

THE COLLEGIANS.

A TALE OF GARRYOWEN.

BY Gerald Griffin.

CHAPTER XXXVIII—Continued

"You did, ay, there, indeed my son, your reproach strikes home. I thought that you would only break a verbal truth, and most unjustly did I wish that you should break it. How fearfully has Heaven repaid me for that selfish and unfeeling act! But you were all too close and secret for me. Go—go, unhappy boy; you taunt me with the seduction which was only the work of your own shameful passion."

This painful dialogue which perhaps would have risen to a still more bitter tone of recrimination, was broken off by a renewal of the summons at the door. It appeared as if the applicant for admission had gone away in despair, and again returned after a fruitless search elsewhere. On opening the door, Mrs. Cregan encountered the surly visage of Dan Dawley, who informed her that her presence was required in the ball-room; such was the name given to that apartment in which Hardress had made to her a confession of his guilt. When she had left the chamber, Hardress who grew momentarily more weak and ill, prepared himself for bed, and bade the old steward send him one of the servants. This commission the surly functionary discharged on returning to the servant's hall, by intimating his master's desire to Pat Falvey, who had entered some time before.

Mrs. Cregan in the meantime, proceeded to the chamber above mentioned, which she could only reach by passing through the narrow hall and winding staircase near the entrance. The former presented a scene calculated to alarm and perplex her. A number of soldiers, with their soaped and powdered queues and musket-barrels shining like silver, were stuck up close to the wall on either side, like the wax figures in the shop of a London tailor. On the gravel before the door she could see a number of country people, who had collected about the door, wondering what could have brought the "army" to Castle Chute. From the door of the kitchen and servant's hall a number of heads were thrust out, with faces indicative of a similar degree of astonishment and curiosity.

Passing through this formidable array, Mrs. Cregan ascended the stairs, and was admitted at the door of the ball-room by a figure as solemn and formidable as those below. The interior of the room presented a scene of still more startling interest. A table was spread in the centre, around which were standing Mr. Warner, the magistrate, Mr. Barnaby Cregan, Captain Gibson, and a clerk. At the farther end of the table, his arm suspended in a cotton handkerchief, stood a low, squalid, and ill-shaped figure, his dress covered with mud, and his face, which was soiled with blood and marl, rather expressive of surprise and empty wonder than of apprehension or of suffering.

Mrs. Cregan, who recognized the figure, paused for a moment in a revision of the most intense anxiety, and then walked calmly forward with that air of easy dignity which she could assume even when her whole nature was at war within her. This power of veiling her inward struggles, even to the extremity of endurance, made her resemble a fair tower sapped in the foundation, which shows no symptom of a weakness up to the very instant of destruction, and is a ruin before the sentiment of admiration has faded on the beholder's mind.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW THE DANGER TO THE SECRET OF HARDRESS WAS AVERTED BY THE INGENUITY OF IRISH WITNESSES.

Mr. Warner informed her that it was no longer necessary that her son's assistance should be afforded

them, as they had had the good fortune to apprehend the object of their suspicions. They should, however, he said, be compelled to await the arrival of their witnesses for nothing had been gained by putting the fellow on his examination. His answers were all given in the true style of an Irish witness, seeming to evince the utmost frankness, yet invariably leaving the querist in still greater perplexity than before he put the question. Every hour, he said, they expected the arrival of this man's brother and sister from Killarney, and they should then have an opportunity of confronting them with him and with the previous witnesses.

"I have already sent off a messenger," continued Mr. Warner, "to my own little place to see if they have yet arrived, in order that they may be brought hither and examined on the spot: The inconvenience to Mrs. Chute, I hope she will excuse, and my principal reason for wishing to see you Mrs. Cregan, was that you might bear our explanation to that lady. On occasions of this kind all good subjects are liable to be trespassed on, perhaps more than court-eesy might warrant."

"I will answer for my sister," said Mrs. Cregan, coldly; "she will not, of course, withhold any accommodation in her power. But this man—has he been questioned, sir?"

"He has."

"Might I be allowed to see the examination?"

"By all means, Mrs. Cregan. Mr. Houlahan, will you hand that book to the lady?"

Mr. Houlahan, after sticking his pen behind his ear, rose and delivered the volume accordingly, with a smirk and bow, which he meant for a wonder of politeness. The lady, whose thoughts were busy with other matters than with Mr. Houlahan's gallantry, received it, nevertheless, with a calm dignity, and opening her reading-glass, stooped to the page which that gentleman had pointed out. She glanced with assumed indifference over the details of the examination of Danny Mann, while she devoured its meaning with an agonizing closeness of scrutiny. The passage which concerned her most was the following:—

"Questioned. If he were known to the deceased Eily O'Connor answereth. He hath met such a one in Garryowen, but knoweth nothing farther. Questioned. If he heard of her death; answereth. Nay. Questioned. If he knoweth of a certain Lowry Looby, living; answereth. Yes. Questioned. Whether Eily O'Connor did not lodge for a time in the house of Philip Naughten, Killarney; answereth. How should he be aware of his brother-in-law's lodgers? Saith, He knoweth not."

Questioned. If he were not present in said Naughten's house, when said Eily, deceased, said Looby being then in Naughten's kitchen, did give a letter to Poll Naughten, sister to the deceased Eily O'Connor answereth. He was in the kitchen. Saith, Looby was a fool, and that his eyes were not fellows. Saith, he knoweth not who was in the said inner room. Questioned. Why he was discharged out of the employment of his master, Mr. Hardress Cregan; answereth, He knoweth not. Questioned. Where he hath been residing since he left his master's service; answereth, It is a token that examinat doth not know or he would not ask. And the like impertinent and futile answers, with sundry speeches little to the purpose, hath the prisoner responded to all subsequent inquiries."

With a feeling of relief, Mrs. Cregan returned the book to the clerk, and glancing towards the prisoner, observed that his eye was fixed on hers with a look of shrewd and anxious inquiry. To this glance she returned one equally comprehensive in the meaning. It told him she was fully in the counsels of her son, and prepared him to be guided by her eye.

At the same moment the sentinel was heard presenting arms at the door, and a corporal entered to say that Mr. Warner's messenger had returned, and that the witnesses might be expected in a few minutes. "All's right, then," said Mr. Warner, who entered a scrutiny of this kind with the same professional gout which might make Xenophon find excitement amid the difficulties and

intricacies of his famous retreat. "Remove the prisoner. We shall examine them apart, and see if their stories will bear the jangling. If they are all as much given to the negative as this fellow, I am afraid we shall find it hard to make them jar."

This was a moment of intense anxiety to Mrs. Cregan. She saw no probability of being able to communicate with the prisoners (for such were all the witnesses at present); and she comprehended all the importance of preventing, at least, the mingled of Hardress's name being placed up with the account of the unknown visitor at the cottage of the Naughtens.

A little experience, however, in the proceedings of Irish law courts would have given her more courage and comfort on this subject. The peasantry of Ireland have, for centuries been at war with the laws by which they are governed, and watch their operations in every instance with a jealous eye. Even guilt itself, however naturally atrocious, obtains a commiseration in their regard, from the more spirit of opposition to a system of government which they consider as unfriendly. There is scarcely a cottage in the south of Ireland where the very circumstance of legal denunciation would not afford, even to a murderer, a certain passport to concealment and protection. To the same cause may be traced, in all likelihood, the shrewdness of disguise, the closeness, the affected dullness, the assumed simplicity and all the inimitable subtleties of evasion and of wit which an Irish peasant can display when he is made to undergo a degree of gladiatorial dexterity which would throw the spirit of Machiavelli into ecstasies.

While Mrs. Cregan remained endeavoring to control the workings of her apprehension, a bustle was heard outside the door, in which the sound of a female voice, raised in anger and remonstrance, overtopped the rest in loudness, like a soprano voice in a chorus.

"Let me in!" she exclaimed, in a fierce tone; "do you want to thrust your scarlet jacket between the tree and the rind? Let me in, you tall ramrod, or I'll pull the soap and powder out of your wig. If I had you on the mountains, I'd cut the pig's tail from your pole, and make a show o' you. Do, do—draw your bayonet on me, you cowardly object. It's like the white blood o' the whole of ye! I know fifty lads of your size, that would think as little of tripping you up on a fair-gress, and making a high-road of your powdered carcass, as I do of snapping my fingers in your face. That for your bayonet, you woman's match!" Here she burst into the room, and confronted the magistrate, while the sentinel muttered, as he recovered his guard. "Well, you're a rum one, you are, as ever I see."

"Danny, a'ra, gal! Oh, vo, ohone, achree, asthoral! Is that the way with you? What did you do to 'em?—what's the matter?"

"Dat de hands may stick to me Poll, if I know, returned the prisoner, while she moaned and wept over him with a sudden passion of grief. "Deey say 'tis to kill some one I done. Deey say one Eily O'Connor was a lodger of ours westwards, an' dat I tuk her out of a night an' murdered her. Isn't dat purty talk? Sure you know yourself we had no lodgers."

"Remove the prisoner," said Mr. Warner; "he must not be present at her examination."

"I'll engage I have no longin' for it," returned Danny. "She knows right well that it is all talks, an' 'tis well I found a friend at last dat 'll see me out o' trouble."

ther)" she said, after a smack that went off like a detonating-cap. "Is that done to your liking, sir?"

Mr. Houlahan treated this query with silence, and the examination proceeded.

"Poll Naughten is your name,—is it not?"

"Polly Mann they christened me for want of a better, an' for want of a worse I took up with Naughten."

"You live in the Gap of Dunloe?"

"Iss, when at home."

"Did you know the deceased Eily O'Connor?"

"Eily who?"

"O'Connor?"

"I never heard a girl o' that name."

"Take care of your answers. We have strong evidence."

"If you have it as strong as a cable, you may make the most of it. You have my answer."

"Do you know a person of the name of Looby?"

"I do, to be sure, for my sins, I believe."

"Do you remember his being in your house in last autumn?"

"I do, well; an' I'd give him his tay the same night if it wasn't for raisins."

"Did you give him a letter on that evening?"

"He made more free than welcome, a dale. I can tell him that."

"Answer my question. Did you give him a letter?"

"Oyeh, many's the thing I gev him, and I'm sorry I didn't give him a thing more along with 'em, an' that's a good flakin'."

"Well, I don't deny you credit for your good wishes in that respect, but still I wait to have my question answered. Did you give Looby a letter on that evening?"

"Listen to me now, please your honor. That the head may go to the grave with me—"

"Those asseverations, my good woman, are quite superfluous. You should remember you are on your oath."

"Well, I am; sure I know I am upon my oath, an' as I am upon 'em, an' by the virtue o' that oath, I swear I never sopped a word with Lowry Looby from that day to this."

"Whew!" said the magistrate, "there's an answer. Hear me, my good woman. If you won't speak out, we shall find a way to make you speak."

"No use in wasting blows upon a willing horse. I can do no more than speak to the best of my ability."

"Very well. I ask you again, therefore, whether Looby received a letter from you on that evening?"

"Does Lowry say I gev him a letter?"

"You will not answer, then?"

"To be sure I will. What am I here for?"

"To drive me mad, I believe."

"Faiks, I can't help you, said Poll, "when you won't listen to me."

"Well, well, speak on."

do not speak upon the way."

Poll was removed, a measure which she resented by shrill and passionate remonstrances, affecting to believe herself very ill-treated. Her husband was next admitted, and, from his humble, timid, and deprecating manner, at once afforded the magistrate some cause of gratulation; and Mrs. Cregan of deep and increasing anxiety.

He approached the table with a fawning smile upon his coarse features, and a helpless, conciliating glance at every individual around him.

"Now, we shall have something," said Mr. Warner; "this fellow has a more tractable eye. Your name is Philip Naughten, is it not?"

The man returned an answer in Irish, which the magistrate cut short in the middle.

"Answer me in English, friend. We speak no Irish here. Is your name Philip Naughten?"

"The wisha, yourneen—"

"Come, come—English. Swear him to know whether he does not understand English. Can you speak English, fellow?"

"Not a word, please your honor."

A roar of laughter succeeded this escapade, to which the prisoner listened with a wondering and stupid look. Addressing himself in Irish to Mr. Cregan, he appeared to make an explanatory speech, which was accompanied by a slight expression of indignation.

"What does the fellow say?" asked Mr. Warner.

"Why," said Cregan, with a smile, "he says, he will admit that he couldn't be hung in English before his face, but he does not know enough of the language to enable him to tell his story in English."

"Well, then, I suppose we must have it in Irish. Mr. Houlahan, will you act as interpreter?"

The clerk, who thought it genteel not to know Irish, bowed and declared himself unqualified.

"Wisha, then," said a gruff voice at a little distance, in a dark corner of the room, "it isn't but what you had opportunities enough of learning it. If you went to foreign parts, what would they say to you, do you think, when you'd tell 'em you didn't know the language of the country where you were born? You ought to be ashamed o' yourself, so you ought."

This speech, which proceeded from the unceremonious Dan Dawley, produced some smiling at the expense of the euphuistic secretary, after which the steward himself was sworn to discharge the duties of the office in question.

The preliminary queries having been put and answered, the interpreter proceeded to ask, at the magistrate's suggestion, whether the witness was acquainted with the deceased Eily O'Connor.

But if it had been the policy of Mrs. Naughten to admit as little as possible, it seemed to be the policy of her husband to admit nothing at all. The subterfuge of the former in denying a knowledge of Eily, under her maiden name (which she imagined, saved her from the guilt of perjury) was an idea too brilliant for her husband. He gaped upon the interpreter in silence for some moments, and then looked on the magistrate as if to gather the meaning of the question.

"Repeat it for him," said the latter.

Dawley did so.

"'Tis the answer he makes 'me, please your honor," he said, "that he's a poor man that lives by industriousness."

"That's no answer. Repeat the question once more, and tell him I shall commit him for trial if he will not answer it."

"Again the question was put, and listened to with the same plodding, meditative look, and answered with a countenance of honest grief, and an apparent anxiety to be understood, which would have baffled the penetration of any but a practised observer. So earnest was his manner, that Mr. Warner really believed he was returning a satisfactory answer. But he was disappointed.

"He says," continued the interpreter, "that when he was a young man he rented a small farm from Mr. O'Connor, of Crag-ber, near Tralee. He has as much thicks in him, please your honor, as a rabbit. I'd as lieve be brakin' stones to a paviour as putting questions to a rogue of his kind."

Threats, promises of favor, lulling queries, and moral expédients of every kind, were used to draw him out into the communicative frankness which was desired. But he remained as adamant. He could or would admit nothing more than that he was a poor man, who lived by his industry, and that he had rented a small farm from Mr. O'Connor, of Crag-ber.

The prisoners, therefore, after a short consultation, were all remanded, in order that time might be afforded for confronting them with the friends of the unhappy Eily. Mrs.

Cregan, with the feeling of one who has stood all day before a burning furnace, hurried to the room of Hardress to indulge the tumult which was gathering in her bosom; and the gentlemen, by a special invitation, (which could no more be declined without offence, in the Ireland of those days, than in a Persian cottage), adjourned to the consolations of Mrs. Chute's dining-parlor. Separate places of confinement were allotted to the prisoners; a sentinel was placed over each, and the remainder of the party, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Captain Gibson, were all entertained like princes in the servant's hall.

CHAPTER XL.

HOW HARDRESS TOOK A DECISIVE STEP FOR HIS OWN SECURITY.

The hospitalities of Castle Chute were on this evening called into active exercise. If the gravest occasion of human life, the vigil of the dead, was not in those days always capable of restraining the impetuous spirit of enjoyment so much indulged in Irish society, how could it be expected that a mere anxiety for the interests of justice could interrupt the flow of their social gaiety? Before midnight, the house rang with laughter, melody, and uproar, and in an hour after every queue in the servant's hall was brought into a horizontal position. Even the three that stalked on guard were said to oscillate on their posts with an ominous motion, as the bells in churches forebode their fall when shaken by an earthquake. Hardress continued too unwell to make his appearance, and this circumstance deprived the company of the society of Anne Chute, and indeed of all the ladies, who took a quiet and rather mournful cup of tea by the drawing-room fire. The wretched subject of their solicitude lay burning on his bed, and listening to the boisterous sounds of mirth that proceeded from the distant parlor, with the ears of a dreaming maniac.

The place in which his boatman was confined had been a stable but was now become too ruinous for use. It was small and roughly paved. The rack and manger were yet attached to the wall, and a few slates, displaced upon the roof admitted certain glimpses of moonshine which fell cold and lonely on the rough, unplastered wall and eaves, making the house illustrious, like that of Sixtus V. Below, on a heap of loose straw, sat the squalid prisoner, warming his fingers over a small fire, heaped against the wall; and listening in silence to the unsteady tread of the sentinel, as he strode back and forward before the stable door, and hummed, with an air of suppressed and timid joviality, the words:—

"We won't go home till morning, We won't go home till morning, We won't go home till morning, Until the dawn appears."

(To be continued.)

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