

KNOCKNAGOW OR THE HOMES OF TIPPERARY.

BY CHARLES J. KICKHAM.

CHAPTER XV.

A DAY'S SHOOTING.

The snipe was at the well, as Bob Lloyd had foretold, and the moment it rose the doctor "blasted away." But greatly to his surprise the snipe did not fall with its wing broken.

"He's wounded," the doctor exclaimed, on seeing the snipe pitch in the next field. "I'll make sure of him the next time."

All three blasted away the next time; and when the snipe quietly dropping into its quarters near the well.

"High is doing business," said Bob Lloyd, on hearing the report of Hugh's gun from the bog.

"Ay, faith," he added, on seeing him quietly walk forward and pick up his bird.

"I'll do that fellow's job," exclaimed Richard, through his clenched teeth, as he rammed home the charge in the long duck gun with a very unnecessary expenditure of force.

"Is it a duck I required asked."

"Ay, faith," replied Bob. "The ice is broken on the pond, and he's coming about it."

The wild duck flew round and round in a circle, and so low that the chances of a shot seemed not improbable.

Bob Lloyd hurried to the corner of the field and stooped behind the fence. Richard and Mr. Lowe took up a position at some distance, and all three watched the wild duck with breathless excitement as it came near and nearer in each round of its flight.

"I hope you enjoyed the shooting," she said to Mr. Lowe.

"Oh, yes," he replied, devoutly hoping that her inquiries would extend no further.

"Well, dinner will be ready immediately," said Mary. "And I need not remind you we are to have a few friends in the evening."

"Who are they?" Richard asked.

"I thought I told you. But I am glad to have an agreeable surprise for you. It is the Hon. Mr. Parnell."

The doctor glanced at Bob Lloyd's unmentionables, and rushed up the stairs like a man bent upon throwing himself out of a window.

As Maurice Kearney took his place at the head of the table his first question, as he looked at the edge of the carving knife, as a matter of course, was:

"Only four or five brace, sir," replied Hugh.

"Oh, only that much," Grace exclaimed, "after all the firing we heard. I thought at one time there was a brisk skirmish going on, if not a pitched battle."

"Well, now," said Hugh, who sat next her, "how would you feel if there was really a pitched battle going on in the bog?"

"Oh, I'd be delighted. The excitement must be so pleasant."

"And which side would you wish to win?"

"The Irish course. How I should like to bind up the wounds of some gallant young chief like Robert Emmet or Sir William Wallace."

"That is the Irish William Wallace whose picture you are drawing the fatal sword in the 'Scottish Chiefs'?"

"Yes; I mean some young chief like that who

"Fought for the land his soul adored, His only talisman—the sword— His only spellword—Liberty."

"Mr. Lowe says you are a rebel," said Mary.

"I don't know that," she replied, looking a little frightened. But observing that Mr. Lowe's smile indicated anything but displeasure she added: "But I do admire a hero. And who is so great as he as the patriot who fights and bleeds for the land of his birth?"

"Will you go to the ball-bait?" Maurice Kearney inquired.

This question caused considerable surprise and some amusement.

Mary, who knew her father's talent for such surprises, could not be sure whether the ball was hauled in after his usual manner of introducing subjects that had not the remotest connection with that under discussion, or whether Irish patriots, fighting for their country, suggested to him the baiting of a bull.

"A ball-bait, sir?" said Hugh. "Why, the practice has been entirely done away with for years."

"It is before the end of the week; but the place is not decided on. What Mr. Parnell told me. He was here for a cow I sold him last Sunday. I gave her to him 'a too cheap."

And Mr. Kearney rubbed his bald head, and seemed sorry too late for the bad bargain he had made with Wat Murphy.

"I wonder he told us nothing about it," Richard remarked. "We saw him over at B. H. Lloyd's."

"Was that the butcher?" Mr. Lowe asked. "I remarked that he had a very well-bred bull-dog."

"Are you an admirer of those interesting animals?" Hugh asked, with a slight shade of sarcasm in his tone.

"Let's have another glass of grog," the doctor suggested.

"Ay, faith," replied Mr. Lloyd. "Come over."

They returned to the house; and after another application to the square bottle, retraced their steps to the bog road, where Hugh was waiting for them.

"Ye had good sport it would seem," Hugh remarked. "Game must be plenty in Mr. Lloyd's preserves?"

"Well, we didn't meet much," replied Mr. Lowe.

"And we lost our day's shooting on account of that duck, said Richard, putting his hand under his coat-tails with a look suggestive of a disagreeable sensation.

"If we cross over to the turf-ricks on the high bank," Hugh remarked, "we may get a shot or two at the plover coming into the bog, they are flying low."

"I vote for going home," replied the doctor. "I have got enough of it for one day."

"I dare say you will have a good appetite for your dinner."

"Well, rather; but we had lunch at Bob's."

"What do you say, Mr. Lowe?" Hugh asked. "Shall we cross the bog and try and add a few gray plovers to our bag?"

"Well, I confess, I'm inclined to vote with the doctor for home."

"Home is the word," said the doctor. And on seeing some country people approaching he managed to let the head and neck of his snipe hang out of his pocket, and, with the long gun on his shoulder, stepped out at a quick pace, looking as if he had done wonders during the day.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNINVITED VISITOR.

Grace had run to the window a dozen times in as many minutes, to see if the footmen were returning; and though Mary smiled at her impatience, she could not conceal from herself that she shared it in no small degree.

"Here they are at last," Grace exclaimed, gleefully.

Mary started from her chair, but sat down again quickly. She blushed, and was glad that no one had seen her.

Grace ran to open the door; and though Mary smiled at her impatience, she could not conceal from herself that she shared it in no small degree.

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baiting! Surely it cannot be for their beauty they are kept. A more ill-favored animal it would be impossible to imagine than the dog of Wat Murphy's, with his crooked legs and frightful grin. I am always quite uneasy when I see him about the place."

"Don't you see he is always muzzled?" said her father.

"That only makes him look the more ferocious," she replied. "It is a shame to have such dogs kept by any one. There was a poor beggar woman here the other day, who had her leg torn in a frightful manner by Pender's dog."

"I heard papa say," said Grace, "that such accidents are becoming very frequent. He says many farmers keep ferocious dogs now. He called to see one poor child that was attacked by a dog, and though the dog was muzzled, papa feared the child would die."

"So many robbers," said Mr. Kearney, "are now prowling about the country, people don't know what to do. But it isn't robbers Pender is afraid of, but balliffs. He was here to day looking for you," he added, turning to Mr. Lowe.

"For me! Oh yes," he added, recollecting himself, "he is my uncle's agent."

"His son," Mr. Kearney replied. "And as a cantankerous a cub ever Lord put breath in. He drove up to the door with a double barrel gun at each side of him, and four pistols stuck in his belt. You'd be talking of bull-dogs," he added, turning to Mary. "But where will you find an uglier bull-dog than Boreford Pender?"

"Boreford!" exclaimed Mr. Lowe. "Is he a connection of that family?"

"His father," replied Mr. Kearney seriously, "was a dog boy to the old marquess."

This curious sort of connection with aristocracy made the young gentleman laugh. But Hugh, feeling that it was scarcely prudent on his father's part to talk in this way of the agent and his son in presence of the landlord's nephew, changed the subject by remarking:

"But you must not suppose from what my father has said about robbers prowling through the country, that there is one of our national vices. On the contrary, the honesty of the people, under the circumstances, is most extraordinary."

"I inferred as much," said Mr. Lowe, "from what the clergyman said the other day about stealing turf. It seems to me a very silly affair for a poor man to take a little turf in that way. And Mr. Hannigan alluded to no other acts of dishonesty."

"He had a right to say something about the turps," said Mr. Kearney. "Only for I got a cabin in every field and had a man minding them, they wouldn't leave me a turp these two last years, what?"

"I don't mean to say that there are gangs of black-poor fellows who, by the by, besides, that will take whatever they can lay hands on."

"Unfortunately that is true," said Hugh. "Unprincipled characters go about plundering under cover of the general distress. But poor, honest people are driven to it, by necessity. When their houses are pulled down and they are forced to take refuge in the lanes of the next town, it is not surprising that many become dishonest. The man who would almost lie down and die of hunger in his own poor cabin, and his neighbors, rather than bring disgrace upon his family by turning thief, can easily be tempted when he finds himself in the midst of strangers in some wretched hold in the lanes or outskirts of the town."

"I really believe what you say is true," said his father. "Poor Molly Ryan was out here the other day, and it was heart-breaking to listen to her. Her two boys, that she 'reared honest,' as she said, got into bad company, and were in jail for attempting to break into Murphy's store. If they had not been turned out of their little place at the Cross-roads, the boys, I am sure, would grow up honest and industrious. Her mother, that may become dishonest. The man who would almost lie down and die of hunger in his own poor cabin, and his neighbors, rather than bring disgrace upon his family by turning thief, can easily be tempted when he finds himself in the midst of strangers in some wretched hold in the lanes or outskirts of the town."

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