

was a marvel of brightness: somehow the candlesticks on the "clevery" and the big fire in the grate did not look brighter than the hams and fitches and gammons that depended from the rafters; not a bit brighter than the prim old lady who said the rosary, talked gossip, and did the house-keeping for his reverence. Parlour, dining room, and drawing room were rolled into one—a papered and carpeted little snuggerly with a bright fire on the hearth, a fresh nosegay of spring flowers on the table; and in the corner a glass-case of books with a chiffonier that suggested comfortable thoughts of what was inside. As for "the Bishop's room," His Lordship must have some temptation to worldliness every time he reposed there, for the feather-bed was the coziest, the curtains the whitest, and the look-out the most charming the world could make them.

It only wanted a genial host and a sincere welcome to finish the charm of the place; and these fronted Gerald O'Dwyer, plain as sunlight, when after inspecting all those cheerful arrangements, he sat *te-te-te* with Father John in the parlour.

"Well, Gerald, I hope you won't die of the dumps here?" said the priest, laughingly.

"It's a perfect little paradise, sir," said Gerald, with sincere enthusiasm.

"Not a very hard Purgatory at any rate, thanks to your poor father and the parishioners."

"My father!"

"What! don't you know I never paid him a farthing for this place?"

"I didn't even know it was his."

"Know it now then: he swore he'd never look at me again if I didn't accept a grant of the place *in secula seculorum*."

"Upon my word then, Father John, 'tis well for you I won't be your landlord. I've taken such a fancy to the place, I'd be a perfect tyrant and refuse all terms but immediate possession."

"Ha ha! You are thinking 'tis a fine thing to be a parish priest?"

"I am certainly envying you, sir."

"Then don't, boy," said the priest, walking to the window. "See! perhaps this will cure you. Well, Andy," he cried, addressing an old man who tottered up the garden walk, "the old woman isn't better to-day?"

"*Mo gra gal*, yer riverence, the breath is nearly out of her," said Andy, with tears in his eyes.

"The fayver cum on dhreadful bad afther you left her, an' she's dyin' for the sighth o'you, the poor sowl, afore she goes."

"Never say die, Andy: she's better than ten

dead yet," said Father John, as he admitted the old man.

"You didn't walk in all the way?"

"Every step of it, yer reverence. I can hardly dhrag my ould legs afther me, I'm so bate out."

"Never mind, Andy: Biddy will get you a fine hot tumbler of punch to put the life in you, and you can ride home on the pony. I'll walk over, myself, in no time."

"*Wishu mo graha shtig*, 'tis I wouldn't doubt yer reverence for the big heart. May all the saints in heaven—"

"Shame, Andy, don't let me hear you cursing," said the priest cheerily. "Go in, and pitch into the punch, 'twill do you more good."

Having resigned the old fellow to Biddy's charge in the kitchen (where that pious female predicted the inevitable beggary of his reverence, if he didn't mend his ways in the punch and pony line,) Father John returned to the parlor to inform Gerald that he had to trudge eight or ten miles across the country to an urgent sick call.

"I'll have the pony coming back," he added, "so I'll be back to dinner at five. Meanwhile, my dear boy, pull down the house or do something wicked to keep up your spirits; do anything at all but think. Stay, you're in the student line—I have a few old books here that may amuse you,"—and he repaired to the little glass-case to advertise its contents—"Here's 'Semlerus on Tertullian'—of course you don't care for *that*. Here you have 'Morality of St. Augustine,' a Greek Lexicon, 'The tale of a Tub,' 'The Lives of the Saints,' 'Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman,' 'The Psalter of Tarn,' 'The—'

"Oh! Sir, quite an embarrassing lot of attractions," said Gerald, with a smile.

"Very well, my boy, choose for yourself—only don't get into polemics and turn Catholic: if you did, we never would hear the end of Jesuitical intrigues. So be a good Protestant and let me see the end of this bottle of Madeira when I come back: I'll warrant it's genuine. And now for the Purgatorial side of my 'little paradise.' Good-bye!"

Gerald O'Dwyer was not sorry to have a few hours in which to arrange his plans at leisure. He had the scheme of a life to project, and his thoughts were still a chaos of grief and uncertainty.

We have said that the priest's cottage lay on the margin of the Wood, which stretched far up the mountain behind it. This was one of Gerald's favourite resorts; and thither the blithe