

A Christmas Carol.

This night in holy Bethlehem Beneath the midnight star Angels and cherubs...

Beneath the clear December skies On holy Mary's breast Incarnate Love now weeping, lies...

In the beginning Thou didst speak The Universe awake. A shadow of the storm and meek...

O sweet, sweet, sweet the Mystery. Unstained by sin's sad leaven; 'Mid sounds of happy jubilee...

Hearts, loving hearts! your place is here, Like lamps about a shrine. Giving the babe a kiss and tear...

Give me thy hand, O fellow man! This day of unkindness smothered; For in this first of years, O man...

A Merry Christmas to our friends! And likewise to each foe! The sunshine of His love He sends...

Hail! Mother of the Infant God! Hail! Virgin and Queen! All things obey His slightest nod...

LLOYD PENNANT.

A TALE OF THE WEST.

By RALPH NEVILLE, Esq.

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CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED.

Arrived in London, Bingham's first step was to call again at the Admiralty; no news; from thence he proceeded to the agents, with no better success; however, in both places they told him that they were in constant expectation of hearing from Captain Pennant...

At any other time Harry would have been delighted with his appointment; under present circumstances he should have preferred first having accomplished his mission. There was no help, however, for what had occurred; he wrote a few lines apprising his uncle of his unexpected employment, and of the failure of all his endeavors to discover any trace of Pennant; and the setting sun saw him rattling over Shooter's Hill, in a chaise-and-four, en route for Chatham.

Her extreme sensibility prevented Miss Bingham's communicating, even to Mrs. Bollingbroke, the engagement she had entered into with Pennant; she had heard of his success, was proud of the glory with which he had covered himself, although she regretted the capture of the French ship, for she had been indoctrinated with Lord Edwards's political opinions. She expected daily to see him return and claim her hand; until that happy moment should arrive, she treasured her secret in her own breast. As day wore on, she became restless and uneasy; she perceived that something must be wrong; her uncle's altered health and manner—Mike's ill-disguised anxiety—and the fact that Pennant's name was never mentioned by either—Harry's absence—all combined to inspire her with some undefined dread; but she availed the result in silence; and each day of doubt only rendered her the more determined not to disclose what had occurred. Bingham's last letter arrived; she was only made acquainted with the part which announced his departure from England; the failure of his exertions was communicated to Master Mike alone. Colonel Blake wrote at once to the Admiralty and the naval agents, requesting that he might be informed whenever Captain Pennant presented himself, or communicated with them.

Two months had elapsed—two months of misery to poor Kate, which she had never experienced before. Every day she was the

first to meet the postboy, and contrived to be the bearer of the bag to the library; but her anxiety remained unrelieved. At length came two English letters, one official, the other sealed with black; she nearly fainted as she presented them to her uncle, who desired to be left alone; his hand trembled as he broke the seal of the private letter, and when he cast his eyes over the contents, he uttered a loud groan, which quickly brought Kate, who had lingered at the door, to his side; she found the Colonel overwhelmed with grief. The Captain of the 'Leopard' had written to announce poor Harry's death; he had fallen in action; the other letter was but an official confirmation of the melancholy tidings.

When the family had in some degree recovered the effects of their unexpected cruel bereavement, the Colonel and Mike held councils as to certain legal proceedings becoming necessary, in consequence of Harry's death; immediate steps should be taken to secure the due administration of his estate, which they supposed, as a matter of course, must descend to his sister. The Colonel's weakened health not permitting him to undertake so fatiguing a journey, it was arranged that Mike should proceed to Dublin and consult Mr. Clipper, who was both law and land agent to the Dunseverick and Bingham estates, as to what should be done on the occasion.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. CLIPPER was an extensive land agent, as well as a solicitor in very extensive practice; in this double capacity he could not fail to realize a fortune, for law was then even much more dilatory and expensive than it is at present; its victims were still less acquainted with its mysteries, and relied much more on the capacity and rectitude of their legal advisers than their more enlightened successors do now. Clipper was an off-handed, and apparently good-natured sort of fellow to all who employed him; so long as he saw his way clearly, and felt assured that his client's estate afforded undoubted security for costs and advances, his cheques might be had for the asking; his dinners were first-rate; he occupied a splendid house in the best square, and entertained none but the very highest people. He had strays, and very heavy ones, too, on the estates of many of the leading families; and, besides paying legal interest, those aristocratic clients who were so unfortunate as to be in his power, were compelled to tolerate the insolent assumption of equality which the attorney assumed towards them, and to patronize his parties, and grace his assemblies, whenever they were "bidden to the feast." It was remarked that Mr. Clipper never parted with any of his employees on good terms; he annoyed those who were enabled to liberate themselves from his thralldom, by unexpected pecuniary claims, which he sought to enforce by legal proceedings; and utterly ruined such as dared to cavil at his conduct or dispute his charges, without having the means of extricating themselves from his gripe. The political importance acquired from the uncontrolled power, which he exercised over the tenantry committed to his care, added in no small degree to his importance; he obtained access even to the Viceroys' table, although the members of his profession were then excluded from the honor of attending the Irish Court; and the fact of his procuring snug berths for some of his relations obtained credence for the report that he was often consulted by the representative of majesty, and that his advice not infrequently determined the measures of the Government.

Mike called three times on the solicitor before he could obtain an interview. On the first occasion a peer was closeted with Mr. Clipper; on the second (a special appointment) the clerk informed him that Mr. Clipper's engagements would not admit of his seeing him, "as it costed against the gentleman that with him was dismissed, he must go to the 'Castle' on important public business; but if Mr. Blake would call to-morrow afternoon, probably Mr. Clipper could spare him half an hour." Mike was punctual to the second, but the solicitor, being particularly occupied, could not be disturbed; "if Mr. Blake would sit down for a few minutes, he might possibly be received." Half an hour passed, during which Mike heard the learned gentleman in loud and merry converse with his companion. At length the door opened, and forth came Mr. Thomas Fincher, followed by Mr. Clipper; they were too much engrossed with their conversation to notice Mike.

"Well, then, you'll be to dinner at the square this evening—half-past-seven, sharp?" "Without fail; you may depend on it," replied Mr. Clipper.

"Lord Kilmore will be there, you know," added Fincher.

"Ah, a capital fellow, that Kilmore, I'm surprised he should be a second day in town without calling on me."

"As the friends were about separating, in stalked this important personage.

"Ah, how do, Clipper? Fortunate to find you."

"Quite well, thank you, my lord; pray walk in. I hope your lordship's health is good."

Clipper was following his noble client into the sanctum sanctorum, when the clerk whispered something; he turned quickly round, and looked towards Mike—"Ah, yes, I really am very sorry, but it is impossible for me to see you now, Mr. Blake, as you may perceive; it is so good as to call at twelve to-morrow."

It can easily be supposed that Mike's temper, disturbed as it had been by late occurrences, was not in a condition to be trifled with; he did still his resentment, however, and came next day; but he encountered another delay, heard the same boisterous and mirthful conversation as on the preceding occasion, and at length saw Mr. Fincher come out with some papers in his hand. He did not pass Mike unnoticed this time, as on the previous day, but on the contrary turned round and gave him a most impertinent stare, then deliberately put the documents in his pocket, and stared again, this time with a sardonic grin on his ill-favored countenance.

After a moment's conversation with his principal, the clerk told Mr. Blake he might walk in. When Mike entered, Mr. Clipper was standing with his back to the door, in the act of arranging some papers; he did not alter his position, but merely bowed over his shoulder, and continued his survey of the bundle he held in his hand, while he addressed Mike without looking at him.

"Well, Mr. Blake, I hope Colonel Blake is well, and that he has not taken the death of his nephew too much to heart. Those things must be expected, sir, and I was happy to hear at the 'Castle' that the young man behaved most gallantly. I did expect a letter from the Colonel concerning Lieutenant Bingham's affairs before this; perhaps you have one for me?"

Mike informed him that he had come specially on that very account, because Colonel Blake's state of health neither permitted him to write nor to make the journey.

"That, sir," rejoined Mr. Clipper, "is very unfortunate, for business can always be transacted more conveniently with principals than with any one else; and I'm very sorry to say," he added, "that there seems but little reason to hope that Lieutenant Bingham has made a will, unless he may have had it drawn at

some other office, and lodged it either there or with his uncle."

"But that, I suppose," said Mike, "can be of little consequence, as, of course, his sister inherits."

Mr. Clipper laid aside the papers—sat down—prayed Mike, who still remained standing, to follow his example—raised his spectacles to his forehead—and said, in a mysterious and rather melancholy manner—

"Not a matter of course at all, sir; in fact, I fear greatly that it is quite otherwise, and that if the necessary precautions were not taken, namely—to have the young man levy fines and suffer recovery, when he came of age, and make a will afterwards—it is but too probable that the estate may pass to his next male heir. I should have been consulted on this subject. A small expense, sir, sometimes saves great disappointments, and if the sheep be lost for the hap'orth of tar, those only have themselves to blame who neglected to take the necessary precautions."

Mike was completely dumfounded.

"Nonsense, Mr. Clipper; that can't be."

"Perhaps not, sir; you may know the law better than I do; I can only tell you that 'the opposite party' are quite alive, and are determined, as I am informed, to prosecute their claims. Will you be so good as to write by this night's post, sir, to Colonel Blake, and ascertain the facts, and call on me some day next week, after you have received his answer? Until then there is no use in my seeing you."

The magnate touched his bell—a clerk appeared—"Is Mr.—come?"

"Yes, sir."

"Show him in," and Mike was bowed out, without getting time to make the slightest observation. He wrote as directed, and after a week's delay received a reply, announcing that no steps of any kind whatever had been taken by the deceased young man to cut off the entail, and that no will was forthcoming. With a heavy heart Mike again proceeded to the attorney's office; again he found Fincher there, standing in the doorway of the private office, in conversation with Mr. Clipper. Having his back to the outer office he did not see him enter.

"Well, then, I shall send the notice to you to-day, and you may admit service; that will facilitate matters, and you can afterwards send it to old Blake."

As he closed the door to depart, Mike confronted him, but Fincher passed on without so much as looking at him. Mike's blood boiled; he asked no questions—was his own usher—and walked straight into the august presence of the man of law, who bowed formally, and requested him to be seated.

"Well, sir, I suppose you have heard from Colonel Blake?"

"Yes, here is his letter." The attorney glanced his eyes over it—

"Well, sir, it is very unfortunate—most unfortunate. It only shows what calamities people bring on themselves by neglecting to consult those who are capable of giving them sound advice. I fear, sir, there is little doubt that the estate is lost; in fact, the adverse party is quite on the high-horse. His solicitor has just left, after announcing his determination to take proceedings."

"Mr. Fincher, I suppose, I met him."

"Yes; do you know Mr. Fincher? Ah, to be sure, I suppose you do. A rising man that—a lucky fellow. You have heard, no doubt, of the splendid match he is about to make with Miss Martin, the heiress of the immense Castlemore estates?" Mike made no reply, but he could not conceal his surprise and mortification. "Yes," continued Clipper, "Fincher will get at least eight thousand a year, and lots of ready money by his wife, who has absolute power to dispose of all she likes. The match was made by his uncle Blatherwell, who will, no doubt, take care that it is properly settled on his nephew. Yes, sir, Mr. Fincher is the opposite solicitor, and very fortunate it is to have so respectable a person employed against me. He is sure to do things in the most gentlemanly manner, so long as he continues to act professionally, which, I suppose will now be but a very short time."

"You make a very wrong estimate of Fincher's character," rejoined Mike, now fairly roused. "I know him to be a coward, and I believe him to be a knave."

"Mr. Blake," interrupted Clipper, your language, if reported, would be actionable. You are safe, of course, with me, but I don't like to hear an absent friend maligned, and therefore, sir, we will change the conversation; if you please, let us return to business."

Mike was about to give him a further spice of his mind, but the communication which Mr. Clipper proceeded to make turned the current of his thoughts into quite another channel.

"If, sir," continued the attorney, "the loss of the estate were all, it would be less matter, for what one never had, one never loses; but the fact is, that if the estate does go (and I say, does go, without in any way committing my own opinion on the subject), Colonel Blake loses at least £15,000 in addition; and the inheritor will receive it, not owing one shilling."

Mike remained silent with astonishment.

"You are aware, sir, I suppose, that Colonel Blake has directed me, at various times, to pay off certain mortgages, affecting or supposed to affect Mr. Bingham's estate, in order to prevent its being put into Chancery during his minority. This, of course, I did, according to instructions, although I repeatedly warned my client at the time of the danger he incurred. Paying off incumbrances, sir, unless they are first declared to be valid, and well charged by the decree of an Equity Court, is a very ticklish proceeding, as the result in this particular case will, I fear, show. The fact is, sir, (and Mr. Clipper dared not look up as he said it), "that as I before remarked, if the estate goes, the money goes with it. The mortgages were not properly recharged; and this again shows 'that to be penny wise is often to be pound foolish.' Colonel Blake would take no step to protect himself until his nephew came of age, and was not determined to do so even then. 'Mr. Bingham would,' he said, 'inherit both properties, and what use could there be in encumbering one of the debts paid by the other?' I told him things might unexpectedly turn out disagreeably, and now my prognostications are but too likely to be verified."

Mike was too much occupied by his own thoughts and too ignorant of the merits of the case, to interrupt him.

"It's a noble property," he continued, "and would be ample security for three times such a debt, were it properly charged. It will be very painful to me, sir, to apply to Colonel Blake on this subject; but you know that 'self-preservation is the first law of nature,' and it would be absolutely criminal in me—indeed it would be a positive injustice to my family—to risk the loss of so large a sum; so that I must request the Colonel to make arrangements for giving me suitable security. Security, sir, is all I require, for I should be unwilling to inconvenience so old a friend, with whom I have been on such terms of intimacy all my life."

Mike was ready to explode. The fellow was a tall chandler's son, in a village near Dunseverick, and had never been received there except on business. He restrained himself, however, for, although rash in his own affairs, he could suffer martyrdom for the interests of others.

"And I know," proceeded the "limb of the law," "that ready money is not now to be expected. Will you have the kindness to take the document home with you and show it to the 'Colonel'? And as you seem to be in his confidence, just say that it will oblige me if he lets me hear from him on the subject as soon as possible. The matter should be settled before the threatened proceedings are commenced. There is another paper, too, which you might as well take him; it is a notice served by the plaintiff in the suit."

Mike jumped from his chair.

"I will do no such thing, sir. Do you presume to make me the bearer of your wife's—your 'lamb baillif'? By—(raising his oaken stick, which was no trifle, for one pin's point I wouldn't leave a whole bone in your carcass."

Mr. Clipper rang his bell violently, and shouted "Murder." The clerks from the outer office rushed in, but Mike had in the meantime resumed his self-control.

"There is no occasion to ring your bell, sir; I have not the least notion of molesting you; but I won't deliver your papers; and if Colonel Blake takes my advice, he'll neither leave his business in your hands nor himself in your power."

He stalked from the office and banged the door after him with a crash that shook the whole house.

That night's post carried a letter from Clipper to Colonel Blake, formally apprising him of the steps about to be taken by Harry Bingham next heir male to obtain possession of the property, and informing him that it was now full time that the moneys advanced by himself in part payment of the debts of that estate should be either refunded or secured. There was no security for this money, as his client must be aware, but his own letters, and as the sum was large "and must be met," he requested that the affair should be at once wound up. He regretted that Colonel Blake had not communicated with himself directly, as he used to do; but that, instead of doing so, he had sent a person who not only insulted, but would have assaulted him, were it not for the interference of his clerks. He suggested that when confidence appeared in the client, it was better to should part; and concluded by requesting that the Colonel would appoint some one else to manage his estate and conduct his law business, as he did not wish to expose himself to further insult by continuing in the employment.

Mike also wrote, giving his version of the affair, and stating that he should set out for home the next day, as his continued stay in Dublin could be of no possible service.

The Colonel threw Clipper's letter aside after he had read it. He had no particular interest in that person, and felt no regret at being obliged to change his man of business. It struck him as being very odd indeed, that an estate should not be liable to the debts which had been paid for it, and he was by no means disposed to submit quietly to such a decision. He, therefore, merely wrote in reply, expressing regret at the communication which he had received, and stating that he should comply with Mr. Clipper's request as quickly as possible.

Mike's arrival afforded great comfort to his relative. From his long absence and retired habits, Colonel Blake had no intimate friends in his own neighborhood. Unaccustomed to business, and particularly unacquainted with law; there was no one to whom he could apply for advice on his private affairs; but his kinsman; and although Mike had been provident and unfortunate himself—like many persons who have failed in life—he was considered capable of giving sound advice to others. It struck the Colonel that, in the new arrangements, the management of the estate might safely be confided to him, for the duty of an agent at that time was confined to the letting of land and receipt of rent, and those duties Mike was perfectly competent to perform. By this means a respectable and lucrative occupation would be provided for Mike, and his constant residence at the 'Castle' would be secured. It was now particularly irksome to the 'Colonel to receive strangers, and it was indispensable for his comfort that he should have some one near him who would serve as a connecting link with the outer world, with which he was more than ever disinclined to hold any direct communication.

The proposal was gratefully accepted by Mike, who, poor fellow, having acquired experience too late, began to feel the unpleasantness of being a dependent; not that he perceived any falling off in the attentions of his friends, nor diminution of their hospitalities, but he had lived long enough to repent the consequences of past indiscretions and to ambition an independence acquired by his own honest exertions. He was no fool, but only the victim of the vicious system which prevailed in his youth, and was rather to be pitied for the false position in which he was placed on entering life than condemned for yielding to the temptations which surrounded him and following the example of the thoughtless and pleasure-seeking class amongst whom his lot was cast.

The day of his public appointment to the agency was a happy one on the entire estate, and when night came the mountain sides were illuminated by bonfires. The poor tenantry considered it a blessing to be released from the grinding oppression of the attorney, and their delight was unbounded at "getting under a real gentleman, and one of their own fine old stock."

When the intelligence of this event reached Mr. Clipper, he became more formally important; had a regular specification of his claims served upon Colonel Blake, accompanied by a notice that if they were not satisfied or arranged before a certain day legal proceedings would be had recourse to for the purpose of forcing their liquidation. A private letter, forwarded by post, expressed the regret Mr. Clipper felt at being obliged to adopt such a course, and requested that, as Colonel Blake had appointed a land agent, he would without delay appoint a law one. A bill, Bingham a Bingham, had been that day filed, and as proceedings were about to be vigorously pushed, it would be necessary to have some solicitor to look after the defendant's interests, for whom he could not therefore be in anywise concerned. He further suggested that some person should be deputed to settle his accounts as land agent, to whom he might surrender his books when a final

arrangement was made; but he positively declined holding communication on this or any other subject with Mr. Michael Blake.

In those days people expected that the legal gentlemen employed in the conduct of a suit should fully identify themselves with the feelings of their clients. They were never looked upon as competent to defend the rights unless they proved their sincerity by being prepared personally to resent the injuries inflicted upon their employers; and the attorney or barrister who was not always ready to counterbalance a check in the court by a shot in the "fifteen acres" was at once suspected of "selling the cause" and sacrificing the interests of those who placed confidence in his honesty. The first consideration which then generally influenced a litigant in selecting a solicitor was the existing state of feeling between the person pitched upon and his legal opponent on the opposite side. It was considered sound policy that they should if possible be the most determined personal enemies, and no one felt more convinced of the absolute necessity of adhering strictly to this well-established rule than Master Mike. As the Colonel had no predilection for any member of the profession, the appointment rested in his hands, and as might be expected, he engaged a gentleman more remarkable for his pugnacious capabilities than for his legal lore. Mr. Pepper had been imprisoned some months for flogging Mr. Clipper at a contested election—this was one qualification; he was at daggers drawn with Mr. Fincher—that constituted a second; and from those antecedents, Mike sagely concluded that there need be no apprehension of a compromise and no danger of a "sell."

Mr. Pepper, of course, scouted the idea of Mr. Clipper's being able to substantiate his demands, open war was declared, and Colonel Blake found himself involved in a Chancery suit as guardian of his niece, in whose failure or success his own interests were seriously involved, and in common law proceedings on his own account.

During his employer's absence, Clipper had instituted proceedings of all kinds to harass the tenantry, on pretence of maintaining royalties, which could never be of the slightest value to the owner in fee, and thus, in his double capacity as solicitor and land agent, had robbed the landlord and ruined the occupier. His bills of costs under those heads were taxed after a fearful contest between the attorneys, and Mike was quite charmed with matters as far as they had yet proceeded. Nothing could be more commendable than Mr. Pepper's conduct. He had thrice during the conflict given the lie direct to Clipper, without, as he triumphantly remarked, "putting a tooth in it," and at length became so violent in his demeanor that it was considered necessary to bind him over to keep the peace. It not possibly be doubted after such a decided exhibition of his feelings, and when unable to succeed in reducing the amount of his opponent's claims to anything like the extent he had anticipated and promised, he assured Mike, to his great comfort, that his failure was not of the slightest consequence, as they were then only battling the amount of costs, which he was sure to get rid of altogether by proceedings in equity, as all the suits for which they were incurred had been unwarrantably undertaken.

CHAPTER VII.

When the elder Martin died suddenly soon after his son's execution, the estate passed to a cousin, then far advanced in life. The person who so unexpectedly inherited had squandered his paternal property in the dissipation of a fashionable life, and when quite cleaned out had married a widow with a well-paid jointure of six hundred a year. The honeymoon was scarcely over before the lady's income was disposed of to relieve the household furniture from an execution laid on by one of her husband's creditors. As Mr. Richard Martin formed the connection from mercenary motives, and his wife found herself despoiled to liquidate debts which she had had no hand in contracting, it may be easily supposed that the "monage" was not a happy one. When good luck did arrive, it helped not to allay the family dissensions. The husband consoled himself in the enjoyment of the pleasures which his newly-acquired wealth enabled him to indulge in. He rarely stayed at home, while the wife remained altogether at Castlemore, her only society being a son by her former marriage, then about fifteen years of age. They had not, however, been a second year in possession of the estate when the exulting lady announced to her liege lord that she found herself in an interesting condition. To a person of his selfish disposition this communication afforded no extraordinary pleasure. He had already all he cared for in life—abundance of money to gratify his tastes and appetites. He professed no affection for his wife, and was indifferent as to who might be his successor. It was only when subsequently apprised by letter that the certainty of having a family was now fully confirmed, that the old gentleman began to evince any particular interest in the matter. He then formally proclaimed the anticipated event at his club, and seemed gratified at being quizzed on the subject by his companions during their nocturnal reveries. It was not until he received intelligence of the birth of a daughter that he considered it necessary to set out for home, where the young heiress was duly presented to paternal embrace. After a few months, the happy father died of leaving in the stomach at "Daly's Clubhouse," and the widow easily reconciled to his loss.

The infant was at once made a ward of Chancery, the mother being allowed the house and demesne, together with a handsome provision for its maintenance, which constituted her chief means of support, for less than one-third of her first jointure now remained; no settlement had been made at her second marriage, because her husband had then nothing to settle upon her, and the suddenness of his death, or disinclination, prevented his taking the necessary steps to rectify the omission, when he possessed the means of doing so.

Mrs. Martin, therefore, in a worldly point of view, had gained nothing, but a loss, by what turned out to be a splendid alliance. So long as she continued to be entrusted with the personal guardianship of her daughter, all would be well, for the allowance she received was most liberal; but should the young lady marry, the mother would be suddenly reduced from affluence to comparative poverty; and this, to a woman of expensive habits, was by no means a satisfactory or pleasing prospect; she therefore early determined that the heiress should not form any matrimonial connection during her minority, if she could help it; and she hoped that filial affection, together with the ascendancy which she expected to attain, would induce her daughter, when she came of age, to make a suitable addition to her income. As the heiress advanced in years, she became more and more unamiable, her personal appearance grew less attractive—and her guardian's influence over her gradually decreased; she soon acquired a knowledge of her own importance, and was not slow in taking advantage of it. She made the concession of a settlement, when she could attain her majority, wholly dependent on a complete acquiescence in her wishes while she remained a minor; and caused serious apprehensions in her

mother's mind that, notwithstanding a strictly domestic education, and the studied care taken to exclude all suitable male society from the house, she might follow her own inclinations, and escape from her tutelage before the object her guardian had in view could be attained. It happened that Mr. Fincher having been professionally concerned for Mrs. Martin in some small matter at the Quarter Sessions, where the family solicitor would have considered it a degradation to attend, had come to Castlemore to render an account of his proceedings, and willingly accepted an invitation to remain for dinner; being the only gentleman the heiress had been allowed to come in contact with, he, without suspecting his good fortune, made a deep impression on her very susceptible imagination. The young lady, however, determined that she should remain long in ignorance of her feelings towards him; she contrived to establish a private correspondence, which was regularly carried on, notwithstanding the mother's vigilance, until Fincher succeeded in entrapping her into a clandestine marriage. Having so far secured the prize, he had no objection to humor his wife's fancies, and becoming acquainted with her desire to live in Dublin, and with her mother's opposition and designs, he urged his better-half to persevere in her demand, hoping that Mrs. Martin's fear of consequences would induce her to resist, and that ill-feeling being thus generated between them, his future income might remain undisturbed, without the necessity of any open interference on his part. Meanwhile, he took every precaution to conceal his connection with the heiress, for an application to the Chancellor, before she came of age, would not only have subjected the husband to pains and penalties, but worse still, would have released the lady from her engagement, and left her hand again at her own disposal. Fincher, too, had another motive for giving such counsel; he had already become in some degree acquainted with the unrestrained violence of his wife's disposition, and dreaded leaving her exposed to temptation, in a position where she could exercise no control; he feared her inconstancy, well knowing that his matrimonial claims were legally untenable, and he wished her to reside in town, where she would be surer, rounded by his friends (for his uncle, Mr. Blatherwell, had long been Mrs. Martin's legal adviser), and where he would find more constant opportunities of holding intercourse with her.

Mrs. Martin's rage and disappointment may be imagined, when on the very day she was discharged from the control of the Chancellor, her daughter announced her determination legally to confirm a connection which she had already privately formed. The mother's first less opposition was made a pretext for seeking the additional settlement, and breaking off all future intercourse between them. Immediately after the publication of the marriage, Fincher was appointed to the commission of the peace, and named high sheriff of the county. Captain O'Mahoney's trick nearly upset all his designs, but having been recognized by an officer in the ship, to which he was transferred from the tender, Fincher was quickly set at liberty; and, supposing that the Captain would observe silence on the subject, for fear of consequences, he determined to let the matter pass unnoticed on that part. But Mrs. Richard Martin was not to be so easily disposed of. She proposed to, and when they were rejected, wrote both to Fincher and his uncle Blatherwell, threatening some terrible disclosures. She had letters delivered by her son, the day previous to the marriage of her daughter, and concluded by stating in legal phraseology, that they were now purchasers with notice. The contents of those mysterious communications produced a very unpleasant effect upon the parties to whom they were addressed; let was now too late to hesitate; and well knowing that any vacillation on his part would only increase his mother-in-law's pretensions, Fincher set her at defiance. Fortune seemed to smile on the rising man; disappointment and mortification produced a fever, which terminated fatally, and released him most seasonably from all further apprehensions on Mr. Martin's account.

Mr. Blatherwell, the eminent barrister, Fincher's uncle being an attentive and a coruscant frequenter of church, contrived to simulate himself into the graces of some persons of rank, who were charmed by the purity of his life, and the unbending sternness of his political principles; yet under the garb of meek humility, the lawyer concealed an arrogant and aspiring disposition; he possessed no remarkable abilities, but he had indomitable perseverance, and understood the science of "boozing" to perfection; independent private circumstances enabled him to play his own card; to join an aristocratic connection was the first object of his solicitude, and he clearly perceived that his best chance of success lay in making his approach to those he sought after, by the "covert way" of religion. His sons and daughters were good-looking; and as he already possessed wealth, he now ambitious station; he, therefore, when his children arrived at a presentable age, and he felt himself fully enabled to launch into the necessary expenses, commenced operations in a most strategical manner. There was no church to be endowed—no mission to be supported—no political act of his party to be sustained—that his hand was not open, and his money expended with liberality. It was always, too, an additional cause of admiration in the eyes of his patrons, that he invariably divided the merit derived from those good acts with his family. It was said to be "touching" to see his children introduced on every possible occasion; it was at once a proof of his paternal love, and of his desire to set an example by which others might profit. No old lady took up a morning paper without scanning the long list of Blatherwells appended to each charitable announcement—until at length their names became familiar to the public, and were stereotyped by the newspaper people as a permanent source of annual profit.

Mr. Blatherwell had attained the rank of K. C.; and the "silk gown" communicated additional humility and unction to his manner; but he felt that his exertions and his expenditures had been, as yet, at least, all but fruitless; he was asked to do a good deal, and mixed with in the religious society of the class with which he desired to be identified; but somehow or other his family were not treated with the same attention. He was, however, too good a tactician to relinquish the advantages already obtained, and too persevering a man to abandon all hope of ultimate success; he therefore early determined that the heiress should not form any matrimonial connection during her minority, if she could help it; and she hoped that filial affection, together with the ascendancy which she expected to attain, would induce her daughter, when she came of age, to make a suitable addition to her income. As the heiress advanced in years, she became more and more unamiable, her personal appearance grew less attractive—and her guardian's influence over her gradually decreased; she soon acquired a knowledge of her own importance, and was not slow in taking advantage of it. She made the concession of a settlement, when she could attain her majority, wholly dependent on a complete acquiescence in her wishes while she remained a minor; and caused serious apprehensions in her

papers while preparing to go to circuit.