

dependence, even on his uncle, had its old horrors.

"By the bye, my lord," he asked hurriedly, "I presume my pardon leaves me at liberty to return to France?"

"To France!" exclaimed Father O'Meara. "The boy is mad!"

"To France!" exclaimed Lord Atholston, and his voice trembled, and the colour left his cheeks. "Gerald, you are not serious. My boy, you are not."

"My Lord, I am," said Gerald, quietly. "I am a soldier of France. My duty lies there."

"But—but I thought your duty was here—here in Kilsheelan. I thought your father left you a mission—are you surely going to abandon it?"

Gerald's heart answered he was no millionaire, but a penniless outcast—why think of restoring Kilsheelan? But he only held down his head, as he said quietly:

"That was a dream, my lord—a youthful dream. It is all over now."

"A dream!" exclaimed the old nobleman, with sudden energy. "Why bless the boy! it is a reality as substantial as flesh and blood."

"A reality, my lord? I do not understand."

"Don't understand?"

"Upon my honour, my lord," cried Father O'Meara, "I believe we've forgotten all about that. Actually, we've only told him half the good news, and left out the best half."

"Oh? Lord bless us, so we did!" cried the old nobleman, the eyes behind the spectacles dancing most un-Ministerially. "This whole business has so upset me, I really half doubt whether I'm in my right senses. We didn't tell you all about the prize-money?"

"The prize-money, my lord?"

"Bless the boy! you don't forget it? That they seized with you off Cornwall, when you were invading us ere-last year?"

"Yes, yes, my lord? You do not mean?"—

"It will be restored to you, my boy—every penny of it! There now, no words about it—thank Father O'Meara again, if you must thank any one! It will be a pious fraud, I'm afraid, to set you down as a peaceful British subject, waylaid by a nest of Cornish pirates, but it shall be done."

"The Chief Secretary's cloak will cover a multitude of sins," said Father John.

"Especially with a parish priest for particeps criminis," laughed the Secretary.

Gerald O'Dwyer's brain was swimming with joy. He could think of nothing—only feel.

"Oh! this is too much!" he cried in bewilderment. "Lord Atholston—"

"Uncle—uncle Tom," the old nobleman put in obstinately.

"If you really wish it, my lord—"

"Wish it, you wilful boy! Why will you think me always an old ogre? Think I have no one else on earth to call me uncle—no one else to remind me I am not altogether alone in the world."

"Then uncle be it!—my dear, good uncle, no words of mine can ever thank you as I ought. If there be any way of repaying you ever so unworthily, believe me I will never neglect it."

There were tears behind the spectacles; but Lord Atholston would not have admitted it for all the world.

"Nonsense, my dear boy, nonsense—the lupines is all mine to have been able to save you. But now that you are rich and think you have something to be grateful for, promise me you will never frighten me again, who have had so much trouble in finding you, by talking of flying away to France the moment you're found, and losing your life to make a great military mountebank a greater curse to humanity."

"But promise instead," finished Father O'Meara, "that like a good Irishman that you'll give your heart and life to Ireland—that you'll make the old people flourish once more in the old place—that you'll be a true O'Dwyer Garv of Kilsheelan—and that you'll give the tumbler of punch I'm waiting for in the old dining-hall before I die. Promise me that, and, please God, if all the evils of Job come upon my head, I'll live as happy as a king till that day comes."

The young man held down his head in thought.

"Gerald, you do not answer," cried the old nobleman in dismay.

"I will do my father's will," said Gerald, calmly. "If I live I will restore Kilsheelan—"

"You will?"

"And as far as I can, I will put the old people, such of them as are left, in the old place—"

"And my tumbler of punch?"

"That, too, I hope, we will discuss some day; but when I have done that much, I fear I cannot stay in Ireland!"

Like a bombshell came the deliberate announcement, and scattered their gathering joy to the four winds.

"Cannot stay in Ireland!"