

the jury in clear and unwavering terms—

NOT GUILTY!

And Ned Rusheen was a free man once more.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NED AND ELLIE.

"WELL, that's strange anyhow; and he after doing all he could to hang him."

It was a poor woman who spoke. She had managed to edge her way in so near where the bar sat, that she had heard—or thought she heard—Mr. Forensic say, "Thank God!" when the foreman of the jury announced their verdict. She would probably have been still more astonished if she had followed some of the barristers down the street, and had seen Mr. Forensic pass his arm through Mr. O'Sullivan's, and with their heads together under the same umbrella—for it had begun to snow heavily.

"I'm glad that's over. There was no doubt of the fellow's innocence."

"Well, I think myself the jury gave a right verdict," replied Mr. O'Sullivan; "but it's a queer case. Should not wonder if it turned up again in some other form."

"I've got my opinion," Mr. Forensic observed drily. "But we shall see."

"Do you think it's a case of murder?"

"I—don't—know."

"Manslaughter?"

"Certainly not."

"But why?"

"Well you see there was clean work made of it."

"But it might have been an accident."

"Not likely: you see there were two shots fired."

"It was a strange thing that the family should all have cleared off at the same time."

"Very!"

"You have your suspicions?"

Mr. Forensic nodded his head, and they began to talk of a civil case which was coming on, in which there was very general interest.

And Ned was free! It would be necessary to have been in his position to have understood what he felt and what he thought. Jackey, with a host of friends, was waiting outside for him. They wanted to take him

to a public house to treat him. But Ned refused resolutely; he wanted to go home at once; his poor mother was waiting in an agony of suspense. He had, also, other—even better—reasons: he never had been in the habit of drinking to excess, but—like too many of his countrymen—he had now and then passed the bonds of strict sobriety. He had promised Father Cavanagh to be upon his guard against this terrible vice, and the good priest had forewarned him that the very generosity and good nature of his countrymen might entrap him when he was released, if the trial terminated in his favor.

Ned remembered the advice, though not many words had been said, and he profited by it—for the time at least. It was hard to refuse all the eager, earnest, warm-hearted offers that were made to him—but so warned is forearmed, and he resisted bravely. It would be, indeed, harder, infinitely harder, if through the persuasion of these well-meaning friends he should suffer a temporary loss of reason, and, perhaps, as many a man has done, lose his life in this state of guilt, and thus go guilty before the judgment seat of God.

But Ned's trials were not over with his release from jail. Earth is the place where we are purified for Heaven, by daily griefs and cares. Well for us if we allow ourselves to be thus prepared for the eternal rest.

Mrs. Rusheen still occupied her little cottage on the Elmsdale estate. Nothing had been said to her about leaving. Edward Elmsdale, bad as he was, had not the heart to expel his foster-mother from the very cabin where she had nursed him. But her joy and happiness at her son's return was not a little damped by the announcement which Barns reluctantly made to Ned. The young Lord had written a letter from England, merely dated London, March, 18, saying that he was sending over a new game-keeper. The old keeper was pensioned off, and Ned was dismissed. It would not be necessary to have a second keeper, as the man now sent was young and active.

Ned had his own opinion on this subject, but he said nothing. What use for him to speak. Was it likely the new keeper would remain long unmo-