

a grudge for a man that axes my pardon," said James Cormack, "and God bless you, and make you happy, but don't mention a word of what happened to anybody, if you forgive me."

"No fear, Ned," said Ned Burkem, "As he left them, he felt the hot blood trickling down his face; he wiped it off, and gave a kind of chuckle, and muttered—

"Devil take me if that don't be the dearest blow you ever struck. My name isn't Ned Burkem, if I don't bring you to the gallows for that, and make that proud thing kneel to me for mercy. I must be his best friend, though; I must get him into my power, until I crush him like the serpent. Ha, ha! whose turn will it be then, I wonder. No matter—ha, ha, ha! you'll rue it! James Cormack. May God—but no, I won't curse; I'll leave him until my time comes. Curse this blood—but I'll have blood for it," and he muttered and cursed as he went along.

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LOVERS' INTERVIEW—THE POLITICAL MEETING—THE GAUGER TRIKED.

The O'Donnells' affairs were every day becoming more discouraging. Though throwing themselves for protection upon the agent, still, so little faith had they in him, that they did not feel secure, and heartily wished that the day of sale was over.

Mr. O'Donnell moved listlessly about the house and place; his grey hair streaming about his head, and his once portly form stooped. Strong minds yield to adversity sooner than weak ones. When unable to resist it, they are too proud to bear the world's frown, and that very moral strength that gained them wealth and respect in their prosperity, now helps to drag them to ruin.

Little Bessy was becoming weaker every day, and it was evident to the most unpractised that consumption was fast doing its work. The dry cough, and the hectic flush that mantled on her velvet cheek, seemed to number her days.

Mrs. O'Donnell and Kate were continually engaged with their domestic duties and their attendance upon Bessy. Frank was the only one upon whom devolved the painful duty of trying to make the most of their shattered fortunes. Even Uncle Corny became apathetic, for if he went abroad, nothing but want and wailing, and death, met his gaze; so he preferred to remain at home. It is true that Shemus-a-Clough kept him company, for with that instinct of poor, half-witted creatures, he found that he could not live roving about as usual, and as there was always plenty to eat and drink, and a welcome at Mr. O'Donnell's, he now stopped there the most of his time; besides, he said

that something was to happen then, and no one would be there to protect them, if he went.

James Cormack spent most of his time at Mr. O'Donnell's, for since Burkem became a resident in the house, and since his attack upon Mary Cahill, he thought it prudent to keep an eye upon him. Burkem took care to worm himself into his favor again. He expressed the greatest sorrow for his past conduct, and thereby disarmed Cormack's suspicions.

"I should have said that Uncle Corny tended and cared Bessy; he sang and read for her, and amused her with tales of his campaigns. It was cheering to see the fine old soldier with that delicate, frail child upon his knee, eagerly listening to his adventures, and then she would look anxiously into his face and ask him—

"If you were killed, Uncle Corny, what would do?"

"Why, I don't know, pet; I suppose they'd bury me somewhere."

"It's not that I mean, Uncle Corny; but sure you couldn't be prepared to die and you fighting? You know we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling."

"Oh, as to the fear and trembling, my dear little puss, I had enough of it on the battle-field; but anything about my salvation, I fear, never gives me any trouble."

"Why, wouldn't you like to go to heaven, Uncle Corny?"

"To be sure I would; but you know, we hadn't time to think of such things then. Soldiers seem born for fighting and nothing else. When you'd hear the guns and cannons roaring around you, and see dead men upon every side of you, you'd be thinking how you could fight best, or perhaps how you could escape."

"Oh, it is dreadful," said she, shuddering. "It is, but it's glorious, after all, to kill your enemies."

"Doesn't our Saviour tell us to love our enemies? Besides, perhaps, that poor man you'd be after killing might have left a wife and children to lament his loss, or perhaps to starve. Think how I would feel if anything happened dear papa, and sure; some one is left to feel after every one that's killed." "Oh, it's dreadful for people to be killing one another that way."

"Well, I believe it's wrong, after all," said Uncle Corny.

It is strange what influence a child's simple arguments will often have upon the strongest man; I have known them to succeed where the most philosophical arguments failed. This is because there is a homely innocence and purity in their remarks that touches the heart.

Frank often visited his uncle, apparently for advice, but in reality to meet Alice. Father O'Donnell felt flattered at being thus treated as the family oracle.