

more fragrant—more smelling of myrr and frankincense—said coldly :

"This man's holding disgraces the estate."

Ryan listened in dumb despair. His wife was ready to swoon with terror, only the children that clung to her skirts and the baby nestling in her bosom made swooning an impossible luxury.

"Awcel, Sir Albin," said the steward, as spiritlessly as possible, "these folk *are* uncommonly dirty, an' lazy—above a', lazy."

"An' av I may make so bowld, yer honor," edged in the bailiff, sidling up near his great master, "this same man is wan o' the wusht ka-rack-theres in the barony."

Ryan eyed the speaker for a moment like a tiger ready for a spring; but the sight of his family sobered him.

"Yer honor," he pleaded, with as much humility as he could gather, "I'm payin' five times what I used to pay for the little bit o' land, an' av I was to work from day-light to dark I could barely squeeze the rint an' a beggar's made o' vittles out av it, not to mind ornamin'tin' the owld cabin, that's dacant enough already, God knows, for the wretches that's in it. Yer honour, I paid you yer rint, when it cem out o' my heart's blood."

Still no sign from the baronet, who turned again coldly to the steward.

"Could anything be done with this fellow's patch of land?"

Mr. M'Laren scratched his head deliberately.

"I dunno it'll iver turn to mickle guid, Sir Albin," was his reply. "At the best it's but puir soil, nu' these Irish bodies are the vera de'il—savin' your worship—for exhausting it. But there's a guid mon frae our country, one Donald Ross, is sair distrest for a lectle bit o' pasture ground, an' if you pleased to throw these couple o' fields in wi' his holding, I doot na you wad hae a safe tenant an' a safe rent."

"I will," broke in the baronet, impatiently, "give this man a month to rid the estate of his presence. We'll have none such lazy louts on Ashenfield." The great man spoke with vulgar *vengefulness*—a *vengefulness* all the smaller for the contrast between avenger and victim. Not dirt alone was Tade Ryan's crime.

The peasant heard his doom stolidly. His agonizing wife sank on her knees in an attitude of utter misery.

"Oh! have mercy, yer honor—have some mercy!" she cried. "You are a father yerself—oh! think what you would feel av yer star-

vin' childher wor dhriven out av the only spot they had on dher Heaven, to die by the roadside! Have mercy, as you expect mercy yerself!"

"My good woman, you are mad!" said the baronet.

"I may well be mad, yer honor—'twould be the blessed exchange for me to be mad or dead."

"M'Laren, come on!" and the great man's horse, carcoling, almost trampled the kneeling suppliant.

With a fierce cry, Ryan leaped to the horse's head, and chucked the bridle with such violence, the animal plunged and reared in terror.

"Stop a minnit," he thundered wildly, desperately. "I can't have the handful av oats saved in a month—do you want to rob me o' that, too?"

"Of everything that can make you insolent," cried the baronet, in furious rage. "Leave go the reins, fellow!"

"Lave go the reins, you impiddent varmint!" and Ryan's hand was struck down from the bridle by a blow of the bailiff's iron-loaded whip.

A demon flashed in the peasant's eye for a moment; but, with a plunge that nearly upset him, the great man's horse was away and Tade Ryan turned with nigh-broken heart to his cabin—his no more—to catch his starving wife in his arms as she swooned at last.

CHAPTER XXV.

ROMANTIC MARCHIONESS.

Sir Albin Artslade went on his way as lightly as if he had not trodden out the hope of five young lives: indeed as if that same stamping out were only a poor holocaust on the altar of his greatness. He went lightly but not happily.

The power of riches was, after all, the only weapon with which he sought to conquer happiness, not to woo it; which, fast as he followed, retired faster and faster, till now, on the high pinnacle of rank and power, with the strong sun and the strong storms of eminence beating in his face, Happiness seemed still afar off beyond heights he could not climb, in clouds there was no reaching: and on his great peak he stood, tearing his hair and rankling his heart, insatiate and insatiable, looking towards the Happiness that looked back mockery on his exalted wretchedness.

Yet he would conquer all that riches could conquer: he would buy honors though there