

we'll bag Sack, and distance Neck-or-nothing. But seriously speaking, it's too good a joke that O'Grady should use you in this manner, who have been so kind to him in money matters: but as the old song says, 'Poverty parts good company;' and he is so cursed poor that he can't afford to know you any longer, now, that you have lent him all the money you had and the pension *in prospectu* is too much for his feelings. I'll be down with you again as soon as I can, for I hate the diabolical town as I do poison. They altered Stephen's Green—*ruined* it, I should say. They have taken away the big ditch that was round it, where I used to hunt water-rats when a boy. They are destroying the place with their d—d improvements. All the dogs are well, I hope, and my favourite bitch. Remember me to Mrs Egan, Whom all admire.

My dear squire,

Yours per quire.

MURTOUGH MURPHY.

'To EDWARD EGAN, Esq., *Merryvale*.'

Murtough Murphy was a great character, as may be guessed from his letter. He was a country attorney of good practice;—good because he could not help it,—for he was a clever, ready-witted fellow, up to all sorts of trap, and one in whose hands a cause was very safe; therefore he had plenty of clients without his seeking them. He kept good horses, was on every race-ground within twenty miles, and a steeple-chase was no steeple-chase without him. Then he betted freely, and, what's more, won his bets very generally; but no one found fault with him for that, and he took your money with such a good grace, and mostly gave you a *bon-mot* in exchange for it,—so that, next to winning the money yourself, you were glad it was won by Murtough Murphy.

The squire read his letter two or three times, and made his comments as he proceeded. 'Working heaven and earth to—ha—So, that's the work O'Grady's at—that's old friendship,—foul—foul; and after all the money I lent him too;—I'll be down on him if he plays false;—not that I'd like that much either. The squire threw down the letter, and then his eye caught the other two that Andy had purloined.

'More of that stupid blackguard's work!—robbing the mail—no less!—that fellow will be hanged some time or other.

Egad, maybe they'll hang him for this! What's best to be done?—Maybe it will be the safest way to see who they are for, and send them to the parties, and request they will say nothing: that's it.

The squire here took up the letters that lay before him, to read their superscriptions; and the first he turned over was directed to Gustavus Granby O'Grady, Esq., Neck-or-nothing Hall, Knockbotherum. This was what is called a curious coincidence. Just as he had been reading all about O'Grady's intended treachery to him, here was a letter to that individual, and with the Dublin post-mark too, and a very grand seal.

The squire examined the arms, and, though not versed in the mysteries of heraldry, he thought he remembered enough of most of the arms he had seen to say that this armorial bearing was a strange one to him. He turned the letter over and over again, and looked at it, back and front, with an expression in his face that said, as plain as countenance could speak, 'I'd give a trifle to know what is inside of this.' He looked at the seal again: 'Here's a—goose, I think it is, sitting in a bowl, with cross bars on it, and a spoon in its mouth; like the fellow that owns it, maybe. A goose with a silver spoon in its mouth! Well, here's the gable-end of a house, and a bird sitting on the top of it. Could it be Sparrow? There's a fellow called Sparrow, an under-secretary at the castle. D—n it! I wish I knew what it's about.

The squire threw down the letter as he said, 'D—n it,' but took it up again in a few seconds, and catching it edgewise between his fore-finger and thumb, gave a gentle pressure that made the letter gape at its extremities, and then, exercising that sidelong glance which is peculiar to postmasters, waiting-maids, and magpies who inspect marrow-bones, peeped into the interior of the epistle, saying to himself as he did so, 'All's fair in war, and why not in electioneering?' His face, which was screwed up to the scrutinizing pucker, gradually lengthened as he caught some words that were on the last turnover of the sheet, and so could be read thoroughly, and his brow darkened into the deepest frown as he scanned these lines: 'As you very properly and pun-gently remark, poor Egan is a spoon—a mere spoon.' 'Am I a spoon you rascal!'