

When the thing was first proposed to Fanny, she was furious. Jim, however, thought that Denny would do very well, though his legs wanted finishing badly. And he made it plain to his sister, for he had not taken it on trust, that Sherrit was really married. So Fanny, who was a sensible girl, laid herself out seriously for the capture of Denny Cronin.

It required a certain amount of circumspection, for it was an essential part of the plan that Denny's people should not be prematurely alarmed. Also, Denny was a flaccid youth, and as heavy to move as an autumnal kelt. A fortnight passed, and Fanny was getting very tired of the game. She had no alternative, however, but to play it to a finish.

The invitations for the Militia ball were out, and Fanny was going under the wing of her eldest sister, whose husband was a captain in the Galcommon Regiment. Sherrit, who is a man of resource, and may some day command a British army in the field (unless, indeed, the British public demand of its generals that purity which it insists upon in its politicians and longs for in its chorus girls), saw his opportunity, and took measures with Jim Fitz-Urse for the landing of Denny on the night of the ball.

The Cleggan court house was being boarded for the dance, and the ladies of the regiment were busy with the decorations, Fanny's sister, Mrs. Knox Glynne, among the rest. Fanny too was there, and Sherrit, giving the decorators the benefit of his experience. A thoroughly practical man, he made Fanny understand how necessary it was that she should know her way about the building without danger of mistake. Then he unfolded his plan; and when he left her he felt he had done all that a man could: the issue was on the knees of the gods.

On the night of the ball, all that were of society (and the fringes thereof) in Galcommon came in state to the Cleggan court house: The ball was as other Militia balls have been, decorously dull—before supper. Denny Cronin danced—he called it dancing—only with Fanny Fitz-Urse. And when they did not dance they sat out in the jury-box and talked. How Fanny got through it she never knew. But by supper time she had Denny well in hand. Breen, as had been arranged, took Fanny in to supper. Sherrit saw to Denny, and got him nicely fuddled without letting him get noticeably drunk. He kept him in the supper-room long after the ladies had left, and only brought him back to Miss Fitz-Urse when the ball-room was beginning to thin and the men to get noisy.