest to need so fierce a blaze. This must be seen to—this must be seen to—but, ha! what have we here?' This sudden ejaculation was caused by the unwanted sounds of profane singing which somewhat boisterously arose from the interior of the mansion; and Tisdal's heart faltered with a dreadful misgiving as this unusual minstrelsy reached his ear.

He no longer approached his dwelling with the bold, firm, and consequential step which usually characterised the proprietor of Drumgunnol—he drew nigh rather with the stealthy caution of a thief, prowling fearfully about some rich man's house, covering from view, and dreading even the sound of his own cautious foot-falls. Thus did Jeremiah Tisdal draw near to his kitchen window, avoiding the light which poured from the casement, and scarcely daring to breathe the lest his presence should be detected. When he looked in, his worst fears were at once realised. Seated in the chimney-corner, with a mug of stout home-brewed ale beside him, while he carelessly chopped and shredded a pipeful of tobacco on the table, sat the identical tattered and ill-favored traveller, whose appearance had so fearfully disconcerted him in the ruin but a few hours before. The stranger was singing, with a loud voice and a rollicking air, one of the low, licentious ballads of the day, to which, with shame and confusion of face he it written, the saintly Master Praise-God Bligh appeared to listen from the opposite corner with a great deal of sly and quiet relish.

Tisdal drew back from the window in extreme trepidation; he smote his clenched hands upon his breast and ground his teeth in bootless rage and despair; again he peered like a skulking spy into his own comfortable kitchen, and again withdrew in anguish and desperation into the darkest recesses of the high-walled yard.

Meanwhile the ballad ended, and Praise-God Bligh walked forth to bolt the strong oak shutters upon the outside of the window. He had hardly entered the open yard when he was confronted by his master.

'Come hither, sir,' said Tisdal, in a stern, harsh whisper, while he dragged the astonished domestic under the shadow of the stable wall.—'How dare you, idiot—how dare you suffer that man within my house?' he whispered, with such vehemence and fury that the froth found its way through his clenched teeth and gathered upon his lips. 'Dog, do you hear me? Your life—your life hangs on your answer,' he continued, while he shook the terrified servant by the throat.—'How came you to admit that—that man within my house—are you drunk or moon-struck—answer, how?'

'Deal patiently, I pray thee, with thy servant,' muttered the domestic, terrified no less at the unwonted violence of his master than at the expression of preter-human rage and agony which blackened his terrific countenance; 'hear me—for God's sake, hear me, and loosen your hold of my throat—pray—pray, good master, patience, and do but hear me.'

'How came you to admit that person within my house?' reiterated the master of Drumgunnol.

'I will tell you all about it if you will but loosen your hold,' replied the servant, entreatingly.

'Speak then, and plainly, or, by Him that made me, you'll have cause to rue it,' retorted Tisdal, with stern deliberateness.

'Hear me, then, and may I die the death if I speak not as plainly as you desire,' continued the domestic with imploring earnestness. 'He told me that he was a sort of cousin of yours, that he came all the way from Lincoln to find you out, and that he brings good news with him, and this is all I know of the matter, as I hope for salvation.'

'You lie, you infernal traitor, you lie like your master the devil; he told you no such cock-and-a-bull story,' retorted his master, in a furious whisper, forgetting in an instant all the sanctimonious conventionalities of his sect, while he advanced his clenched fist within an inch of the affrighted servant's face; 'it's a lie—all a lie—a villainous lie from beginning to end. He gave you money—money—or promised it—promised money for your treason—bribed, perfidious spy!

did he, miscreant, did he, or not? Answer I say.'

With an imprecation too awful here to be expressed, and an earnestness so palpably sincere as to leave no possible doubt of his veracity, the servant denied the charge.

'Then you are a greater idiot than I took you for, that's all,' replied Tisdal, through his set teeth, and with a savage scowl of the blackest rage. 'A blessed driveller to leave in charge of one's house and substance.'

The whole of this conference was rendered the more singular, and perhaps not the less horrible, that it was conducted in whispers.

He turned abruptly, and walked a few steps toward the house; and then, with a gesture of despair, he strode back again to the amazed and awe-stricken domestic.

'Idiot—idiot—accursed, execrable idiot—you have ruined—destroyed your master,' ejaculated he, frantically; and at the same moment he struck the unsuspecting man, with all the force of fury, with his doubled fist, in the face. The servant staggered backward, stunned and bloody, and fell heavily upon the rough pavement under the wall. Unheeding his fall, Tisdal again turned toward the house, and again unable to summon resolution for the dreaded meeting, paused. He approached the window, looked in once more; then drew back, adjusted his disordered dress, called all his firmness to his aid, and, with a steady pace and resolute mien, entered the door of his house, and walking straight into the kitchen, confronted the sinister-looking personage, who sat, very much at his ease, beneath the comfortable canopy of the great kitchen chimney.

Cozy, warm, and cheery was the kitchen of the grange of Drumgunnol; the crisp turf and unctuous hogwood glowed, blazed, and sparkled in the mighty hearth, flooding the chamber even to its remotest nooks and most forgotten recesses with a genial warmth, and pouring abroad a ruddy light, that danced pleasantly along the smoke-dried rafters, and blazed and flashed in the rows of burnished pewter, which furnished the cumbersome old cupboard at the further end. Good cheer enough for a year and more depended in inviting festoonery from the ceiling alone—golden bunches of onions, whole bushes of dried pot-herbs, smoked beef, hams, and fitches, and dried salmon, threw their flickering shadows far along the broad ceiling; the irregular dark walls glittered redly with crowded utensils, and loomed with high-piled shelves; a comfortable old clock ticked vigilantly in a recess near the window, and a matchlock and a short musket, together with fishing-rods of sundry lengths, added to the homely decorations of the mantel-piece; and several cloaks and other pieces of drapery, together with sundry old hats and a saddle, depended from certain pegs in the side boarding of a curambrous stair, which communicated with the loft above; the cat sat purring in the inmost corner of the hearth, and the dog dozed lazily, stretched at full length before its glow. Such was the hospitable chamber which smiled a ruddy welcome upon the master of Drumgunnol, as he passed the threshold of his home, and shut his door with a hasty swing in the face of the chill night air.

Deadly and stern, however, was the contrast between this snug scene of homely abundance and the sinister and evil looks of the two personages who formed its only occupants. Tisdal fixed upon the stranger a look of gloomy menace which his visitor returned with a tranquil grin, half of sarcasm, half of defiance; and thus, for nearly a minute, the two old acquaintances regarded each other without interchanging a single syllable.

The disreputable looking stranger state quietly by the fire, leaning slyly from the corner of his eye upon his agitated host; while a slight smile added a still more unpleasant meaning to his pale and sinister face.

The kitchen clock in the grange of Drumgunnol might have ticked some two or three dozen times ere Tisdal spoke.

'How came you, sir,' said he, stercorally, 'to establish yourself as a guest in my house, uninvited and undesired by me?'

'Pooh, pooh, brother Snap, never mind mouthing with me; look like yourself, bold Captain Gordon, alias Burnt-brandy-for-two, or if you like the new name better, Saint Jeremiah Tisdal,' retorted the stranger, glibly. 'Come, I say—come, man, never stand striving to look like one of the "postles" in a church window there, for it won't go down with me. Little Dick Slash is the same off-hand fellow that he ever was, though not quite such a beau; and I'm shot, if you'll come the saint over him. Ha, ha,—egad, your high crown and black-toggerly is enough to tickle one into absolute convulsions. I am, indeed, a changed man,' replied Tisdal, slowly and stercorally, as soon as the harsh exclamation with which his old acquaintance wound up, had quite subsided; 'and it were well for you, Richard Deverill, if you were so, too.'

'Why, that depends very much on the sort of

a change a man might make,' answered Deverill, briskly. 'For instance, a new hat, a suit of green and silver, a well-lined purse, and an active nag, were a change of affairs, I grant you, highly desirable just now. But oddsboddikins! such a change as yours. Why, if you had turned monk, or astrologer, or doctor, or anything else, with a relish of the old dead knowledge, good living and burnt-brandy-for-two sort of style about it—odds! if you had done this, and taken a town lodging, where, as thou knowest, brother Jeremiah, there is no lack of monied flats, comely wenches, bully boys, sack, brandy, and so following, why, man, I could have understood and admired thee; but a Puritan at the back of a bog, in the heart of a wilderness!—gibbet me, if I can comprehend that.'

'The place has been mine for nigh eleven years,' replied Tisdal, doggedly. 'I have lived here for that term an altered man, eschewing evil, and seeking the Lord. I affect no company save my own, and have desired no habitation save this house, ever since it has come to me.'

'Come to you,' echoed the visitor, with a smile worthy of Mephistophiles himself. 'I was by, Captain Gordon, I believe, when it came to you, as you say.'

Tisdal drew his brows together in a deep, black scowl, like a man stung with a sudden pang of bodily anguish, and uttered, from the depths of his wrung heart, a groan of the fiercest torture; while Deverill carelessly filled the bowl of his pipe, and lighted the tobacco at the candle.

'Come, old Bowshanks—brave brother Snap valiant captain!' exclaimed the visitor, as soon as he had got his tobacco pipe in full play, 'this is, after all, but a scurvy welcome. Let's have some supper, and a glass of your old favorite.—You forget, my boy, how long it is since we two have met.'

'Look ye, Richard Deverill,' said Tisdal, with startling abruptness, and eyeing his visitor with a deadly scowl, while he disclosed a long-barrelled pistol gleaming in his hand, 'what's to prevent my dealing with you on the spot, as—as—a robber.'

'And what's to prevent my dealing with you, in like manner, as a murderer?' retorted Deverill, coolly; while, without even disarranging his negligent attitude, he as instantaneously levelled a pistol at the body of his host. 'One, two, three—move but a finger, and I whip you thro'—heart, liver, lights, pluck, and all.'

Tisdal, stood unmoved before the muzzle of the villain's pistol, as if his own personal risk were a matter wholly unrecognised in the stern debate which at that moment occupied his mind.

'Put up your barking-iron, and no more noise,' said Deverill, with sarcastic coolness.—'We know one another; and two can play at that game. Odd rat it, man, and did you fancy that little Dick Slash would pay his old friend, Captain Bowshanks, a visit at this time of night, and in his country-house, too, without the lead towels about him? Tut, man, I'm not a fool.'

'You're the same cool villain you ever were,' said Tisdal.

'I faith, Master Snap, and so are you,' rejoined Deverill. 'Bull-dog every inch, both of us; so, better not to quarrel—eh?'

'What seek you here, and with me?' urged Tisdal, gloomily.

'Look at my clothes. Pooh, pooh, you know well enough what I want,' retorted Deverill.—'Help, that's all.'

'Just so; you come here to extort money,' continued Tisdal.

'And find you prepared to give it,' said the stranger. 'Why, see you, master Tisdal, I have not a shilling—scarce a rag. I swallowed my last crust to-day, and have nothing left on the face of the earth but these my old pair of barkers. Now, turn from me to you. What's your case? The devil, or what you will, has prospered you, fed your belly, clothed your back. Your stepple hat throws off the weather; that black blanket about your shoulders keeps you warm; your shoes are sound, your doublet whole—you are blessed with a house, a kitchen, coin, and what not;—in short, you are a comfortable, greasy, well-fed, rich old dog; while I—not one bit a worse man than yourself—I am all but begging my way up to Dublin. Come, come, look at the matter fairly, and say ought you to grudge a lift to an old comrade. I don't want much—you'll find me reasonable. Put up your pistols, and if you don't like my offer, it's time enough to talk big, and tap claret afterwards.'

Tisdal paused for a moment moodily, and then thrust the weapon back again into his belt.

Deverill's pale face, for the first time, exhibited some slight evidence of inward agitation. He drew a long breath, and, rising from his seat, stood with his back to the fire, watching with a piercing eye, in whose contracted pupil there gleamed something at once of craft, ferocity, and extreme suspicion; the movements of his host, who, in dogged silence, and with a sombre scowl, took a turn or two up and down the well-stored kitchen, in the ruddy and uncertain firelight and

among the manifold creature comforts which seemed but to mock the horrors of his misery, with the glad salutation, 'eat, drink, and be merry.'

CHAPTER XI.—THE MONEY BAGS.

The two tenants of the kitchen of the grange of Drumgunnol remained silent for a time: Tisdal was the first to speak—

'Deverill,' said he, in an altered tone, 'you know not what a hazard you have run. Had I shot you dead, you would have had no more than your deserts; but, thanks be to the Lord, I have spared you, and taken no more blood upon these hands of mine. I rebuked the spirit that prompted to the act; and I swear to thee, by the living God, I will not seek to harm thee, except it be in self-defence.'

'And I,' said the guest, with a courteous flourish, as he replaced his pistol, in turn, within his vest—'and I swear by the honor of a gentleman, that I will not seek to hurt thee, except for a like purpose; so the treaty is concluded and agreed on both sides. Let us then proceed to supper; for, as I have told you, my dinner has been something of the lightest; and ale and tobacco, though good enough in their way, are scarce equal, in the matter of nourishment, to a grilled pullet and a rasher of bacon; and that you'll admit, noble captain.'

'Prithce, forbear to call me by nicknames,' said Tisdal, vehemently. 'You want food, raiment, and perchance a little money. Well, these you shall have; but while you stay under my roof, all I demand is this, that before others you make no allusion to what is past, to—in short, to my former courses. You comprehend me; and so—'

At this moment, the bony, lank, hard visage of Praise-God Bligh, bruised and frightened, appeared at the door; and Tisdal conveyed the conclusion of his caution by pressing his finger to his lip—a gesture which Deverill answered by a quiet wink. The master of Drumgunnol then proceeded to issue his orders for supper; and old Alley, the wrinkled and rheumatic maid-of-all-work, being roused from her slumbers in the left descended the creaking stair in loose attire, and with many a muttered curse, united her labors with those of the lean and lank-haired servant; and thus, ere long, a smoking meal of savory food reeked invitingly upon the board. The meal proceeded in sullen silence, until the two domestics had withdrawn for the night to their respective cribs.

'Come, come, old Snap,' said the stranger, in reply to an interrogatory from Tisdal—'pleasure to-night, business to-morrow. Rat me, if I hurry myself to please you—to-morrow morning, I say, I shall tell you my terms; to-night I shall consider them, with the aid of your flask and a whiff of tobacco.'

'If you desire a bed, you will find a clean and warm one in yonder closet,' said Tisdal.

'Why, captain,' replied he, 'to tell the truth it's quite a novelty to me to meet with such brandy as I've got here, so I have made up my mind to pass the night in my chair—just in our own old style—with the stone jar before me, and a good pipe of tobacco between my finger and thumb; and all the more particular as I see no harm in keeping wide awake—do you take me?—under my very peculiar circumstances; so, with many thanks for your polite attention, I'll just stay as I am.'

'Do as you list,' replied Tisdal, wholly disregarding the sneer with which this intimation was conveyed; 'there is turf and wood enough in the creel behind you to keep the fire blazing till morning.'

Having thus spoken, the master of Drumgunnol withdrew, and with a heavy tread, and a still heavier heart, mounted the steep and narrow stair which led to his bed chamber, and bolting and locking the door upon the inside, threw himself upon his knees, and poured forth, in the agony of his soul, a torrent of passionate prayer, interrupted with groans and sighs which seemed to burst from the very depths of his heart. Deverill appeared, meanwhile, resolved to make his solitary vigil as comfortable as the means and appliances within his reach would allow. With his thick-soled shoe he thrust the embers on the hearth together, and heaped over them fragments of dried hog-wood enough to make a bonfire; and while the genial blaze flickered and mounted with many a bursting crackle and shower of ruddy sparks, he drew his chair still nearer, and leaning his elbow on the table, and his head upon his hand, he fixed his eyes upon the shifting embers in profound and exciting meditation, while with vigorous exhalation he puffed forth dense and cloudy volumes of the aromatic vapor of his favorite weed. Half an hour passed, and he laid the exhausted pipe upon the table, slowly drained a long-stemmed glass of brandy, relapsed into deep and engrossing meditation, and arose from it at length with a laugh, low and stifled; but, without so villainous in its tone and expression, that it might well have chilled the heart of any mortal listener.

'Ex pede Herculem,' muttered he, as he, stepped lightly to the cupboard, on which, in ruddy shining rows, glittered the burnished utensils of the comfortable household—'Ex pede Herculem,' as we used to say at school; let us judge the saloon by the contents of the kitchen, and by the result see what the old boy can do; for, after all, that is the point. Pish!—pooh! tut! he ejaculated, as he impatiently but noiselessly turned over, one after another, the plates, dishes, cups, and flagons which stood before him in comely rows—'all pewter, pewter and brass. No clue here: nothing to show whether the old gallows-tassel has silver and gold in his plate-chest—if, indeed, he has one at all. So, egad, the only way is to take that for granted, and bleed him freely. I'm safe enough in saying he has both money and plate. Pshaw!—to be sure he has. What else does he lock up his bed-room for, and carry the key with him wherever he goes? What else does he keep that lank, canting rascal for, that the devil himself could not pump one word of information out of—either the veriest simpleton, or the deepest knave in this land of saints.'

Deverill filled his pipe anew, and again seated himself in front of the blazing fire.

From his abstraction, however, he was soon aroused. His quick ear caught a sound from without, and as it seemed to him, proceeding from cause in operation close under the wall of the old house. The guilty and the vile are very suspicious, and the stranger started from his seat and glided noiselessly across the chamber, he stepped lightly into the closet which Tisdal had indicated, and from its dark window, himself unseen, observed, to his no small astonishment, the form of Praise-God Bligh, whom he believed to be at that moment in his garret, and fast asleep, gliding stealthily by, and wide awake. For a single second he beheld him, and in another he was gone.

'Treachery!' muttered Deverill; 'treason in the wind!'—and he went softly to the outer door; it was, however, bolted and locked upon the inside.

Tisdal, meanwhile, as we have said, had locked himself into his chamber under the high roof of the mansion, and there, in the anguish of his heart, was pouring forth his bitter and impetuous supplications—fierce, fervent and incoherent—praying for his own deliverance and pardon; and in the same breath, invoking curses and destruction upon the head of his persecutor—upbraiding heaven with having deserted him in his need—and finally, praying, with sobs and groans, and wringing of hands, that the poor, miserable, and insufficient store of household stuff, and silver and gold which his weak endeavors had been blessed, might escape the hands of the spoiler, and the wiles of the crafty. Then rising he unlocked an old oak press, and from its darkest and deepest corner drew out a leathern bag full of gold pieces, the counting of which was one of his daily exercises, fulfilled as regularly as his devotions. He felt this bag with the fond pressure of both his hands—he covered over it with looks of love and anguish which would have been a perfect feast to a cynic—he untied the firmly twisted thongs which secured the opening, took out, one by one, the broad gold pieces—looked at them with the yearning gaze of love and despair—replaced them, and again bound the neck of the huge leathern purse, with as much jealousy as if the admission of even a particle of air might have dissolved the enchanting vision which, from time to time, its interior disclosed.

'And must I—must I share it with him? The little store I have with so much self-denial hoarded—must it better half be squandered by this wretch in pot-house revellings, and still ruder profligacy? If I were what-once I was, I would have blown fifty souls into eternity fire! But no, no!—no more blood!—no more blood!'

After a little pause, he added, in a tone of fierce agitation—

'Thank God, the girl—little Phebe—is out of the way to-night! thank God, at least, for that—thank God for that!'

He took a few hasty turns up and down the room—stopped short, while gradually a grim smile, first of doubtful significance, but which rapidly brightened into one of sinister but unequivocal triumph, lighted up his dark and ill-favored countenance; with exulting reverence he smote his hand upon his forehead, stamped fiercely upon the floor, and cried—

'I have it, God be thanked, I have it! He counted out ten of the broad gold pieces which furnished the leathern bag, folded them, and placed them in the same press; then from another bag of the same kind he took some score crowns and as many shillings, and did likewise with them. He next secured the two leathern purses with tenfold precaution, and dropped them, one at each side, into the low pockets of his black threadbare coat; he softly turned the key in his door, opened it noiselessly, and with the velvet tread of an old tiger, stole forth upon the lobby. He paused at the stair-head, stooped