

we have to expect but trouble till they murder us outright—or we murder them," he added, fiercely.

The wife shuddered, for she knew they were no meaningless words.

"Don't talk o' murder," she cried, crossing herself piously. "Anything but that. But what's the matter now?"

"Mavrone; need you axe? That tunderin' villin, Murphy, is at the bottom av it as usual—he towlt me yesterday he'd see the grass growin' in the little cabin afore we wor six months' owlder, an' he manes it, the black hearted thraither. I know he manes it!"

His wife raised her eyes to Heaven in silent submission.

"God help us! they're the bitther times for the owld stock; But shure what's the use o' lyin' down to die, av 'twas only to spite 'em? Tade, be yerself agin, man alive—'tis new wid you to be afraid o' mane turncoats an lick-plates! Let 'em do their worst, there's a good God above that won't forget us in His own good time."

"*Mo chree lannu!* you're a brave little wife!" cried Ryan, folding her in his strong embrace with a vehemence that recalled his first love-clasp at the dance on the Common long ago; all despair struck dead before such indomitable hope.

"There now, asthore, ate a bit o' bruckhisht—*for my sake.*"

"For your sake, I will," but as he spoke he started at the sounds of horse's hoofs coming down the road outside. "It's no use, Kitty—here's Sir Albin Artslade, an' 'tis alsy to know what brings him."

It was indeed the baronet who rode up to the cabin, bestriding his horse with the air of one to whom equestrian dignity was an awkward necessity, but with that cold hard look in his face that disdained all show of pity, and spoke only of hatred and of the insolence of power. By his side, like a pale shadow of the great man's greatness, sinking self totally in his greater self, on a steed that was a shadow of the great man's steed, Mr. Duncan McLaren rode—a sensible Scotchman who, without being specially bad himself, thought the least that was his due; by commandment human or divine, was to leave his master be as bad as he chose. He was a practical man and made real improvements: if he had been free to follow his own notions he would have moulded native industry into his improvements; and perhaps fused effectually Saxon steadiness with Celtic impulse. But a

man of Mr. McLaren's intelligence was not long in discovering that the darling object of his master (and probably the tenure of his office) admitted no truce with the natives, but degradation where it might be galling enough, and, where that failed, extirpation without parley.

And so the worthy steward, under protest to his conscience, worked his master's will, shrewdly concluding that if his scruples carried him too far, there were many Mr. Duncan McLaren's north of the Tweed, or south of it, for the matter of that, would cheerfully do bad things in a much worse spirit than himself. If moralists don't think the theory perfect, let them put the peccadillo on the one side and the stewardship on the other, and unless they be lunatics (as many lunatics moralists there be) they must admit Mr. McLaren was a wise man, if he was not also a good one.

Mr. Jer. Murphy, the bailiff, made a trio of visitors to Tade Ryan's poor hovel; slinking at a respectable distance behind his superlative and comparative betters; with befitting sleekness and awe in his demeanour, and swaddled in fur cap, muffler and shroud, like frieze-coat enough to equip the heavy villain of any tragic monstrosity on record: nor indeed was the character quite foreign to his own, whose function was to do all wickedness which required vileness in the execution; Irishmen being in all time best wasted by Irishmen, and his degradation being of a depth that made his Irishism tolerable even to Sir Albin.

Poor Ryan saw them halt opposite the cabin, and tottered to the door to meet them in a mood of half-stupefied despair, for he knew their mission well. He had been the butt of the new people's wrath for many a day, so the penalty of his stubborn attachment to the old people and the old notions, and his part in the affray which ended the festivities of Sir Albin Artslade's welcome-home had marked him, he knew, as a victim they must needs be rid of. He struggled to muster a smile with which to meet "his honor," but he only mustered a frown.

Who will not cling to the straw upon a sea of troubles?—with wife, and children, and home ready to be swallowed up? He essayed—God knows with what a pang!—to doff his hat to the insolent stranger, and he did!—doffed it cringingly!

The baronet never noticed the salutation: never changed his cold stare: God-like, unheeding adoration more than Godly: but turning to his obsequious steward, whose adoration was