

Look at his pistols—they are discharged—while mine—”

He paused, as he remembered his weapon, too, had been discharged in his collision with the bailiff, and started with damaging confusion.

“Well, what about *yours*?” cried the other, tauntingly. “Ha, ha, you know well I discharged mine in defence o’ my poor murdered master; maybe you’d give as good an account of the bullet you sent to his poor heart? an’ pray who gev *you* lave to carry this purty blunderbus you have, eh?”

Ryan bit his lips with rage. Every circumstance convicted him. He remained doggedly silent: ready to strangle the foul coward that accused him; but to what purpose?

“This is horrible—most horrible!” exclaimed Mr. Sackwell, glancing in terror from the murdered baronet to his murderer, and then again to his accuser, and wiping away the big beads of perspiration that gathered on his forehead. “As one of His Majesty’s Justices of the Peace, I—I really don’t know what to do.”

“Isn’t it easy?” said the philosophical Charlie. “Each of those men says the other is the murderer. If they’re in earnest, let them keep one another company till we get to Clonmel and have the thing investigated, and if either of them stirs a peg to escape in the meantime I’ll shoot him dead. That’s all.”

“Y—yes that’s most admirable,” cried Mr. Sackwell, with great relief. “For *you* it’s quite a stroke of genius. I—I think I’ll go away—this sort of thing doesn’t do you know for my nerves. I—I sincerely trust the murderer—whoever he may be—mind I’m not prejudging the case—not by any means!—whoever he may be I sincerely trust will be brought to justice.”

“I am ready to go,” said Ryan, boldly. “I’ll say no more; but av the dead could spake—”

“Bah!” cried the bailiff loudly, but with some show of trepidation in his manner; for all his braggadocio, “you wouldn’t be so anxious to hear him, only you know well he’s stone dead.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said Charlie Sackwell, who had alighted from his horse and was engaged examining the body of the murdered baronet.

“What!” cried Mr. Sackwell, who was still within hearing; and “What!” cried the other two men simultaneously, the one in a voice of deadly terror, the other of eager expectancy.

“He is not quite dead,” said Charlie Sackwell, calmly.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A WITNESS FROM THE DEAD.

“Not quite dead!”

In an instant the four men were huddled eagerly round Sir Albin Artslade’s body. Charles Sackwell, who, with all his easy stupidity, combined some practical resource upon occasion, made a deliberate examination of the wound and its consequences. He laid his hand on the wounded man’s heart, and waited. There was a feeble flicker of life, rare and dull, but growing quicker.

The assassin’s cheeks were ashy pale: his heart beat furiously. What if Sir Albin Artslade lived?

But the wound was a mortal one. The bullet had entered below the left breast, and must have lodged somewhere in the region of the heart. But the worst sign of all was that it left but a faint bluish puncture in the skin,—there was no blood flowing—none but what flowed within.

Young Sackwell watched the flickering life as it struggled fitfully to assert itself, and assisted its struggle by every means in his power. By degrees he forced a draught of brandy down the wounded man’s throat, and and at last had the satisfaction of seeing the limbs quiver feebly, then move more freely; and then with a convulsive shudder, Sir Albin Artslade woke to consciousness once more.

His eyes wandered for a moment heavily around as if to collect some sense of the situation, and closed again as if in pain. But when they opened a second time they fixed themselves with unearthly steadiness on the murderer; who stood rooted to the spot in mortal terror.

“Hush! he is going to speak.”

Of a sudden, a fierce light was kindled in the heavy eyes, which seemed to pierce the murderer to the soul.

“Murderer!” he cried, jerking himself up violently, and clenching his fist fiercely in the very face of the bailiff. But the effort awoke all the agonies of his wound, and with a groan he sank back, pressing his hand wearily against his side.

“He is dead,” cried the bailiff, with intense relief. “He must have been ravin’.”

“He is not dead,” said Charlie Sackwell, supporting the wounded man’s head as tenderly