

"Going to America! Frank," said Father O'Donnell. "No, boy. What would your father do, and Alice, and I, poor old man that I am, now to lose my fine boy? No, Frank, don't go," and the old man put his handkerchief to his eyes.

"It is hard enough, no doubt," said Mr. Maher, evidently well pleased at the matter; "but, after all, what can the boy do here? Many a man made a fortune there in a little time. If you want money, Frank, I'll help you."

"No, sir," said Frank, proudly, "I have enough."

"Well, perhaps you're right, perhaps you're right. But what will I do? Won't you try and keep him, Alice?"

This appeal was too much for Alice.

"There now, there now, don't cry, child, and he won't go; though maybe it's better. Let him go, Alice, let him go."

"Uncle," said Frank, firmly, "I have resolved upon going; I cannot be a pauper here; and you, Mr. Maher, I have one request to ask of you—that is, you know that this darling girl and I love one another; I could not think of asking her now, even if I thought I would get your consent; but do not ask her to marry until I return. I will return with wealth, or never return. If living and rich, I'll be back in five years. She and I are pledged for that time. If I don't return with wealth, she's free."

"Do promise them, promise them. Sure they are fond of one another, God bless them. He'll be rich yet. Promise them," said Father O'Donnell.

"Give me your hand Frank," said Mr. Maher. "I do promise; and if you return with wealth, there is not a young man in the country I'd sooner give her to; but then, in your present circumstances, it would be your ruin to marry. I have a good many sons, Frank, so I could not give her a farm, and, you know, the money soon goes."

"God bless you! God bless you!" said Frank, grasping him by the hand; "you are right; but I'll win wealth for her sake, for I could die to gain her."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE POOR LAWS—HOW THE POOR ARE TREATED—A HUMANE BOARD—THE FRUIT OF EVICTIONS.

I intended to devote some chapters to the working and management of the poor laws in Ireland, and also to the sophistry of political economists, who assert that Ireland is rapidly increasing in material wealth; but as my work is extending beyond the limits I had prescribed, I must confine myself to a few remarks.

In the first place, I fearlessly assert that the poor laws have destroyed the happiness and independence of the very poor for whose benefit they were created.

Since the introduction of poor rates, pauperism has increased, and poverty become more predominant.

The law has provided the indigent against absolute starvation. This protection destroys every principle of energy in the sinking man's heart; it also checks the unforced sympathies of our nature, which, at all times, have been found a surer protection against misery than any legal enactments.

The best legal enactments for providing for the maintenance of the poor seem somehow to clash against the wise dispensation of Providence; for even a casual observer must see that the best safeguards against extreme poverty lie in that charitable feeling planted by the hand of Nature in our bosoms. The poor laws close up the many fountains of charity, and fling over the poor to the merciless protection of paid officials, whose hearts become steeled to misery, and whose only study is to please their superiors, and to make the most they possibly can of their own situations. They possess not one feeling of sympathy for the poor wretches thrown on their care. They stand to each other in grim hostility—the one party thankless and dissatisfied, and claiming as their due what the others niggardly administer. In fact, the system has transformed the whole nature of charity. It has closed up those sacred fountains which are the poor man's best protection—namely, the kindness of friends and relatives, the sympathy and charity of the wealthy, and these acts of mutual help and kindness which the poor render each other, and which are of more importance than a casual observer could conceive. Again, the laws are an encouragement to vice; they support the unfortunate and her