

my poor father of whose death he had only just heard. He immediately recognized me, having been a frequent guest at the Castle long ago. I believe he always had a liking for me as a child: but his reception of me then was beyond all precedent, kind and commiserate. He is a prosperous old bachelor, rich as a Jew, and dissipates only in politics—he conceits himself a pillar of the Tory party, and, though the Ministry have rather slighted his pretensions, I believe he is really a considerable politician. At my rate, he has a good heart. He insisted on my accompanying him to his hotel (he was in Ireland only on official business) and, though I gave him little notion of the ruin of our estates, he had learned enough previously of my poor father's embarrassments to induce him to offer me his assistance wherever and however I might require it."

"And you?" broke in the priest. "Most likely you stood on your dignity, and told him to go to the devil."

"Indeed, I did not sir," said Gerald, with a smile. "I felt his kindness deeply, and half promised to pay him a visit in his old manor-house in Northumberland. It was only that evening I learned he was a childless old bachelor."

"In the name of mercy, what of that?"

"Simply that I was not born for a legacy-hunter. I might have liked the old nobleman for himself; but his gold—pslaw! it made him at once hideous in my sight. I could never have humoured a whim of his after without cursing myself for a hypocrite, and my very need of his money made the hunt after it more repulsive."

St. Patrick! "what an Irish idea!"

"Besides, on reflection, I knew the suspicious destruction of the Castle must soon come to his ears, and how on earth could I appear to him other than as a criminal adventurer? No explanation could be convincing against the damning coincidences that accused me; valuable time would be lost; and if, after all, Lord Atholston's kind hearth established my victory, how much nearer would I be to the prim duty of my life? Kilsheelan, restored by charity to a pauper, had better not be restored at all."

Father O'Meara stared open-mouthed at the speaker.

"I believe there is something in noble birth after all," he said half in soliloquy.

"The issue was at all events," the young man continued, "that I left Dublin that very night. I know I treated the old nobleman

unkindly, for I never in any way communicated an apology for my abrupt flight to him: but there was no other course open to me, if I would avoid impossible explanations or inevitable deception. A few days after, I was bound for France in a little smuggler. Once there I found myself in an atmosphere of fever that suited well my own adventurous temper. All France was in arms. Torrents of glorious ardour rolled their victories all over Europe. States changed their fortunes every day: all society was convulsed: great reputations were the growth of an hour; the soldier might be anything—yesterday, unknown: to-day, a marshal: perhaps to-morrow, a prince. It was the grand chance of enterprise and valour. I plunged readily into the spirit of the time, and was a soldier from the first day I set foot in France. I thirsted for glory, for distinction, of course—is there an atom in all creation will not warm in a furnace?—I was a Republican, too, and our conquests were for the Republic—but all motives of this kind were secondary to the one great object—by means of fame to win fortune: by means of fortune, Kilsheelan.

"I was drafted into a foreign legion bound for the Italian wars, composed chiefly of Italian refugees and Polish patriots. Fortune favoured us in a captain, whose very name was victory. Napoleon Bonaparte,—the world knows him now—came fresh from his romantic exploits in Africa to trample the proudest armies of Europe in the dust. Our march on Italy was one long jubilee. With him for our captain nobody doubted: all was confident and glorious anticipation. I suppose you read how our army crossed the Alps. I remember it myself only as a confused dream: I was but an atom in a great body that moved only to be victorious.

"There was little bravery in my recklessness, but at all events it turned out well, for before we had half crossed Mount St. Bernard, I was captain of my company.

"It was not till we began to descend into Piedmont that the Austrian troops really gave fight: but in those treacherous defiles we had many a fierce struggle for victory, and as our legion was in the very front of the vanguard we had considerably more than our share of the fighting. One morning as we advanced to seize a pass that would bring the army at once on the Austrian flank and turn one of their most dangerous positions, we were suddenly assailed at a turn in the defile by a raking fire from a little castle perched above a beautiful valley,