

***CHARLES
JAMES LEVER***



***LUTTRELL
OF ARRAN***

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EAN 8596547226703

DigiCat, 2022

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CHAPTER I. A WILD LANDSCAPE

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“One half the world knows not how the other half lives,” says the adage; and there is a peculiar force in the maxim when applied to certain remote and little-visited districts in these islands, where the people are about as unknown to us as though they inhabited some lonely rock in the South Pacific.

While the great world, not very far off, busies itself with all the appliances of state and science, amusing its leisure by problems which, once on a time, would have been reserved for the studies of philosophers and sages, these poor creatures drag on an existence rather beneath than above the habits of savage life. Their dwellings, their food, their clothes, such as generations of their fathers possessed; and neither in their culture, their aspirations, nor their ways, advanced beyond what centuries back had seen them.

Of that group of islands off the north-west coast of Ireland called the Arrans, Innishmore is a striking instance of this neglect and desolation. Probably within the wide sweep of the British islands there could not be found a spot more irretrievably given up to poverty and barbarism. Some circular mud hovels, shaped like beehives, and with a central aperture for the escape of the smoke, are the dwellings of an almost naked, famine-stricken people, whose looks, language, and gestures mark them out for foreigners if they chance to come over to the mainland. Deriving their scanty subsistence almost entirely from

fishing and kelp-burning, they depend for life upon the chances of the seasons, in a spot where storms are all but perpetual, and where a day of comparative calm is a rare event.

Curious enough it is to mark that in this wild, ungenial spot civilisation had once set foot, and some Christian pilgrims found a resting-place. There is no certain record of whence or how they first came, but the Abbey of St. Finbar dates from an early century, and the strong walls yet attest the size and proportions of the ancient monastery. Something like forty years ago the islanders learned that the owner of the island, of whose existence they then heard for the first time, proposed to come over and live there, and soon afterwards a few workmen arrived, and, in some weeks, converted the old crypt of the Abbey into something habitable, adding two small chambers to it, and building a chimney—a work of art—which, whether meant for defence or some religious object, was, during its construction, a much-debated question by the people. The intention to resume a sovereignty which had lain so long in abeyance would have been a bold measure in such a spot if it had not been preceded by the assurance that the chief meant to disturb nothing, dispute nothing of vested interests. They were told that he who was coming was a man weary of the world and its ways, who desired simply a spot of earth where he might live in peace, and where, dying, he might leave his bones with the Luttrells, whose graves for generations back thronged the narrow aisle of the church. These facts, and that he had a sickly wife and one child, a boy of a few years old, were all that they knew of him. If the

bare idea of a superior was distasteful in a community where common misery had taught brotherhood, the notion was dispelled at sight of the sad, sorrow-stricken man who landed on an evening of September, and walked from the boat through the surf beside his wife, as two sailors carried her to shore. He held his little boy's hand, refusing the many offers that were made to carry him, though the foaming water surged at times above the little fellow's waist, and made him plunge with childish glee and laughter; that infant courage and light-heartedness going farther into the hearts of the wild people than if the father had come to greet them with costly presents!

John Luttrell was not above six-and-thirty, but he looked fifty; his hair was perfectly white, his blue eyes dimmed and circled with dark wrinkles, his shoulders stooped, and his look downcast. Of his wife it could be seen that she had once been handsome, but her wasted figure and incessant cough showed she was in the last stage of consumption. The child was a picture of infantile beauty, and that daring boldness which sits so gracefully on childhood. If he was dressed in the very cheapest and least costly fashion, to the islanders he seemed attired in very splendour, and his jacket of dark crimson cloth and a little feather that he wore in his cap sufficed to win for him the name of the Prince, which he never lost afterward.

It could not be supposed that such an advent would not create a great stir and commotion in the little colony; the ways, the looks, the demeanour, and the requirements of the new comers, furnishing for weeks, and even months, topics for conversation; but gradually this wore itself out.

Molly Ryan, the one sole domestic servant who accompanied the Luttrells, being of an uncommunicative temper, contributed no anecdotic details of in-door life to stimulate interest and keep curiosity alive. All that they knew of Luttrell was to meet him in his walks, and receive the short, not over-courteous nod with which he acknowledged their salutations. Of his wife, they only saw the wasted form that half lay, half sat at a window; so that all their thoughts were centred in the child-the Prince—who came familiarly amongst them, uncared for and unheeded by his own, and free to pass his days with the other children as they heaped wood upon the kelp fires, or helped the fishermen to dry their nets upon the shore. In the innocence of their primitive life this familiarity did not trench upon the respect they felt they owed him. They did not regard his presence as anything like condescension, they could not think of it as derogation, but they felt throughout that he was not one of them, and his golden hair and his tiny hands and feet were as unmistakable marks of station as though he wore a coronet or carried a sceptre.

The unbroken melancholy that seemed to mark Luttrell's life, his un-communicativeness, his want of interest or sympathy in all that went on around him, would have inspired, by themselves, a sense of fear amongst the people; but to these traits were added others that seemed to augment this terror. His days were passed in search of relics and antiquarian objects, of which the Abbey possessed a rich store, and to their simple intelligence these things smacked of magic. To hear the clink of his spade within the walls of the old church by day, and to see the

lone light in his chamber, where it was rumoured he sat sleepless throughout the night, were always enough to exact a paternoster and a benediction from the peasant, whose whole religious training began and ended with these offices.

Nor was the child destined to escape the influence of this popular impression. He was rarely at home, and, when there, scarcely noticed or spoken to. His poor sick mother would draw him to her heart, and as she pressed his golden locks close to her, her tears would fall fast upon them, but dreading lest her sorrow should throw a shade over his sunny happiness, she would try to engage him in some out-of-door pursuit again—send him off to ask if the fishermen had taken a full haul, or when some one's new boat would be ready for launching.

Of the room in which the recluse sat, and wherein he alone ever entered, a chance peep through the ivy-covered casement offered nothing very reassuring. It was a narrow, lofty chamber, with a groined roof and a flagged floor, formed of ancient gravestones, the sculptured sides downwards. Two large stuffed seals sat guardwise on either side of the fireplace, over which, on a bracket, was an enormous human skull, an inscription being attached to it, with the reasons for believing its size to be gigantic rather than the consequences of diseased growth. Strange-shaped bones, and arrow-heads, and stone spears and javelins decorated the walls, with amber ornaments and clasps of metal. A massive font served as a washstand, and a broken stone cross formed a coat-rack. In one corner, enclosed by two planks, stood an humble bed, and opposite the fire was

the only chair in the chamber—a rude contrivance, fashioned from a root of bog-oak, black with centuries of interment.

It was late at night that Luttrell sat here, reading an old volume, whose parchment cover was stained and discoloured by time. The window was open, and offered a wide view over the sea, on which a faint moonlight shone out at times, and whose dull surging plash broke with a uniform measure on the shore beneath.

Twice had he laid down his book, and, opening the door, stood to listen for a moment, and then resumed his reading; but it was easy to see that the pages did not engage his attention, nor was he able, as he sought, to find occupation in their contents.

At last there came a gentle tap to the door; he arose and opened it. It was the woman-servant who formed his household, who stood tearful and trembling before him.

“Well?” said he, in some emotion.

“Father Lowrie is come,” said she, timidly.

He only nodded, as though to say, “Go on.”

“And he’ll give her the rights,” continued she; “but he says he hopes that you’ll come over to Belmullet on Sunday, and declare at the altar how it was.”

“Declare what?” cried he; and his voice rose to a key of passionate eagerness that was almost a shriek. “Declare what?”

“He means, that you’ll tell the people——”

“Send him here to me,” broke in Luttrell, angrily. “I’m not going to discuss this with you.”

“Sure isn’t he giving her the blessed Sacrament!” said she, indignantly.

“Leave me, then—leave me in peace,” said he, as he turned away and leaned his head on the chimney-piece; and then, without raising it, added, “and tell the priest to come to me before he goes away.”

The woman had not gone many minutes, when a heavy step approached the door, and a strong knock was heard. “Come in!” cried Luttrell, and there entered a short, slightly-made man, middle-aged and active-looking, with bright black eyes, and a tall, straight forehead, to whom Luttrell motioned the only chair as he came forward.

“It’s all over, Sir. She’s in glory!” said he, reverently.

“Without pain?” asked Luttrell.

“A parting pang—no more. She was calm to the last. Indeed, her last words were to repeat what she had pressed so often upon me.”

“I know—I know!” broke in Luttrell, impatiently. “I never denied it.”

“True, Sir; but you never acknowledged it,” said the priest, hardily. “When you had the courage to make a peasant girl your wife, you ought to have had the courage to declare it also.”

“To have taken her to the Court, I hope—to have presented her to Royalty—to have paraded my shame and my folly before a world whose best kindness was that it forgot me! Look here, Sir; my wife was brought up a Catholic; I never interfered with her convictions. If I never spoke to her on the subject of her faith, it was no small concession from a man who felt on the matter as I did. I

sent for you to administer to her the rights of her Church, but not to lecture me on my duties or my obligations. What I ought to do, and when, I have not to learn from a Roman Catholic priest."

"And yet, Sir, it is a Catholic priest will force you to do it. There was no stain on your wife's fame, and there shall be none upon her memory."

"What is the amount of my debt to you, Father Lowrie?" asked Luttrell, calmly and even courteously.

"Nothing, Sir; not a farthing. Her father was a good friend to me and mine before ruin overtook him. It wasn't for money I came here to-night."

"Then you leave me your debtor, Sir, and against my will."

"But you needn't be, Mr. Luttrell," said the priest, with eagerness. "She that has just gone, begged and prayed me with her last breath to look after her little boy, and to see and watch that he was not brought up in darkness."

"I understand you. You were to bring him into your own fold. If you hope for success for such a scheme, take a likelier moment, father; this is not your time. Leave me now, I pray you. I have much to attend to."

"May I hope to have an early opportunity to see and talk with you, Mr. Luttrell?"

"You shall hear from me, Sir, on the matter, and early," said Luttrell. "Your own good feeling will show this is not the moment to press me."

Abashed by the manner in which these last words were spoken, the father bowed low and withdrew.

“Well?” cried the servant-woman, as he passed out, “will he do it, your reverence?”

“Not to-day, anyhow, Molly,” said he, with a sigh.

How Luttrell sorrowed for the loss of his wife was not known. It was believed that he never passed the threshold of the door where she lay—never went to take one farewell look of her. He sat moodily in his room, going out at times to give certain orders about the funeral, which was to take place on the third day. A messenger had been despatched to his late wife’s relatives, who lived about seventy miles off, down the coast of Mayo, and to invite them to attend. Of her immediate family none remained. Her father was in banishment, the commutation of a sentence of death. Of her two brothers, one had died on the scaffold, and another had escaped to America, whither her three sisters had followed him; so that except her uncle, Peter Hogan, and his family, and a half-brother of her mother’s, a certain Joe Rafter, who kept a shop at Lahinch, there were few to follow her to the grave as mourners.

Peter had four sons and several daughters, three of them married. They were of the class of small farmers, very little above the condition of the cottier; but they were, as a family, a determined, resolute, hard-headed race, not a little dreaded in the neighbourhood where they lived, and well known to be knit together by ties that made an injury to any one of them a feud that the whole family would avenge.

For years and years Luttrell had not seen nor even heard of them. He had a vague recollection of having seen Peter Hogan at his marriage, and once or twice afterwards, but preserved no recollection of him. Nothing short of an

absolute necessity—for as such he felt it—would have induced him to send for them now; but he knew well how rigid were popular prejudices, and how impossible it would have been for him to live amongst a people whose most cherished feelings he would have outraged, had he omitted the accustomed honours to the dead.

He told his servant Molly to do all that was needful on the occasion—to provide for those melancholy festivities which the lower Irish adhere to with a devotion that at once blends their religious ardour with their intensely strong imaginative power.

“There is but one thing I will not bear,” said he. “They must not come in upon me. I will see them when they come, and take leave of them when they go; but they are not to expect me to take any part in their proceedings. Into this room I will suffer none to enter.”

“And Master Harry,” said the woman, wiping her eyes with her apron—“what’s to be done with him? ‘Tis two days that he’s there, and he won’t leave the corpse.”

“It’s a child’s sorrow, and will soon wear itself out.”

“Ay, but it’s killing him!” said she, tenderly—“it’s killing him in the mean while.”

“He belongs to a tough race,” said he, with a bitter smile, “that neither sorrow nor shame ever killed. Leave the boy alone, and he’ll come to himself the sooner.”

The peasant woman felt almost sick in her horror at such a sentiment, and she moved towards the door to pass out.

“Have you thought of everything, Molly?” asked he, more mildly.

"I think so, Sir. There's to be twenty-eight at the wake—twenty-nine, if Mr. Rafter comes; but we don't expect him—and Father Lowrie would make thirty; but we've plenty for them all."

"And when will this—this feasting—take place?"

"The night before the funeral, by coorse," said the woman.

"And they will all leave this the next morning, Molly?"

"Indeed I suppose they will, Sir," said she, no less offended at the doubt than at the inhospitable meanness of the question.

"So be it, then!" said he, with a sigh. "I have nothing more to say."

"You know, Sir," said she, with a great effort at courage, "that they'll expect your Honour will go in for a minute or two—to drink their healths, and say a few words to them?"

He shook his head in dissent, but said nothing.

"The Hogans is as proud a stock as any in Mayo, Sir," said she, eagerly, "and if they thought it was any disrespect to her that was gone——"

"Hold your tongue, woman," cried he, impatiently. "She was my wife, and I know better what becomes her memory than these ignorant peasants. Let there be no more of this;" and he closed the door after her as she went out, and turned the key in it, in token that he would not brook more disturbance.

CHAPTER II. A YACHTING PARTY.

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In a beautiful little bay on the north-east of Innishmore, land-locked on all sides but the entrance, a handsome schooner yacht dropped her anchor just as the sun was setting. Amidst the desolate grandeur of those wild cliffs, against which the sea surged and plashed till the very rocks were smooth worn, that graceful little craft, with her tall and taper spars, and all her trim adjuncts, seemed a strange vision. It was the contrast of civilisation with barbarism; they were the two poles of what are most separated in life—wealth and poverty.

The owner was a Baronet, a certain Sir Gervais Vyner—one of those spoiled children of fortune which England alone rears; for while in other lands high birth and large fortune confer their distinctive advantages, they do not tend, as they do with us, to great social eminence, and even political influence. Vyner had got almost every prize in this world's lottery; all, indeed, but one; his only child was a daughter, and this was the drop that sufficed to turn to bitterness much of that cupful of enjoyment Fate had offered to his lips. He had seen a good deal of life—done a little of everything—on the turf—in the hunting-field—on the floor of the House he had what was called “held his own.” He was, in fact, one of those accomplished, well-mannered, well-looking people, who, so long as not pushed by any inordinate ambition into a position of undue importance, invariably get full credit for all the abilities they possess, and, what is better still, attract no ill will for the possessing

them. As well as having done everything, he had been everywhere: up the Mediterranean, up the Baltic, into the Black Sea, up the St. Lawrence—everywhere but to Ireland—and now, in a dull autumn, when too late for a distant tour, he had induced his friend Grenfell to accompany him in a short cruise, with the distinct pledge that they were not to visit Dublin, or any other of those cognate cities of which Irishmen are vain, but which to Mr. George Grenfell represented all that was an outrage on good taste, and an insult to civilisation. Mr. Grenfell, in one word, entertained for Ireland and the Irish sentiments that wouldn't have been thought very complimentary if applied to Fejee islanders, with certain hopeless forebodings as to the future than even Fejee itself might have resented as unfair.

Nobody knew why these two men were friends, but they were so. They seemed utterly unsuited in every way. Vyner loved travel, incident, adventure, strange lands, and strange people; he liked the very emergencies, the roughings of the road. Grenfell was a Londoner, who only tolerated, and not very patiently, whatever was beyond an easy drive of Hyde Park Corner. Vyner was a man of good birth, and had high connexions on every side—advantages of which he no more dreamed of being vain, than of the air he breathed. Mr. Grenfell was a nobody, with the additional disparagement of being a nobody that every one knew. Grenfell's Italian warehouse, Grenfell's potted meats, his pickled salmon, his caviare, his shrimps, his olives, and his patent macaroni, being European in celebrity, and, though the means by which his father made an enormous fortune, were miseries which poisoned life, rising spectre-like before him on every

dinner-table, and staring at him in great capitals in every supplement of the *Times*. He would have changed his name, but he knew well that it would have availed him nothing. The disguise would only have invited discovery, and the very mention of him exacted the explanation, "No more a Seymour nor a Villiers than you are; the fellow is old Grenfell's son; 'Grenfell's Game Sauce,' and the rest of it." A chance resemblance to a fashionable Earl suggested another expedient, and Mr. George Grenfell got it about—how, it is not easy to say—that the noble Lord had greatly admired his mother, and paid her marked attention at Scarborough. Whatever pleasure Mr. George Grenfell felt in this theory is not easy to explain; nor have we to explain what we simply narrate as a fact, without the slightest pretension to account for.

Such were the two men who travelled together, and the yacht also contained Vyner's daughter Ada, a little girl of eight, and her governess, Mademoiselle Heinzleman, a Hanoverian lady, who claimed a descent from the Hohenzollerns, and had pride enough for a Hapsburg. If Vyner and Grenfell were not very much alike in tastes, temperament, and condition, Grenfell and the German governess were positively antipathies; nor was their war a secret or a smouldering fire, but a blaze, to which each brought fuel every day, aiding the combustion by every appliance of skill and ingenuity.

Vyner loved his daughter passionately—not even the disappointment that she had not been a boy threw any cloud over his affection—and he took her with him when and wherever he could; and, indeed, the pleasure of having her

for a companion now made this little home tour one of the most charming of all his excursions, and in her childish delight at new scenes and new people he renewed all his own memories of early travel.

“Here you are, Sir,” said Mr. Crab, late a sailing-master in the Royal Navy, but now in command of *The Meteor*—“here you are;” and he pointed with his finger to a little bay on the outspread chart that covered the cabin table. “This is about it! It may be either of these two; each of them looks north—north by east—and each has this large mountain to the south’ard and west’ard.”

“‘The north islands of Arran,’ read out Vyner, slowly, from a little MS. note-book. ‘Innishmore, the largest of them, has several good anchorages, especially on the eastern side, few inhabitants, and all miserably poor. There is the ruin of an Abbey, and a holy well of great reputed antiquity, and a strange relic of ancient superstition called the Judgment-stone, on which he who lays his hand while denouncing a wrong done him by another, brings down divine vengeance on either his enemy or himself, according as his allegation is just or unjust. There is something similar to be found in the Breton laws——’”

“For mercy’s sake don’t give us more of that tiresome little book, which, from the day we sailed, has never contributed one single hint as to where we could find anything to eat, or even water fit to drink,” said Grenfell. “Do you mean to go on shore in this barbarous place?”

“Of course I do. Crab intends us to pass two days here; we have sprung our for’topmast, and must look to it.”

“Blessed invention a yacht! As a means of locomotion, there’s not a cripple but could beat it; and as a place to live in, to eat, sleep, wash, and exercise, there’s not a cell in Brixton is not a palace in comparison.”

“Mademoiselle wish to say good night, Sare Vyner,” said the governess, a tall, fair-haired lady, with very light eyes, thick lips, and an immense lower jaw, a type, but not a flattering type, of German physiognomy.

“Let her come by all means;” and in an instant the door burst open, and with the spring of a young fawn the little girl was fast locked in her father’s arms.

“Oh, is it not very soon to go to bed, papa dearest?” cried she; “and it would be so nice to wait a little and see the moon shining on these big rocks here.”

“What does Mademoiselle Heinzleman say?” asked Vyner, smiling at the eager face of the child.

The lady appealed to made no other reply than by the production of a great silver watch with an enormous dial.

“That is a real curiosity,” cried Grenfell. “Is it permissible to ask a nearer view of that remarkable clock, Miss Heinzleman?”

“Freilich!” said she, not suspecting the slightest trace of raillery in the request. “It was made at Wurtzburg, by Jacob Schmelling, year time 1736.”

“And intended, probably, for the Town-hall?”

“No, Saar,” replied she, detecting the covert sneer; “intended for him whose arms it bear, Gottfried von Heinzleman, Burgomeister of Wurtzburg, a German noble, who neither made sausages nor sold Swiss cheeses.”

“Good night! good night! my own darling!” said Vyner, kissing his child affectionately. “You shall have a late evening to-morrow, and a walk in the moonlight too;” and after a hearty embrace from the little girl, and a respectful curtsy from the governess, returned with a not less respectful deference on his own part, Vyner closed the door after them, and resumed his seat.

“What cursed tempers those Germans have,” said Grenfell, trying to seem careless and easy; “even that good-natured joke about her watch she must take amiss.”

“Don’t forget, George,” said Vyner, good humouredly, “that in any little passage of arms between you, you have the strong position, and hers is the weak one.”

“I wish *she* would have the kindness to remember that fact, but she is an aggressive old damsel, and never looks so satisfied as when she imagines she has said an impertinence.”

“She is an excellent governess, and Ada is very fond of her.”

“So much the worse for Ada.”

“What do you mean by that?” cried Vyner, with an energy that surprised the other.

“Simply this; that by a man who professes to believe that objects of beauty are almost as essential to be presented to the eyes of childhood as maxims of morality, such a choice in a companion for his daughter is inexplicable. The woman is ugly, her voice discordant and jarring, her carriage and bearing atrocious—and will you tell me that all these will fail to make their impression when associated with every tone and every incident of childhood?”

“You are not in your happiest mood to-night, George. Was the claret bad?”

“I drank none of it. I took some of that Moselle cup, and it was tolerably good. By the way, when and how are we to get some ice? Carter says we have very little left.”

“Perhaps there may be glaciers in the wild region beside us. Ireland and Iceland have only a consonant between them. What if we go ashore and have a look at the place?”

A careless shrug of assent was the answer, and soon afterwards the trim yawl, manned by four stout fellows, skimmed across the smooth bay, and landed Vyner and his friend on a little rocky promontory that formed a natural pier.

It was complete desolation on every side of them: the mountain which rose from the sea was brown and blue with moss and heather, but not a human habitation, not an animal, marked its side; a few sea-birds skimmed fearlessly across the water, or stood perched on peaks of rock close to the travellers, and a large seal heavily plunged into the depth as they landed; save these, not a sign of anything living could be seen.

“There is something very depressing in this solitude,” said Grenfell; “I detest these places where a man is thrown back upon himself.”

“Do you know, then, that at this very moment I was speculating on buying a patch of land here to build a cottage; a cabin of three or four rooms, where one might house himself if ever he came this way.”

“But why should he come this way? What on earth should turn any man’s steps twice in this direction?”

“Come, come, George! You’ll not deny that all this is very fine: that great mountain rising abruptly from the sea, with that narrow belt of yellow beach below it; those wild fantastic rocks, with their drooping seaweed; those solemn caves, wherein the rumbling sea rushes to issue forth again in some distant cleft,—are all objects of grandeur and beauty, and, for myself, I feel as if I could linger for days amongst them unwearied.”

“What was that?” cried Grenfell, as they now gained a crest of the ridge, and could see a wild irregular valley that lay beneath, the shades of evening deepening into very blackness the lower portions of the landscape. “Was that thunder, or the roar of the sea? There it is again!”

They listened for a few moments, and again there came, borne on the faint land-breeze, a sound that swelled from a feeble wail to a wild sustained cry, rising and falling till it died away just as it had begun. It was indescribably touching, and conveyed a sense of deep sorrow, almost of despair. It might have been the last cry of a sinking crew as the waves closed above them; and so indeed did it seem to Vyner, as he said, “If there had been a storm at sea, I’d have sworn that sound came from a shipwreck.”

“I suppose it is only some other pleasant adjunct of the charming spot you would select for a villa,” said Grenfell; “perhaps the seals or the grampuses are musical.”

“Listen to that!” cried Vyner, laying a hand on his arm; “and see! yonder—far away to the left—there is a light!”

“Well, if there be inhabitants here, I’m not astonished that they cry over it.”

“Let us find out what it can mean, George.”

“Have you any arms about you? I have left my revolver behind, and have nothing but this sword-cane.”

“I have not as much, and feel pretty certain we shall not need it. Every traveller in Ireland, even in the remotest tracts, bear witness to the kindness which is extended to the stranger.”

“They who come back from the Rocky Mountains are invariably in love with the Sioux Indians. The testimony that one wants, is from the fellows who have been scalped.”

“What an intense prejudice you have against all that is Irish!”

“Say, if you like, that I have a prejudice against all mock cordiality, mock frankness, mock hospitality, and mock intrepidity.”

“Stay, George! you can’t impugn their courage.”

“I don’t want to impugn anything beyond the inordinate pretensions to be something better, braver, more amiable, and more gifted than all the rest of the world. I say, Vyner, I have had quite enough of this sort of walking; my feet are cut to pieces with these sharp stones, and every second step is into a puddle. Do you mean to go on?”

“Certainly; I am determined to see what that light means.” “Then I turn back. I’ll send the boat in again, and tell them to hoist a lantern, which, if the natives have not done for you in the mean while, you’ll see on the beach.”

“Come along; don’t be lazy.”

“It’s not laziness. I could walk a Parisian Boulevard for these three hours; what I object to is, the certainty of a cold, and the casualty of a sprained ankle. A pleasant journey to

you;" and, as he spoke, he turned abruptly round, and began to retrace his steps.

Vyner looked after him; he called after him too, for a moment, but, as the other never heeded, he lighted a fresh cigar and continued his way.

The light, which seemed to tremble and flicker at first, shone steadily and brightly as he drew nearer, and at length he hit upon a sort of pathway which greatly assisted his advance. The way, too, led gradually downwards, showing that the glen or valley was far deeper than he at first supposed it. As he went on, the moon, a faint crescent, came out, and showed him the gable of an old ruin rising above some stunted trees, through whose foliage, at times, he fancied he saw the glitter of a light. These lay in a little cleft that opened to the sea, and on the shore, drawn up, were two boats, on whose sides the cold moonlight shone clearly.

"So, there are people who live here!" thought he; "perhaps Grenfell was right. It might have been as well to have come armed!" He hesitated to go on. Stories of wreckers, tales of wild and lawless men in remote untravelled lands, rose to his mind and he half doubted if it were prudent to proceed farther. Half ashamed of his fears, half dreading the bantering he was sure to meet from Grenfell, he went forward. The path led to a small river in which stepping-stones were placed, and crossing this, the foot track became broader and evidently had been more travelled. The night was now perfectly still and calm, the moonlight touched the mountain towards its peak, but all beneath was in sombre blackness, more especially near the

old church, whose ruined gable his eyes, as they grew familiarised with the darkness, could clearly distinguish. Not a sound of that strange unearthly dirge that he first heard was audible; all was silent; so silent, indeed, that he was startled by the sharp crackling of the tall reeds which grew close to the path and which he occasionally broke as he pressed forward. His path stopped abruptly at a stone stile, over which he clambered, and found himself in a little enclosure planted with potatoes, beyond which was a dense copse of thorns and hazel, so tangled that the path became very tortuous and winding. On issuing from this, he found himself in front of a strong glare of light, which issued from a circular window of the gable several feet above his head; at the same time that he heard a sort of low monotonous moaning sound, broken at intervals by a swell of chorus, which he at length detected was the response of people engaged in prayer. Creeping stealthily around through dockweeds and nettles, he at last found a narrow loopholed window to which his hands could just reach, and to which, after a brief effort, he succeed in lifting himself. The scene on which he now looked never faded from his memory. In the long narrow aisle of the old Abbey a company of men and women sat two deep round the walls, the space in the centre being occupied by a coffin placed on trestles; rude torches of bog-pine stuck in the walls threw a red and lurid glare over the faces, and lit up their expressions with a vivid distinctness. At the head of the coffin sat an old grey-headed man of stern and forbidding look, and an air of savage determination, which even grief had not softened; and close beside him, on a low stool, sat a child, who,

overcome by sleep as it seemed, had laid his head on the old man's knee, and slept profoundly. From this old man proceeded the low muttering words which the others answered by a sort of chant, the only interruption to which was when any one of the surrounders would rise from his place to deposit some small piece of money on a plate which stood on the coffin, and was meant to contain the offerings for the priest.



If the language they spoke in was strange and unintelligible to Vyner's ears, it did not the less convey, as the sound of Irish unfailingly does to all unaccustomed ears, a something terribly energetic and passionate—every accent was striking, and every tone full of power—but far more still was he struck by the faces on every side. He had but seen the Irish of St. Giles's; the physiognomy he alone knew was that blended one of sycophancy and dissipation that a degraded and demoralised class wear. He had never before seen that fierce vigour and concentrated earnestness which mark the native face. Still less had he any idea what its expression could become when heightened by religious fervour. There were fine features, noble foreheads wide and spacious, calm brows, and deeply-set eyes, in many around, but in all were the lower jaw and the mouth coarse and depraved-looking. There was no lack of power, it is true, but

it was a power that could easily adapt itself to violence and cruelty, and when they spoke, so overmastering seemed this impulse of their natures, that the eyes lost the gentleness they had worn, and flashed with an angry and vindictive brilliancy.

Drink was served round at intervals, and freely partaken of, and from the gestures and vehemence of the old man, Vyner conjectured that something like toasts were responded to. At moments, too, the prayers for the dead would seem to be forgotten, and brief snatches of conversation would occur, and even joke and laughter were heard; when suddenly, and as though to recal them to the solemn rites of the hour, a voice, always a woman's, would burst in with a cry, at first faint, but gradually rising till it became a wild yell, at one particular cadence of which—just as one has seen a spaniel howl at a certain note—the rest would seem unable to control themselves, and break in with a rush of sound that made the old walls ring again. Dreadful as it had seemed before, it was far more fearful now, as he stood close by, and could mark, besides, the highly-wrought expressions—the terribly passionate faces around.

So fascinated was he by the scene—so completely had its terrible reality impressed him—that Vyner could not leave the spot, and he gazed till he knew, and for many a long year after could remember, every face that was there. More than once was he disposed to venture in amongst them, and ask, as a stranger, the privilege of joining the solemnity, but fear withheld him; and as the first pinkish streak or dawn appeared, he crept cautiously down and alighted on the grass.