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CHAPTER X. (Continued.)

"But the letter," interrupted O'Byrne, "how did the letter fall into your hands?" "Well, your honor, after burning the house, and my shirt over my clothes, the way no one would know me, I dug out the potatoes the way the lord would not get them, and I set out for the Rath, and the sorra long I was trudging the road, when what should I hear but groans come up out of Tom Riley's quarry. "Who's there?" says I. "It's me," says he. "And what brings you here?" says I. "Oh, sure my horse fell down in the quarry hole. Come here and give me a lift. Give me a hand," says he, "until I get him up," says Le. Well, down I went, my dear, and what should I find there but a fine big lump of a dragoon, and his horse floundering about in the water. Well, your honor, I took the bridle and led the horse to the right place, and got him up on the edge and led him along the winding road, until at last I got him out on the highway, and there was the poor dragoon, and he, quite lame, limping after me. When he was on dry ground, he began to shiver like an aspen leaf, an' as I was helpin' him to mount, I managed to loose the girth of the saddle, an' before he was half up, he comes down, slap bang, like a sack of steeped barley, to the ground. I slipped me hand quickly into his pouch, and took the letter out of it. I then jumped upon the horse's back, an' bid good to the Sassanagh churl. "If you'd hear the roars of the poor sodjer cryin' out, 'Stop thief! Stop thief! Stop the White-boy!' an' the likes, until I was clear an' clane out of his hearing, which, by me sowkins, wasn't very long. But the most curious part of the whole transaction was, when I got up on the bare back of the dragoons big black charger, the poor baste was either afeared to remain near where he got the duckin', or, may be, he had some Irish blood in him, an' wished to do me a piece of sarvice by gettin' away from the big sodjer; at all events, he took to his heels in gallant style, an' sorra stop or stay I could make him do, but on an' on he galloped headlong! But, as good fortune would have it, I managed to guide the rein in the proper direction; an' so I couldn't stop him by any manner of means to speak to your lordship; because I had as much as ever I could do to keep myself on his back. He still dashed along until he wore himself down, an' then stood still of his own accord, two miles from this place, where I left him to graze an' rest himself. So I started for the meetin' an' I'm just come in time to be too late. An' that's the way the thing happened, me lord."

"Really, Tom, you are a worthy fellow," cried O'Byrne, shaking Tom's hand warmly. "If I had been in his place, I'd carry sodjer an' all way prisoner of war. What advantage a sodjer has above all other men!" said Jack Gunn, boastfully.

CHAPTER XI.

The house of Lord Powerscourt appeared at first sight unworthy of the magnificent grounds in which it was embosomed. The architecture was Italian, with a small colonade in the front, the wings of which encircled a handsome garden, ornamented with a fountain or jet d'eau. Vases of bronze filled with rare flowers, a considerable number of statues, handsome pilasters, and gilded balustrades glittered in the front of the edifice. No indications, however, were discernible of the majesty or grandeur which plebeians often expect in the habitations of lords. About a hundred yards in the rear of the edifice stood the servants' apartments and out offices, embosomed amid a cluster of acacias. But from its cheerless and naked aspect, Powerscourt House seemed rather the dwelling of a rich citizen than the home of a proud member of the arrogant aristocracy of the three kingdoms. When you ascended the steps of the vestibule, however, the wealth and prodigality of the opulent lord began to blaze upon you. Polished marbles, shining mirrors, gilded cornices, graceful sculptures, and bold carvings, glittered on every hand as you advanced. The delighted visitor was dazzled by the crowd of precious objects presented in comparatively limited precincts. Carpets of brilliant colors covered the vestibule and stairs. Each apartment presented furniture of a different fashion. There it was all medieval and here it was the furniture of Francis I., while beyond was the gorgeous ornamentation of the luxurious period of Louis XIV., or of Madame Pampadour. The upper part of the house consisted of a picture gallery, in which there was nothing but modern pictures. The house was particularly rich in samples of the Ceramic art. You encountered at every pace Etrurian vases and Greek statuettes, alternating with the porcelains of China, Sevres, and Saxony. On these admirable superfluities prodigious sums must have been lavished. Owing, however, to their tasteless

arrangement, they served to prove the boundless wealth, not the enlightened intelligence, of his lordship. It was impossible for an impartial traveller to pass from squalid huddles of miserable cabins into this fairy-land of foreign art and smiling ornamentation, without lamenting the monstrous inequality with which the law of primogeniture curses the people who groan under aristocratic government—the most oppressive of all governments.

Opulence and luxury appeared to have particularly made their home in the comfortable apartment of old Lord Powerscourt. The walls were covered with soft and silky tissues; quilted, wadded, and stuffed, so as to sink under the touch like a perpetual cushion. The icy winds of the north never discovered the smallest aperture at which they might enter that comfortable apartment. Tubes of heated air passed round the luxurious apartment, and night and day kept up an equality of temperature. While the fierce and cutting winter of the poles raged inhospitably outside, the gouty peer enjoyed the delicious climate of luxurious Italy within. Curtains of crimson velvet, with fringes of gold, alternately excluded and admitted the light of day by their magnificent drapery. The upper walls were covered with costly paintings, in brilliant and gorgeous frames—life-like portraits, for the most part, of his lordship's favorite horses, living and dead—the whole stud—black horses, and bay horses, and white horses, and piebald horses, and horses of every possible variety of shade. On the right hand and the left, on the north and the south, on the east and the west, behind you and before, wherever you turned your eye, horses and jockeys, jockeys and horses, met your gaze.

On the morning of the day on which the conspiracy was to bust out, his lordship, after tossing through a restless night, rose in a most detestable humor. Dressed in a morning gown of cashmere, corded with silk and tasseled with gold, his lordship sat growling in his cushioned arm-chair before a large coal fire which burned in the brightly polished grate notwithstanding the mildness of the external atmosphere. Being a justice of the peace, his lordship occasionally administered the law, but as this noble justice of the peace was a hereditary peer, he, of course, was entirely ignorant of the law which he administered. But his lordship who could not acquire law by study, could pay for it in hard coin—he could hire a lawyer. A lawyer accordingly he had hired in the person of Daniel Tyler, a little dry Dublin briefless barrister who found it more profitable to assist a stupid magistrate that could pay, than to defend widows and orphans in a country where orphans and widows can rarely reward eloquence with hard coin.

"Bad news indeed?" exclaimed his lordship, in reply to some observation of Tyler. "Could there be worse news than what I already know? There is one of my game-keepers murdered by the dirty beggars of the village. And one of my finest deer killed within a few paces of my hall door by invisible malefactors. But all this is a fly blow compared to what they have since attempted. They perpetrated a brutal and dastardly assault yesterday evening on an officer in her majesty's service, my relative and my heir. A whole horde of blood-thirsty savages rushed upon the unarmed gentleman as he was unsuspectingly angling in the lake, and assailed him with ferocious rage and unspeakable violence. In consequence of the serious injuries inflicted on him he lies dangerously ill, and perhaps may die. Is it not a horrible state of things? Cleary," screamed his lordship, turning to his valet, "how is Sir George this morning?"

"Much better, my lord, only his face is bruised and swelled and disfigured, my lord." "Horrible villains!" exclaimed his infuriated lordship; "they thought they were attacking me—they thought they were attacking the Queen herself, whose royal authority I unworthily represent. It is just the same; they might as well attack myself as my excellent kinsman and future heir. It is just the same. But what—has no warrant yet been issued against these treacherous savages—what are you doing, Mr. Tyler? What is the reason that you have not issued warrants against the wicked authors of this atrocious crime? With all your laziness, Mr. Tyler, you might have brought me the warrants to sign—you might have taken some steps for the apprehension of the barbarous assassins of my innocent kinsman."

"Please your lordship, I was waiting to know who the culprits were." "What?" roared his lordship; "so you were waiting to know them. Do you expect them to come into this room and tell you their names? Why don't you take some steps, sir, for their apprehension—eh? Why, you're a downright fool; you and Jameson, sir, are downright fools. Why don't you make it your business to know them? Tell me that. Murders are perpetrated under your very nose unknown to you—you cannot see them, or hinder them, or do anything! Nothing can be done unless I do it myself. Go—try, sir,

try if you cannot at least make out the warrants with all your laziness. Leave a blank for the names and it can be filled with the notorious characters lurking in the neighborhood. Consult McDonough; he must be able to speak by this time: he knows the most dangerous of the villains. There's that old rebel, Daly, of Lady's Church, the Repeal Schoolmaster, and several others. Why don't you issue warrants against them? It is your business to know them, not mine—your duty, sir."

"I shall execute your lordship's orders," said the clerk, "as soon as I know—"

"Know what—what are you mumbling about, sir—what are you gaping at—why don't you speak out, man?" screamed his lordship. "There you are with your mouth open like a scald bird that wants feeding. Why the devil don't you speak, sir—haven't you a tongue in your head?"

"My lord, your lordship's health requires so much attention from the faithful servants, who are devoted to your lordship's interests—"

"Don't take so much care of my health, Mr. Tyler," shouted his lordship, in a tone sharpened by anxiety; "but tell me plainly what is going on—I command you, sir?"

The clerk being thus forced to speak, narrated the burning of Kavanagh's cabin, and how the dragoon, robbed of his horse and despatches, had arrived at Powerscourt house, all battered and bruised.

The old lord, as he listened, seemed suffocating with anger and terror. His crimson face and blazing eyes suggested the idea of the bursting of a blood-vessel, or an immediate fit of apoplexy.

"The next thing they'll do is to attack myself," exclaimed his lordship. "They will do it—they only want strength."

We may here remark, *en parentheses*, that if the Irish people had sense enough to attack the aristocracy it would be unnecessary to attack anything else. But they mistake the missile for the hand that hurls it; and they wreak their blind fury on an instrument which is every moment renewed, instead of destroying the gilded hand which pours every form of calamity, exile, famine, and disgrace on the patient and afflicted heads of the Irish people. The aristocracy take a murderous advantage of this blindness to exterminate the Irish.

Tyler replied that Lord Powerscourt and his amiable family could not be personally in danger; but even if they were, his lordship was surrounded by trusty servants in whose fidelity he might place implicit confidence.

"My lord knows," said Cleary, "that he has at least one servant who is always ready to die for his excellent master."

"What brought me ever into this cursed country or among its execrable inhabitants—this land of perdition, whose Popery and poverty endanger life and property. But I shall not wait for the blow. Order the carriage—I am determined to quit this fatal country. The villains are perfectly capable of assassinating me."

Forgetting his gait, his lordship limped and stumped up and down the chamber. Tyler, with his usual craft, allowed the first ebullition of excitement to pass unnoticed. When his lordship fell exhausted into a seat.

"My lord, I trust you will pardon my boldness if I say it is not necessary to quit the house. What has happened should neither alarm nor surprise your lordship. Your extreme benevolence, your kind indulgence, as I often told your lordship, have warned and fostered that treacherous squalid horde of savage beggars into rebellion. If your lordship were only severe and resolute with the treacherous savages—if you would crush them—you would soon see them obedient and submissive to your will."

"You are right for once," exclaimed his lordship, starting up a second time from his chair. "I see it all now. That foolish girl, whose head is turned by that sneaking priest, has had too much influence over me. My kind indulgence is the cause of all. But I shall make them jump—I'll make examples of them—I'll begin this moment, sit down and get ready a warrant for the arrest of Tom Kavanagh and his adherents for incendiarism; and if the villain is not hanged before this day two months—no matter. The Irish are like nettles; if you don't crush them they'll sting you. Do not forget to put the word 'adherents' into the warrant. The word is elastic, and we may net a great many of the blackguards and throw them at least into jail, if we cannot hang them. But, stay; how many constables in Powerscourt House?"

lord, I shall obey your lordship," replied the clerk respectfully; "but I am sure we shall not want defenders. The dragoon informs me that orders have been sent from the Castle for a regiment of infantry to march into Wicklow—they will be here this evening or to-morrow."

"What are you saying?" asked his lordship, ghastly with alarm. "Why, an open rebellion must have broken out somewhere in the county—there must be some serious reasons for the despatch of so many troops—the letter stolen from the dragoon was very important; but since his Excellency is so prompt in sending us help, we should redouble our energies.—Get a warrant ready for the arrest of the farmers who were put out of their cabins, the same day as Kavanagh. If they are not guilty of incendiarism they are guilty of disaffection, and should be got rid of. Don't forget that blind old rebel, Daly."

Carried away by his rage and terror, his lordship would have willingly issued warrants to incarcerate all the Catholic inhabitants of Wicklow, had not Tyler shown that prudence was a necessity until vigorous measures were supported by imposing force. The warrants being got ready, his lordship signed them; but Tyler hinted that ere they could be carried into execution they must be signed by a second magistrate.

"Well, go and look for the Rev. Mr. Bruce, my colleague; tell him to hasten: bring Jameson likewise. His experience may be requisite. When they arrive show them into the hall of audience, and let the servants be ready to mount on horseback, and carry my messages wherever it may be necessary. You shall see, Tyler, you shall see," added the old Lord, rubbing his hands; "but are you quite sure the military are coming?"

"The dragoon assures me they are, my lord; and if your lordship wishes, you can question him yourself."

"Tell him to come up in a minute or two," said his Lordship. "Meantime, set out, Tyler—don't let the grass grow under your feet—there's no time to be lost. And you, Cleary," continued his Lordship, turning to his valet, "get ready to dress me."

Tyler made a low bow, and left the room.—Cleary prepared his lordship's clothes. This valet of Lord Powerscourt was a thin, tall, red-haired old bachelor, and, in spite of his final manner, not destitute of intelligence. Lord Powerscourt consulted him at times about the affairs of his family, and willingly listened to his opinion—a circumstance which rendered him, equally in London and in Wicklow, a favorite whose influence was feared. But this favorite never appeared in the eyes of his master to know that he was powerful: he never offered his advice, and patiently waited until his opinion was asked. He did not depart from this prudent rule on the present occasion, but while doing his duty maintained a discreet and decent silence. The fiery eye of Lord Powerscourt easily discerned, nevertheless, that his valet was swelling with news and willing to talk.

"Well, Cleary, have you heard what is going on? What do you think of all this?"

"I think as your lordship does."

"That's very right," said his Lordship; "but you may also have an opinion of your own.—Come, speak out, I order you. Don't you think there's a conspiracy on foot against me and my people?"

"It is not my business, my lord," said Cleary, with apparent humility, and speaking so low that he was scarcely audible, "to interiere in such matters."

"Come," replied the old Lord, roughly, "speak out man."

"Well, my Lord, since it is your Lordship's orders, I shall speak with frankness. Some events have recently happened, which have nothing whatever to do with politics or conspiracies; but the danger is perhaps no less menacing."

"What do you mean to say?" shrieked Lord Powerscourt, in a tremor of anxiety. "You certainly know something—out with it, man."

"It is the duty of a good servant to acquaint an excellent master like your Lordship with everything he knows. I shall, therefore, brave the displeasure of Sir George—"

"Sir George!" cried Lord Powerscourt, "what can Sir George have to do with this business? Perhaps you can explain the assault which was wantonly inflicted upon him yesterday at Glendalough?"

"Exactly, my Lord; but as high people are connected with this affair, I am afraid—"

"Well, my lord," said Cleary, in a low tone, as if apprehensive of being overheard, "yesterday evening, when I took my leave of your lordship for the night, and was retiring to my own room, I met John Smith, the footman, who waited on Sir George when he was fishing; poor Smith was all in a tremor, my lord; he told me that he knew everything connected with the accident. But Sir George had threatened his life, if he attempted to mention it. Nevertheless, he felt it his duty to discharge his conscience; and, knowing my devotion to your lordship, he came to me to ask my advice. I persuaded the honest fellow to sit down and extracted the whole from him. Sir George was fishing in the lake, when Miss O'Byrne suddenly approached him. She assumed a false air of gaiety; but her voice trembled and her face was ghastly pale. Well, my lord, after a few moments she whispered something to Sir George, who turned to John Smith, and ordered him to go beyond the ditch and look for bait. While Smith was going to the ditch, he saw two men gliding furtively among the bushes, as if they were making to the place where Sir George was talking to Miss O'Byrne. The appearance of these men excited the suspicion of John Smith, and, instead of going to the ditch, he squatted down among some flaggers, where he could distinctly see what was going on, though he could hear nothing."

"And what did he see?" asked the old lord, his eyes glittering with the fire of curiosity.

"Miss O'Byrne, my lord, began to speak with Sir George in a very earnest manner: she seemed to wipe her eyes, and implore him. His honor was much calmer, and continued to fish with great tranquillity. John Smith fancied it was some love affair. And he might be right; for Miss O'Byrne, though come of a Popish race, is a very handsome girl—"

"Enough—enough," interrupted his lordship, in a snarling tone, "spare me your suppositions, and tell me what happened."

"Sir George seemed to refuse what Miss O'Byrne asked; for she wrung her hands, and raised her eyes to heaven in a piteous manner. Immediately afterwards, one of the two men, who were skulking in the bushes, rushed up to Sir George and spoke to him very fiercely; the stranger then assaulted his honor, and struck him several times with something in his hand. Sir Geo. never said a word; he neither called for help nor attempted to defend himself. John Smith was eager twenty times to run to his master's help, but in his hurry he stumbled against the butt of a tree and tumbled into a hollow, where he was nearly drowned. Before he could get out, he heard the noise of something falling into the lake. John Smith fancied they had killed Sir George, and was trying to hide the body in the water; but when he succeeded in climbing out of the gully, he saw Sir George approaching him along the margin of the lake, while the other persons were conversing in a group where Sir George had been fishing. Sir George's face was covered with blood, and he limped along with pain and difficulty. John Smith ran up to his honor, and assisted him to walk, asking him, at the same time what had happened. But Sir George refused to answer, and ordered him for his life to tell no one what had occurred."

During this conversation, Lord Powerscourt seemed suffocating with indignation, so that he could scarcely speak. Suddenly escaping from the hands of his valet, he began to hobble up and down the room, as if he had lost his senses "I see it all!" he said, "I see it all! those lurking villains were lying in wait to murder my kinsman. That impudent hussy required a reparation incompatible with the dignity of a baronet, and, being unable to succeed, she called the villains who were lying in ambush, to come and murder him. The law shall now have full swing—I have been too kind to those proud beggarly O'Byrnes. But I shall crush them under my heel like reptiles as they are."

Pausing for a moment, he inquired in a calmer tone: "Do you think Smith knows the men who assaulted my kinsman?"

"They are strangers, he says,—he never laid his eyes on them before; but the man who assaulted his honor is a well dressed swaggering fellow, with something of the cut of a gentleman. It must be easy—"

"That is enough. Our object must be to secure the wretch who concocted this scheme—not the villain she employed." His Lordship added, after a pause, in a lower tone: "You and Smith are good servants. If you continue faithful, you shall find me a grateful master. Divide this between ye;" he handed Cleary a ten pound note. "When you stand on the green cloth you will know what to say—until then—not a word.—Come, conclude my toilet. I had never more occasion for activity an courage."

Tyler at this moment put his head in at the half open door, and said the bailiff and the minister had arrived, and awaited his lordship's commands. "Tell them I shall be down in a moment. Oh! we shall have work to-day. Are