

"WEARING OF THE GREEN."

"So you are really going to Ireland, old fellow, and at such a time?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Look out for the Fenians! See that they don't capture you, and keep you as a British hostage."

"Stuff! There are no Fenians."

"Oh aren't there, though! Yes, by St. Patrick, and Fenianesses too—just ask Gerald Barrymore!"

"Why, I am going over to Gerald Barrymore. I am going to spend the time with him, hunt and course and fish, and all the rest of it."

"Well, he says there are Fenians no end."

"Don't believe a word of it, although I am sure he thinks it if he says so. There isn't pluck enough in the population to make anything like a formidable movement of any kind. I'll undertake to rout any band of Fenians that may come in my way with this cane."

"Misguided young man, farewell! If you should fall a victim to your rashness, I'll write your epitaph!"

"Thank you, my dear fellow! That is indeed adding a new terror to death. It will make me doubly careful of my precious existence!"

So the two friends parted, smiling. This dialogue took place one soft bright day of late autumn in the pleasant Temple Gardens, in the heart of London—the Temple Gardens of York and Lancaster, and the Red and White Roses; of Addison, Steele and Sir Roger de Coverley; of Ruth, Pecksniff, and Tom Pinch; of Arthur Pendeunis and Stunning Warrington.

The two friends who thus talked and parted were Tom Gibbs and Laurence Spalding. Both were young barristers; both were as yet briefless; both were writers for newspapers and magazines; both were distinguished and active members of the Inns of Court Volunteer Corps, familiarly known as the "Devil's own."

Laurence Spalding was a tall athletic young fellow, who delighted in the drilling and the rifle-shooting, and the privilege—new, strange and dear to young lawyers—of wearing the mous-tache. He it was who, on the eve of a visit to Ireland, was speaking scorn of Fenianism, and the natives of Ireland generally. He had never been in Ireland; and this was just the time when the air was rife with rumours of projected Fenian insurrection, and before any actual rising had taken place to divulge the real proportions of Fenianism's military strength. Laurence Spalding was to be a guest of his old chum and fellow-student, Gerald Barrymore, a young Irishman who had eaten his way to the English bar, and hoped to distinguish himself there, although, unlike most of his compatriots, he was heir to some property in Ireland which was actually unencumbered. Spalding was longing to see Ireland; longing to enjoy his friend's hospitality; longing to be introduced to his friend's beautiful sister, of whom he had heard so much.

Barrymore was going over to Ireland that night. Laurence was to follow in two or three days. Barrymore was to meet him in Dublin, and show him over the city; then they were to go on together to Barrymore's home in a mountainous, sea-washed, south-western county. The railway would only carry them a certain way; the rest of the journey must be made by carriage or on horseback over mountain roads.

Now it so happened that Tom Gibbs, who was a good deal of a chatterbox and a little of a mischief-maker, met Gerald Barrymore half an hour after the conversation just reported, and told him with perhaps some flourish and embellishment, what Laurence had been saying about Fenianism and the dangers of Irish rebellion. Barrymore's cheek reddened. He was, like most Irishmen, rather sensitive of ridicule; and, moreover, although a loyal British subject, he had been descanting somewhat largely at the dinner in the Temple Hall on the formidable nature of the Fenian movement. So he felt a good deal annoyed for the moment at what Gibbs told him; but his manly good nature presently returned, and he resolved to think no more about it. Unluckily, however, when he got to his Irish home, he told his sister something of the story, and that young lady's pretty cheek and bright eye glowed with pique and resentment.

Grace Barrymore was a bright, animated, beautiful girl, with a noble queenly figure and curling fair hair. She was highly educated, had lived in France and Italy, had all the culture of an Englishwoman of the best class, and yet retained an exquisite flavour of her own racy nationality. She was a motherless girl, and she ruled her father and the estate and the tenantry, and the whole district generally. Like many other true-hearted Irishwomen who have seen other countries besides their own, she scolded her compatriots a good deal for their own benefit, but would not hear a word said against them by a foreigner, especially a Saxon. She was always warning all the "boys" of the place against mixing themselves up with the dangerous follies of Fenianism; and she did not at present know of the existence of a single Fenian in the neighbourhood; but she clenched her little fist, and bit her red lip, and mentally vowed vengeance when she heard that a young Englishman had dared to sneer at the courage of Fenianism and the danger of Irish insurrection.

Two or three days passed away, and Laurence Spalding landed for the first time at Kingston, the port of Dublin, where his friend Barrymore received him. They spent two or three other days very joyously in the pleasant city. Everywhere they heard talk of Fenianism, and expected "risings" of the most dreadful kind, having for their object the overthrow of throne, church, altar, private property, and everything else that respectable persons hold sacred. Gerald Barrymore shook his head gravely; Laurence Spalding laughed loudly.

"Laurence, my dear fellow, I do wish I had been more fortunate in choosing my time to bring you over here. Down in my neighbourhood they say things are beginning to look very bad."

Laurence only laughed again, and wondered at the credulity of his friend. Laurence was one of that class of Englishmen who never believe in anything unusual until they see it; who ride out beyond bounds in Naples and Sicily, scoffing at stories of brigandism, and get taken by brigands; who ramble heedless outside the lines of camps; and bathe in shoal water where sharks are said to abound, and do other such deeds of blunt bold scepticism.

The two friends went by the railway as far as they could go. Then a carriage met them, and they prepared for a journey which Spalding was given to understand would last a couple of days. The carriage had a pair of strong sinewy horses. The driver and the postillion were both armed with pistols. Gerald Barrymore deposited pistols in the carriage holsters.

"I wish we were safe at home, Masther Gerald," observed the driver.

"So do I, Tim. How are things looking just now?"

"Terrible bad, Masther Gerald!"

"Thru for you, boy!" growled the postillion, in assent.

"The whole side of the country is up, I'm tould," said the driver.

"More power to 'em!" growled the postillion.

"What nonsense!" laughed Laurence, and he turned to Barrymore. "Do you really believe such talk as this?"

"My dear Spalding, you don't know anything of this country. I only hope you may not be compelled to learn by disagreeable experience."

Laurence shrugged his shoulders. His friend was evidently not amenable to reason on this subject, which Laurence had settled beforehand by process of intuition—the best possible way of dealing with difficult political and national questions.

They drove on for some hours, Spalding and Barrymore smoking and pleasantly chatting, although Barrymore was continually casting anxious glances on either side of the road, and every now and then examining his pistols. At last they came into a dark and gloomy defile—a narrow gorge almost as wild as an Alpine pass, and which seemed to stretch on for miles.

"If we were through this," said Barrymore, in a low tone, as if speaking to himself, "I think we should be safe for this day."

"Are there highway robbers about?" asked Spalding.

"Highway robbers here? Oh no!"

"What else, then?"

"The Fenians!" said Gerald, in a low and solemn voice.

Laurence threw himself back in the carriage and quietly laughed.