

THE IRISH SERVANT'S STORY.

BY CHARLES O'MALLEY.

POWER was detained in town by some orders from the adjutant-general, so that I started for Cork the next morning, with no other companion than my servant Mike. For the first few stages upon the road my own thoughts sufficiently occupied me, to render me insensible or indifferent to all else. My opening career—the prospects my new life as a soldier held out—my hopes of distinction—my love of Lucy, with all its train of doubts and fears—passed in review before me, and I took no note of time till far past noon. I now looked to the back part of the coach, where Mike's voice had been, as usual, in the ascendant for some time, and perceived that he was surrounded by an eager auditory of four raw recruits, who, under the care of a sergeant, were proceeding to Cork to be enrolled in their regiment. The sergeant, whose minutes of wakefulness were only those, when the coach stopped to change horses, and when he got down to mix a "summat hot," paid little attention to his followers, leaving them perfectly free in all their movements, to listen to Mike's eloquence, and profit by his suggestions, should they deem fit. Master Michael's services to his new acquaintances, I began to perceive, were not exactly of the same nature as Dibdin is reported to have rendered to our navy in the late war. Far from it; his theme was no contemptuous disdain for danger—no patriotic enthusiasm to fight for home and country—no proud consciousness of British valour, mingled with the appropriate hatred of our mutual enemies; on the contrary, Mike's eloquence was enlisted for the defendant. He detailed, and in no unimpressive way either, the hardships of a soldier's life, its dangers, its vicissitudes, its possible penalties, its inevitably small rewards, and, in fact, so completely did he work on the feelings of his hearers, that I perceived more than one glance exchanged between the victims, that certainly betokened any thing save the resolve to fight for King George. It was at the close of a long and most powerful appeal upon the superiority of any other line of life, petty larceny and small felony inclusive, that he concluded with the following quotation:—

Thru for ye boys!

"With your red scarlet coat,
You're as proud as a goat,
And your long cap and feather."

But by the piper that played before Moses it's more whipping nor gingerbread is going on among them; av ye knew but all, and heard the misfortune that happened to my father.

And was he a sodger? inquired one.

Troth was he, more sorrow to him, and wasn't he amost whipped, one day, for doing what he was bid?

Musha, but that was hard.

To be sure it was hard; but, faix, when my father seen that they didn't know their own minds, he thought, anyhow, he knew his, so he ran away; and devil a bit of him they ever cotch afther.—May be, ye might like to hear the story, and there's in it for yes too.

A general request to this end being preferred by the company, Mike took a shrewd look at the sergeant, to be sure that he was still sleeping, settled his coat comfortably across his knees, and began.

Well, it's a good many years ago my father listed in the North Cork, just to oblige Mr. Barry, the landlord there; "for," says he, "Phii," says he, "it's no soldier ye'll be at all, but my own man, to brush my clothes and go errands, and the like o' that; and the king, long life to him, will help to pay ye for your trouble—ye understand me."—Well my father agreed, and Mr. Barry was as good as his word. Never a guard did my father mount, nor as much as a drill had he, nor a roll-call, nor anything at all, save and except wait on the captain, his master, just as pleasant as need be, and no inconvenience in life.

Well, for three years this went on as I'm telling, and the regiment was ordered down to Banthry, because of a report that the "boys" were rising down there; and the second evening there was a night party patrolling, with Captain Barry, for six hours in the rain, and the captain, God be merciful to him, tuk cowld and died; more betoken, they said it was drink, but my father says it wasn't; "for," says he, "after he tuk eight tumblers comfortable," my father mixed the ninth, the captain waved his hand this way, as much as to say he'd have no more. "Is it that ye mean," says my father, and the captain nodded. "Musha, but it's sorry I am," says my father, "to see you this way, for ye must be bad entirely to leave off in the beginning of the evening." And thru for him, the captain was dead in the morning.

A sorrowful day it was for my father when he died; it was the finest place in the world; little to do; plenty of diversion; and a kind man he was—when he was drunk. Well, then, when the Captain was buried, and all was over, my father hoped they'd be for letting him away, as he said, "Sure, I'm no use in life to any body, save the man that's gone, for his ways are all I know, and I never was a sodger." But, upon my conscience they had other thoughts in their heads, for they ordered him into the ranks to be drilled just like the recruits they took the day before.

"Musha, is'n't this hard," said my father; "here I am an ould vitrin that ought to be discharged on a pension, with two and sixpence a day, obliged to go capering about the barrack yard practising the goose step, or some other nonsense not becoming my age or my habits;" but so it was.

Well, this went on for some time, and, sure,