

PRINTERS
ERRORS



O'DUFFY

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BOOKS BY EIMAR O'DUFFY

THE WASTED ISLAND. A Novel.

THE LION AND THE FOX. A Novel.

BRICRIUS' FEAST. A Comedy in Three Acts.

A COLLEGE CHORUS. Poems and Parodies by Students
of University College, Dublin. Edited by Eimar
O'Duffy.

PRINTER'S ERRORS

BY

EIMAR O'DUFFY

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To the critic who complained that my comedy, "Bricrius' Feast," was not a tragedy, and to the critic who complained that my tragedy, "The Wasted Island," was not a comedy, I dedicate this *jeu d'esprit*, in the hope that they will mend their ways.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.	PAGE
I. MR. WOLVERHAMPTON PLAYS TRUANT . . .	9
II. THE SUPERMAN OF UPPER BAGGOT STREET . . .	22
III. PROGRESS OF THE REVOLUTION . . .	36
IV. MR. WOLVERHAMPTON AMONG THE INTELLEC- TUALS	52
V. LEONORA SURPASSES HERSELF . . .	71
VI. MR. WOLVERHAMPTON IN QUEST OF ADVENTURE	97
VII. THE PERSECUTION OF ALGERNON . . .	108
VIII. MR. WOLVERHAMPTON GETS WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR	116
IX. MUSIC AND A CHOCOLATE	134

CHAPTER I.

I.

MR. WOLVERHAMPTON PLAYS TRUANT.

AFTER his desperate deed at the office, Mr. Wolverhampton called a car, dashed across town to Harcourt Street Station, took a first-class ticket to Foxhill, and hurled himself into the train a second before it began to move. The other occupants of the carriage greeted his entry with glances of scornful hostility, as is the way of railway travellers, and then resumed the perusal of their papers or the landscape. There were three of them—two men and a girl—and they had each occupied a corner of the carriage. Mr. Wolverhampton appropriated the fourth, and sat down heavily, mopping his brow.

These fellow-travellers of his could have had no conception of the enormity of the deed just perpetrated by Mr. Wolverhampton, or they might not have glanced at him so casually. In appearance, at any rate, he was not likely to attract much attention, for he looked exactly what he was—a successful middle-aged business man. He was slim for his age, about the average height, with mild blue eyes, a square good-humoured face, and a good thatch of light brown hair, under which commonplace exterior his heart beat high and his mind soared exultant. And Mr. Wolverhampton was saying over and over again, all unknown to the three cold strangers in their corners: “I’ve done it! I’ve done it! I’ve done it!”

What had Mr. Wolverhampton done? Briefly, he had revolted; but to understand why and against what he had revolted, and how he had carried his revolt into effect the reader must be told some of Mr. Wolverhampton’s history.

II.

He was the son of a self-made man. His father had been the founder and owner of nine-tenths of the shares of the well-known Dublin printing firm, F. F. Wolverhampton, Ltd. A hard man was old F. F., a hard husband, a hard master, and a despotic father, at whose memory young F. F. still trembled.

Having led a struggling life himself in his early years he saw no reason why his son should not do the same; having had no kind of liberal education himself he grudged it to his son—nay more, he regarded such a thing as an encumbrance to a business man, which was what he intended his son to be. So at fourteen years of age young F. F., heir to the whole establishment, was put to serve his time as an apprentice just as if he were a poor man's child, and for two years toiled and sweated at the works. Now young F. F. was made of different stuff from his father: a gentle, cheery lad, impatient and imaginative. He did not care much for hard work of any kind, but the laborious grimy work of the printer's apprentice he detested with all his heart; so he dreamed and plotted and planned a thousand ways of escaping from it. He had little time for reading, nor, in fact, did he feel much desire for it, but he had now and then come across stray books that pleased him: mainly boys' adventure books in which the hero invariably ran away from home, made his fortune, and finally settled down to peace and prosperity. He was not long, therefore, in making up his mind to do likewise.

Now for all his harshness F. F. senior was generous with money. Perhaps he dimly perceived the heaviness of his son's lot and wished to mitigate it somewhat; at any rate, besides paying him his wages the same as all the other hands, he supplied him liberally with pocket-money. Not that it was much use to the poor boy at the time, for he got little opportunity to spend it, and even then his tastes were not extravagant; but it proved a god-send eventually. The money used to accumulate in his pockets, and when these were too full he used to deposit the overflow in a drawer in his dressing table.

It was when contemplating this hoard one day and wondering what to do with it that the idea occurred to him to save it all up against the day when he should have sufficient confidence to decamp.

That day, however, on one excuse or another, kept putting itself off. By nature vacillating and undecided; and only stimulated momentarily by the sparks of imagination which toil and weariness were steadily damping down, he kept postponing the moment of action day by day, week by week, month by month, and, finally, year by year. He was eighteen before an external stimulus came to goad him into activity, and then it came in the form of a girl.

Her name was Daisy Dilworth, and she was third from the end of the front row of the chorus in the Christmas pantomime at the Gaiety Theatre. F. F. was then, having served his time, a fully-fledged and over-worked printer by day, a man of the world by night. Though he still continued, from force of habit, to add to the hoard of money in the drawer in his bedroom, he was rich enough to be able to do so without denying himself any of the simple pleasures that appealed to him—dressing well, dancing, eating sugared almonds, and going to theatres—and so he met his fate. Lights, music, paint and peroxide made pulp of a heart that had been starved of beauty. Love burst upon him fiercely and absorbingly, shining in the darkness of his world like a white fire, to which he rushed, moth-like, without thought or hesitation. She was a good enough girl, and was attracted by his ingenuousness and his wholehearted adoration of herself; moreover, she was not long about finding out about his parentage, and, knowing nothing of the old man's character, which might perhaps have made her pause, she yielded to the boy's ardent wooing, and within a week of their first meeting had married him and fled with him to London, to wait for the father's wrath to cool down.

But the old man's anger outlasted young F. F.'s money. The boy had to seek work, and obtained a poorly-paid position with a London printer; his wife became impatient and began to grumble and regret the step she had taken; and to make their lot harder, a son was born

before the end of the year. To feed this extra mouth, they had to move into cheaper and less comfortable lodgings. Daisy became more and more discontented, the infant was an enormous expense, and it looked as if the poor young father had escaped from one slavery only to rush into another. A year later, another child—a daughter this time—was born, and the unwilling mother grumbled a little, gave up the struggle, and died. Perhaps the disappearance of the unwanted daughter-in-law reconciled the father to the condition of affairs; perhaps the accumulated misfortunes that had fallen on his son touched his heart; whichever was the reason, the old man now forgave everything, presented the young widower with a house and gave him a congenial position at the works, at which he settled down and commenced life afresh.

III.

Years passed by. The old man died and his son inherited the business. Meanwhile he had been bringing up his children in the way in which he would wish to have been brought up himself. He sent them to the best schools, breathed not one word of business to them, and resolved to make of the boy, Algernon, what he had always wanted to be, and still wanted to be, a gentleman of leisure. For this purpose he saved all the money he could, intending eventually to sell out from the printing works and so invest the proceeds as to secure a comfortable income to all three.

But this man seemed destined for disappointment. As he watched Algernon's growth he saw him become more and more like his grandfather every day, not only in appearance, but in character. He was tall and dark and strongly made, with a heavy bull-dog type of face. His disposition was masterful, and he was always asking questions about business, and in the holidays he used to hang about the works. At fifteen he insisted on leaving school and studying printing. His father weakly gave way. In two years time Algernon had worked himself into an important position in the business. In two more he had become general manager, and had set about reforming the firm from top to bottom.

The old method, though for half a century Wolverhamptons had flourished by it, was not good enough for Algernon. Having forced his father to give him a partnership, he swept through the dreamy old establishment like a whirlwind, sacking superannuated old Irishmen and putting keen businesslike young Scots and Americans in their places. He made new rules and regulations in every department. He ordained that all work must be delivered on the evening before the day promised. He forbade the making of promises that could not be kept. Under his regime the slipshod old business began to work like a newly oiled machine, and to produce enormous dividends.

Gone now were poor F. F.'s dreams of retirement. He was weak and vacillating, and he had allowed his son literally to cut the ground from beneath his feet. He was born to be dominated, and he was now as much a slave to his son as he had formerly been to his father. And Algernon was a hard master. He never spared himself, and the two proprietors of the great works laboured as long and as heavily as any of their employees.

And the unfortunate widower's home life was no easier. His daughter, Henrietta, was a female copy of her brother: dark and tall and stern. She ruled the house with a rod of iron, treating Algernon as the master and her father as a child. He would come home of an evening tired out with a hard day at the office and fling himself into an arm-chair only to be told he must not sit there, as the room was going to be swept. He must not go to the diningroom either, as the table was being laid, and, as he was not allowed to smoke in the drawingroom, he would creep off humbly to his bedroom and sit there until the dinner-bell rang.

She forbade him to eat sugared almonds, too, telling him that it was a childish and plebeian habit. This was perhaps the hardest blow of all. Even in the dark days of his apprenticeship he was able to eat sugared almonds: they were then his only solace. In the days of his poverty in London he had frequently scraped together a few pennies to gratify this harmless vice. Now that they were forbidden him he was dull indeed.

So you picture the life of this cheerful, kindly, bothered

soul. At 46, still gay and youthful at heart, he is ruled and domineered by a son only nineteen years younger than himself in time but a century older in character, and by a daughter who treats him as a step-child. He could set himself free, as he did before, if an external stimulus would rouse him to another effort, but not otherwise. A faint heart is a poor companion to a romantic imagination.

IV.

He wished that his children would marry, and so he would perforce be relieved of their company, but he was not long in coming to the conclusion that nobody would ever marry Henrietta. For a long time he had hopes that Algernon would take a wife, but in the end these hopes, too, were dashed. Algernon had spent many weeks reading some big, dry-looking books by a man called Nietzsche, and at the end he had proclaimed to his father and sister that he was the superman, and that he intended to remain single until he had met the superwoman. This was all Double Dutch to poor Mr. Wolverhampton, who never read anything but fiction (and Nat Gould and Marie Corelli at that), but Algernon quickly explained. Nietzsche taught that by the process of Evolution man, as now existing, would improve into a much finer being altogether, distinguished by the perfection of its physique and the commanding and resolute nature of its character. Algernon was convinced that all of this description pointed to him as the superman, or at any rate as its forerunner, and his father was quite ready to believe him. Algernon then announced that in consideration of his high destiny it would not do for him to marry an ordinary woman. He must seek his destined mate, the superwoman, or, failing her, one who was physically flawless. This was a terrible blow to Mr. Wolverhampton, who had no faith in the existence of the superwoman, and was quite sure that no woman who was physically flawless would be such a fool as to marry Algernon. It was in that moment of despair that Mr. Wolverhampton began to cast about for means of regaining his liberty.

And just about this time all Dublin was being stirred by the poems of Mr. Lucius Loftus. The notion of all

Dublin being stirred by a new poet would rather astonish anyone who knows that city, for Dublin is as full of poets as Belfast is of rivetters. You can't go down Grafton Street without jostling poets; you can't go to a party without being introduced to a few; they are everywhere, and the appearance of a new one every now and again causes no sensation. But this poet was different from all the other Dublin poets, who, as everyone knows, are very superior people who write about feelings that ordinary people have never experienced, and about purple mists and mystic doves, and the curlew's call and other things that nobody knows anything about. Mr. Loftus, on the other hand, wrote about feelings that everyone has—not wanting to work, and what nice stuff grass is, and how pleasant it is to take a girl for a walk on a summer day in a pine wood. His poems were full of youth and joy and life and high spirits, and many of them were downright funny, and all of them were written in an easy-tripping musical metre.

So everybody read him, even Mr. Wolverhampton. Mr. Wolverhampton had never read any poetry before; it didn't appeal to him. But here were all his feelings expressed; here were said all the things he wanted to say; here were words to little catchy airs he knew. He got to know some of the poems by heart, and he used to recite them or sing them in his bath, or when Algernon wasn't listening in his office. Needless to say, Algernon did not read Mr. Loftus's poetry. He called it low-class stuff.

And there was one poem which particularly affected Mr. Wolverhampton, it expressed his own feelings so exactly. It was called "Come On," and began thus:—

When I was a child, long, long ago,
 Full many a woe had I.
 I cut my finger, the blood did flow,
 And I uttered a piercing cry.
 Said my old, old nurse with the wrinkled face:
 "Arrah whisht now! dry your tears,
 Sure you'll soon be well, and in any case
 You'll be dead in a hundred years."

So the poem ran for many stanzas with its refrain,

“you’ll be dead in a hundred years,” applied in a dozen different ways: as a spur, a consolation, a jibe, and what not. But the last stanza of all was peculiarly applicable to Mr. Wolverhampton. It ran thus:—

The buds are bursting, the cock-birds sing
 Love-songs to the coyful hen,
 All nature wakes at the kiss of Spring.
 And what are you doing, men?
 Don’t you hear the lark and the primrose shout:
 (What matter your work’s arrears?)
 “Oh hurry, come out! Come out! Come out!
 You’ll be dead in a hundred years.”

Just what he had thought a thousand times himself as he had looked out on the sunshine from his grimy office. He had far less than a hundred years before him, less than half that in fact, and not twenty years more of strength and health. And yet here he was wasting those precious years day by day earning five times as much money as he really needed, and all to please not himself but his son. It was intolerable, and yet he could not make up his mind to end it.

“Oh hurry, come out! come out! come out!” he would sing to himself under his breath.

“I will end it! I will!” he would cry with sudden resolution. But he never did.

And at last he fell in love. To the great motive which had spurred him on on a former occasion he once more responded. He swore a great oath that not another day of this lovely July should find him working when he might be out in the sunshine wooing and winning. When, punctually at one o’clock, Algernon went out to lunch, he took a sheet of paper and wrote on it the following:—

NOTICE.

SPECIAL HALF-HOLIDAY.

This Establishment will close at 2 p.m. to-day.

By Order,

F. F. WOLVERHAMPTON.

In mingled triumph and trepidation he summoned a

boy and bid him to have copies of this order typed at once and fixed on the necessary notice boards.

It was a desperate thing he had done. Algernon, he knew, would be furious. Henrietta would make his life unendurable for days. But it was done, and there was no going back on it.

In another minute he had banged down the lid of his desk, rushed down the stairs, and . . . here he was speeding down to the golf links where, perhaps, his lady-love might be seen.

V.

Stepping lightly and eagerly like a boy, Mr. Wolverhampton set out from Foxhill Station to the golf club. In spite of a certain trepidation lurking somewhere in the bottom of his heart, he was feeling very gay, very hopeful, and very daring. *Very* daring. He was like a truant schoolboy, not sure at moments whether fear or pleasure were the uppermost of his sensations. Alternately hurrying and dallying with the rise and fall of his mental barometer, he reached the little white-painted gate leading to the links.

A white skirt fluttering. . . . Yes. . . . No. . . . Yes, it is she. She comes out of the club house and makes for the first tee. His heart stops beating a moment, and then begins to hammer furiously at his ribs, while his face goes alternately red and white, as he realises that her escort is a young man. . . . A young man, but who? . . . Mr. Wolverhampton recognised him without difficulty. It was Ernest O'Mahony, the amateur actor.

"That's all right," Mr. Wolverhampton consoled himself. "If she can tolerate that theatrical humbug she can put up with me."

She turned and waved to him as he came up the path. She was a slender girl with fair hair all clustering round her pretty head, and an enchanting smile. Her nose was a little sharp, perhaps, and so was her chin, and there was a touch of scorn hovering somewhere over the dainty mouth. But take her for all in all, she was a lovely creature. And she was an artist. She had painted

pictures which even his uncultured eye admired, and which competent critics wrote and spoke of as superb. And she sent black-and-white sketches to the best magazines, and was responsible for the delightful water-colour illustrations to many well-known editions de luxe. As Mr. Wolverhampton thought of all this he became suddenly humble and abashed.

"What chance is there for me?" he said. "Stupid, illiterate me!"

He stood still while she and her partner drove, and as she picked up her clubs to move off she waved to him again.

"Delightful, unconventional creature," thought Mr. Wolverhampton, as he watched her receding figure for some minutes before going into the club house. He murmured her name slowly under her breath.

"Leonora. . . ."

"I'll bet I'll have as much chance as that idiot, O'Mahony," he told himself defiantly.

O'Mahony was a well-known Dublin amateur actor, and Mr. Wolverhampton was wrong in calling him an idiot. Not that O'Mahony was quite normal; his best friends could scarcely say that of him. He was so devoted to acting, and was in such request for charitable and private theatricals of all kinds, and was so frequently asked at parties and elsewhere to recite that he had almost forgotten the demeanour of a normal man. He behaved as if life were one eternal tragedy or melodrama (all his favourite parts and pieces were tragic or melodramatic), and indeed it was hard to see any difference between his character on the stage and his character off it. If you met him in the street he would start violently, put his hand to his forehead, gasp a moment, and say: "Ah! my dee-ar friend"; when startled by a sudden noise, he would say: "Hist!" in a hoarse whisper; and he was always ready on the smallest provocation to slay you or to commit suicide. Consequently, Mr. Wolverhampton did not fear him as a rival, even though he was tall and dark and handsome, with long curling hair and deep, dreamy eyes.

Mr. Wolverhampton had not come down to Foxhill to

play golf. He had come to see Leonora, and, if possible, to escort her home. But alas for his resolve! As he entered the luncheon-room the only member there was Mr. Bonegraft, the celebrated surgeon, just finishing coffee.

"Hello! Wolverhampton," cried Mr. Bonegraft. "Out for a round."

"Yes," said Mr. Wolverhampton, off his guard.

"Well, come with me. I've no partner."

Mr. Wolverhampton tried to retrace his steps.

"I'd be delighted," he said, "but I haven't had lunch yet."

"Order it quick, then," said Mr. Bonegraft. "I'll wait for you."

The miserable Wolverhampton had to do as he was told. He was very much in awe of Mr. Bonegraft, who was a very loud-voiced and imposing man, and very famous. However, he had sufficient presence of mind to seat himself in such a way as to command a view of the tenth tee, which, like the first, was situated close to the clubhouse. If he could get one more view of his adored he felt that his day would not be entirely wasted, and he decided to spin out his lunch as long as possible. He ordered soup to begin with, much to the disgust of Mr. Bonegraft, who hoped that he would be content to take a little cold meat and bread and butter, and then hurry out to play. Mr. Bonegraft, however, had to sit and watch the tantalising man cautiously stirring his cup to cool it, and then sipping it slowly and with relish. Then he had to watch him take the menu, and, after a lengthy perusal of it, order steak and kidney pie, which takes an age to cool, and which no man with any respect for his stomach would eat in a hurry. Thoroughly exasperated and feeling no doubt that the watched pot never boils, Mr. Bonegraft excused himself and went to consume his impatience in the sitting-room.

So Mr. Wolverhampton saw his divinity again. She and her partner were laughing over some joke or other as they approached the tee. Mr. Wolverhampton thought her laugh celestial, as the breeze carried it through the open window to his jealous ears. A less prejudiced

observer would probably have considered it a trifle vulgar (she was known to belong to a rather Bohemian set), but for Mr. Wolverhampton it held the music of paradise. How he wished he had the wit to say something that would elicit that music! He wanted badly to wring O'Mahony's neck.

"I never knew you were such a gourmand," complained Mr. Bonegraft when Mr. Wolverhampton finally announced himself ready to start.

"And I never knew you were such a duffer," he felt inclined to say later on as he won hole after hole without the faintest difficulty.

Wrapped in his dreams, Mr. Wolverhampton played away perfectly aimlessly. Golf is a game that demands concentration, so it is no game for a man in love. And Mr. Wolverhampton had no desire to win. If the game were over soon enough he might see Leonora yet, and so his sole object was to get beaten as quickly and as badly as possible.

"Three up," said Mr. Bonegraft, strutting to the fourth tee, chest out and triumph in his voice. He drove straight and true down the fairway, and his ball lay beautifully within an easy jigger shot of the hole. Mr. Wolverhampton fozzled badly, took three to get out of the rough, and bunkered his fifth on the edge of the green. Mr. Bonegraft laid his approach within six inches of the hole, and bit his lip in exasperation as F. F. played four futile shots in the bunker and finally picked up his ball. An easy victory is no victory, and Mr. Bonegraft felt that good play was wasted against this duffer. Cholerick and over-confident he sliced his next drive badly, and Wolverhampton succeeded in spite of himself in halving the hole.

"Still three up," said Mr. Bonegraft.

"Sure it's not four?" queried F. F., smiling happily.

Mr. Bonegraft grunted an expression of certainty, and won the next three holes with infuriating ease.

"Eight up," he said at the turn, and offered to give Mr. Wolverhampton two strokes a hole for the rest of the game. F. F., however, smilingly declined.

"No," he said. "It wouldn't be fair. My handicap's

the same as yours, after all, I'm just a bit off my game, I'm afraid. . . . I may pull up on you yet," he added with a fatuous expression of optimism that tore the remains of Mr. Bonegraft's temper to tatters. "Never say die till you're dead."

Mr. Bonegraft did the tenth in four, while Mr. Wolverhampton took seven to it.

"Nine up and eight to play," said Mr. Bonegraft savagely. "I suppose we needn't play the bye?"

"I suppose not," replied Mr. Wolverhampton, and they trudged back to the club house in silence, Mr. Bonegraft registering a solemn vow never to play with the blighter again. But what would Mr. Wolverhampton have cared, even had he divined Mr. Bonegraft's thoughts? For his tactics had proved successful, and he was in time to catch Leonora before she left the club, and, to O'Mahony's intense disgust, to accompany her and his rival to the station.

And all the time Leonora talked to the little printer, completely ignoring O'Mahony, who stalked sulkily beside her. F. F. chatted gaily and had the happiness of eliciting his divinity's silvery laugh on more than one occasion. In the train they still talked together, and she showed, he felt sure, that she was quite sorry to part from him at Harcourt Street.

She was gone, and he stood alone in the cool and lonely dusk outside the station. He had spent a day listening to the music of paradise; now he must return to face the music at home.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUPERMAN OF UPPER BAGGOT STREET.

MISS HENRIETTA WOLVERHAMPTON sat alone in the drawingroom of her father's house. She was a tall, dark, hard-featured young woman, and wore a dress of stiff black silk—a dress characteristic of her, and the only kind she ever wore.

She sat perfectly still and silent before the empty fireplace, her legs crossed, her hands clasped behind her head, her eyes gazing into vacancy. She was not thinking of anything, she never did, for she had nothing to think about; she was just resting.

Suddenly the door opened, and her brother Algernon, a male replica of herself, burst into the room in a state of tremendous excitement.

“Look at this!” he cried, thrusting into her hands the notice which his father had that morning posted up in the works. Henrietta was incapable of excitement.

“What does it mean?” she said, with a calmness that served but to increase her brother's perturbation.

“Mean?” he ejaculated. “What does it mean? “What *does* it mean, I should like to know.”

“Be calm, Algernon,” said Henrietta, solemnly. “Your're behaving like an ordinary man. Remember what you are!”

Straightway Algernon pulled himself up and assumed a constraint of figure that would have made anyone with a sense of humour burst out laughing.

Henrietta, however, not being possessed of that commodity, merely pointed to a chair and said: “Sit down and let's discuss the matter quietly.”

Algernon sat down and proceeded to explain how on returning to the office after lunch he had found it closed and the employees all gone, and on entering had found the notice pinned to the board.

"This is serious, decidedly serious," said Henrietta at the conclusion of the narrative. Her brows drew together till a deep trench appeared between them, running up from her nose almost to the roots of her black wiry hair. "I think father must be going mad," she resumed. "He's been behaving very queerly lately. I don't know what's come over him."

"I think I can guess," said Algernon: "He's never been quite the same since that visit we made to Michael O'Malley."

"That's true. It was the very next day that he suggested putting up our name in Irish at the works."

"I wonder——" said Henrietta, and paused

"What," said Algernon.

"It doesn't matter. It's impossible."

"What's impossible?"

"What I was thinking. And yet—one never knows."

"This is very mysterious. What on earth are you driving at?"

"Could he possibly have fallen in love with that Leonora creature?"

"My dear Henrietta! Impossible. Why, he's getting on for fifty."

"Forty-six," Henrietta corrected him.

"It's absurd, anyway," reiterated Algernon.

"Love is always absurd," said Henrietta, "and yet it affects all kinds of people. Fools get it, and sensible people get it, nice people get it, and blackguards get it; boys get it, and old men get it. It makes fools of them all, and there's no fool like an old fool. I admit that I can't understand it, but facts are facts, and you can't get away from them."

Algernon had become meditative.

"I can't understand it either," he said. "It conflicts with all my theories—and with Nietzsche's, too. Love, after all, is only a silly poet's name for the Life Force. Now what could the Life Force want with a puling old dotard of fifty?"

"Forty-six, Algernon."

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt, Henrietta. The exact figures are immaterial. You and I well know that

the Life Force could have no use for a senile old dotard. We also know that there is no such thing as Love, that what is commonly called Love is merely a crude manifestation of the working of the Life Force. Therefore we may safely assume that Leonora is not the cause of my father's strange behaviour."

"I suppose you're right," said Henrietta. "Logie is logie, and you can't get away from it . . . By the way, I've just received an invitation from the McEvoy's, for Thursday next. Leonora's sure to be there, so I was going to refuse it and not let father know, but I suppose I may as well accept now."

Algernon hesitated a moment before replying. Then he said: "Very well. We may as well go, and we'll keep our eyes open and see whether Leonora has not stirred the last dying embers of the Life Force in his decayed and enfeebled body. For I shouldn't be surprised, you know, if that had anything to do with it."

"I noticed, by the way," said Henrietta, "that he blushed the other day when her name came up in conversation."

"Humph," said Algernon. "One of the cruder manifestations of the working of the Life Force usually confined to the very young."

"The trouble is," said Henrietta, "that if Leonora finds this out she'll make a fool of him."

"All the better," replied Algernon. "It'll bring him back to sanity, and make a man of him."

"How like a boy he's been lately," observed Henrietta. Then in exasperation: "He's a romantic old idiot."

"He's been getting cynical, too," said Algernon. "He's beginning to laugh at my claim to be the superman."

"He always did—on the sly."

"I used to *think* he believed in me, and that was something. Now I know he doesn't . . . Henrietta, I *am* the superman."

"Of course, Algernon. I know you are."

"I have perfect eyes, perfect hearing, perfect teeth, and a phenomenal sense of smell. I have a flawless

body and constitution, and extraordinary health and vitality. I have considerably more than the average human intelligence, which, of course, is the equivalent to having the average superhuman intelligence. If I——”

“Yes, Algernon,” interrupted Henrietta in haste. “I know all that. You have occasionally told me before.”

“You and Bertie.”” went on Algernon, plaintively, “are the only people who believe me. That’s why I tolerate Bertie. He’s a fool, and intolerably vain, but at any rate he believes in me. Why will no one else believe in me?”

“You must bear with this, Algernon,” replied Henrietta. “It is the lot of the exceptional. The superman will never be acknowledged in his own city, still less by his own father.”

Algernon sighed and said resignedly:

“Ah, yes, you’re right, Henrietta. And after all, that’s one more proof, if any more were needed, that I am the superman.”

Seeing that her brother was now in a more philosophical frame of mind, Henrietta went about her household duties, leaving him as she thought, contemplating his own perfections, and his high destiny in the depths of a comfortable arm-chair. He did not, however, remain in that attitude for long. Thoughts too trivial to ruffle the placid serenity of the superman’s brain were obviously causing considerable commotion within his silly cranium. All the upholsterer’s art could not lull him to repose. He twisted and turned this way and that; he ran his fingers through his hair, making of its cultivated sleekness a lowering wilderness; he bit his lips and glared savagely at the adjacent furniture of the room; once even he blushed as if a painful memory had flashed across his mind. At that he swore softly to himself and began to pace the room like a caged tiger. He was meditating upon the follies of which his father had been guilty during the past week,—trifling things, it is true, which should not have worried a superman, but Algernon saw all departures from the usual with the magnifying eye of his inborn responsibility.

II.

An hour later Henrietta found him lying exhausted in the arm-chair, and announced tea and Bertie MacIntyre. She left the two men to consume the meal by themselves, for their conversation generally bored her.

Bertie was Algernon's only friend. He was several years younger than Algernon, to whom he gave a kind of worshipful homage, receiving in return contemptuous benevolence and good advice. Algernon liked Bertie's companionship, because he needed an audience to keep up his confidence in himself; Bertie liked Algernon because it flattered him to be made the confident of a grown man. This was the mutual interest that kept them together.

It was Algernon's habit when his temper was bad to vent it, not in the way of ordinary men by plainly showing it in his language and behaviour, but by coldly and cruelly dissecting the weaker points of Bertie's character or by scornfully upbraiding him for some of his lapses from well-bred behaviour to which his nervous disposition rendered him liable. Being now in a very bad temper indeed he said: "Is that you, Bertie?" in a voice accompanied by a contraction of the brows which Bertie knew boded a bad half-hour. He answered Algernon's question with a weak "yes" and hesitated.

"Pour out some tea," commanded Algernon, "and don't fidget."

Bertie did as he was told, looking very miserable the while; and then Algernon, having taken a long draught of tea, demanded:

"What was the matter with you at the Rooney's last Saturday? Such atrocious manners as yours I never saw before."

For once the worm in Bertie turned. The one good quality he possessed, the abstract love of justice which is the Irishman's strongest characteristic, was touched.

"I say, Algernon," he blurted out, "you can teach me most things, but manners isn't one of them. You've none at all yourself."

"I know that," replied Algernon. "But I've no use for them. Remember who I am. But for an ordinary man like you manners are essential. Besides, you must distinguish between no manners and bad manners. Your's are bad, nothing more."

Bertie gave a sigh of resignation. He had never yet argued with Algernon but he had been soundly beaten. Algernon resumed.

"Spilling your tea was bad enough, but the way you crumbled your cake all over the carpet . . . why, what on earth came over you?"

"I couldn't help it," said Bertie, desperately, "you may as well know first as last. I didn't know whether I was on my head or my heels. Miss Montgomery always affects me like that."

"What?" cried Algernon, startled completely out of his supermanly nonchalance.

"Yes," said Bertie, defiantly, "I'm in love with her."

"You young ass," cried Algernon. "You thorough-going young idiot."

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Bertie, thoroughly astonished at this outburst. "There's nothing extraordinary in my loving her, is there?"

"No. That's just it. Everyone in Dublin has been in love with her at one time or another. It's becoming a municipal habit. Why, my poor doting old father is in love with her at the present moment."

It was Bertie's turn to express astonishment.

"Yes," went on Algernon. "They all do it, old and young. Prattling infancy, like you; decrepit senility, like my unfortunate father. All alike fall victims to the Force of Life flaming in Leonora. I alone am exempt, which proves . . . but I need pursue that theme no further. The queer thing about it is that there's no apparent reason for such wholesale conquests. She's not remarkably pretty, you know: only kittenish. And she's not remarkably clever either: only pert. In fact, I think she's a most disagreeable person."

Bertie was thoroughly offended.

"I won't have her talked about like that," he cried.

"In fact," rising to his feet, "rather than hear her abused I'll take my leave."

"Don't be an ass, Bertie," said Algernon. "I was only doing it for your good. I don't like to see you throwing yourself away."

Bertie was something mollified by this, and there were some very tempting hot cakes on the tea-table; so he sat down again, suggesting that they should drop the subject. Fearful lest it should recur, he started quickly on a new one.

"I say, Algernon," he said. "I'm thinking of joining the Volunteers."

"You *what*?" cried Algernon.

"You're very touchy this afternoon," said Bertie, plaintively. "I said that I'm thinking of joining the Volunteers. What's wrong in that?"

"My teaching seems to have very little effect on you," replied Algernon, grimly.

"But that is quite in accordance with your teaching," remonstrated Bertie. "War, bloody war, to purge the land of the unfit, and prepare the way for the superman."

"These people don't want the superman," said Algernon. "They want peace and social reform. They want to protect the unfit. They want to revive this decadent old nation. They want all the old-fashioned retrograde ideals."

"Only the other day," said Bertie, "I was talking to a chap who said your ideas were old-fashioned and retrograde."

"You seem to think ideas are like eggs," said Algernon. "An idea isn't necessarily bad because it's old."

"Oh," said Bertie. "Hasn't your principal argument against all my former ideas always been that they were old?"

"Excuse me, Bertie," said Algernon, "if in spite of the muddled state of your mind, you will try to recollect my argument correctly, you will see that it was nothing of the kind."

"I can't remember," replied Bertie, helplessly. "It

was all so deep and complicated. It persuaded me at the time, but I can't remember it."

"Well," said Algernon, "you can hardly expect me to go over my whole philosophy again, all for your benefit, can you?"

"I suppose not," Bertie admitted. "But I'm always nicely stuck when people ask me what your supermen really want."

At this Algernon put on his most consequential air, and in a portentous voice descanted as follows:

"We want to solve the eternal problem of man, the relation of the strong and weak. Two solutions have hitherto been proposed. First came Christianity preaching charity, so protecting the weak against the strong, and thus bringing about an appalling increase in the numbers of the weak. Then came Socialism preaching equality, so setting the weak alongside the strong if not above them. Each of these philosophies is opposed to the other, but both agree in preserving the unfit at the expense of the fit. Then came the strong voice of Nietzsche preaching the superman, the elimination of the unfit. I look to a universal war to accomplish this. I want the world to plunge into a veritable bath of blood, and so purge itself of the weak and sickly and foolish who prey parasitically upon it. Then shall the Life Force fulfil itself and give place to the superman.

"And what is a superman?" asked Bertie.

"I've often told you," replied Algernon, "that I am the nearest approach to a superman in this city. I may even lay claim to be one. I have perfect eyes, perfect hearing, perfect teeth, an acute sense of smell, and extraordinary health and vitality. I have——"

"I know all that," said Bertie. "I don't see that it's anything out of the way either. Many a D.M.P. man could say the same. Their physical tests are pretty stringent, you know."

"Yes," replied Algernon, "but they are only men."

"What's a man, then?"

"Man is a weak, imperfect creature, who, if he have any good quality, inevitably has it counterbalanced by some greater defect. Your D.M.P. man, for instance, is

big of bone and brawny of muscle, but he has a brain of putty. Man is a creature of moods and impulses, of instincts and appetites, a slave to his emotions, a cringer to gods of his own creation, the plaything of the opposite sex, a fool, a sniggerer, a liar, a shuffler, a sluggard, a coward and a snob. You're a man."

"Well," said Bertie, "if you think me all this, and wish to exterminate me and my kind, why do you take the trouble to teach me your doctrines?"

"By the ridiculous laws of our so-called civilisation I am not allowed to kill you actually. Therefore I wish to kill you potentially. I don't want you to marry and propagate your ineffectual breed on the earth."

"But if my breed is so very ineffectual, what chance has it to survive, anyhow?"

"What is unfit to grow should not be propagated," said Algernon.

Bertie suddenly gave way beneath the intellectual pressure of the argument and stammered out: "I don't care; I'll marry if I like. That is, if Leonora will have me."

"Even if you are bent on marrying," said Algernon, shifting the ground of attack, "I don't see why it must be Leonora."

"Why not?"

"Well, for one thing she's half-a-dozen years older than you are."

Bertie was unprepared for this, but he faced it bravely. "What matter?" he said.

"Why, my dear young friend, it makes all the difference in the world, especially with such a chicken as you. Leonora's no chicken, I can tell you."

Bertie had read many novels in his day, and knew what was required of him at this point. He drew himself to his full height and said quietly: "I beg, Algernon, that you will not speak of that lady without fitting reverence. In fact, I would prefer that her name be omitted from the conversation."

"As you please," said Algernon, shrugging his shoulders. "It wasn't I that introduced it."

There was silence for a moment. Then Bertie reopened the question.

"You asked me not to marry, Algernon," he said. "I don't think that's a fair thing to ask a chap. Were you ever in love yourself?"

"No," replied Algernon. "When I decide to take a wife, I shall go and seek for a suitable one coldly and calmly. The superman has no emotions."

"I'm sorry for you," said Bertie.

"Your sorrow is thrown away, then. The superman isn't happy in his isolation; but neither is he unhappy. He who would perform great things must forswear happiness and seek instead the satisfaction of accomplishment."

Bertie said nothing, but poured himself out another cup of tea.

III.

Punctually on the stroke of seven, dinner was served in the Wolverhampton household. It was ever a gloomy meal, for, just as Algernon ruled at the works, Henrietta ruled at home, and her notion of order was monotony and rigidity. She never allowed the lights in the house to be lit until the darkness had reached the stage of being uncomfortable. She never allowed fires after the Vernal Equinox or before the Winter Solstice. Meals were as regular as the Calendar. Breakfast was always the same: bacon and eggs on week-days, bacon and sausage on Sundays. Dinner varied unchangingly: clear soup on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, thick soup on the other days; beef on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, mutton on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays; cod and haddock were eaten on each alternate Friday (for Algernon had to conform to the rules of the house, even though he had forsaken Christ for Nietzsche); of sweets there were seven, one dedicated to each day of the week. Lunch was the only meal where the unexpected was likely to happen, as it was just a re-hash of the previous day's dinner, and might take a variety of shapes.

So at seven o'clock Algernon and Henrietta drew out their chairs at each end of the long table and sat down. Their faces were dark and lowering, for Mr. Wolverhampton was not yet in, and to be late was in their eyes the unpardonable sin. They were always punctual themselves, and their father had never dared to be late before. It was during the carving of the joint that the truant returned. His face and manner betrayed a mixture of emotions. There was an element of shameful fright in his eyes and awkwardness in his carriage which indicated that the old feeling of awe in presence of his mentors was not quite gone; there was a certain air of defiance in him too, showing that it was wearing off; and pervading his whole manner was a certain indefinable something which told Henrietta at least (Algernon was less perceptive) that the old regime had passed away.

Psychologically Mr. Wolverhampton had chosen the best possible moment for entering the room. Algernon and Henrietta belonged to that type of person whose anger rises by slow degrees to boiling point, when it either boils over or evaporates in steam. Had he arrived before dinner he would have come upon the heating up stage, when his appearance would have been enough to bring it to the boiling point instantaneously; had he been in time for the soup his arrival would have coincided with the natural boiling point; as it was he came in when evaporation was complete and they were simmering down into sullenness.

"Well, sir?" said Algernon.

At once Mr. Wolverhampton realised how things stood. The last relics of his nervousness fell from him, and he said, jauntily: "Well, old chap. Had a good half-holiday?"

Algernon was too astonished to make any reply, so his father turned his attention to Henrietta.

"Give me a good cut of that mutton, old girl," he said. "I'm as hungry as a horse; never mind about soup. I'm sure it was dishwater, anyway."

At such an insult to her housekeeping, Henrietta must have been furious. But the thing was so unprecedented

that she knew not what to say. Moreover, she was conscious somehow or other of a change in her father. What it was she could not say: there was certainly a curious light in his eye—lunacy, perhaps. At any rate silence was the easiest and safest course, so without a word she helped him generously to mutton.

While F. F. was satisfying a very healthy appetite, his children looked at each other across the table. Each looked to the other for guidance, so each looked into questioning eyes and remained unanswered. Then they looked at their father. From him they learned nothing. He chewed away with bovine contentment, keeping his eyes on his plate lest they might betray the little divil that was dancing in his brain. (Yes: divil. There's all the difference in the world between a divil and a devil, but what it is you can only guess from the sound of the word.).

Henrietta and Algernon were in such a state of perturbation that they only picked at the next course—an excellent semolina pudding it was—while F. F. gorged himself to the full. When he had finished, came the final outrage. Out of his pocket he took a paper bag, and, offering it to Henrietta, said: "Try a sugared almond."

"No, thank you," replied Henrietta, icily.

"I know I needn't offer one to you, Algy." Algy fairly jumped at the name, but Mr. Wolverhampton did not appear to notice it. Quite unconcernedly he dived his hand into the bag, and extracting a pink ellipsoid conveyed it to his mouth and sucked it ruminantly.

At last Algernon was able to speak.

"Look here, father," he said, "this is really the last straw. Will you kindly explain your extraordinary behaviour to-day?"

Mr. Wolverhampton looked at his son pensively for a minute. He was not quite sure what to say. The revolution had come about so easily that its success astonished its author (which is a way that revolutions have). He had expected a hard fight for his freedom; had looked forward to it with repugnance, for he was a peaceful soul; and here he was winning hands down. Henrietta had

clearly shown that she was afraid of him; here was Algernon addressing him with quite unprecedented politeness. Revolt was proving itself more comfortable by far than submission. Crunching the first sugared almond in his teeth, he began to suck a second, delivering this lecture the while:

"I'm tired of this life I've been leading. There's no meaning in it. It's about time I had a bit of my own way and did what I liked. I want a bit of fun in my life and adventure."

He shifted the sugared almond from one cheek to the other and resumed:

"I'm head of the firm of F. F. Wolverhampton and Son, and I'm master of this house. So I don't see why I shouldn't enjoy myself. I had a most enjoyable day to-day. So had the men. It's a pity you didn't take advantage of the half-holiday I granted to do the same. Algernon, in future every Wednesday will be a half-holiday, and work will cease every day at five. People do need sunshine, you know."

How completely Algernon was defeated was shown by his next sentence. He actually began to reason with his father.

"Wednesday's a bad day," he said. "The 'Exotic Review' goes to press then."

"Well, we'll make it Thursday," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

Algernon said nothing. Henrietta was stupefied at her brother's collapse. The revolution had triumphed.

IV.

If adventure was what Mr. Wolverhampton wanted, he had not long to wait for the promise of it. When he came down to breakfast next morning (he came down a quarter of an hour late to celebrate the new regime) he found a letter on his plate. It was written in a bold hand, with many flourishes about the capital letters.

"Your conduct yesterday was the conduct of a boor," read Mr. Wolverhampton, "and regarding it as such I shall not deign to notice it beyond warning you that it

must not be repeated. Should you disregard this warning, nay more, should you ever again presume to address to Miss Montgomery a word more than the courtesy of ordinary social intercourse requires, or to pay more attention to her existence than you would to that of any other lady with whom you are as slightly acquainted, I shall be compelled to take notice of your action.

“ Very summarily,

“ Be warned in time,

“ ERNEST O'MAHONY.”

“ The actor chap!” cried Mr. Wolverhampton, and chuckled.

Algernon and Henrietta stared at him, but he vouchsafed no explanation. He tackled his breakfast greedily.

CHAPTER III.

PROGRESS OF THE REVOLUTION.

I.

IT is the unknown that terrifies; the unexpected that conquers. Had Algernon and Henrietta had the faintest inkling of what was going on in their father's mind during the early months of the summer; had they the slightest suspicion of the presence of that element of strength in his character which made action on his part possible; had they, in fact, been prepared at all for the blow, F. F.'s victory would never have been so easily achieved, might conceivably have been altogether prevented. But they had been taken by surprise. They were stupefied, just as a cat would be if the mouse it was playing with were suddenly to spring at its throat. And so they were worsted.

It must not be supposed, however, that they gave in at once. When the first shock was over they attempted to put up a resistance, but it was too late. His victory left F. F. a changed man. Gone was his timidity and diffidence, at any rate towards his children. With the vision of Leonora ever before him he fought to secure the ascendancy which was essential to his freedom, and defeated all attempts at counter-revolution.

Also he took the offensive. Next door to the Wolverhampton printing works was a large ironmongery over whose doorway was inscribed the legend, "Established in the Reign of George the First." This inscription had always irritated Mr. Wolverhampton. He hated the snobbishness of its appeal to antiquity. "Apologising for the badness of their goods," he grunted to himself. He hated also its West Britishness, for though he was no politician, he was a good Irishman with a natural distrust of the garrison and an instinctive dislike of England.

A few days after the Revolution, as he was strolling in a leisurely manner down to the works his eye was caught by this inscription, and he stopped to contemplate it. He regarded it for a few minutes, and then laughed softly to himself. An idea had evidently occurred to him.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I'll put the lid on the ironmonger; it'll advertise me; and it'll annoy Algernon."

With these benevolent intentions he retired to his office.

Next morning when Algernon arrived at the office (he still kept to the old hours in spite of the bad example set by his father) he got a shock that brought him to a standstill before the door. Right across the front of the building, underneath the title of F. F. Wolverhampton and Son, was the legend in flaming gold:

ESTABLISHED IN THE REIGN OF RODERICK THE LAST.

In a fury of rage he strode into the front shop and demanded an explanation. The young lady in charge paused in her work of parcelling up the week's "Exotic Review," and said that as far as she knew the inscription had been painted up that morning by the orders of Mr. Wolverhampton. Algernon did not yet fully appreciate his position under the new regime. Diving to the back of the building he came upon the workman who had painted up the inscription and ordered him to obliterate it with black paint. The workman politely refused. He had been ordered to paint it up by Mr. Wolverhampton himself, he had expressly commanded him to disregard any interference which might be put in his way by Mr. Algernon. He was sorry, but the master's orders must be obeyed.

Furiously Algernon flung himself into his office to await the arrival of his father. He waited there on tenterhooks for nearly an hour; it seemed as if old F. F. had come down later than ever on purpose. At length Algernon heard him approach and enter his office, which was directly opposite Algernon's, on the other side of the corridor. Algernon waited a moment, and then springing to his feet crossed the corridor and entered his father's office. He came with denunciations on his lips, but there was a look in F. F.'s eyes that stifled them.

"Good morning," said F. F. "Do you want anything?"

Algernon sat down at the opposite end of the table.

"I want to have a talk with you," he said.

"Well, words are cheap."

"I want to know the meaning of that inscription over the door."

"The meaning?" queried F. F. "Surely to the supermanly intelligence the meaning is clear enough. Why, I can understand it myself."

"I mean, is it a joke, or a new advertising stunt, or a mere piece of folly, or what?"

"Nothing so deep as that, my boy. It's merely a protest. That ironmonger fellow next door badly needs taking down."

Algernon thought hard a moment before speaking again. He realised that it was necessary to reason with his father.

"Are you aware," he said at length, "that your inscription is deceptive. The ironmonger is quite correct in saying he was established in the reign of George the First. But we weren't even established in Ireland in Roderick's time."

"Weren't we?" exclaimed Mr. Wolverhampton.

"No. Don't imagine we're sprung from the dispossessed Celts, father. We're planters, sturdy colonists of good Teutonic blood. We're of the conquering race of the superman."

"Rubbish," said Mr. Wolverhampton; but there was anxiety in his voice. He was weak in ethnology.

"Fact," said Algernon, omnisciently.

"Damn it," said Mr. Wolverhampton, irascibly.

"I'm an Irishman. I feel it. I know it."

"My dear father," replied Algernon, "our very name proves our English descent. Wolverhampton. Not much of the Gael in that."

"H'm!" admitted Mr. Wolverhampton. "There's something in what you say. But you never know. Damned if I don't join the Gaelic League and find out."

"But meanwhile we'd better have that ridiculous inscription painted out," said Algernon.

Mr. Wolverhampton did not answer.

"Don't you think so?" said Algernon, persuasively.

Still no answer. Mr. Wolverhampton's eyes were vacant.

"Do you hear me?" demanded Algernon. Silence. Algernon furiously left the office.

II.

The idea of joining the Gaelic League had not come spontaneously into Mr. Wolverhampton's head. It was put there by Leonora. She was herself a strong Gael, and had expressed concern on learning that Mr. Wolverhampton took no interest in the revival of his native language. That was enough in itself to awaken a pseudo-enthusiasm of the kind in Mr. Wolverhampton's breast, but up to this it had carried him no further than the resolution-making stage.

Then, on the morning of the altercation with Algernon about the inscription, he had received a note from Leonora telling him how glad she was to think that her efforts had made him incline towards Gaelic things, and requesting him to accompany her to a concert of the Thirty-two Counties' Branch of the League that evening. The invitation came as a surprise to Mr. Wolverhampton, and he was not sure whether he was shocked or pleased by it. "What an extraordinary girl!" he said to himself, and then, remembering that she belonged to a rather Bohemian set, decided that her behaviour must be judged by other than conventional standards, and telephoned his acceptance. Leonora requested him to meet her in Grafton Street at half-past seven, saying that she would conduct him to the concert hall, and Mr. Wolverhampton spent the remainder of the day fidgeting about and watching the lagging hands of the clock.

At lunch time he told Henrietta (*told* her; with never an "if you please" or "would you mind?") to have dinner a quarter of an hour earlier than usual, as he had to go out immediately after. Henrietta looked rebellion for a moment, but he stared her out. "Very well," she

said, adding to herself as a salve to her pride: "Better humour him, I suppose."

So at ten minutes to eight Mr. Wolverhampton found himself sitting in the stalls of the Rotunda between his divinity and a melancholy-looking young man with a very pale face and prematurely white hair, whom she introduced as Mr. Cavanagh. On the other side of Leonora was another young man, tall and lanky, with prominent cheek bones and a long nose, who began a conversation with her the moment she sat down, eventually interesting her so much that she gave him her whole attention, turning her graceful back towards the disgusted Mr. Wolverhampton, who was left, jealous and neglected, reading the items of the programme to while away the time.

As he sat thus, Mr. Cavanagh leant over towards him and said, in a carefully modulated voice, and with an expression of deliberate culture on his face:—

"Remarkably interesting programme, don't you think?"

"Er—remarkably," replied Mr. Wolverhampton, coming to himself.

"I see that Mr. Loftus is to sing a newly-discovered traditional song. Are you interested in traditional music, Mr. Wolverhampton?"

Mr. Wolverhampton said he was, but he knew nothing about it.

"Ah!" said Mr. Cavanagh, "it's marvellous! Unique! And they call us an uncivilised people! Now, I ask you, Mr. Wolverhampton, what peasantry in any country in the world, even in Germany itself, was ever known to produce spontaneously first-class music of an absolutely original kind, with a system of time and semi-tones peculiar to itself, and to hand it down by word of mouth from generation to generation?"

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"Extraordinary is too weak a term," replied Mr. Cavanagh. "There is no term in the language strong enough. English, of course, is a very defective language. The English mind seems to shrink from anything powerful or strong; this has left its mark on their language,

with the result that when one wishes to be emphatic one is driven to the use of hyperbole."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"A further result," went on Mr. Cavanagh, mellifluously, "is that, whereas familiarity breeds contempt, the over-worked hyperbole breaks down under the strain, becomes anæmic, and is used thereafter with a permanently weakened meaning. I will give you an example. Theatre managers were at one time content to call a production that filled the theatre 'a great success.' One day someone felt that this was not strong enough, and advertised his particular production 'a tremendous success.' With a word like that on the tapis, 'a great success' became colourless. After a time, 'tremendous' began to show anæmic symptoms, and 'stupendous' was brought in to fill its place. That meant that 'tremendous success' had now to be interpreted as meaning a fair-sized audience, while 'great success' meant positive failure. Do you follow me, or am I boring you?"

"Not at all," said Mr. Wolverhampton, stifling a yawn.

"Irish, on the other hand," resumed Mr. Cavanagh's smooth-flowing voice, "is a very complete and definitive language, in which every word has a single and restricted meaning. One would expect a corresponding restraint and definitiveness in the mentality of the race, but, strange to say, one does not. No doubt you are familiar with the too frequent recurrence of hyperbole in our political oratory, but probably its frequency in our poetry has escaped your notice."

"Yes," said Mr. Wolverhampton. He was wondering what sort of thing this "high purrbolay" (so he envisaged the word) might be, and was determined not to commit himself until he could find out.

"Yeats' use of hyperbole," went on Mr. Cavanagh, "is, of course, superb—do you not think so?"

"Yes," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"By the way, what did you think of that poem of his in this month's 'Manannan?'"

"Superb," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"You're right, sir. Superb is just the word. What inspiration! What craftsmanship! What delicate terms of prosody! What style! What polish! And the lyrical intensity of the thing!"

"Exactly," said Wolverhampton, wondering who Yeats was, and whether "Manannan" was an English or an American monthly.

"By the way," said Mr. Cavanagh, "I see that Loftus is singing his own translation of this traditional song, 'The Sword and the Fly,' I see he calls it. Charming Celtic symbolism, isn't it?"

"Charming," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"What do you think of Mr. Loftus' work?" enquired Mr. Cavanagh.

"Top hole," cried Mr. Wolverhampton, becoming suddenly excited and interested. But slang acted on Mr. Cavanagh like a spray of cold water on a cat. He realised that Mr. Wolverhampton was a low-brow and discontinued the conversation, but before F. F. had time to notice the silence, the curtain rose and the concert began.

It was a bilingual concert, for the Thirty-two Counties was a notoriously lax branch. Moreover, the concert had been organised to raise funds, and so had to appeal to the general public, who, whatever their sympathy with the cause of the revival of their native language, could hardly be expected to pay money to listen to a succession of songs and recitations which they could not understand. F. F. enjoyed himself immensely. Leonora had finished her conversation with her neighbour, and now gave the little printer her full attention, commenting graciously on one item, listening patiently to his comments on another, explaining the meaning of the Irish items.

At last the time came for Mr. Loftus to sing his song. Mr. Wolverhampton watched eagerly for the appearance of his hero, the author of "Come On," and inspiration of his own recent bid for freedom. He clapped vigorously when the poet walked on to the stage, for the latter in no way fell short of his idealisation of him. He was a well-made young man of medium height, with a humorous, almost cynical cast of countenance. His wavy

brown hair was well brushed and short, and he wore evening dress of elegant art. There was, in fact, nothing of the long-haired, bow-tied poet about him, which fact, coupled with his known aversion to intellectual society, his fondness for the companionship of young men destitute of any claim to intellectual eminence, and the sane character of his writings, caused most Dublin people to refuse him the title of poet altogether, the poor creatures being so accustomed to associate art with obscurity and neurasthenia that they were incapable of imagining that a normal man could be an artist at all. Apart from Mr. Wolverhampton's ignorant appreciation, his reception was a lukewarm one, but he merely smiled a little more cynically as he came to the front of the platform.

Then he commenced to sing. Mr. Wolverhampton, who had been expecting a rollicking ditty, somewhat in the manner of "Come On," received rather a shock at the peculiar form of melody which issued from his lips. It seemed to F. F. to be altogether timeless (and there were semi-tones in disconcerting places, while the singer sometimes dwelt on a note so long that F. F. fancied he must be pre-occupied with something else—like a woman singing over her washtub.

And these were the words of the song:

"A maiden fa-ir in a backyard strolling,
A beautiful you-u-uth came up to her,
With his lily-white to-o-ongue sweet words he spoke in,
And asked her would she care for to be his girl.

"O no, good sir-ir-ir, I have too many;
I must ask you-u-ou to be getting on.
I've always had woo-oo-ooers in plenty—
I'm the son of Gilligan's daughter, Mary Ann.

"He took his swo-o-rd and killed a fly-y,
And brushed its corpse off his nose with his rosy hand,
And then he too-oo-ook his farewell mildly,
And rode away from the child of Gilligan."

"Is not that superb?" said Mr. Cavanagh to F. F., while murmurs of intelligent appreciation ran round the

hall. "I think Loftus must really be a genius after all. That anti-cultural attitude of his must be a pose."

"I suppose so," said Mr. Wolverhampton, who was much addicted to innocuous funning. Mr. Cavanagh, however, did not see it, and resumed:

"He does the traditional intonation like a native, and his translation of the song is a perfect gem. Such a perfect reproduction of the Gaelic mode of prosody is exceedingly rare and difficult. Did you ever see such skilful use of assonance?"

"Never," said Mr. Wolverhampton, and was saved from further questioning by the commencement of the next item.

When the concert was over, F. F. and Leonora moved towards the door accompanied by the lanky young man who had so monopolised Leonora during the evening, and whom she introduced to F. F. as Mr. Jack Molloy. At the door they were met by Mr. Lucius Loftus, who after saluting Leonora, turned to Mr. Molloy and said: "Pay up."

Molloy promptly handed over a sovereign, which he had evidently held in readiness.

"What was the bet?" asked Leonora.

"That song," replied Loftus.

"What do you mean?"

"O, it was just a bit of a parody I scribbled a week ago. Jack bet me a sovereign I couldn't palm it off on a Gaelic League branch."

"I should have barred the Thirty-two Counties," said Molloy, ruefully.

At this point Mr. Cavanagh's voice intervened.

"Did I hear you say, Mr. Loftus," he asked, "that that song of yours was not genuine?"

Loftus nodded.

"Then I think you have been guilty of very bad taste," said Mr. Cavanagh. "Many people have been imposed upon, though I myself felt sure something was wrong."

"What about his superb assonances?" interjected Mr. Wolverhampton, getting out the last word with difficulty.

Mr. Cavanagh stood for a moment, staring awkwardly, tried in vain to say something, and walked off in disgust.

"Good for you," said Loftus to Mr. Wolverhampton, while Molloy chuckled and Leonora uttered her silvery laugh.

The party got somewhat broken up by the jostling crowd in the doorway, and Leonora had an opportunity to whisper to Jack Molloy: "Take Mr. Wolverhampton off my hands for a bit. I want to talk to Lucius. . . . He's good material for anecdotes," she added.

So when he reached the street, F. F. saw Leonora walking rapidly ahead with the poet while Jack Molloy was evidently desirous of his own company. He tried to hurry after Leonora, but Jack laid a hand on his arm.

"Did you enjoy the concert?" he asked.

"Yes," said F. F., with his eyes far ahead.

"Weren't you rather bored by that fellow Cavanagh?"

"Not very. . . . But we'd better keep up with the others."

"O, they're all right. This Cavanagh fellow is an awful ass . . . always spouting intellect, you know. Doesn't mind when or where. If you met him at a football match or bathing, or in the middle of the Sahara Desert, he'd stop you and say: 'What do you think of that last poem of Yeats?' or, 'Is Ibsen's technique greater than his philosophy?'"

"Yes, yes," said F. F., impatiently, still watching Leonora and Loftus, who were vanishing rapidly from view.

"One time," said Molloy, "I was hurrying to catch a train when he stopped me in Westmoreland Street. 'How do you do?' says he. 'Have you seen the latest play at the Eclectic?'" 'No,' says I. 'Ah then,' says he, 'you've missed an intellectual treat.' 'Hardly,' says I. 'I know the sort of stuff Thingimajig writes—Sham-Ibsen alky-talk, and so on.' 'Then you think action is necessary to a play?' says he. 'What a narrow view.' Well I was just wondering how on earth to get rid of the fellow when I saw a watering cart come up the road. He had his back to it, and never guessed what was coming. You know the way they shoot the water out on all sides? Well, Cavanagh was so absorbed in Ibsen that he hadn't time to dodge, and got it in the neck,—I mean the trousers. When he came to himself I had scooted."

F. F. tried to laugh.

"Have you heard the story of George Moore and the fish and chip shop?" asked Jack.

"Yes," said F. F. He hadn't, of course, but he was in no mood for further anecdotes.

"Or the story of Cyril Umpleby and the Howth guns?"

"Yes."

Jack Molloy was baffled, and relapsed into silence for a moment.

"I bet you never heard the story of how Lucius Loftus didn't take up farming?" he said at length.

F. F. dared not say yes again.

"It's rather funny," said Molloy, giggling a little, "though it involves a frightful amount of human suffering. Some time ago Lucius found poetry didn't pay, so he thought he'd take up farming instead. He had an uncle in the country who's a farmer, and he thought he'd go and ask him for advice how to begin. Now this uncle of his is about the ugliest man in Ireland. He has great bulgy eyes and fat, red cheeks and a most appalling nose, something like a cross between a strawberry and a mangel. That was bad enough to start with, but the day Lucius arrived he found him working in a field with his face all red and swollen and his eyes bunged up and bits of raw meat fastened on to him here and there. And as for his nose. . . . Well, you can imagine what that was like. The poor devil, you see, had been attacked by a swarm of bees when he was trying to get their honey. . . ."

Molloy burst into uncontrolled laughter at this point. Mr. Loftus senior's sufferings evidently tickled him immensely.

"Well," he said, recovering with difficulty, "Lucius didn't like to bother him with his affairs at such a painful moment, so he withdrew and came back a week later. This time"

Another paroxysm of laughter seized upon Molloy.

"He found his uncle in a worse condition than ever. He (more laughter) He was positively ghastly to look at. He'd been kicked in the face . . . he! he! he! . . . by a horse."

Molloy gave his laughter full scope now, and when the fit was over, added:

"That's why Lucius didn't take up farming."

At that moment they came up to Leonora's door in Anne Street. Lucius was saying good-night to her. He saw the laughter on Molloy's face.

"Isn't he a gruesome beast," he said to Leonora. "He's been telling the story of my uncle and the bees again."

"How often have you told it, Jack?" asked Leonora, with a smile.

"A million times, I'll bet," said Lucius.

"You people don't seem to see half the humour of that," said Jack. "When I think of his face . . . you know, if it had been any other sort of face . . ." And again he burst out laughing.

"I'm off" said Leonora, and opened the door with her latchkey. "Good-night, all," she said, and shut the door.

The others said good-night quickly to Mr. Wolverhampton and left him. He moved away slowly towards home, feeling rather lonely.

III.

Soon afterwards F. F. joined the League and began to learn Irish. To his dismay he found himself in a different class from Leonora; he had not known that she was not a beginner. His class consisted of two bright school-boys, a middle-aged lady, an old man, a young man and a young girl (evidently lovers) and himself. They were taught by a young man named Conchubhar O Galchabhair, who had long hair and wild-looking eyes, and who used the *Módh Direach* enthusiastically and unintelligently.

"Bosca," he would say, placing a large box on the table in front of him.

"Bosca," they would all repeat.

Then he would say in a tone of eager interrogation:

"An bosca é?"

And answer, with great contentment and satisfaction:

"Seadh. Is bosca é."

So far so good. But there were snags ahead.

"Sé sin mo bhosca," he said. Then to Mr. Wolverhampton, "A Frédéric, an é sin mo bhosca?"

" Seadh. Sé sin mo bhosca."

" O, ní h'eadh! Ní h'eadh! Ní hé sin do bhosca. Sé sin mo bhosca."

" That's what I *said*," cried F. F. " I *said* mo bhosca."

Anois, anois! Ná h-abair é as Béurla, má is é do thoil é. Ní hé sin do bhosca; sé sin mo bhosca."

" Exactly," said F. F. " Sé sin mo bhosca."

Conchubhar was exasperated. He handed the box to F. F. and said: " *Do* bhosca." Then he took it back and said " *mo* bhosca."

Then he handed it again to F. F. and said:

" Sé sin do bhosca. Anois, an é sin do bhosca."

" Seadh," said F. F. shirking the difficulty.

" Seadh sé sin . . ." with an interrogative tone.

" Do bhosca," said F. F.

" Tut-tut," said Conchubhar, which is no language at all, so it was still Módh Direach. He thought for a moment, seemed to swear under his breath, and, flinging Módh Direach to the winds, said:

" Can't you understand? 'Mo is my' and 'do is your.'"

" O, I see," said F. F., " and what does all the rest of it mean?"

Either Irish is a very difficult language, or Módh Direach is a difficult way to teach, or Conchubhair was a bad teacher, or Mr. Wolverhampton very stupid. I am not prepared to say which.

IV.

So Mr. Wolverhampton began to learn Irish and to call his friends Seán and Séumas, and to say "lá breagh" and "Dia dhuit" and "go raibh maith agat."

And one day he said to Algernon:—

" You were wrong about our name being English. Wolverhampton is really a corruption of the old Irish name, MacMhuilbhireantuin."

" Spell it," said Algernon scornfully.

Mr. Wolverhampton did so.

Algernon laughed.

"You may laugh as much as you like," said his father, "but that's the name that's going up over the office to-morrow."

"What?" roared Algernon.

"Be calm," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"How can I be calm in face of such a piece of folly?"

"Folly?" queried F. F.

"It is worse than folly. It is a retrograde step, a step back to the dark ages."

"I don't appreciate your objection," said F. F.

"No, you wouldn't," replied Algernon. "To an ordinary man like you, no doubt, a dead language is a delightful object to sentimentalise about. But to me it is mere folly, and mischievous folly too. Man must be surpassed, and I can only regard with abhorrence any attempt to repair a broken link in the rusty old chain that connects him with the past."

"Algernon," said Mr. Wolverhampton, "you are an ass."

"Any fool can call any wise man names," said Algernon. "But I won't press that. If I can't appeal to your intellect I can at least touch your business instincts. What will our customers think?"

"The firm of Wolverhampton is well enough known to get on without any signboard at all. Besides, 'Printers' still stands in English, so you needn't be afraid we'll be mistaken for a butcher's or haberdasher's."

"That's not what I'm driving at, at all. I mean that an Irish signboard may be all very well over a huckster's shop in Amiens-street, but it won't do for a first-class printer."

"My dear Algy," replied Mr. Wolverhampton; "how can you expect to be taken for the superman if you talk snobbery that would disgrace a genteel bourgeois?"

"Even the superman must live, father," said Algernon weakly.

"Ah, that's better," replied his father. "Once it used to be, *'Only the superman shall live.'*"

There was a momentary pause, and then Algernon began again:

"So nothing will induce you to re-consider this monumental folly?"

"O go away and don't bother me," replied F. F. impatiently."

Utterly routed, Algernon crept away.

"Slán leat!" called out Mr. Wolverhampton after his retreating figure.

That evening as Algernon left the works a painter was putting the final flourishes to a golden inscription that read:

"MacMhuilbhireantúin agus a Mhac."

V.

Matters were getting desperate. So, Algernon and Henrietta agreed as they sat one evening over the drawing-room fire back-biting their father.

"In June," said Algernon "he started singing in his bath."

"He has a poor ear," commented Henrietta.

"We should never have allowed it," said Algernon.

"In July," said Henrietta, "he was late for breakfast."

"Three minutes late," commented Algernon.

"We should have put our foot down then," said Henrietta.

"On the tenth of July," said Algernon, "he fell in love."

"With Leonora Montgomery of all people," was Henrietta's comment.

"He ought to have been locked up," said Algernon.

"On the 15th of July," said Henrietta, "he was late for dinner."

"And ate sugared almonds out of a bag for dessert," added Algernon.

"In August," said Henrietta, "he joined the Irish volunteers."

"And drilled," said Algernon, "and bought a rifle."

"And went on manœuvres," added Henrietta.

"Leaving bits of his withered old hide on every hedge and barbed wire fence in the country," pursued Algernon.

"Making himself and us ridiculous," protested Henrietta.

"In September he joined the Gaelic League," said Algernon.

"And sat in a class with a lot of childreu," grumbled Henrietta, "learning the Irish for 'fine day' and 'young cow.'"

"I shall always," commented Algernon, "regard with abhorrence any attempt to repair a broken link in the rusty old chain that connects us with the past."

"He dances at ceilidhes, too," said Henrietta.

"Yet another rusty link," said Algernon.

"And he must look so ridiculous capering around in those jigs and reels," said Henrietta.

"And now comes this tomfool of an inscription over the works," cried Algernon with a crescendo of exasperation.

"Its awful," agreed Henrietta.

"We should never have let it begin," said Algernon.

"Quite right," said Henrietta.

"We've been fools," said Algernon.

"What's done is done," said Henrietta, "and you can't get away from it."

"But what can be done?" cried Algernon in despair.

"He gets worse and worse," said Henrietta. "He keeps on going to Irish classes and ceilidhes."

"And dances pas seuls to barrel-organs," moaned Algernon. "I've seen him."

"And sings in his bath worse than ever."

"And openly courts Leonora . . ."

"... who leads him on . . ."

"... and laughs at him in her sleeve."

"He's bought a Volunteer uniform too . . ."

"And wears it in the street."

"It's awful," said Henrietta.

"But what can we do?" repeated Algernon.

It was a hard question to answer.

"I should have put my foot down," said Henrietta, "when he started singing in his bath."

CHAPTER IV.

MR. WOLVERHAMPTON AMONG THE INTELLECTUALS.

I.

MR. WOLVERHAMPTON stood in maidenly hesitation in front of a bookshop at the corner of Grafton-street. He looked into the gloomy interior of the shop and took a retrograde step. Like a nervous bather he could not brace himself to a straight plunge, but had to insinuate himself in bit by bit. He turned to the window and began to study the titles of the books exposed there.

F. F. was going to buy a book; hence his timidity. Though he made his living by printing them, he had never bought a book in his life before, and only exceptional circumstances had driven him to buy one now.

Exceptional circumstances? Love, of course. It was being steadily driven into Mr. Wolverhampton's imagination that unless he could cultivate some sort of intellect he would have no means of entertaining Leonora, still less any chance of wooing and winning her. Jack Molloy had monopolised most of her attention at the Gaelic League concert a few weeks ago, and he had been unable to cut into their conversation. But this incident was only one of many. He had been meeting her frequently all this time, at teas, garden parties, at various entertainments, and always her attention had been taken from him by young men who could talk to her about intellectual things. F. F. had been thoroughly disheartened. He felt her slipping away from him, and had lost all his early confidence of manner. Even Ernest O'Mahony, who at one time looked upon him with such jealous eyes and sent him such ferocious warnings, now seemed to regard him as a back number, and looked upon his efforts to court Leonora with indifference.

So. F. F. like the ardent lover he was, had resolved to become intellectual, and as a first step thereto had come down to Grafton-street to purchase a copy of the plays of Anton Tchekoff. At that time, you see, there was a rage for Russia among the intellectuals. All of them were reading Russian novels, some of them drinking Russian tea and smoking Russian cigarettes, a few were even discussing Russian psychology, while the Eclectic Theatre Company were producing Russian plays at irregular intervals. One of these was to be produced the very next week, a play by a man with a most extraordinary name which no two people seemed to pronounce alike, but whom all were united in hailing as the world's greatest dramatic genius. Leonora called him Tchekoff, but Ernest O'Mahony, who was a bit of a purist, suggested proper pronunciation was Tchaykoff. Others were in favour of Chehoff; while Mr. Cavanagh, who had once studied Russian for a month in the Berlitz School, asserted that the word was pronounced Tshayhoff. Jack Molloy, however, said: "You just ask for the dramatic works of Checkoff and you'll be all right. They're not worth reading anyhow." And here stood F. F. trying to make up his mind to enter that shop.

He slipped in, eventually, under cover of another man, and faced the horrors within. Books. Books in row upon row along the walls. Books stacked upon tables. Books everywhere. Mr. Wolverhampton wondered how on earth the people of Dublin could ever get through so many books. There was an air of quiet sedateness too about the place, which completely differentiated it from any other kind of shop. There was no bustle of business; all was studious repose. The customers walked quietly about examining the covers of books, or stood aloof reading some books they could not afford to buy, while the shopmen remained unobtrusively in the background, or chatted urbanely with one or two of the customers. Mr. Wolverhampton felt like an intruder or like a heathen entering a place of worship. He shrank from disturbing any of the shopmen so far as to request them to attend to him, so following the example of the others he made a tour of the book shelves looking for the title he wanted.

Presently he reached a shelf that caught his attention immediately. It was the Popular Novelist's shelf, and among its contents was a Garvice novel, which he had not yet read, and whose title, in the mood in which he then was, promised all sorts of alluring possibilities. It was called "Only a Girl's Love." Trembling with eagerness Mr. Wolverhampton took it from its place and began to read. Tchekoff was forgotten.

He had read about a chapter and a half when he became conscious that someone was standing close to him. He looked up. It was one of the shopmen. Mr. Wolverhampton, not being used to the ways of book shops, began immediately to feel like a guilty child caught stealing jam. He coloured slightly and closed the book.

"Anything I can get for you, sir?" asked the man suavely.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Wolverhampton. "I want—er, I want——" But the name had slipped from F. F.'s memory. "I'll tell you in a minute," he said desparately, and began to think hard. It was no use. The name refused to come. The shopman smiled in a superior sort of way, and asked:

"What *kind* of book is it?"

"Plays," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"Shaw?" asked the shopman.

"Quite," replied F. F., thinking the man must be English.

"I mean *Bernard Shaw*," said the shopman, patiently, thinking the same of F. F.

"No. Some Russian chap or other."

"Tchekoff," suggested a deep voice over F. F.'s shoulder. F. F. turned round quickly and confronted the stern visage of Ernest O'Mahony.

"Hello! That you?" said F. F. "How did you guess what I wanted. . . . The works of Check off," he informed the shopman, who went away in search of them.

"Yes. It is I," said Ernest. "Why have you disregarded my warnings?"

"What warnings?"

"The letter I sent you the other day."

"That? O, was that a warning? I thought it was a joke."

"It was no joke, as you'll quickly find out. Miss Montgomery informed me yesterday when I asked her to go with me to the Eclectic that she had already promised to go with you. Is that a fact?"

"Surely you don't doubt the lady's word?"

"Then it *is* true? You admit it. Very well, sir. Your interference is a thing I will not tolerate. I warn you once more that if you go to the Eclectic with Miss Montgomery you will regret it."

"Impossible," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"Think so if you like," said O'Mahony. "But," he added dramatically, "I shall be there."

"I shall be delighted to see you," said F. F. to O'Mahony's retreating back.

The shopman returned with a copy of Tchekoff's works. It cost F. F. six shillings.

"H'm," he grunted, glancing through it with a professional eye, "cost price ninepence halfpenny."

II.

The scholarly prelude to Mr. Wolverhampton's visit to the Eclectic Theatre was the direct outcome of his unfortunate visit the previous week to the Abbey.

It had been his first visit to that "cradle of the revival." Indeed its very name had been unknown to him until he had heard it from Leonora's own lips. Soon after the discovery he had taken Leonora to see "The Well of the Saints," and she had chosen to go on Tuesday of all nights of the week, Tuesday being the day when, as she told F. F., "all the intellectuals would be there." So they were too, and she pointed them all out to F. F.

"That man there with the dreamy eyes and the bow tie is Yeats—Yeats, the poet, you know. The quiet man over there at the end of the same row is his brother Jack, the artist. That's Lennox Robinson over beyond with the hair, and the bearded man behind you with the

folded arms and the eyebrows—don't look—is Darrell Figgis. That old lady just coming in at the door is Lady Gregory. She wrote "The Gaol Gate," which they're acting to-night. That man in the back row looking over his moustache is Douglas Hyde, and the man near the pillar there with the beard, is Ernest Boyd, the critic.

"What's a critic," asked F. F. innocently.

"A man who makes a living by misinterpreting better men's books," replied Leonora.

"Do people actually get paid for doing that?" asked Mr. Wolverhampton, who took everything literally, and on whom epigrams were quite thrown away.

"They do," replied Leonora. "A critic has only to give a wrong version of another man's plot and throw in a few words of abuse and he gets a couple of guineas a column for it—which is often a good deal more than the poor author gets for the book."

"But what's the idea," asked Mr. Wolverhampton, very puzzled to know why such a thoroughly superfluous trade should be so well paid. "What are these critics for?"

"Ah, that's rather a poser. Lucius Loftus says they're employed just to give the newspapers an intellectual tone, but I don't agree with him. I rather think their use is as short guides to culture."

Mr. Wolverhampton's face took on such an expression of intelligent comprehension that she felt quite sure he did not understand her meaning, so she proceeded to explain.

"You see, the would-be intellectuals are all either too poor to buy books or too lazy to read them, but none are so humble as not to want to talk about them. They can do that by reading the reviews, which give them an idea of the plot and suggestions as to whether they may praise or blame a book without risk to their reputations for culture. Three-quarters of the people you'll hear talking learnedly about any book have never read anything but the reviews of it, and I know people who would think nothing of discoursing for an hour or so on Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason,' or the 'Ethics of Aristotle,' after seeing a five-line notice of a new edition in a Dublin paper."

"You don't say so," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

The orchestra finished playing the overture to "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and the curtain rose on the gloomy scenario of "The Gaol Gate." There was a hush in the theatre only broken by a faint buzzing sound somewhere at the back of the stage. Then one of the two cloaked female figures on the stage spoke in a homely accent and a richly musical voice.

* * * * *

Mr. Wolverhampton sat through the play in a state of helpless stupefaction. It was unlike anything he had ever seen in a theatre before. For him 'the theatre' meant Pantomime, Musical Comedy or Farce; he went there 'to be amused,' as people of his kind put it. He was not at all amused by this twilight conversation between two women and a policeman, and after ten minutes of patient waiting for the 'amusement' to begin, he resigned himself to the inevitable and sat on in patient boredom.

Then the curtain fell and the lights went up and Leonora was asking him what he thought of the piece. And Mr. Wolverhampton, blinking his dazzled eyes, answered gravely: "Very nice."

After an all too short interval, during which F. F. did his best to talk intelligently with Leonora and succeeded in making her smile tolerantly (or affectionately as he allowed himself to fancy) upon his ingenuousness, the curtain rose upon the, to Mr. Wolverhampton, incomprehensible ironies of "The Well of the Saints." He made a brave attempt to enjoy the piece, but unavailingly, and once more he gave himself up to the stoical endurance of boredom. One advantage, however, he discovered in this play which the previous one had lacked: the stage was not darkened, so that by glancing stealthily sideways every now and again he could catch a glimpse of Leonora's profile lit up by its projected effulgence.

And then came the long interval—and disaster. He took his beautiful charge out to the vestibule for coffee, where the pair of them got entangled in a group of intellectual friends of hers—personages with brows of the most exalted pattern, people who in five minutes' conversation

could rattle off more words, incomprehensible to Mr. Wolverhampton, than he could find in an hour's hunt through the dictionary. F. F. heard their names vaguely. There was a thin-lipped, haughty-eyed woman—a Mrs. Heuston Harrington, with whom was her son Fred, whom she was trying to bring up in the way his father, the eminent critic, would have wished, but without much success, as anyone without material bias might have predicted after a glance at the youth's face. There was also a hawk-faced young man with a mighty hank of brown curls hanging out of one side of his head and seeming to give it a distinct list to starboard. This was Campbell Jones, the rising young Abbey playwright. Then there was Hyacinth Finnigan, the witty physician, and that dull creature Blatherton (nobody knew his Christian name), whose profession in life seems to be to haunt the vestibule of the Abbey. The white-haired Cavanagh was also present. It was quite a distinguished group.

As they tossed the great names in literature and art to and fro between them like so many cricket balls, poor F. F. listened in horrible bewilderment. Looking around the vestibule he saw half a dozen similar groups similarly occupied, and realised shamefully that he was the only silent person in the place. He felt that he was not doing Leonora credit, so as a cover to his silence he tried to sip his coffee, little dreaming that no true intellectual would ever think of eating or drinking so long as he had something to say. It was too hot, however—nothing can be quite so hot as hot coffee—so in sheer despair he rushed at the first gap that would admit him to the conversation.

Cavanagh had been speaking. His slow, measured sentences had reduced the remainder of the group to a temporary and unwilling silence.

“Synge,” he concluded, “was pre-eminently an artist, and as such was in nowise interested in affairs or human problems or questions of morality. That, in my opinion, conclusively rules out any satiric purpose from ‘The Well of the Saints.’ It is comedy pure and simple.”

Here came the pause. For a moment, as frequently happened after a speech of Cavanagh's, the audience was

too busy yawning (mentally of course), to be able to reply. This was F. F.'s opportunity.

"Comedy!" he exclaimed. "Do you call that comedy? Why I never got a laugh from beginning to end. There wasn't one thing in it that you would properly call a joke. Now, if you really want a good laugh, take my advice and go to 'Charley's Aunt' next week at the Gaiety. That's something like a comedy. I go to it regularly every year, and like it better each time. Ever seen it, Mrs. Heuston Harrington?"

A strained silence followed this speech. F. F.'s hearers did not know what to say or where to look. They were shocked, embarrassed, as if they were a party of young ladies and F. F. a drunken sailor who had been uttering obscenity. The situation was saved, however, by the rise of the curtain upon the second act, which caused an immediate movement towards the auditorium from the vestibule. Leonora took her escort firmly by the arm, thereby nearly intoxicating him with emotion, and led him to his seat; which was well for his peace of mind, for as soon as he was almost out of earshot Hyacinth Finnigan excitedly demanded of Campbell Jones:

"Where on earth did Leonora pick up that concentrated essence of idiocy?"

"I don't know," replied Jones. "But you'll probably find him in her next collection of Dublin types."

And, though he knew it not, F. F. earned immortality that night. The story of his exploit was told in the United Arts Club the very next day. It was the inspiration of most of the conversation at Mrs. Heuston Harrington's "at home" the next evening. Campbell Jones told the tale to a gathering of his fellow-playwrights, in his lodgings, a few days later; and before the end of the week Hyacinth Finnigan's embroidered version of the affair was on the lips of every raconteur in Dublin. (Most Dubliners are raconteurs, and all of them think they are.) After that the anecdote spread abroad with extraordinary rapidity. It was told wherever two or more intellectuals were gathered together; over the nuts and wine in Merriion Square; over the coffee and bananas in Baggot Street and Harcourt Street; and over the tea and bread-

and-butter in Rathmines and Rathgar. Two, at least, of Dublin's most distinguished poets were moved to hearty laughter by it, and it took on a new lease of life when an epigrammatical politician dubbed it "The Printer's Error," and a famous throat-specialist wrote a lyric about it. In the end, when all Dublin was heartily sick of it, someone with a commercial turn of mind gave it an English setting and exported it to London, where it appeared in due course in the sober pages of England's premier humorous paper, and, later on, somewhat worn but still recognisable, in its penny contemporaries.

It was the hearing of vague rumours of all this excitement that made Mr. Wolverhampton realise that he had not done himself credit at the Abbey that night, and sent him, with a resolve to do better at the Eclectic, in search of a copy of the works of Tchekoff.

III.

The sisters Leila and Leonora Montgomery sat combing their hair and chatting together by the fireside in their two-roomed flat in Anne Street. Leila was the elder of the two by several years. She was short of stature but well-made, with a pleasant good-humoured face and a wealth of long wavy red-gold hair, now displayed to its full advantage as she ran her comb through its glittering strands in the fire-light. Leonora, younger, prettier, cleverer as she was envied her that hair, her own fair curls looking meagre beside it.

"Leo," said Leila, "don't you think it's about time you stopped encouraging poor Mr. Wolverhampton?"

"Encouraging him?" queried Leonora.

"Yes, encouraging him."

"What nonsense you do talk, Leila!" said Leonora impatiently. "We're just friends, nothing more."

"And since when have you started making friends among unintellectual? My dear Leo, it won't wash. He's too old for you anyway."

"Exactly. That's why it's perfectly safe. It couldn't be anything but platonic, could it?"

"Are you sure it's platonic on his side?"

"I hope so. Anyhow he gives me a good time, and he takes me to theatres I couldn't afford myself, and he's a decent old chap, and I don't see why I shouldn't."

"People are talking."

"People are fools."

There was silence for a moment. Presently Leila resumed:

"There's something more in it than you'd like to admit all the same."

Leonora laughed.

"What a penetrating old darling it is!" she said. Then after a pause: "Shall I tell you? . . . I will."

"Do" said Leila.

"He has a son," blurted out Leonora, and incontinently blushed fiery red. "There, isn't that an unmaidenly admission?" she added defiantly.

"Algernon!" exclaimed Leila in surprise. Sisterly intuition had told her that Leonora was concealing something; what it was she had never even suspected.

Leonora was hurt by her surprise. Blushing even deeper she flung out hastily:

"Well! He isn't such a fool as he looks."

"My dear," remonstrated Leila, "I never even suspected that he looked one. I think he's very handsome, really."

"He's the only man I ever met," said Leonora, "that didn't fling himself at my feet. I suppose that's why I want him."

"And that's why you court his father? What good will that do?"

"It might do *some* good," said Leonora vaguely.

"Nonsense, my dear," said Leila decisively. She admitted her sister's intellectual superiority to herself, but in the serious business of life hers had always been the leadership. She knew a good deal about humanity, this young woman. She was an assistant in an employment agency where she had opportunities of studying it in many and varied forms. Limitless material for novels came daily to her hands had she but the gift of artistic expression to make use of it. But she had not, and was content merely to accumulate that uninspiring

bundle of memories which is called experience. Out of her experience now she lectured her sister.

"Nonsense, my dear," she repeated. "No man can be won through his father. You're more likely to repulse him for ever that way. If a man doesn't want you, you must make him want you. Every man wants a woman; that's something to start with. All you want to do now is to make him want your particular kind of woman. There's nothing very difficult in that; millions of women not half as clever as you have done it. You'll just have to show him that he needs you; that you supply something he lacks; if you once show him the lack he'll find out for himself how great it is. You just seek him out; talk to him, be good company to him, make him miss you when you're gone. He'll do that easily enough if you're only sufficiently entertaining."

"In plain language, I must throw myself at his head—court him. No, thank you."

"Why not? Most women court men unconsciously; why shouldn't you do it consciously? You've been doing it indirectly this long time."

"That's true," Leonora admitted.

"And let his father alone," said Leila.

"By the way," said Leonora, "he's taking me to the Eclectic Theatre on Wednesday."

"That's a nuisance," said Leila. "Still, you'd better make a start at once. Don't go."

"He's booked two seats."

"H'm! . . . I tell you what. You can sham illness. I'll go in your place."

"Leila," said Leonora, "You're a brick. I'm bored stiff with the little wretch."

She finished combing her hair and began thoughtfully to undress. Leila sat smiling into the dying fire.

IV.

On the Wednesday evening F. F. called at the flat for his lady love. Leila met him at the hall-door.

"Leonora's not well," she said. "She had a bad headache this morning and stayed in bed, in the hope

that it would pass off. But it hasn't, and she's a bit feverish this evening."

F. F. showed his disappointment plainly.

"She told me to say she was very sorry," said Leila, "and she hopes you will be able to get someone else instead. It would be a pity to waste the ticket."

"I don't know of anyone who'd care," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"Wouldn't I do?" Leila asked.

"Why, of course! The very thing!" said Mr. Wolverhampton, miserably, but trying hard to be polite.

In a few minutes they set out together. Mr. Wolverhampton, with a lover's eagerness, and with the knowledge that Leonora was always a little long in her preparations, had arrived earlier than was necessary. Leila's preparations had been brief; and so they had ample time to walk to the theatre. F. F. found Leila much easier than Leonora to talk to. He had none of that sense of inferiority which he always felt when with her sister, and when they reached their destination they were quite old friends.

The Eclectic Theatre stood in a street which was just one degree better than a slum. It was a very shabby street, with a publichouse at the corner and children playing in the gutters. The theatre itself was a large, ugly, rambling old building, erected a hundred and fifty years ago for no one knows what purpose. It had been untenanted for a dozen years before the Eclectic Theatre Co. took it; before that it had been a school, and before that a conventicle of some unknown religion.

The Theatre Company was the foundation of a number of amiable gentlemen of artistic inclinations, who wished to form (we quote their own words without professing to understand them) a School of Psychological Drama in Ireland—as if all drama worthy of the name, from Aeschylus to Shakespeare, and from Shakespeare to Synge, were anything else. Of course, what the amiable gentlemen in their foggy intellectualism really meant by psychological drama was drama more or less frankly plagiarised from Isben and the Scandinavians and Russians, and as this kind of morbid and unskilled research into not very important ideas and not very com-

mon emotions is uninteresting to the sane and logical mind of Ireland, and as dramatists naturally like to have an audience to their plays, the Eclectic Theatre had to rely for its authors upon a few weedy-minded young men who were content to dish out parodies of the Northern dramatists as new and original plays, or upon the Northern dramatists themselves.

The Eclectic was unlike any theatre Mr. Wolverhampton had ever seen. The audience, conversing in whispers in the dimly-lighted auditorium or waiting silently in fervent anticipation for the rising of the curtain, resembled more a church congregation than any other kind of assembly. About half the hundred odd seats available were empty. Programmes (free) and chocolate were to be had, not from paid menials, but from a number of elegantly-dressed young ladies who served you in an awkward manner calculated to demonstrate conclusively their amateur status. There was no orchestra—as one of the directors put it neatly, at the Eclectic Theatre the play was to be the thing.

At the doorway F. F. and his charge encountered Ernest O'Mahony. As soon as the actor set eyes on Leila his face lit up with triumph.

"Ha! Ha! Wolverhampton," he said between his teeth. "You are a wise man. You took my warning. Verbum satis sapienti, eh?"

"You're an awful idiot, O'Mahony," replied F. F. He was not good at repartee.

In the audience, Mr. Wolverhampton espied one familiar face, that of Lucius Loftus, beside whom were two seats, which Leila and he promptly appropriated. Mr. Loftus greeted them in friendly fashion, and then Mr. Wolverhampton turned to scrutinise the programme.

"‘Uncle Vanya,’ by Anton Tchekoff," he read. "Preceded by ‘The Cock and the Bull,’ a psycho-allegorical comedy by Lucius Loftus."

"So the curtain-raiser's by you?" he said, turning to the poet.

"Yes," said Loftus, "though I demur to your designation. ‘The Cock and the Bull’ is a play; the curtain-raising business is left to the scene-shifters."

"I didn't know you wrote plays," said F. F.

"I don't. This is my first."

"What does—er—spiko—what-you-may-call-it mean?" pursued F. F.

"Nothing, so far as I know," replied Loftus. "The play is a mere light-hearted comedy, but if I hadn't called it psycho-something it would never have been accepted by this temple of the muses."

"Well, why didn't you take it to the other theatres?"

"I did. But it was too Irish for the Gaiety, and not Irish enough for the Abbey, so there was nothing else for it but the Eclectic."

Just before the curtain rose on "The Cock and the Bull," Mr. Cavanagh entered the theatre and took the seat on the other side of Mr. Loftus.

"I never expected anything psycho-allegorical from your pen," he remarked to the latter.

"We live and learn," replied Lucius.

Mr. Wolverhampton enjoyed the play immensely. It was, he declared, the funniest thing he'd ever listened to: far funnier than "Charley's Aunt" or the "Private Secretary." His hearty laughter rang through the theatre, sounding high above the intellectual chuckles of the rest of the audience. Undeniably these latter were enjoying the crude merriment of the piece, but as they wanted it to be understood that it was the subtler under-current of psychological satire supposed to be present that they really enjoyed, they could turn to each other every now and again with knowing looks and say: "There's irony for you," or, "Subtle, isn't it?" or such-like comment.

"Deep! Deep!" Mr. Cavanagh would mutter every now and again when some particular sally would convey an underlying meaning to his probing brain.

"This is damn good," said a candid gentleman in the seat behind, to his companion. "But I confess I can't see any of those double meanings you promised me."

"Ah!" replied the other, appreciatively. "They're there all the same. I'm not sure I see them all myself, but I know they're there. That fellow, Loftus, is a subtle genius, and he wouldn't write a word that hadn't a double significance in it. Why, the whole play is sym-

bolical of some psychological process of which we know nothing."

"That piece is a perfect little gem," said Mr. Cavanagh after the fall of the curtain. "Such a brilliant piece of psycho-analysis it has rarely been my privilege to enjoy. I congratulate you, Mr. Loftus."

"Thanks very much," stammered the poet.

"After such a successful debut you will, no doubt, continue to write plays?"

"No," replied Lucius. "That's the last I'll ever attempt."

"And why?" remonstrated Cavanagh.

"What's the good of writing plays when one can't get a decent-sized audience?"

"What does the audience matter? One writes for oneself, surely."

"It's easily seen you've never done any writing, Cavanagh. I've ideas to give to the world, and I want the world to have them. First I tried putting them into verse. That spread them fairly well, but verse doesn't pay. So I've just tried the drama, and I can't make that pay either—at any rate, not in Ireland."

"Why not try England?" suggested Mr. Wolverhampton.

"Damn England!" snapped Lucius. "Anyway, I'm going to try novel writing next. If that doesn't pay in Ireland, at any rate you can rely on something from America."

"I'm afraid you're not an artist," said Mr. Cavanagh, severely.

"What do you know about it!" demanded Lucius. "Those who practise the arts must live by the arts. To live by the arts you must please the public, not your precious self. Any artist who is worth a damn manages to do both—like Shakespeare."

Mr. Wolverhampton felt out of place in a conversation about art, so he left the two of them to their argument and turned to talk to Leila. They had quite an interesting conversation—all about the weather and Charlie Chaplin and their favourite brands of cigarettes, and whether they preferred Irish terriers or fox terriers, and how terrible the war was (for a war had broken out in

Europe during the summer), and how they wondered when it would be over, and all sorts of easy-going subjects like that.

F. F. began to feel that he liked Leila; there was something very pleasant about her face and there was a delightful gleam in her red-gold hair. . . . The curtain rose again when they were in the middle of a sentence.

If the "Well of the Saints" had been a puzzle to Mr. Wolverhampton, "Uncle Vanya" was sheer chaos. The rise of the curtain disclosed a garden in which a querulous old professor, his discontented young wife, his former wife's absent-minded mother, his maudlin hypochondriac brother-in-law, the latter's ugly niece, a disillusioned vodka-bibbing doctor, and a pock-marked man who had seen better days, sat or strolled about, or wandered off and on, telling each other or thinking aloud how bored they were and what wrecks they had made of their lives. In the whole caste there was only one normal human being—an old peasant woman; all the rest were morbid, self-conscious, perverse, aimless monomaniacs. Someone proclaimed his love for someone else's wife towards the end of the act, and then, to the tinkle of a guitar, the scene came to a close. There was more talking and soliloquising, with a little drinking thrown in, in the second act. The inaction meandered through Act III., and then suddenly things began to happen. The doctor kissed the professor's wife, the maudlin uncle shot at the professor, and Mr. Wolverhampton woke up feeling more at home—feeling, in fact, as if he were in the Queen's Theatre. With the fourth act, however, the situation eased. The doctor and the professor's wife kissed again, it is true, but nothing else occurred to break the dialogue; and, with the departure of the bulk of the caste for the city, the play closed with the remainder yawning in their chairs.

In order to be able to converse intelligently with Leonora, Mr. Wolverhampton had read the play, and two others as well—a tremendous task for him. He had not, however, got much meaning out of any of them, what with the strange-looking names of the characters and his own inability to envisage the action. He had hoped, therefore, to make a little more sense out of it when seen, but

in this he was disappointed. Instead of becoming simplified in the acting, it seemed to be more difficult than ever, and, in addition, several circumstances prevented him from giving it his undivided attention.

First there was his chagrin over Leonora's absence and a certain anxiety about that headache of hers. Then there was the altercation with O'Mahony. That irritated him abominably. He felt that his reply to the actor lacked point and polish, and he was furiously eager to let O'Mahony know that he had made a mistake—that it was not fear of his displeasure that had prevented him bringing Leonora to the Eclectic.

"Schoolboy! Guttersnipe!" he kept on mentally calling himself. "Conceited puppy!" he called Ernest.

And in the interval between Acts I. and II. a further disquieting incident occurred. He had ventured on some uncomplimentary remarks about Cavanagh to Leila, and Leila had said:

"O, that idiot! Yes, he's never done talking art and the rest of it. He doesn't care where or when it is, but the moment he meets you he's out with a theory about Ibsen, or asking your opinion about some unknown play of Strindberg's. Why, only this morning, Leo and I met him in Grafton Street, and——"

"This morning?" asked Mr. Wolverhampton.

"Yes. This morning."

"I understand that Miss Leonora——"

"O——" and here Leila flushed very red. "What am I talking about? It was yesterday, of course. As I was saying"

But Mr. Wolverhampton was not to be deceived. He felt sure now that Leonora's headache was only a blind. She had not wanted to come with him; that was the bitter truth.

"She finds me dull," he said to himself in sad realisation.

"I suppose I am dull," he reflected miserably.

Quite excusably he lost interest in the remainder of the performance. He was not the only person who found the piece incomprehensible, but he was the only one who showed it.

Mr. Wolverhampton met Leonora by chance in Grafton

Street next morning. Her headache, he learned, was much better.

"How did you enjoy the play?" she asked. "Very much indeed," said Mr. Wolverhampton. "It was an intellectual treat." He had picked up that phrase from Cavanagh. Leonora recognised it, and smiled with amusement.

"Tell me about it," she said, motioning him to accompany her down the street.

"Well, you see——" Mr. Wolverhampton began to stammer as he walked beside her, "there's this professor fellow—something off, you know. He's been married twice, you see, and his brother-in-law by his first wife is called Uncle Vanya."

"Why?" asked Leonora. "Whose uncle is he?" Mr. Wolverhampton scratched his head.

"Wait till I see, now. O yes, I've got it. He's the ugly girl's uncle. Louia, I think, they call her. Well, this professor fellow goes out for a walk, and when he comes back . . . Oh, no, I'm forgetting. Before all this, there's a doctor waiting in the garden. . . ."

"What garden?"

"The garden the professor went for a walk out of."

"I see. Go on."

F. F. floundered ahead. He failed to give Leonora any idea of the plot of Uncle Vanya, and he could see that he was boring her. He brought his narrative to a rapid conclusion, and invited her to accompany him to the Abbey next Tuesday. She said she was engaged on Tuesday.

"Wednesday, then?"

No. She couldn't manage it.

"Any other day?"

No. She was booked for the whole week. F. F. had the tact not to press her further, and very sadly he took leave of her.

Why this sudden series of reverses, he asked himself, after the brilliantly happy successes of the earlier days of his courtship? The answer to the question stared him, of course, in the face. He was not intellectual; he could not talk in a reverent or superior tone about other people's writings; he could not talk about them at all;

he could not even understand them. And then an idea occurred to him. Could he not write himself instead? Evidently writing was much easier than criticising, for the only writer he had met did not seem to him half as clever as the lookers-on; at any rate, Mr. Wolverhampton had found him easier to get on with.

The thought was instantly transformed into a resolution, and the resolution into action. Mr. Wolverhampton plunged into a stationer's shop and bought a ream of foolscap.

As he made for home, he encountered Lucius Loftus.

"Hello!" he cried, joyously. "I'm just going home to write a play. Can you give me a few tips?"

The poet smiled on him tolerantly. He seemed about to say something, then apparently changed his mind and decided to say something different.

"Well," he said, "for all forms of writing there are three steps in the process of composition. Have something to write; write it, and then forget all about it and light your pipe. Postscript: don't bother about art. Good luck." And he went on.

F. F. reached home and retired to a writing-desk. He opened the packet of foolscap, placed a quire of it before him, and for a moment contemplated its blue-ruled whiteness. Then he began to write. On the top of the sheet he slowly and carefully inscribed the words:

ACT I.

Then he paused and looked up at the ceiling, meditatively chewing his pen.

V.

That evening he received a letter, in a strange, bold handwriting. It was neither addressed nor dated:

"You have been seen frequently," it ran, "in the company of Miss Leonora Montgomery. This must not occur again. I forbid it.—Colman MacCarthy."

F. F. laughed to himself. His spirits were quite revived.

"I'm evidently regarded as a serious rival by someone," he said. "Come. Things aren't so bad after all. . . . But who, in the name of goodness, is Colman MacCarthy?"

CHAPTER V.

LEONORA SURPASSES HERSELF.

I.

LESBIA was giving the party, but Leonora was managing everything. Leonora always did, for she was of a managing disposition. She sat at the table in Lesbia's sitting-room nibbling the pencil with which she had been scribbling the names of those to be invited on a sheet of paper. Beside her was her sister Leila, comfortably if inelegantly poised, with her right knee on a chair, her right elbow on the table, and her chin in her right hand. In an armchair by the fireplace reposed Lesbia; a compromise, so far as her appearance went, between her two sisters, but inclining in manner and disposition more towards Leila. Opposite her in another armchair sat her husband, Michael O'Malley, the poet, reading a book and paying but scant attention to the business of issuing the invitations.

There are rather a lot of poets in this story, but, then, there are a lot of poets in Dublin, so our reputation for realism will not be injured by the introduction of another. Michael O'Malley was a pleasant, cheery little man, with curly brown hair and a large nose. By profession and inclination he was, as we have said, a poet, but as in this era of our civilisation we have not yet decided that a man shall perform the business of which he is capable, and be able to make a livelihood thereby, and as the fine arts, and especially poetry, are among the least lucrative of employments in the existing economic chaos, he was compelled to undertake several odd jobs in journalism and education to make a living. There are artists in every occupation in Dublin, so that many a sonnet goes unwritten because a prescription has to be compounded,

and many a divine inspiration goes unrecorded in order that a deed of conveyancing may be drafted, or a tooth-ache cured, or the path of a blockhead smoothed.

"Who else shall we ask?" said Leonora, looking up from her list and nibbling her pencil. "I've got Jack down, and Lucius, and Ernest O'Mahony, and the two MacIntyres, and Felim O'Dwyer and Jim Crowley. That makes seven besides ourselves. We ought to have a few more."

"What about the Wolverhamptons?" asked Leila.

Leonora suddenly evinced a strong interest in the paper before her, which she proceeded to cover with lightning sketches and geometrical figures to the great detriment of its intelligibility as a list of invitations.

"Is that your middle-aged Admirer, Leo?" asked Lesbia. "I'd love to see him. I've heard the most extraordinary tales about him."

"Have you heard about the duel he fought with Ernest O'Mahony the day before yesterday?"

"A duel?" cried Lesbia, and Michael O'Malley dropped his book and said, "What's this about a duel?"

"Yes; a real duel," said Leonora. "And all about me."

"At least it *would* have been a duel if it had gone on," explained Leila. "They really started to fight only their mothers wouldn't let them."

"Their mothers?" queried Lesbia.

"Well, Ernest's mother stopped him," explained Leila, "And Algernon held back Mr. Wolverhampton."

"It must have been fun," said Michael. "Tell us all about it, Leo."

"You tell him, Leila," said Leonora.

"It happened at the MacEvoys on Wednesday," Leila explained. "They were giving a sort of hooley, you know. Tea and charades and that sort of nonsense. Ernest and old Woolly were there tumbling over each other to be attentive to Leo. I must say Leo was asking for trouble, for she was as nice as could be to both of them."

"Is it a pillar of salt like Hetty you'd like me to be?" protested Leo.

"Well, there's no need to be a pillar of treacle, anyway," said Leila.

"I must be cleverer than I thought if I could perform a feat like that," said Leonora.

"Drop the metaphors and go on, Leila," implored Michael.

"Well," said Leila, "the crisis came when the tea was being handed round 'Allow me,' says Ernest, with a bow that nearly toppled him over, and he offers her a plateful of puff pastries. 'Cake,' says F. F. shoving another plate in front of it. Leo helped herself to a slice of cake. . . ."

"I can't digest Mrs. MacEvoy's pastry," interposed Leonora.

"Don't interrupt," said Leila. "That was the *casus belli*, anyhow. They did a mutual glaring stunt, and soon afterwards we missed them from the room. . . ."

"Suddenly," said Leonora, "there was a clash of steel from the garden. . . ."

"We rushed to the window," said Leila.

"And there," said Leonora, "were our two swash-bucklers slashing away at each other with a couple of rusty swords they'd found in the study. . . ."

"Then," went on Leila, "We all made a rush for the stairs, and in a moment Mrs. O'Mahony had her arms round Ernest and Algy and Hetty were giving old F. F. dog's abuse, and the two bravos trying their hardest to break away and go for each other again."

"It's a shame for you, Leo, to be encouraging them both," said Lesbia.

"Really, Leo, you are the limit," said Michael.

"I can't help it if men make fools of themselves on my account," said Leonora.

"Can't you, then?" said Lesbia.

"Shall we invite him, anyway?" said Leonora.

"Do," said Michael. "It'll be the greatest sport on earth. Did you hear the story of what he said about *the well of the saints*?"

"That old story," said Leonora. "Why that's all over the place. I was there when it happened."

"Put him down, Leo," said Leila. "And Algy and Hetty, too. He wouldn't be complete without them."

II.

"Well," said Henrietta to Algernon, "shall we go?"

"Shall we?" mused Algernon.

"He's going for certain," said Henrietta.

"If we do go he'll probably bring disgrace and ridicule on us again," said Algernon. "I couldn't face an affair like Wednesday's again."

"On the other hand," said Henrietta, "if we don't go, there'll be no one to restrain him from even greater follies."

"Poor doting irresponsible old man," mused Algernon. "To think that half a century of life could not sober him."

"He's only forty-six," corrected Henrietta. "Well, shall we go?"

"I suppose we'd better," said Algernon.

That afternoon Bertie MacIntyre happened in for a chat. He wore the uniform of a Second Lieutenant in His Britannic Majesty's army.

"Great Scott," exclaimed Algernon. "What are you doing in that rig out?"

"I'm going to the front," replied Bertie with quiet dignity.

"England expects every Irishman to do his duty," sneered Algernon.

"I didn't know you were a Sinn Feiner," said Bertie.

"I'm not," shouted Algernon.

"What's wrong then?" asked Bertie. "Haven't you always preached war, red war, to purge the earth of the unfit and prepare the way for the superman?"

"Yes, you idiot, of course, I did. But you're on the wrong side. You're going to help the decadent French and English and the barbarous Russians to swamp the nation of the superman by sheer weight of numbers. O, you fool, you ass, you donkey."

"Sorry," said Bertie. "I didn't know. Better luck next war. Anyway I'm in it now. Couldn't get a transfer, you know, not for any money."

"How goes your affair with Miss Montgomery?" asked Algernon.

Bertie's face became gloomy.

"Very slowly," he said, "And I'm afraid this uniform won't improve matters. She's a wild Sinn Féiner, you know."

"Nonsense," said Algernon. "Women love a uniform, no matter what colour it is. To them a soldier is a soldier, no matter what flag he fights under. Women adore soldiers, so go in and win."

"What?" cried Bertie. "I thought you objected to me courting Leo. That's why I've kept away from you so long."

"I recall my objection," said Algernon. "As you know, my miserable grey-haired old lunatic of a father is making himself publicly ridiculous by running after her, and I shan't feel that he's safe until she's securely married. So go in and win. I wish you luck."

"Thank you, old chap," said Bertie.

"Have you been invited to Michael O'Malley's next Sunday?" asked Algernon.

"Yes."

"Well, make hay while the sun shines. My unfortunate old father will be there too, and I want you to cut him out."

"By the way, that reminds me," said Bertie. "I seem to have cut someone else out. Read that," and he handed him a letter which he took from his pocket. "That came the day after Mrs. O'Malley's invitation."

"*You are hereby warned to shun for the future the company of Miss Leonora Montgomery,*" Algernon read.

"This is exciting. *You have already pressed your attentions upon her too much. I shall tolerate this no longer. Colman MacCarthy.* Who on earth is Colman MacCarthy?"

"That's what I was going to ask you. Have you never heard of him?"

"Never."

"Sounds rather like a stage bully, doesn't he?"

"Sounds to me rather like a hoax. However, you never know. Leonora has strange admirers."

III.

Michael O'Malley and his wife and sisters-in-law were awaiting the arrival of their guests. Lesbia wore a grey frock that did not become her; she had not much taste in clothes, but she was pretty enough to carry off anything. Leila wore a simple green dress with a green fillet in her red-gold hair. It was her only evening frock, for the registry office where she was employed only paid her twelve and six a week for the forty-eight hours of her life that it took from her. Leonora was startlingly garbed in red and yellow. She had sold a picture on exceptionally good terms the week before.

The first guest to arrive was Bertie MacIntyre.

"I must apologise for this rig-out," he said meekly, in reference to his uniform.

"Not at all," said Michael, who was himself a captain in the Irish Volunteers but preferred to wear mufti in off-hours.

"Im sure you mean well," said Leonora.

Bertie bowed and sat down on the chesterfield beside her. A few minutes later a dark, lanky, hawk-faced man entered and was greeted with enthusiasm by everybody.

"Hello! Who's this?" he said, turning eventually to Bertie. "Why, it's MacIntyre. Bert MacIntyre, fulmen belli, Carthagine's horror. Say, old chap, what has Poseidon's mistress done to earn your loyalty?"

"Im not loyal to England," protested Bertie. "I'm fighting for Ireland and Belgium."

"Thou dost protest too much, methinks. Look, Leonora, how Britain's flag flies in his damask cheek, or is that only a chaste Irish blush?"

"Chuck it, Crowley," said Bertie.

"Jim, don't tease the boy," said Leonora. "Sit down," she continued, and to Bertie's intense disgust she made a place for Crowley on the Chesterfield between herself and him.

The next arrival was Ernest O'Mahony, who was in evening dress, and he was closely followed by Lucius

Loftus, who had dispensed with that formality, and he by a young man called Phelim O'Dwyer, wearing the grey-green uniform of the Irish Volunteers. After them came half a dozen other guests, male and female, some in evening dress, some in ordinary clothes, and some in Irish costume. A few minutes later F. F.'s genial figure, clad in a saffron kilt, with a green plaid fastened at his shoulder by a magnificent silver clasp, appeared in the doorway with his two dismal jailers looming behind, and looking very obviously ashamed of themselves and their father. Algernon was in evening dress, Henrietta in her usual dress of stiff black silk. Soon afterwards Jack Molloy arrived, and the party was complete.

"Let's have a charade," Leonora suggested, whereat there was an immediate chorus of approval.

"You collect a company, then, Leo," said Leila.

"Very well," said Leonora. "Will you come with me, Jack?"

"Delighted," said Jack Molloy.

"You, Jim?"

"At your service, fair lady," replied Crowley.

"You, Mr. Wolverhampton?"

"I can't act," replied Algernon, none too graciously.

"O, come, you can try."

"No, thanks."

"Do."

"No."

Leonora flushed slightly and turned to ask some others. Nobody else refused her request, and when she had chosen as many as she wanted she led the party out of the room.

There were six of them besides herself: Loftus, Molloy, O'Dwyer, Bertie, Crowley, and one of the MacEvoy girls. They gathered in the next room, and immediately everyone was suggesting words.

"Don't let's have anything too hard," said Miss MacEvoy. "It's no fun if they can't guess."

"'Ornithorynchus,'" suggested Crowley.

"Don't be absurd, Jim," said Leonora.

"What about 'horseman,' " said Miss MacEvoy. "First we could do a horse and then . . ."

"No, Gladys," said Leonora. "We want something just a little more complex than that."

"'Carrot,' " suggested O'Dwyer.

"How would we act 'rot' then?" asked someone.

"O, just let Crowley stand up by himself and gas a bit. That'd be rot enough for anyone."

"That'd be too simple altogether," said Molloy.

"I'd suggest 'assassinate,' " retaliated Crowley, "O'Dwyer could act the first syllable, Molloy the second, and . . ."

"Look here, you three," said Leonora. "Just behave yourselves, and suggest something sensible."

"Why not do 'sea-shell?' " proposed Bertie. "'Sea' and 'shell' " would be easy enough, but for the last act, when we do the whole word, we could make it 'Seashell Cut Plug.' That might throw them off the scent."

"I've got it," suddenly exclaimed Lucius Loftus. "Don't divide it in the usual way. Make it 'Seas-Hell' for the syllables, and do the tobacco stunt for the whole word."

Everyone jumped at this suggestion except Gladys, who thought it "unfair" and "too farfetched," but she was overruled. Then they set themselves to thinking out ways and means.

Meanwhile one end of the drawingroom had been cleared as a stage, and the chairs were arranged in the other portion like seats in a theatre. The audience sat down to wait for the performance, occasionally coughing or clapping as an incitement to the actors to hurry up. Presently Jack Molloy entered carrying a bamboo curtain pole with a piece of black cloth fastened to one end. He took a chair, which he placed in the middle of the stage, and setting the pole upright lashed it by the middle to the back of the chair with a piece of string.

"This is supposed to be the mast of a ship," he explained. "The word we are going to act consists of two syllables, of which we shall now proceed to depict the first."

He bowed and went out amid acclamation. Then the performance began. It went something like this:

Enter the Pirate King, a ferocious-looking figure with long unkempt hair, like horse-hair, straggling over his brow and ears. He wears a red jacket and an old cocked hat and skull and crossbones scrawled on it in chalk. In his belt is stuck an umbrella by way of a sword. He speaks in the voice of LUCIUS LOFTUS.

King (striding up and down the deck)—Har! Har! I am a Pirate King, I am. A Pirate King, Har! Har! Crackskull Crossbones, the Terror of the Pacific.

Lesbia (from the audience)—“That’s my best umbrella, Lucius.” (Suppressed).

Enter First Pirate (Bertie) and Second Pirate (Jack Molloy) in their shirt sleeves with red-and-white bath mats round their waists and a poker and a shovel respectively where their swords ought to be.

1st Pirate.—We have taken a prisoner.

2nd Pirate.—A maiden of wealth and position.

Crossbones (raising his eyebrows almost to his hair)—Har! Har! Seemeth it to thee that the wench is comely. Eh? (with a horrible grimace).

1st Pirate.—Beshrew me, but she is fair.

2nd Pirate. (In adenoidal Dublinese)—O, gargeous!

Crossbones—Let her be brought before me.

Exit Second Pirate. Crossbones seats himself on a powder barrel (really a pouffe) and folds his arms, frowning horribly. First Pirate stands to attention beside him. Re-enter Second Pirate with Third Pirate (O’Dwyer) leading in the Heroine (Leonora).

Crossbones (With a frightful grimace)—Ha! pretty one! Knowest thou before whom thou hast been brung? Ha!

Heroine (Wringing her hands).—Alas, no.

Crossbones.—I am Crackskull Crossbones, the Scourge of the Seas.

Heroine.—Really? I took you for an umbrella stand.

At this impromptu there was general laughter among the audience, and the Pirate King and his gang so far forgot themselves as to join in. It was some time before

they could recover their equanimity sufficiently to continue the performance.

Crossbones (recovering).—Nay, wench, these impromptu sallies shall avail thee naught. I tell thee I am Crackskull Crossbones, the Scourge of the Seas. Dost thou not quail, wench?

Heroine.—Nay. I am a gallant British maid, and I scorn thy wrath.

Crossbones.—Bethink thee ere thou defy me. I am, I repeat, the Scourge of the Seas, and thou art in my power. If thou but behave thee, I shall e'en be merciful and hold thee to ransom for a hundred crowns.

Heroine.—Indeed, Captain, I have none who would pay that ransom for such as I.

Crossbones.—What? Are there none to whom thou art dear?

Heroine (suddenly colloquial).—Yes. That's just the trouble. My father finds me too dear altogether. He'd give a hundred quid to be rid of me.

Crossbones.—This is evil news thou bringest me, wench.

Heroine (in broad Ulster dialect).—It is that.

Crossbones.—Failing a ransom, wench, thou must e'en walk the plank. Realisest thou that?

Heroine (in flattest nasal Dublinese).—I deoo.

Crossbones.—Prepare thee, then, for in quarter of an hour thou diest. (*Setting his teeth*).

Heroine (high-toned once more).—Do thy worst, villain, I am a British maid, and I fear thee not.

Crossbones.—Har! Har! That defiant look becomes thee. Methinks I shall snatch a kiss from those ruby lips ere they be cold in death. Har! Har! I am the Scourge of the Seas, but my heart is soft where a wench is concerned.

Exit Crossbones, dragging Heroine with him.

2nd Pirate (in Dublinese).—Tt-tt-tt! O, the lovely lady. To treat her like that. It's a shayum.

3rd Pirate.—Pah! The scum of Britain! Our Captain's lips are too good for her.

1st Pirate (looking out to sea).—Mates, is not that a sail upon the starboard bow?

3rd Pirate.—'Tis even so. We are pursued.

1st Pirate.—Raise the alarm, Bloody Bill.

2nd Pirate (in *Dublinese*).—Ahoy there, Captain! The polis is afther us.

1st Pirate.—Stand to it.

Enter Hero (Crowley), a gallant figure with a red sash round his waist and a poker in his hand.

Hero (thrusting a First Pirate).—Die, villain.

1st Pirate.—Oh, I am slain! (*Dies*).

Hero (making for Third Pirate).—Have at thee, knave.

3rd Pirate (with a heroic gesture).—I am an Englishman, and I am not afraid to fly. (*Runs off*).

2nd Pirate (falling on his knees).—Spare me, misther. I am the only support of my widowed mother in Cuffe-street.

Hero.—Die, foul spawn of Hell. (*Kills him*).

Re-enter Crossbones.

Crossbones.—Har! Thou art her lover. Look on me and terremble. I am Crackskull Crossbones, the Scourge of the Seas.

Hero (in Americanese).—Say, mister, is your life insured?

Crossbones (tapping the handle of the umbrella).—This, my trusty blade, is all the insurance I want.

Hero.—Wal, I guess your policy's just about to expire. Where did you get it? Back of the Bank?

Crossbones.—No more of this banter. I am the Scourge of the Seas, and I mean to scourge thee this very day.

Hero.—Come, sir. Your passado. (*They draw and begin to fight*).

Lesbia (from the audience).—Mind my umbrella, Lucius.

Hero kills Crossbones. Enter Heroine.

Heroine.—My beloved!

Hero.—My own!

They embrace. The sound of gnashing teeth is heard in the neighbourhood of Ernest O'Mahony. The Hero and Heroine bow to the audience. The dead bodies rise and do likewise. Exeunt Omnes.

There was a buzz of talk among the audience. Everyone was busy guessing.

"Would it be 'ship'?" suggested one person.

"'King'" suggested another.

"Is there any word with 'wench' for a first syllable?" asked a third.

"Or 'maid'?" asked a fourth.

"What about 'Har'?" said Lesbia.

"I'll bet it's power" said Ernest O'Mahony.

Someone else suggested "sea."

"No. 'Seas'" said another.

"Do you remember that joke about 'dear'?" said Michael O'Malley. "Keep your eye on that. It wasn't inserted for nothing."

"There's a hundred things it might be," said Leila. "We'll just have to wait for the second syllable to help us out."

The second syllable was painfully easy to interpret. The whole caste stood about the stage writhing in pain and complaining of the heat. Crowley, with a pair of horns and a tail made of skipping-rope, was the Devil, and the principal torment he inflicted on his guests was to make them repeat for the nine billion nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand million nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-ninth time the story of their lives. Leonora was Queen Elizabeth, Gladys, Lady Macbeth, O'Dwyer, Diarmuid Mac-Murrough, Lucius Loftus, Judas Iscariot, and Jack Molloy, Leonard MacNally.

"Hell," said everyone at the close.

"What about 'full'" objected Ernest. "Crowley said they were full up. The first syllable was 'power,' so that gives us 'powerful.'"

This sounded reasonable enough, but no one was inclined to give in to Ernest.

"What words end in 'hell'?" asked someone.

"What did we say the first syllable was? 'Ship-Hell'—no good. 'King-Hell'—worse."

"Wench-Hell," added someone.

"Har-hell; Harrol!" cried Lesbia. "See if they don't act the battle of Clontarf for the whole word."

“ Seas-hell—no good either,” said Leila. “ Wait for the last act.”

Then Jack Molloy came in and arranged a circle of chairs on the stage, on which the company presently came in, carrying a varied assortment of pipes. Everyone had a pipe of some kind except Gladys, who preferred a cigarette. Most of the men had their own pipes, but Bertie MacIntyre had a long ornamental one, with a bowl of red clay. Leonora had a gigantic meerschaum.

“ For heaven’s sake, don’t drop that!” said Michael O’Malley.

The company took their chairs and sat down, and then began each in turn to praise his favourite tobacco. Crowley sang the praises of Craven; O’Dwyer of John Cotton; Lucius of Country Life; Jack Molloy scorned all trumpery mixtures, and declared for Sea-shell cut Plug; Bertie favoured Twist, and Leonora Black Shag; Gladys said she was more refined, and smoked nothing but “ My Darling ” cigarettes. Then they all trooped out.

There was chaos and wonderment in the audience. Everyone was completely puzzled. The charade over, the caste returned to the drawingroom to listen to the guesses, but Bertie managed to retain Leonora for a moment outside.

“ I want to ask you something,” he said.

“ Well?”

“ Who is Colman MacCarthy?”

Leonora smiled, and said: “ He’s a friend of mine.”

“ What sort of friend?—if it isn’t a rude question.”

“ He’s very tall—six-foot-three, I should say,—and broad in proportion, and he’s as strong as a horse—a regular superman; and he has a perfectly frightful temper.”

This was not an answer to Bertie’s question. He had said, “ What sort of friend?” not “ What sort of man?” But this description was so interesting as to make him forget that. Before he could make any comment Leonora opened the drawingroom door, and he followed her inside.

Everyone was guessing, and guessing wrong. At last there was silence.

"Do you give it up?" asked Leonora.

There was no answer for a moment, and then an excited voice cried out:

"I've got it!"

All eyes were turned on Mr. Wolverhampton.

"What is it?" asked Leonora.

"Sea-shell," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

And then everyone saw it, and felt horribly taken in. You see, being educated people, they had all been thinking in terms of syllables; whereas Mr. Wolverhampton, being uneducated, and not having the faintest idea of what a syllable was, had been thinking in terms of letters, and so worked the thing out; which is an illustration of the truth of a certain hackneyed line of Pope's and of the Socratic (or is it Platonic?) theory of wisdom. Nobody, however, was bothering at the moment about abstruse questions, so there was an unanimous howl that the division of the word was unfair. This produced a long argument between the caste and the audience, which Leonora eventually clinched by saying:

"Mr. Wolverhampton guessed it, anyhow."

There was no answer to this, Mr. Wolverhampton was the hero of the hour.

The original arrangements of the furniture of the room were now restored, and Leonora called upon Mr. Lucius Loftus for one of his songs. Lucius complying, sang a recently composed ditty and, on being encored, gave, to Mr. Wolverhampton's intense delight, his celebrated song, "Come On," the Marseillaise of F. F.'s revolution. Then Ernest O'Mahony was called upon to recite and gave a rendering of the dagger scene from *Macbeth* and a personation of Irving in *The Bells*.

Bored by these recitations, F. F. turned to talk to Felim O'Dwyer, who happened to be beside him.

"I hear you aren't living at home now," he said "how is that?"

"Owing to causes directly or indirectly concerned with the present war," replied Felim.

“ I don't understand you.”

“ I wouldn't fight for England,” explained Felim,
“ and I have a Roman father.”

“ So you left him?” said F. F. “ Well, well. It's
easier to shake off a Roman father than a Roman son.”

Felim who had heard something of Algernon's relations
with his father, laughed heartily. “ This old josser isn't
half such an ass as people make out,” he said to himself.

“ Will anyone else give us a song?” asked Leonora
of the Company. O'Mahony's recitation had come to an
end.

“ Mr. Wolverhampton?” suggested Lucius Loftus.

“ Oh, do, Mr. Wolverhampton,” said Lesbia.

“ Certainly,” said Mr. Wolverhampton.

Algernon and Henrietta looked at each other in dismay.
They had never known their father to sing in public.

“ The poor, foolish, drivelling old dotard,” said
Algernon.

“ I'll bet this is a plot between him and Mr. Loftus,”
said Henrietta.

She was right. F. F. had determined to distinguish
himself in Leonora's eyes that evening, in pursuance of
which ambition he had induced Lucius to write him a
special song and teach him how to sing it. Lucius had
complied, it is to be feared, with his tongue in his cheek.
Here at any rate is the song which Mr. Wolverhampton,
in all the glory of his saffron kilt and silver brooch,
trolled out to that distinguished company:—

“ I'll sing a song which you all recognise,
For you've heard all these stories, I surmise,
But I hope all the same you won't like them the less:
Old friends are improved when they wear a new
dress.”

CHORUS (which Mr. Loftus led, and which eventually
a few of the company joined).

“ Tra-la-laa-, tra-la-laa,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-laa,
Tra-la-la-la, laa-la, laa-la,
Traa-la-la-la-laa-la-laa-la,”

" Once to a waiter I said ' would you stoop
To the task of removing that gentleman's soup?'
' And why, may I ask?' said the waiter so grand,
' Because,' I replied, sir, ' I can't hear the band.' "

CHORUS. This time it was sung with a little more esprit.

" A nervous young curate had breakfast one day
With his bishop and several more guests, so they say.
' I'm afraid,' quoth the bishop, 'you don't like that
egg,'
' It's all right,' said the curate, ' I'm eating the
leg.' "

CHORUS again. This time the whole company joined in and seemed to be enjoying itself thoroughly, if a little shamefacedly.

" Wee Mary her appetite never could quell;
She went to a party and did herself well.
Says Mama: ' You won't sleep on so full a stomach,'
' Never mind, mummy darling. I'll sleep on my
back.' "

The chorus went with a good swing this time. Even Algernon joined in. Henrietta and Ernest O'Mahony alone remained silent. F. F. began the last verse:

" A navvy was drinking his whiskey one night,
Says his wife: ' Put some water in that now you
might.'"
' No, no,' says her husband, ' no, Biddy asthore,
I've troubles enough, ma'am, without adding
more.' "

Enthusiastically everyone (except the two already mentioned) joined in the chorus. The room shook with the thunder of voices in unison. Mr. Wolverhampton was the success of the evening.

There were several more songs after that, but none that received such a welcome. During their progress Ernest O'Mahony managed to make his way to Leonora's side.

" Miss Montgomery," he said, " I want to ask you something."

" Ask away," she replied.

" Who is Colman MacCarthy?"

Leonora described that gentleman.

"Why do you ask?" she added.

"I received a rather curious letter from him," said Ernest, and slipped away to avoid further explanations. Leonora's description of the redoubtable MacCarthy furnished him with plenty of food for thought.

The songs being all over, Lesbia made an announcement.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she said, "you'll find sandwiches and lemonade in the dining room, and there's a piano and a bare floor in the room above for those who'd care to dance. There's a card-table in the study for anyone who'd like a rubber, and this room is here for those who prefer to be quiet."

There was a general exit for the dining room after this speech. Henrietta went out on Algernon's arm, Leila with Lucius Loftus. Ernest O'Mahony, making for Leonora, was waylaid by Gladys and forced to be her escort. Bertie and Mr. Wolverhampton went simultaneously for their divinity and in their rivalry so incommoded each other that Jack Molloy cut them both out.

"May I have the pleasure of taking you for some refreshment?" he said, offering his arm.

"Certainly, Jack," she said, taking it. Then, turning sweetly to the others: "You'll excuse me, won't you?" she said.

Bertie and F. F. bowed in silent rage. Leonora and Jack swept out of the room, leaving them alone together. F. F. slammed the door and turned on Bertie.

"Of all the impudent young scamps I ever met," he said, "you're the worst. What do you mean by it?"

"Mean by what?" asked Bertie.

"Daring to offer your arm to Miss Montgomery."

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Why shouldn't you? You! . . . Why . . . Look here, my dear Bertie, you don't quite realise what you've done. I'll be quite frank with you. I may as well tell you that I—er—regard Miss Montgomery with—er—feelings of the—er—greatest respect. Yes, the greatest respect.

"O, do you?" replied Bertie. "Well, I'm in love with her."

"You?"

"Yes, me."

"But, damn it, sir, so am I."

"You?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'd try and get over it if I were you," said Bertie, nonchalantly.

"Get over it!" exclaimed Mr. Wolverhampton.

"Yes. Get over it."

"I will not get over it. I'm going to marry her."

"No. I'm going to marry her."

"You. How can you keep a wife?"

"I'll be qualified in three years."

"Well, I can marry her at once."

"O, look here, Mr. Wolverhampton, that's absurd. You're old enough to be her father."

"And *she's* old enough to be your mother."

"Rot."

"Twenty-nine next birthday."

"I don't believe it."

"Fact. Consult Who's Who."

"I don't care. I'm going to marry her."

"So am I."

They looked at each other in silent exasperation for a moment. Then both spoke together.

"Look here. Will you listen to reason?" they said.

They went on talking together for several minutes, and then, at the height of the argument, the door opened and Jack Molloy came in.

"Either of you chaps seen a cigarette case lying about?" he said. Then noticing their attitudes: "Hello! Do I interrupt you? Anything wrong?"

"This ancient boy-o wants to marry Leonora," blurted out Bertie.

"You insolent street-boy!" exclaimed F. F.

"O, come now" remonstrated Jack. "Be calm! Be reasonable. And look here, young man," he said to Bertie, "if he does want to marry the lady, I don't see what business it is of yours. You're not her keeper."

"The pup wants to marry her himself," said F. F. hastily.

"O, I see," said Jack. "You're rivals then. Why not toss up for her?"

"Sir," said Mr. Wolverhampton, "that suggestion is frivolous, and, I may add, most insulting to the lady."

"*Most insulting*," chimed in Betrie.

"I don't know so much," said Jack judicially. "You see, Leonora's rather a sport and might enjoy it, and it would certainly be less embarrassing for her than to have the two of you fighting for her under her very nose."

"But isn't it absurd," persisted Bertie, "for a man of Mr. Wolverhampton's age to be running after a girl like Leonora?"

"Not so absurd as for a boy like you," retorted Mr. Wolverhampton.

"I don't know; I don't know," said Jack. "Of course, love is always absurd. A man in love is the most ridiculous looking creature on earth, and I don't suppose age or youth make him either more or less. I repeat my suggestion to toss up. The man who wins will have something anyhow, and neither of you has the remotest chance of winning Leonora."

"What?" exclaimed both rivals in a breath.

"Not the faintest," repeated Jack. "You've both been completely cut out this very evening."

"Who by?" they demanded.

"Oh, you'll know soon enough," replied Jack.

Bertie and Mr. Wolverhampton turned upon each other and exclaimed simultaneously:

"I suppose you're satisfied now!"

"Ah, there's my cigarette case," said Jack, picking it up from an adjacent chair. "Hadn't you two better come upstairs?"

"I suppose so," said Bertie.

They turned towards the door, but at the same moment Ernest O'Mahony came in in deep dejection, his head down and his hands in his trousers pocket.

"Hello!" said Jack.

"You here?" said Ernest,

"I'm afraid so," answered Jack. "Are we in the way?"

"I wanted to be alone," said Ernest gloomily.

"What's the matter?" asked Jack.

"That girl!" replied Ernest. "How she mocks me! How she scorns all my advances! Oh, I'm a miserable man!"

"There's more than you in that condition, old man," said Jack. "Buck up!"

"Buck up, indeed!" said Ernest. "What a way to talk."

"Don't be so damnably tragic, O'Mahony," put in Bertie. "She won't have me, either, but am I going to mope about it? Not likely. There are other fish in the sea, and no woman's worth weeping for anyway."

"That's the stuff!" said Jack. "Now, O'Mahony, don't make an ass of yourself."

"You have never loved," said Ernest, "and MacIntyre is only a boy. But we, Wolverhampton, we are men, and we know what love is. My anger against you is abated. We are comrades in a common disappointment. Do you know who is our successful rival?"

"Who?" asked Mr. Wolverhampton.

"Ah, who?" repeated Ernest. "Towards whom have her eyes been turning throughout this whole evening? For whom has she been acting? For whom has she been exhibiting the priceless jewels of her wit? At whose appearance does her countenance brighten and her whole manner become changed? Beside whom does she endeavour over and over again to sit? Whom does she even now ply with attentions and sandwiches? Whom?"

"Well, whom, for God's sake?" exclaimed Jack, impatiently.

"Spit it out, old chap," said Bertie.

"Who is it?" cried Mr. Wolverhampton, in agony.

"Who is it?" proclaimed Ernest dramatically. "Who, but your own son, Algernon, who, like an unfeeling clod, spurns every advance and scorns the precious love she offers."

"My goodness!" exclaimed F. F.

"Great Scott!" cried Bertie.

"Rot!" said Jack Molloy.

"Blind, blind fools!" shouted Ernest. "Have you not seen her blush whenever she looks at him? Why she blushes at his very name. She's like a green girl of seventeen."

Suddenly Algernon's voice was heard outside the door.

"It's no use, Henrietta," he was saying. "I'm going. I can't stand this persecution any longer."

Next moment he and Henrietta appeared in the doorway.

"Ah, here's the lucky man!" cried Jack. "Come in and hear the good news."

"What good news?" demanded Algernon, surlily.

"News such as three men here would give their lives to hear, and you can have it for nothing."

"It can be summarised in three words," said Ernest. "Leonora loves you."

"Great Scott!" cried Algernon.

"Little though you deserved it," said Ernest, "it was none the less true."

"And I congratulate you, Algernon," said Mr. Wolverhampton, magnanimously.

"What have I done to deserve this?" said Algernon.

"Baphemer!" said Ernest. "An angel has given her love to a swine, and he has trampled it in the mire."

"Look here, O'Mahony," said Algernon, sternly. "I'm not going to stand here and let you call me names, and I won't tolerate any more of these practical jokes."

"It's no joke, worse luck," said Ernest. "She loves you, and the world is at an end for me."

"You can have her, as far as I am concerned," replied Algernon. "I don't want her."

"Ungrateful dog!" stormed Ernest. "Is this the way to treat a woman's love?" And such a woman! O, if she but knew how her love was thrown away on this block of stone, and what a wealth of love she could have from me. O, what bitter, bitter irony."

"Ah, dry up, O'Mahony," said Bertie. "You're not the only pea in the soup."

Someone else came into the room at this juncture. It was Leila.

"Hello! What are you all doing here?" she said. "Are you there, Jack? You're wanted upstairs to play the piano. Lucius wants to dance."

"I'll be up in a minute," said Jack. "I was just looking for my cigarette case."

"Thanks awfully," said Leila, and turning to go away nearly ran into Michael and Lesbia, who were coming in.

"Is Mr. Wolverhampton there?" asked Lesbia. "You bad man, you haven't had anything to eat yet. The sandwiches will be all finished if you don't hurry up. . . . Hello! What's the matter here?"

"O, nothing much. Just a little dispute," said Jack.

"A dispute?" said Michael. "What on earth about?"

"Well," said Jack, "There's a whole crowd of people here who want to marry Leonora, and I was acting as referee."

"Get away!" said Michael.

"Which of them is it?" asked Lesbia.

"Well, there's Bertie for one, and Ernest for another, and Mr. Wolverhampton. . . ."

"You're joking," said Lesbia.

"I'm sorry to say he isn't, madam," said F. F.

"Then there's Algernon. . . ."

"Excuse me," said Algernon. "I have no desire to marry Miss Montgomery."

"Well, she wants to marry you," said Jack, "and that's pretty much the same thing. She always gets her own way."

"She won't this time," said Algernon, grimly.

"Don't mind him, Algernon," said Lesbia. "Leo was only joking. She's always up to some joke or other."

"I object to being made ridiculous," said Algernon, grimly.

"Oh, don't take yourself so seriously," said Michael.

"A joke never harmed anyone. You ought to be flattered when a pretty girl like Leo takes so much notice of you as to play pranks with you."

"Unfortunately," interposed Ernest, "this isn't a joke. Leonora loves him."

"Well, then, he'd better marry her," said Michael. "If she's set her heart on it she'll have you, and you may as well give in first as last. It will save trouble."

Algernon turned away with an exasperated snort.

"Excuse me, Mr. O'Malley," said F. F. "You don't know Algernon as I do. I'm his father and he's been a Roman son to me. It would be far better for Miss Montgomery to give up all thought of marrying him and choose one of us three, who are only too anxious to have her."

"Now that's a great idea," said Michael. "Leila, like a good girl, go and fetch Leo and maybe she'll clear the matter up."

Leila ran out.

"Do you mean to say," said Ernest angrily, "that you're going to put this beautiful girl through the ordeal of choosing one of us before a roomful of people?"

"O don't worry yourself," said Lesbia. "Leo's not shy."

"This farce has gone on long enough," said Algernon. "I'm going. Come along, Henrietta."

"Coward!" said F. F.

Algernon made for the door, but at that moment Lesbia returned, followed by Leonora who was nonchalantly sucking an orange.

"What's the matter," she asked carelessly, and obviously more interested in extracting the maximum of enjoyment from the orange than in getting an answer to the question.

"There are a lot of people here wanting to marry you, Leo," said Lesbia.

"Are there?" Leonora asked indifferently and continued sucking the orange. "How many?"

"Ernest and Bertie," said Lesbia.

"And Mr. Wolverhampton," said Jack.

"Well," said Leonora, still sucking, "I don't want to marry them."

Ernest was heard to sigh deeply. Bertie blushed. Mr. Wolverhampton fidgetted with his plaid.

"I'm going to marry Algy over there," announced Leonora, and took another suck at the orange.

Her audience were none of them particularly conventional people, but they were all of them sensibly perturbed by this exhibition of frankness.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Algernon very decidedly.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Leonora," said Henrietta.

"Why should I be ashamed?" asked Leonora. "All women want to get married, why shouldn't I?"

"You're not going to marry me," said Algernon.

"O, yes I will," said Leonora, and flung her orange into the fire-place.

"I'm going out of this," said Algernon, in a black fury.

"Don't get excited, Algernon," said Henrietta. "She can't marry you against you're will so why worry?"

"I'm perfectly calm," said Algernon, and then turning to Leonora he went on: "you needn't think you'll stampede me into a wedding. I'll play John Tanner to no Ann Whitefield."

"Better play Tanner than Tavy, like me," interposed Bertie.

"We won't play anything, darling," said Leonora, going over to Algernon. "I'm your Leo, and you're my Algy."

"Don't come near me," cried Algernon, backing away from her.

Leonora suddenly ceased her advance and remained silent. Henrietta stepped towards her.

"Really, Leonora, you shock me," she said. "Algernon, don't stand staring like an idiot. Come away."

"I don't know what I'm doing," said Algernon. "Nothing like this ever happened to me before. Let's go."

Algernon and Henrietta moved sternly towards the door. At that Michael O'Malley woke up suddenly from the habitually dreamy state into which he had fallen.

"What's all this?" he said. "You're not leaving, are you?"

"Yes, we're leaving," said Algernon. "Are you coming, father?"

"No, I'm not," said F. F.

"What's been happening exactly?" asked Michael, quite puzzled. "Leo, what have you been doing?"

"Nothing in particular," replied Leonora, gloomily. "Trying to marry Algy, that's all."

"Damnation!" exclaimed Algernon.

"Be calm," said Henrietta. "She shan't have you. Will is will and you can't get away from it."

"Well," said Michael, "I suppose I'd better say good-bye."

Algernon and Henrietta went out without answering.

"Leo, how *could* you?" said Lesbia, as soon as they were gone.

"I told you it wouldn't be any good," said Leonora, turning angrily on Leila.

"This is rather interesting," said Michael. "I wish I'd been here for the beginning of it."

"So you were, you old silly," said Lesbia affectionately, "only you were asleep."

"Ah, well," said Michael, "let's join the others."

He went out with Lesbia. Ernest went up to Leonora.

"You see that he'll have none of you," he said.

"Well, I still want you, and by heaven I'll *make* you love me," and with that he left the room.

"Never mind, Leo," said Jack Molloy, "Come and have a dance upstairs."

"Thanks, Jack," said Leonora, and went off on his arm.

"Come along, Mr. Wolverhampton," said Leila.

"You're heart's not broken, is it? She'd be too much of a handful for you, wouldn't she. Isn't your son a terrible man, too, poor chap?"

"I agree with you, Miss Leila. I agree with you," laughed Mr. Wolverhampton, and went off with Leila to the dancing room.

Bertie MacIntyre was left alone. Suddenly he remembered that there were sandwiches and cakes in the next room.

IV.

"There's no doubt about it," mused Mr. Wolverhampton, as he stood before the mirror in his bedroom that night, "for a man of my figure the kilt is not a dignified costume to make love in. . . ."

"If ever I go courting again," he said, "I shall do so in more sober attire."

Sitting, in his shirt, on the edge of his bed, he began to unlace his boots.

"What a fool I've been," he meditated. "And what an awful old fraud . . . Pretending to be an intellectual, when I've never read a book. . . I might have known . .

"Then this play I wrote. . . ."

He thought of a certain ream of paper, with the single phrase 'Act I.' scrawled at the top of the first sheet. "Thank heaven, no one knows about that," he said.

"Then I must needs go and act the Gael, and heaven help me, I'm no Gael; just a common or garden Irishman. . . ."

"Yes. I'm an old fraud. . . ."

He kicked off one boot, to the great annoyance of Algernon, who slept in the room beneath, and began to unlace the other.

"After all," he said to himself, "I suppose I'm well out of it. . . . Leonora *would* be a handful. . . . Too clever for me by half, and you'd never know what she'd be up to. . . ."

"Now Leila's more my style. I can talk to her all right. . . . And she's quiet and sympathetic. . . . She's prettier than Leonora, too, in a quiet sort of way. And she's got very nice hair. . . ."

"What a nice *way* she has. . . ."

He remembered that Leila had pressed his hand in hers after the great crisis. He lifted that hand and looked at it, hesitated a moment, then raised it shyly to his lips.

CHAPTER VI.

I.

MR WOLVERHAMPTON IN QUEST OF ADVENTURE.

ALL the same," said Mr. Wolverhampton to himself next morning; "one can hardly go and make love to a girl immediately after being rejected by her sister. It would be complimentary to neither the one nor the other. . . ."

"Still, I'm not going back to a quiet life; not by any means. . . . If I can't have love, I'll have adventure."

When he came down to breakfast he found Algernon and Henrietta already seated at the table, both looking very sulky.

"A nice mess you've landed us in," grumbled Algernon.

"What are you talking about?" said Mr. Wolverhampton. "You ought to consider yourself the luckiest man in the world. The prettiest and cleverest girl in Dublin practically throws herself at your head, and you call it 'a nice mess.' I never heard of such a thing."

"Pretty or ugly, clever or stupid," said Algernon, "I don't want to marry Leonora Montgomery."

"You couldn't do better if you searched Ireland," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"I don't intend to do better. I don't intend to marry anybody."

"Some coffee, Hetty," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"That's really very foolish of you, Algernon. You really ought to be thinking of getting married. You're getting on in years, you know."

"I suppose," sneered Algernon, "you'd have liked me to marry at a ridiculously early age like yourself."

"Better early than never, Algernon," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"When I decide to marry," said Algernon, "I shall choose a mate quietly and calmly, looking for those qualities in her which shall fit her to be the wife and mother of supermen."

"Have a sugared almond," said F. F.

"I wish you would give up that disgusting habit of sucking sugared almonds," said Henrietta. "It isn't dignified in a commercial magnate."

"No, but they are jolly nice," said F. F. "Try one."

Mr. Wolverhampton's generosity was coldly declined, and when breakfast was over Henrietta retired to her room while Algernon went down to the office.

"And now for a life of adventure," said Mr. Wolverhampton to himself. He sat deep in thought for about twenty minutes. Then a smile passed over his face, and going to a writing table, he took up a pen and a sheet of notepaper. He thought again for a moment and then began to write. In a few minutes he had produced the following:—

Gentleman with means desires occupation. Treasure-seekers fitted out. Filibusters financed, etc.—

—This office.

On his way to business he left copies of this at the advertisement counters of the three principal daily papers.

Three days later Mr. Wolverhampton interviewed the sender of the most promising reply to this advertisement. He was a man of about forty, dark and impressive-looking, neatly dressed in navy-blue, and wearing a pointed beard. There was a look about his eyes that should have inspired mistrust, but Mr. Wolverhampton, guileless as a child, did not observe it.

Julian D'Arcy was the name which this worthy gave on entering.

"I have come to tell you about some buried treasure I can put my hand on," he said.

"Sit down," said Mr. Wolverhampton. "Have a sugared almond," and he offered him a bag.

"Thanks. I prefer to smoke, if you don't mind," replied the other, and taking a cigar from his case he bit off the end very neatly with his sharp, white teeth, lit it, and sat back comfortably in an arm-chair.

"Yes; it's genuine buried treasure I'm after," he said. "No yarn, but the genuine article. No wild goose chase, with an old chart for clue, but real genuine treasure, which I've seen with these very eyes and handled with these very hands. Think of that. I've had bars of gold in these two hands of mine, and for lack of means I've had to leave them where they are."

"Tell me all about it," said F. F.

"Well," said D'Arcy, "do you remember hearing of the wreck of the 'Hesperus' about seven years ago? I daresay not. She was a small vessel belonging to the Yellow Star Line that went down with all hands off the coast of Brazil. I was the only survivor. I tied myself to a plank and was washed ashore on an uninhabited island, where I remained until I was rescued by a passing steamer six months later."

"Needless to say those six months were pretty dull. I'd no particular struggle for existence to liven things up. The climate of the place is quite pleasant, so I'd no trouble rigging myself up a dwelling, and the island was fruitful and swarmed with game, so I was in no danger of starvation. I was just dull. I used to stroll about the place whistling and throwing stones at birds for lack of anything better to do, and sometimes exploring woods and caves and other out-of-the-way spots in the hope of meeting with some sort of adventure."

"One day I entered a cave that went deeper than any I'd discovered yet. I was carrying a torch made out of twisted creepers dipped in some resinous stuff I'd extracted from a fallen tree—a sort of pine, I fancy. It wasn't much good as a torch, and only threw out its light a few yards in front of me, so that suddenly without any warning I almost ran into something the very sight of which made my blood run cold. . . . It was a human skeleton standing erect right in my path."

Mr. Julian D'Arcy was a first-rate story teller. At this point he paused and mopped his brow with a silk handkerchief. F. F. was thrilled to the soul.

"And then?" he asked breathless.

"I almost dropped the torch at the shock," resumed D'Arcy, "but collecting all my courage I took a step

forward. I discovered that a long chain was wound about the skeleton fastening it to a pole which had been driven into the ground. Evidently some fiends in human form had chained up the poor creature, of whom these were the remains, and left him alone in the darkness to die of starvation and exhaustion.

"As I was thus reflecting, the light of my torch fell on something bright a few yards away. I hurried forward and, groping about, touched something cold and hard. It was a bar of gold. . . . At the same moment my torch flickered and went out, and I had to grope my way out of the cave in darkness."

Again D'Arcy paused, and again F. F. urged him eagerly to proceed.

"Next day," resumed D'Arcy, "I returned to the cave, and having buried the gruesome sentinel, I made a thorough search of the place. You can judge of my excitement and delight when I found that the back of the cave was the hiding place of a vast hoard of treasure. I was nearly a week unearthing and counting it. There were over a hundred bars of solid gold, which I could just manage to lift but not carry. There were seven sacks of gold and silver coins, mostly Spanish and French, but a few English and Dutch. There was a small chest of jewels, some loose and some set in ornaments; and there was a miscellaneous collection of candlesticks, cups, plate and other valuables."

Mr. Wolverhampton gasped when this catalogue came to an end. Mr. D'Arcy carefully detached an inch of ash from the end of his cigar and continued his statement.

"Evidently this was the cache of some seventeenth century pirate, who had perished at sea. I suppose the skeleton belonged to some stranger who had found it by chance and been done to death, or perhaps to a member of the gang who had ratted.

"Well, it was less than a week after this that I was rescued. Of course I couldn't say anything about the treasure. If I had, some Government or other would have claimed it and my share would have been thank you and a small percentage, and it's all or none for me. So I

just took the full of my pockets of coin and kept mum. When I got home to England. . . ."

"Home?" queried Mr. Wolverhampton. "Am't you an Irishman?"

"Yes, but I've lived most of my life in England. Anyway, as soon as I got back I took two of my friends into partnership and set out to find the treasure. One of them was Captain Matchlock of the schooner *Coromandel*, the other a man named Cuthbertson. We clubbed all our money together to fit out an expedition and set sail at once for the island. I won't go into the details of that cruise. It's enough to say that as soon as the crew heard we were after treasure they mutinied. They claimed an equal division all round, and, of course, we wouldn't hear of that, so we just had to go home empty-handed. Since then we've never been able to raise enough money for another try, and there the matter lies. Think of it: gold and silver and precious stones enough to make half a dozen fortunes, lying there for lack of a few thousands to lift it."

"I'm immensely interested, Mr. D'Arcy," said F. F. "Have you any of those Spanish coins about you?"

"Not one. I sunk everything in fitting out that expedition. But I've something better. Look at this."

He took from his pocket what looked like a soiled rag, unfolded it, and passed it to Mr. Wolverhampton.

"That's a map of the Island I drew with a stump of pencil on my handkerchief," he said.

It was indeed a map; just such a map as Mr. Wolverhampton had read in the penny dreadfuls of his boyhood. He poured over it, fascinated.

"That cross marks the site of the cave," explained D'Arcy. "You must excuse me for not disclosing for the present the latitude and longitude of the island. I ascertained them as soon as I was taken on board the ship that rescued me, and when all formalities are complete I shall give them to you."

"Certainly. Most reasonable," said Mr. Wolverhampton. "And now as to particulars of expenditure. . .?"

III.

Another person who had seen Mr. Wolverhampton's advertisement was Leila Montgomery, part of whose business it was to read all the advertisements in the papers every day. She guessed at once who had inserted it. It was so exactly like him, she told herself.

And on the very day of Mr. Wolverhampton's interview with D'Arcy she happened to pass along Upper Baggot Street. Just as she reached Mr. Wolverhampton's house D'Arcy was coming down the steps. She glanced at him casually at first, then more intently.

"I've seen that face before," she said to herself. "Where was it, I wonder?" she mused as she walked on, but the circumstances eluded her memory. No effort could recall them, but she felt certain that they were unpleasant ones. Undeniably the stranger's face was not one to be trusted.

"I know he's a dishonest man," Leila told herself, "but what on earth——"

Suddenly she remembered F. F.'s advertisement.

"It's some sharper come to swindle him," she said. "I'd better go and warn him."

She hesitated a moment, then retraced her steps, and a little shyly went up to Mr. Wolverhampton's door and rang the bell.

"I want to see Mr. Wolverhampton for a moment on business," she told the maid, and presently she was shown into his presence.

"Sit down, sit down, Miss Montgomery," said F. F., speaking very hastily, to hide his confusion, and turning his back to the light lest she might observe the blush which he felt creeping up from under his collar. "To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

Leila had no prepared statement ready. Having acted on impulse, she had not had time to think out any preliminaries, so perforce she had to plunge in *medias res*.

"Who was that man I passed on the steps?" she asked point blank.

"A friend of mine," he answered. "A Mr. D'Arcy."

"D'Arcy isn't his name, anyhow," said Leila. "I can't remember his name, but I know it isn't D'Arcy."

"So you know him?" asked F. F.

"No. I can't strictly say I do. But I know he's a shady character."

"What has he done then?"

"O, don't ask me. I remember his face in connection with something or other I've forgotten, but which I am quite sure was discreditable. So I've just come in to warn you against him."

"O, come, Miss Montgomery," protested F. F., "you can hardly expect me to condemn a man on such flimsy evidence as this."

"Isn't his face sufficient evidence?" said Leila. "If ever dishonesty and fraud were written on a man's face they're written on D'Arcy's—or whatever he calls himself."

This conveyed nothing to Mr. Wolverhampton. As simple as a child in his estimate of his fellowmen, he never suspected evil until it was pointed out to him, and even then did not believe it. He was one of those people whose way it is to like everybody.

"I'm afraid I don't understand you," he said to Leila.

"No matter," she replied. "Has he tried to get anything out of you?"

"No," said F. F. briefly. He had no intention of letting anyone know of the little adventure he had prepared for himself.

"Well," said Leila. "Don't let him succeed, anyhow. I won't be long finding out who Mr. D'Arcy is, and when I do I'll tell you. Meanwhile be wary of him."

"Certainly," said F. F., still quite unconvinced. He looked upon Leila's interference in his schemes much as a child might look upon its mother's action in taking away a razor with which it was amusing itself.

"Have a sugared almond," he said; but Leila declined, having business on hand which would not let her wait.

"Women! Women!" philosophised Mr. Wolverhampton when she was gone. But her solicitude for his welfare quite flattered him.

"Isn't he a silly old darling?" said Leila to herself on her way home. "Now where did I see that D'Arcy creature before? Where on earth . . .?"

The question remained a mystery.

IV.

We follow Mr. Julian D'Arcy meanwhile to Liverpool, through the disreputable streets in the neighbourhood of the docks to a publichouse and up the stairs to a room over the shop. D'Arcy entered without knocking.

Within a man was seated at a table eating a meal of bread and cheese and beer. He looked up as D'Arcy entered, showing a face of extreme ugliness; the forehead very low, the jaw very heavy; the nose bulbous; a prodigious squint in one eye; the beginnings of a cancerous growth in the right corner of the lower lip, due to irritation from the short clay pipe he habitually smoked, and which now lay on the table beside him.

"The Boss!" he cried, rising to his feet, and revealing the fact that he was very short—about four feet ten at the outside. His figure was disproportionately broad, and his legs were bow-shaped.

"Himself and none other," replied D'Arcy. "How wags the world since last we met?"

"Pretty bobbish, thanks, if that's wot you mean," grunted the other. "Got another dead snip for me to back?"—this with a heavy attempt at sarcasm.

"Nothing deader," replied D'Arcy. "Game for it?"

"All depends, boss. I'm 'ard up, and not on for risks. Sit down and we'll 'ave a talk about it. 'Ave a glass of beer?"

"No, thanks. I'll smoke a cigar, though," and he helped himself from his case.

D'Arcy smoked in silence for a while. The other crammed the remains of his bread and cheese into his mouth, chewed it up, swilled down a mug of beer, and filled and lit his clay pipe.

"Now, then, boss?" he said.

"It's a dead cert I'm out for, with a small risk," said D'Arcy.

"I 'opes it's better than your last dead cert, boss."

"O come now. I've only failed you once. You needn't rub that in any more. You'll admit I've put you in for a lot of good things, won't you?"

"I will. Out with it now."

"Well, I struck the real goods; a perfect beauty; a middle-aged booby with heaps of cash looking out for adventure. We can give him that, can't we, Chudleigh?"

"We can."

"Well, I've fixed this old juggins up with a buried treasure yarn, and he's game to fit out an expedition to recover it. He'll put up ten thousand if we ask for it; and, meanwhile, he's handed over a thousand to show his goodwill."

"Bloody fool!" ejaculated Chudleigh.

"It'll be half and half if you chip in," said D'Arcy, "and the first five hundred down."

"Wot 'ave I got to do?"

"We're going hunting for that treasure in your *Sarah Jane*—the *Coromandel*, I've called her in the yarn. You've just got to be the old sea dog, and no difficult part to play, seeing that it's what you are."

"But look 'ere, guvnor, where've got to? 'Oo's the old cove, and where are we taking him to in the *Sarah Jane*? And 'ow are we going to get the dibs off 'im? You ain't going to just drop him overboard, are you?"

"Allow me a moment and I'll explain. The old cove is a respectable old gentleman living in Dublin, at which port we'll pick him up. He expects to be taken to the South Seas somewhere, but we'll just take him to some out of the way spot in the Hebrides where a ship calls about once a year, and after we've relieved him of his ten thousand just drop him ashore. Quite simple, isn't it?"

"Sounds orlright. . ."

"Are you game?"

"I'll think it over."

"Five hundred down, remember, and five thousand to follow."

" I'll consider it."

" Well, I'll see you to-morrow."

" Right—o."

" And, by the way, from this out your name is no longer Chudleigh, but Capt. Matchlock, of the schooner *Coromandel*. By the way, is your rotten old tub a schooner?"

" No. She's a ketch."

" Oh, well, I suppose he won't know the difference any more than I do. . . . And, oh! look here. I'm hanged if I'll fag down to this warren again. If you're on, call at my hotel to-morrow. I'm staying at the Adelphi."

" We ain't 'arf swank, are we?"

" Well, with a thousand in my pocket. . . ."

V.

Leila was busy at work in the Employment Agency when all of a sudden she remembered where she had seen Julian D'Arcy's face before. The remembrance confirmed her fears for Mr. Wolverhampton; he was the credulous dupe of a singularly clever swindler.

She rose from her desk at once and approached her employer.

" I want leave of absence for an hour," she said.

Her employer, Miss Mithington, a tall skinny woman, with hard grey eyes, looked at her in stern surprise.

" What for, may I ask?"

" It's a matter of importance," replied Leila. " A matter of life and death."

" Indeed?" queried Miss Withington, raising her eyebrows. " And do you think I pay you twelve and six a week to go and attend to matters of life and death?"

" If you don't give me leave I'll go without it," said Leila.

" If so you may save yourself the trouble of coming back."

Leila was gone before the sentence was finished. She arrived at Mr. Wolverhampton's house breathless.

Mr. Wolverhampton had just gone out, the maid told her, with a strange gentleman.

"The gentleman who called last Wednesday?"

"I think so."

"A gentleman in a blue suit?"

"Yes, Miss."

"How long are they gone?"

"About five minutes, Miss."

"What way?"

"Down the street."

Leila rushed off at once. She knew not what urged her to hurry; some instinct seemed to tell her the matter was urgent.

She jumped on board a city-going tram.

"If they go by backways I've lost them anyway," she reasoned. "They may just as likely keep to the main thoroughfare, and if so I'll overtake them."

As the tram kept on its way she kept her gaze fixed on the people thronging the pathways. She paid her fare without changing her attitude. Down Lower Fitzwilliam Street went the tram; no sign of her quarry. Down Merrion Square East; no sign. Merrion Square South; still no sign. She had an impulse to leave the tram at Holles Street, and again at Westland Row. But she suppressed them. "Even if they are gone that way," she said, "I wouldn't find them. Better stick to the main line." In the bewildering crowds of Nassau Street and College Green it was difficult to be sure of looking every where, but still there was no sign of those she sought.

On O'Connell Bridge it suddenly occurred to her to go on top of the tram and obtain a wider view. As she did so the tram stopped, giving her leisure to look around on all sides. She looked back along Westmoreland Street and D'Olier Street; forward along Sackville Street. No sign. Then she looked down the river and her heart gave a jump. Two figures—a tall figure in blue accompanied by a shorter one in grey—could be seen hurrying along the quays near the Custom House. Far off as they were there could be no mistaking them. Leila ran down the steps, jumped off the tram, and hurried in pursuit.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PERSECUTION OF ALGERNON.

I.

BERTIE MACINTYRE, coming in that afternoon, found Algernon alone. He was glad of that, for he wanted to have things out with his friend. It was their first meeting since the party at Michael O'Malley's, brooding on which had led Bertie to the conclusion that Algernon had treated him badly. He could not believe that Leonora had behaved as she did without some encouragement from Algernon, and in the light of what Algernon had said to him shortly before, Bertie could not regard such conduct as honourable. Characteristically, however, he could not come to the point at once, but began conversationally:

"Good evening, Algernon. All alone?"

"Yes. Henrietta's not come home yet, and my father's gone off for a holiday."

"A holiday? At this time?"

"Yes. The poor doddling old infant has acquired a habit of acting on impulse. I didn't know anything about it till this morning. Where have you been all this time?"

Bertie both felt and looked uncomfortable. He hated coming to the point, but there was no help for it.

"I—I—don't think you've treated me quite fairly, Algernon," he stammered.

"What do you mean?"

After some further beating about the bush Bertie explained. Before he had quite finished Algernon interrupted him angrily.

"You sense-forsaken young ass! You don't seriously imagine I want to marry Leonora, do you?"

"Well——"

"Heavens, is this woman to be eternally the plague of my life? There seems to be a general conspiracy to associate me with her. I didn't expect to find you taking part in it."

"I don't belong to any conspiracy. I didn't think any girl, no matter how unconventional, would behave as Leonora did without some encouragement. But I take your word for it, and admit I was wrong."

"Ever since that nonsensical tea party I've had no peace," complained Algernon. "Leonora has positively shoved herself on to me on several occasions, and you're the third person who has come either with threats or complaints to me for courting her. It's intolerable. I'm simply pestered to death. . . . I believe that infernal ass, Loftus, has written a song about me."

Bertie nodded his head sympathetically. Algernon resumed:

"The day after the party she met me in Grafton Street and insisted on walking with me. That lunatic, O'Mahony, saw us, and came to my office to demand an explanation. It appears he hasn't given up hopes of winning her for himself, and the deluded idiot has an idea that I'm only pretending not to want her out of fear of his wrath. Well, I don't want to waste my time quarrelling with a fool about a girl I hate the sight of, so I just soothed him down and assured him that the meeting was a chance one and not of my seeking, but then the same evening I got a threatening letter from your friend, Colman MacCarthy."

"Colman MacCarthy?"

"Yes. By the way, have you found out anything about him?"

"Yes. Leonora tells me he's an admirer of hers."

"Thanks. I guessed so much from his letter. Anything else?"

"Oh, she says he's about ten feet high, and as strong as a horse—a regular superman, she says."

"A superman?"

"Yes. That was her very word. He'd be a dangerous fellow to thwart, I fancy."

"H'm! No hectoring bully would keep me from the woman I wanted. But he can have Leonora."

"Do you really not care for Leonora?" asked Bertie.

"Care for her? Care for her?" Algernon was almost incoherent with rage. "Why man, I hate her. I detest her. I loathe the sight of her."

It was some minutes before Algernon simmered down sufficiently to be able to proceed with his complaints.

"On Wednesday last," he said at length, "the brazen hussy came down to the works to get some printing done. I was called in to settle some difficulty or other, and what do you think I was confronted with?"

"What?"

"A design for a wedding card. . . her wedding card . . . and mine. 'Montgomery' in the corner, you know, with an arrow through it, and 'Wolverhampton' substituted for it. I was really mad with anger, but Leonora just grinned like a Cheshire cat and asked me some questions about coloured inks. . . . I couldn't show my face in that department again until I'd sacked all the staff, and to crown everything I got another letter that night from Colman MacCarthy. . . . What can I do to stop this persecution?"

"I don't know," said Bertie. "Perhaps you'd better marry her . . . only then there'd still be Colman MacCarthy to deal with."

"If you can't propose something sensible," said Algernon, "you'd better shut up."

"Yesterday," he resumed, "I was taking tea by myself in the Cairo when the bold-faced creature came in and plumped herself down at my table. Of course, I pretended not to notice her, but she chattered away quite gaily by herself. . . . I left her in the middle of a sentence."

"Damn it, Algernon," said Bertie, "the girl deserves to win."

"As a reward for her pertinacity, or as a punishment for her impertinence?" asked Algernon, grimly.

"A little bit of both," replied Bertie pleasantly.

And at that moment the maid announced Mr. Ernest O'Mahony.

II.

Brows frowning like a storm-cloud he strode into the room and addressed Algernon in a voice of thunder.

"Liar!" he cried. "Coward! shuffler! sneak!"

Algernon rose from his chair.

"Look here, O'Mahony," he said. "I've had enough of you. Drop this theatrical humbug and get out of the house."

"Not until you have explained yourself."

"I owe you no explanation," said Algernon as calmly as he could. "I find your presence here a nuisance, and if you don't go away at once I'll have you removed."

"I am quite ready to go," returned Ernest, "but I insist first on your explaining why you lied to me the other day."

"When did I lie to you, you pig-headed donkey?" cried Algernon. Chronic exasperation had made him human.

"You told me that you were not courting Miss Montgomery, and yet I learn on the best authority that yesterday she had tea with you at the Cairo."

"Look here," said Algernon, restraining his exasperation with the greatest difficulty, "I've told you before that if ever Miss Montgomery is to be seen in my company the occasion is not my seeking. I've no more to say on the matter. . . . Now, if you value your life, go, I can't answer for my temper much longer."

"Sir," said O'Mahony, solemnly, "such an explanation is an insult to my intelligence and to the lady's character, and I refuse to accept it. You should be ashamed to excuse your presumption in paying court to Miss Montgomery by assuming an indifference which is creditable neither to you nor to her. Therefore, take this as a last warning: If ever you are seen again in the company of Miss Montgomery you must fight me or be for ever branded as a coward."

Collecting the last remnants of his self-control, Algernon said:

"O'Mahony, you're too great a fool to take seriously, with your rubbishy talk about fighting. You're a nui-

sance, that's what you are. Nothing more. Now here's my opinion of Leonora. She's a vain, impudent, brazen-faced hussy. Wild horses wouldn't make me marry her if she had a dowery of a hundred million pounds. Now go to the devil."

"So that's your opinion of the woman I love, is it? Then I have tenfold more right to chastise you than if you wished to marry her. . . . Sir, swords are too good for you. He who speaks in that manner of a beautiful woman is worthy only of a horse-whip. I shall purchase one to-morrow."

Algernon was too angry to take up the altercation, and here Bertie interposed.

"You are a God forsaken ass, O'Mahony," he said. "This sort of thing really isn't done, you know. This is life, not a drama—indeed, your behaviour is fit only for a farce. All the time you think you're looking like a hero you're really looking like a donkey."

"You seem to have no sense of dignity, MacIntyre," said Ernest. "You don't seem to realise what a serious thing it is to speak derogatorily of a lady."

"You're like a spoilt child," said Bertie. "If a girl won't have you you go about fixing the blame on everyone else but yourself. If Leonora doesn't like you it's not Algernon's fault; there must be something wrong with your face or your socks or something. Try sun-bronze, or parting your hair on the other side, or talking less; try anything you like, but don't make yourself a general nuisance."

After this harangue there was nothing for Ernest to do but to go. He had nothing else to say, so he went out in silence.

"You see what I have to put up with," said Algernon. Bertie laughed.

"Really, these Bohemians are a mad crowd," he said. "They appear to have no sense of humour."

"Do you know that a few weeks ago that high-toned blatherskite fought a duel with my unfortunate old father?"

"Yes. 'Tis the talk of Dublin,"

"I suppose it is," said Algernon, bitterly. "What have we done to deserve it?"

"Oh," said Bertie, "you needn't worry. Most people would rather be laughed at than be ignored. To be the subject of anecdotes is held to be almost as high an achievement as to be a teller of them."

"*Eloquentia civium urbis felicitas*," said Algernon.

"By gad, Algernon, that's not bad," said Bertie. "I never knew you were a wit. You're no superman; you're almost human."

III.

Ten minutes later Jack Molloy was shown into the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Wolverhampton," he said, and with a bow and a flourish presented him with an envelope. "A message from my friend, Mr. Colman MacCarthy," he announced.

Algernon's anger flared up again.

"Who the devil is this Colman MacCarthy?" he demanded.

"Do you mean to say you don't know? Well, that's very imprudent of you. Before you start courting a fellow's girl you ought to have the sense to find out what he's like."

"Courting his girl!" shouted Algernon. "When is this fooling going to end? I wish to the devil he'd marry the hussy and beat her with a poker when he's waspish."

"These equivocations are no good, Wolverhampton," answered Molloy, saucily. "Deliberately flouting my friend's kindly warnings, you have taken Miss Montgomery to tea, and he is reluctantly compelled to send you a challenge. I am empowered to make all arrangements with any friend you may appoint."

"I say, Algernon," chimed in Bertie, "You might as well accept this challenge. It'll rid you of the fellow's persecution and prove you the superman at the same time—two birds with one brick, you know."

"Has the whole world gone mad?" demanded Algernon. "Bertie, you're a fool. Molloy, tell that

MacCarthy cock-on-a-dung-hill that I decline to dispute with him about a girl that I am as anxious to see the last of as he is to grab her."

"I'm afraid this won't do," said Molloy. "I have to fulfil my duty to my friend and return him a formal answer."

"What blatant folly!" cried Algernon.

"O, I quite agree with you on that point," said Molloy. "No woman is worth fighting for, in my opinion. They're not even worth the trouble of courting. In fact, personally, I wouldn't cross the street for the most beautiful woman in the world. But I don't expect other people to agree with me, and, as I say, I am only doing my duty to my friend in asking for a formal answer to his challenge.

"Let me be your second, Algernon," said Bertie.

"Shut up," snapped Algernon. "Mr. Molloy, you can take this answer to your friend. He can marry Miss Montgomery with my best wishes for the future unhappiness of the pair of them; and you may add that if I did want the girl, no tuppenny tavern bully like him could keep her from me."

"I simply can't take back an answer like that," said Molloy.

"It's all you'll get, anyway. If you ring the bell Susan will show you the way out."

Algernon stalked out of the room, leaving Molloy and Bertie to themselves.

"Tell me, Molloy," said Bertie, "who is Colman MacCarthy?"

"A friend of mine."

"H'm."

"What else is he?"

"An admirer of Leonora's."

"Is that his sole function or profession?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, strictly between ourselves, is there any such person?"

"Why would you doubt?"

"Because, apart from Leonora and yourself, I've never met anyone who'd ever seen him."

"He's of a rather retiring disposition."

"I didn't gather that from these letters of his."

"Well, he's very much in love."

"In my experience love makes the timid more timid."

"Not in mine. MacCarthy is a rather peculiar man."

"He must be. A man of his physique to go about everywhere, noticing everything, and yet remaining unnoticed, must be rather—unobtrusive."

"Oh, yes. He's very unobtrusive."

"Well, I believe so firmly in his existence that I intend to fight him myself."

"Nonsense. You've no quarrel with him."

"Haven't I? I also love Leonora."

"Rot."

"Yes, I do. So will you kindly convey my challenge to him?"

"I can't. I'm *his* friend."

"Well, would you mind giving me his address?"

Molloy suddenly became very uneasy.

"I've—I've forgotten it," he said.

"Well, will you find it out and drop me a postcard."

"Certainly. Certainly. . . . By the way, I'd better be off. . . . So long, old chap."

"So long."

Molloy went out rather hurriedly.

"Ain't I a regular Sherlock Holmes," said Bertie to himself. "I'll stake my life there's no such person . . . Colman MacCarthy: What a name! Now who on earth invented him, and why? . . . Not Molloy. . ."

"Leonora, of course . . . Why. . . .?"

"Test of courage, I suppose. . . . Doesn't really know which of us to choose and tries us this way. . . Well, I'm not afraid of Mr. Colman MacCarthy, so there's a dog's chance for me yet. . ."

CHAPTER VIII

MR WOLVERHAMPTON GETS WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR.

I.

MR. Wolverhampton was deliciously thrilled by the sight of the *Coromandel*. The ketch had an unusually large mizzen, so that to his lubberly eye she passed very well for a schooner. The crew was just such a collection of cut-throats as he had read about, and he was particularly delighted with the unprepossessing appearance of the Captain; he might have wished him a little taller perhaps, but otherwise he was as typical an old sea-dog as one could wish for.

Mr. D'Arcy introduced them:

"Mr. Wolverhampton: Captain Matchlock."

The Captain gave F. F. a scaly hand to shake, and the three went down the companion way amidships to the cabin. Mr. Wolverhampton was accorded the only chair, while the others sat on each side of him, Mr. D'Arcy on a bunk, the Captain on a sea-chest. F. F. looked around him, taking in his environment optimistically. The cabin was dark and stuffy, illuminated by two small port holes and an unclean skylight. He and his companions sat in the order described around a small table stained all over by circles of liquor. At the star-board wall was a kind of settee loaded with crockery and empty beer bottles. F. F. glanced from D'Arcy to the Captain and back again, and tried to persuade himself that all was as he wanted it.

"And now," he said, "for our plans."

Mr. D'Arcy cleared his throat as if for a speech, and at the same moment the cabin door burst open, and Leila Montgomery stepped inside. D'Arcy stopped,

startled, in the middle of a word. "Blimy!" said the Captain. F. F. half rose to his feet.

"Miss Montgomery!" he gasped.

Leila stood still for a moment, looked round her, and then, addressing D'Arcy, said:

"Good evening, Mr. Rawlinson."

"Excuse me," replied D'Arcy calmly, "I think you are making a mistake. Rawlinson is not my name."

"I'm quite sure it isn't," answered Leila, "but it's the alias I remember you by."

D'Arcy turned to F. F. and said: "Is this lady a friend of yours?"

"Yes," replied F. F. "Miss Montgomery, I hope you are not casting any imputations on the character of my friend, Mr. D'Arcy."

"Friend!" exclaimed Leila. "Do you call that fraudulent bucket-shop promoter your friend?"

D'Arcy jumped to his feet and put on a semblance of honest pain and anger.

"Mr. Wolverhampton, if this lady were not a friend of yours . . . I appeal to you. . . ."

But F. F.'s suspicions were aroused at last, and he showed it. D'Arcy knew that further deception was impossible, and quickly resolved on a bold stroke. He pulled Leila away from the door, and put his back against it, and drawing a revolver, covered Leila and F. F. alternately, saying: "Hands up!"

It never occurred to either of the victims that he dared not have fired. They felt isolated from the world in that stuffy little cabin, and thought they had no course but to obey. D'Arcy called the Captain to his side, and the pair of them then left the cabin, locking the door behind them. Leila and Mr. Wolverhampton were prisoners.

They looked at each other in amazement.

"This is an adventure," said F. F.

"Too much of an adventure for my taste," replied Leila. "What's going to happen now?"

She went to the door and tried the handle. It did not budge. Orders were shouted up on deck. The vessel moved forward and began to keel over slightly. There

was a creaking of timbers and cordage, and the crockery on the settee began to slide until brought to by a sort of bulwark that ran round it.

"We're off to sea," said F. F.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish," said Leila.

"What shall we do?" asked F. F. a little helplessly.

"There's nothing very much we *can* do," replied Leila. "Hello! There's a bolt to the door. At least we can keep that couple of cut-throats from coming back here."

She went and shot the bolt. F. F. made assurance doubly sure by dragging over the heavy sea-chest on which the Captain had been sitting and placed it against the door.

"Now we can't be disturbed," he said.

The ketch was now sailing at a good speed, and they could tell by a slight pitching and tossing that she had left the river and was out on the bay.

"I'm sorry you've got yourself into such a mess on my account," said F. F.

"O, it's all right," replied Leila. "They can't murder us, you know. That sort of thing isn't done nowadays. How did you get into Rawlinson's clutches?"

"Tell me first," said F. F., "who is Rawlinson?"

Leila told him. Some years before he had come to the employment agency where she worked to engage clerks and typists for some enterprise he was running, and which had turned out afterwards to be a bucket shop. He was evidently an adventurer who lived by his wits.

"What brought him to you?" she concluded.

When F. F. had explained Leila laughed heartily—and perhaps a little tenderly.

"Well, if you wanted adventure," she said, "you've got it; and perhaps a little more than you bargained for. . . . Hello! We're coming to a standstill."

"Hove to," corrected Mr. Wolverhampton.

II.

"This is a complication," said D'Arcy, as, in response to hasty commands the *Coromandel* was cast off from the pier and slid down the river.

"A wot?" asked Captain Matchlock.

"A complication—a hitch—a *dea ex machina*. Why the devil did your men let that woman on board?"

"I told 'em to pay no 'eed to anythink that might 'appen. Safest way with em. . . . Wot's the 'arm anyway?"

"That girl's sure to have some relations or other who'll start enquiries if she doesn't come home to-night. . . ."

"Relations? Ain't she 'is wife or daughter or some-think?"

"Idiot! Didn't you hear him call her Miss Montgomery? Besides, his wife's dead, and I've seen his daughter."

"Gorblimey!"

"You may well say gorblimey. This is the very devil of a business. The whole situation will have to be revised."

"Wot price your dead cert now? Wouldn't fail, would yer? . . . We *are* failed."

"Nonsense. We'll have that five thousand yet. . . ."

"Get us copped, more likely. . . ."

"No. We won't get copped."

"You and your infallible methods. . . ."

"Shut up, Chudleigh, for the Lord's sake, and let me think."

"Ow, think awiy!" said the Captain, surlily, and left him.

D'Arcy paced the deck for some minutes while scheme after scheme suggested itself to his fertile brain to be rejected each in turn as too hazardous or otherwise unsatisfactory. Presently Chudleigh sidled up to him.

"Thought of anythink, boss?"

"No."

"Why not take the dibs off 'em and drop 'em in the dinghy and run for it?"

"Yes. And have every port in the three Kingdoms looking out for us in an hour."

Chudleigh became despondent.

"Better put 'em ashore and be content with wot we've got," he suggested.

"Do you think he'll be content to leave us what we've got? Anyway, I want that five thousand."

"Can't be done, boss."

Suddenly D'Arcy cried: "I've got it. First of all heave to, and I'll tell you what we'll do."

In a few minutes the order was carried out and Chudleigh came to hear the boss's plan.

"There's a little deserted island," said D'Arcy, "about a mile out from Howth, called 'Ireland's Eye.' We'll just hang about till nightfall and then drop them there—after collaring the swag, of course. At the earliest they won't be rescued till next morning—perhaps later. That gives us anything from twelve to twenty-four hours to get clear in."

"Bit of a risk," said Chudleigh.

"Of course there's a risk," replied D'Arcy impatiently. "But it's our only possible chance."

They argued about it for a while, incidentally furnishing a fine demonstration of the mental qualities of the two races of which they were such creditable specimens; D'Arcy logically rash when rashness was the only safe course; Chudleigh stupidly timid when timidity meant inevitable disaster; D'Arcy clear-sighted, straight-thinking, relentless; Chudleigh purblind, muddle-headed, side-tracking, generally hazy. D'Arcy put the points in favour of his own scheme clearly and in order, and asked Chudleigh to put up any objections he might think of. Chudleigh did so, and D'Arcy effectively disposed of them. Had Chudleigh any alternative proposals? Yes. Leave their captives ashore and have done with them. D'Arcy had dealt with this before, and did so again. That course spelt disaster, swift and immediate. Chudleigh gave in. Any other alternative? Yes. Go on to the Hebrides. Disposed of again, and again Chudleigh acquiesced. No other alternative? No.

"Well . . .?"

"Still, I don't like it. . . ."

"Well, suggest something better."

"The 'Ebrides."

"Haven't I told you that's no good? That girl was probably seen coming on board; she may even have told

people where she was going. We'd be run down before we would ever get near the Hebrides."

"Orlright. I give in about the 'Ebrides. But I don't like this 'ere island business."

D'Arcy as patiently as he could went over the whole ground again. The island scheme was risky, but there was no alternative, so it had to be tried. Besides, the risk was not enormous. In twelve or fifteen hours, before ever the hue-and-cry began, the *Coromandel*, rechristened *Sarah Jane*, should be back in her old berth and the notes disposed of. Chudleigh was still unconvinced. He repeated some of his former objections and had them again refuted. He rambled into side issues; he shied at non-essential points.

D'Arcy, following him into the maze and fog thus created, was himself baffled, blinded and exasperated.

"But look here," he said at length, desperately reaching for the straight path. "All this is neither here nor there. The essential point is this. . . ."

He put the case again, with more force and heat this time.

"Oh yes," replied Chudleigh at the end, "wot you say is orlright. But wot I say is this, and mind you I'm a practical man, I am, wot's been in more jails before you was born than you've ever been in in your life, and wot I say is: will this 'ere plan work? It *sounds* orlright, I say, but . . ."

"You god-forsaken, thick-skulled nincompoop!" ejaculated D'Arcy, driven to desperation. "Can't you see . . .?"

It is the way Irishmen and Englishmen have always argued and always will (until, if ever, Englishmen acquire the art of clear thinking). Eventually in this case D'Arcy carried the day, Chudleigh acquiescing with glum foreboding. The shades of evening were falling, and the *Coromandel* was headed for "Ireland's Eye." Chudleigh stood by the weather bulwarks spitting into the sea and grumbling to himself.

"We'd far better 'ave put 'em ashore and 'ad done with it," he harked back, "or gone on to the 'Ebrides and 'ad three clear months"

"Damned Englishman," muttered D'Arcy under his breath, as he went down the companionship to interview his prisoners. Turning the key in the lock, he found that the door would not open.

"Let me in," he called.

"We feel safer without you," answered the voice of Mr. Wolverhampton.

"I'm not going to hurt you. I only want to talk to you."

"Well, talk away."

"I can break down the door if I like, you know."

"That'll be your loss, not mine."

D'Arcy swore.

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Wolverhampton.

"Look here," said D'Arcy, "if you'll hand over the swag we'll put you ashore on 'Ireland's Eye,' with blankets and provisions—do you hear?"

"Yes. Go on."

"And if you don't we'll sail out to sea and take it from you, and then drop you overboard. Do you hear that?"

"Yes," said Mr. Wolverhampton, and D'Arcy noticed that his voice was just a shade less cheerful.

"Think it over," said D'Arcy, and went on deck again.

"Now we're in the soup nicely, aren't we?" said F. F. ruefully. "Miss Montgomery, I can't tell you how sorry I am for landing you in such a mess. I'm a frightful ass, so I am."

"What's the swag he's talking about?" asked Leila.

"This," said F. F. taking a thick packet from his pocket. "Five thousand pounds in Bank of England notes."

"Whatever did you bring that along for?"

"Expenses. They've had two thousand out of me already to fit up the ship. This was for provisions and tools when we got to the other side, and pay for the men, and so on."

"Well, we've got to save it," said Leila.

"We can't. I'll just have to hand it over and let them put us ashore. . . . I'll never go treasure hunting again."

"Nonsense. I wouldn't dream of letting those blackguards have the money."

"Neither would I, if I'd only myself to consider. But I can't allow you to suffer for my folly."

"Oh, I'm all right. Let's hold a council of war and think out a course of action."

"I'm hungry," said F. F. "Have a sugared almond?"

In the gathering gloom they sat side by side on the sea-chest, helping themselves alternately out of the bag. Sucking the sugared dainty must have been conducive to constructive thought, for presently Leila said, pointing towards the settee:

"Those beer bottles have solved the problem."

"How?" asked F. F.

"Put the notes into one, drop it overboard, and surrender. When they find you've nothing to rob, they'll put us ashore and sail away. Then we swim out and get the bottle."

"They'll kill us."

"Not they. They'd be afraid. There are too many of them in it, and these blackguards never trust one another. . . . And who's going to risk hanging just to gratify his spite?"

"Right!" said F. F., and taking up a bottle he began to poke the notes into it.

"Not that way," said Leila. "You'll need twenty bottles if you don't pack them properly, and that would attract notice."

She took the notes from him and rolled them up very carefully. There were twenty-six of them altogether—six for five hundred pounds and the remainder for one hundred, Leila managed to get them all into one bottle; then she corked it and put it aside.

"Are we nearing the island yet?" she asked. "It must be pretty late."

F. F. looked out of the shoreward port-hole. Night had fallen, and the great ray of the Baily was sweeping towards him like a sword of light.

III.

"Have you made up your mind yet?" asked D'Arcy.

For answer F. F. drew the bolt and opened the door.

"Yes, I'm going ashore," he said, blinking in the light of the lamp that D'Arcy carried.

"Sensible man," said D'Arcy. "Walk up, please."

The two captives emerged and followed him on deck. The night was cool and fresh and starlit. The cliffs of "Ireland's Eye" loomed close at hand. The ketch was hove to and a dinghy was alongside tossing about in a choppy sea waiting to take the prisoners ashore. Captain Matchlock was on deck with another lantern. The crew stood about indifferent.

"Now, hand over the cash if you please," said D'Arcy.

F. F. took some small change out of his trousers' pocket and offered it to him.

"Don't be a fool," snapped D'Arcy. "It's bigger game than that I'm after."

"That's all I have then."

"Didn't I tell you to bring along £5,000 with you?"

"Yes. But I forgot."

"You needn't come the innocent on me. Fork out that money or I'll have to search you."

"Search away."

"You search the fool, Chudleigh," said D'Arcy.

Chudleigh handed his lantern to one of the crew and went through F. F.'s pockets. He found letters and bills and other papers, which he scrutinised by means of the lantern, but no money. Then he searched Mr. Wolverhampton's hat, and found nothing. Then he took off his coat and waist-coat and tore the linings out of them. Still nothing. He made F. F. take off his boots, and nearly cut them to pieces, to no purpose.

"Nothing 'ere, boss," he announced at length.

D'Arcy swore violently, and handing him the lantern began to search himself. He searched every inch of Mr. Wolverhampton's clothing and person, and at length gave up baffled.

"I told you I'd nothing," said F. F. plaintively.

"Let's search the lady, boss," said Chudleigh with sudden eagerness.

"How dare you!" shouted F. F. "I won't tolerate that I assure you," he said to D'Arcy, "that the lady is concealing nothing."

"How am I to believe that?" asked D'Arcy.

"I give you my word of honour. . . ."

"Don't mind 'im, boss. If 'e ain't got the swag, she must 'ave." He advanced towards Leila, but Mr. Wolverhampton stepped between.

"Mr. D'Arcy," he said, "as an Irishman I appeal to you. I've given you my word of honour that this lady is not concealing anything. Do I look like a man who is lying, or like the sort that would permit a woman to risk this indignity?"

D'Arcy was a man to whom lying was second nature, but, unlike Chudleigh, he knew an honest man when he saw him. Probably he realised that Mr. Wolverhampton was telling the truth, and that he would sooner have lost the money than allow a lady to risk being searched for it; and he had enough of an Irishman's native bashfulness to object to this course altogether. Moreover, he was still angry with Chudleigh's stupidity in argument, and perhaps with the desire of gratifying that anti-English bias which exists in every Irishman, he said:

"Come back here, you dirty beast. We don't do that sort of thing in Ireland."

"Gorblimey!" cried Chudleigh. "Five thousand quid! W'y, you blinkin' fool"

"Shut up," said D'Arcy. "Isn't a thousand enough for you? . . . Good-bye Mr. Wolverhampton. I'm sorry to have incommoded you for nothing. You ought to try something for that memory of yours."

Chudleigh retired from the scene, cursing volubly. D'Arcy helped Leila and F. F. into the dinghy, and immediately they were rowed to a jutting point of rock and put ashore. The oarsman handed them two blankets and a parcel and rowed back to the ketch, which immediately sailed away. They stood in the cold and darkness

looking after her until she had vanished, and even as she did so the moon rose. It was not much of a moon, but it sufficed.

"Thank goodness for that," said Leila. "We ought to be able to find the bottle now."

But it was some time before they could see it. It had drifted away from the place where the ketch had been, but fortunately nearer shore. There it was, a little black stick it seemed, bobbing about in the choppy moonlit sea about fifty yards from the shore.

"You will have to swim for it," said Leila.

"Well, seek some shady nook for yourself," said F. F. with a blush. "I didn't think of bringing a bathing-suit this trip."

Leila caught up the blankets and parcel and retired inland.

F. F. stripped and plunged into the black waters. Phew! It was horribly cold. He struck out hastily for the place where he thought the bottle was, and when he had gone sufficiently far treaded the water and looked around him. No sign of the bottle. He swam out a little farther and repeated the performance, again fruitlessly. He swam to the right for a while, this being the direction in which the bottle had originally drifted. Still the search baffled him. He was horribly cold and not a little fearful. If Leila had not suggested it he would never have thought of undertaking such a swim for he was by no means a good swimmer. Already he was getting tired; and in face of his coldness and weariness the five thousand pounds seemed to lose their importance. Five thousand pounds—what of it? He could stand the loss of it, but he could not stand much more of his present discomfort. Treading water again his eyes searched the sea in desperation; there was no sign of the bottle. His repeated failure to find it irritated him; he gave vent to a petulant exclamation, and a wave lashing his face, nearly smothered him. He spluttered and spat and swam on. Once more he looked around him; still no bottle. At last he despaired of finding it. It was lost for ever, and somehow he did not care. Of course, Leila would be disappointed, but then he had done his

best; she could not think too badly of him after all he had gone through. Ugh! how cold it was! His arms were weary—weary, and suddenly a fear of cramp assailed him. Then, to complete his discomfiture, a cloud passed over the moon. Darkness! At that he turned in panic haste and made for the shore. The waves smote him in the face, blinding him, deafening him, bewildering him, filling his mouth with the taste of salt. With his chilled stiffened limbs he struggled onward. What a distance he had come! He had not known he was coming so far. The shore seemed relentlessly, agonisingly distant.

Then the moon shone forth again and he saw Leila standing on the rock, pointing with her right hand. He heard her voice.

“Just to your left,” she cried, and turning his head he saw the neck of the bottle bobbing about a few yards away. Summoning up all his reserves of energy he spurted forward, seized it, and made for the land. It was difficult swimming with the bottle in his hand, but somehow or other he did it. Leila withdrew to let him scramble ashore. This was the most difficult part of his task, and he would have liked her to help him, but he was a modest man. He jammed the bottle into a crevice in the rocks and tried to haul himself out of the water. His exhausted arms were barely capable of the task, and the barnacle-crusts cut his hands and knees most painfully. However, he got on to dry land at last, and having partially dried himself with his handkerchief and some of the torn lining of his coat, he got into his clothes.

Leila was waiting for him not far off with the blankets and parcel.

“Got it?” she asked.

His teeth were chattering with the cold.

“Wh—what?” he asked. For a moment he had actually forgotten the reason for his swim.

“Well, isn’t that just like you!” laughed Leila. “The bottle, of course.”

“O, of course. How stupid of me. Now, where did I leave it? I remember.”

He ran back to the landing place, bent down, and returned in a moment triumphantly waving the bottle.

"Now, where shall we camp?" asked Leila.

"Not here. There's no shelter here. I wonder where we could get some shelter?"

"I know. The ruined chapel down by the beach."

"Of course. Now, how do we get to it?"

The moon had mounted well up into the sky by this time, a lop-sided oval by whose light they took stock of their surroundings. They were on the seaward side of the island near the Martello tower, whose top was just visible away to their right. The ruined chapel, they knew, was far off to the left near the beach facing Howth. Both Leila and F. F. were fairly familiar with the features of the island, having frequently gone there for picnics at different times. The distance to the chapel was about half a mile as the crow is supposed to fly, but the way, they knew, was rough and devious, up hillocks and down dales, skirting the peak that forms the centre of the island. Leila, carrying the parcel of provisions, and Mr. Wolverhampton the blankets, they set out.

It took them the best part of an hour to accomplish the journey. They were both very tired, and clouds frequently obscured the moonlight, so that every now and again they stumbled over boulders or brambles, tearing and bruising themselves. At first their way lay up hill till they reached the ridge forming the backbone of the island. There they sat down for a rest. They could see now the lights of Howth Harbour, the sweeping ray of the Baily, and the little isolated lights of the villa residences on the hill; and looking back again and out to sea they saw the steady gleam of the Kish and the slow solemn winking of the light on Rock-a-bill. The wind rustled the dead bracken and the waves washed on the shore. The moon, almost at her zenith by now, stared at them incuriously.

"Nothing could shock her, I suppose," said Mr. Wolverhampton. It was only then Leila noticed that F. F. was holding her hand.

"Isn't it weird," she said, and shivered slightly.

"Eerie," replied F. F. He did not know what it

meant, but he had frequently come across the word in his cheap novel reading and liked the sound of it.

Partially rested they went forward again, and eventually reached their destination. While F. F. went in search of fuel Leila in the shelter of the roofless chapel opened the parcel, which she found contained some ship's biscuits, some rashers of bacon, two bottles of beer, two forks and two mugs. She spread these out on one of the blankets and waited for F. F.'s return. He came in presently with an armful of bracken and furze.

"Not very substantial, is it?" he said. "We'd burn a ton of that in ten minutes."

"Try the beach," suggested Leila.

He went down to the beach and found a few pieces of driftwood, which, being somewhat damp, would not burn too quickly. Then he produced matches and kindled a fire. The bracken fizzled up quickly, and the furze gave out a cheerful blaze, needing, however, frequent replenishing. The driftwood smouldered and spat. Then they had supper, consisting of rashers broiled before the fire on forks, and served on ship's biscuits, and half a bottle of beer each, and they wound up with a couple of sugared almonds. They became quite gay after that, and presently F. F. produced a pipe and tobacco, and Leila found two cigarettes in her handbag.

"I'm not sorry for this adventure," said F. F.

"Nor I. After all, I've known picnics less comfortable."

"What *will* Algernon and Henrietta say?" chuckled F. F.

"And Leonora . . . Heavens! She will be anxious about me . . ."

Leonora's possible anxiety was the one check to their gaiety. But they did not let it worry them overmuch.

The moon sinking in the heavens no longer illuminated the interior of the chapel, and they were left to the glow of the fire. Leila yawned and became drowsy; so did F. F. He knocked the ashes out of his third pipe and said:

"If you're tired, wrap yourself in the blankets and go to sleep. I'll watch."

"All right," she replied. "But you must call me in a couple of hours so that you can sleep while I watch."

"As you like," he said.

In a few minutes she had rolled herself in the blankets and lay sleeping on a pile of bracken near the fire. F. F. lit another pipe and paced up and down the chapel. Presently he tired of this, and sat down, supporting his back against the wall. He could hear Leila's measured breathing, and see the play of the firelight on her hair. His eyes were heavy; his pipe dropped from between his teeth. . . . What an adventure he had had. . . . His chin dropped on his chest. . .

He awoke, blinking his eyes in the sunshine, and saw Leila standing before him. She laughed deliciously.

"You're a nice sentry," she said.

IV.

It was a bright, fresh autumn morning. Mr. Wolverhampton went down to Kirwan's Hole for a wash, and gathered a fresh supply of fuel. Then they had breakfast, consisting of the other bottle of beer and the remains of the bacon and biscuits.

"And now," said F. F. a little regretfully, "I suppose we must signal for a rescuer."

"I suppose so," said Leila. "What'll we do?"

"You haven't a red petticoat, I suppose?" asked Mr. Wolverhampton.

"No," replied Leila, lifting the hem of her skirt so as to show an inch of white frill.

But Mr. Wolverhampton's sensational reading had taught him a thing or two. He piled furze and bracken on to the fire until it blazed fiercely and then smothered it with damp fuel so that a thick volume of smoke rose up into the air.

"Now let's go down to the beach and watch the effect," he said.

"You're a most resourceful man," said Leila, whereat F. F. became as proud as a child praised for being good.

They went down to the beach together, almost unconsciously arm in arm. The sea was calmer than on the night before, just rippling lightly up the shingle. The morning sun was very bright.

"I'm sorry our picnic is over," said Leila.

"We had a good time, hadn't we?" said F. F.

"Better than theatres, isn't it?"

"Yes, and concerts, and parties,—and charades . . . you *have* liked it, haven't you?"

"Yes, very much."

"It's like a story book, isn't it? I thought things like this only happened in story books."

"This has been better than anything in any book I have ever read."

"Ah, you should read . . . oh, I always forget the names of books; not being literary, you know. I just read to amuse myself, I'm afraid."

"So do most people for that matter," replied Leila, "even those who pretend they don't."

F. F. took something from his pocket.

"Do you know," he said, "I'll never want to part with these notes. They'll be a sort of memento . . . would you like one? . . . just as a memento."

Smilingly she accepted a note for £100 and slipped it into her bag.

"Yes, I'll keep it always," she said.

F. F. looked across the channel towards Howth, but there was no stir in that direction. He noticed too that the smoke column was becoming wilted.

"The harbour is generally rather deserted in winter," said Leila.

"Well, I'd better keep the fire going, anyway," replied F. F., and set about gathering more fuel.

V.

It was mid-day before they were rescued. A solitary boatman thought it might be worth while investigating the cause of the fire near the ruined chapel, and rowed across accordingly.

He was very much surprised at the appearance of the castaways.

"What brought yez here at all?" he asked.

"We were marooned here," F. F. explained, but the mariner was plainly sceptical. However, he took them into his boat and rowed them back to Howth.

F. F. looked back regretfully at the island as it receded in the distance. A thin wisp of smoke was still rising from the chapel. Leila saw the look in his face and gave his hand a squeeze. . . .

"I'm wondering," he said, as they approached the mouth of the harbour, "whether I ought to give this man one and ninepence or a hundred pounds."

Leila laughed.

"You see," he explained, "one and nine pence is a rather small reward for a man who has saved our lives, but it's all the small change I've got. On the other hand a hundred pounds is rather too much to pay for an hour of his time."

However, he gave the man one hundred pounds, whereat the fellow winked confidentially as much as to say: "Trust me."

"Confound him," thought F. F. "Thinks it's hush money, does he?"

The mariner certainly thought the whole thing very fishy.

After a good lunch at an adjacent hotel Leila and F. F. caught the next train to town.

"What a tame ending to all our excitement," said F. F., comfortably ensconced in a first-class carriage.

"Yes, it's rather prosaic," said Leila, "if these people only knew." "These people" referred to the old gentleman and the middle-aged lady who were the other occupants of the carriage.

"To look at us," said F. F. "who would guess we'd been kidnapped by pirates, nearly robbed, and marooned on a desert island?"

F. F., it should be mentioned, had bought himself a new pair of boots in Howth village, and he kept his coat buttoned so as to hide the tattered lining; so our two adventurers looked quite respectable, if a little shabby.

When they reached town F. F. left Leila at her flat in Anne Street,—very reluctantly, and after extracting a promise of a meeting to-morrow. Then he took a tram home. How dull and stodgy the passengers looked.

“If they only *knew*,” F. F. kept saying to himself. “Life is tame.”

VI.

Algernon and Henrietta were having tea in the drawing-room when he appeared.

“Back already?” said Henrietta, none too hospitably. “I thought you were going to be away for months.”

“So did I,” replied F. F. “Give me some tea.”

“Have you heard about Leila Montgomery?” asked Henrietta, when his needs had been supplied.

“What’s happened to her?”

“Disappeared.”

“What?”

“Vanished” said Algernon.

“Since when?”

“Since yesterday. She didn’t go home last night,” said Henrietta.

“Leonora was inquiring about her here this morning,” put in Algernon.

And then Mr. Wolverhampton had to tell his tale. He could not keep it in any longer.

“Well, you’re a nice infant to let out by yourself” said Algernon. “Adventures, forsooth!”

“And if you wanted adventures,” said Henrietta, “why couldn’t you have gone to the war?”

“The war?” said F. F. “I don’t call that an adventure. I call that a mess.”

CHAPTER IX.

MUSIC AND A CHOCOLATE.

I.

EVERYONE in Dublin was going to the White Elephant Bazaar. It was such a deserving charity, having been got up in aid of the ruined promoters of other Bazaars. It was well organised, too, and well advertised. A fine large hall amid fine large grounds had been secured for it; the stalls were to be few and frivolous, the side shows many and various; the dancing room was reputed to be second to none, and the three best bands in the city had been engaged to play.

So everyone was going; even those recluses Algernon and Henrietta Wolverhampton. F. F. was going, too, accompanied by Leila Montgomery. All artistic, social, moneyed, and proletarian Dublin was to be there.

The evening before the opening night the Wolverhampton family were sitting quietly in their drawing-room when the maid announced that Mr. Ernest O'Mahony wished to see Mr. Algernon.

"Confound the fellow," said Algernon. "What on earth can he want now?"

He went downstairs, and found Ernest waiting in the study.

"Aha!" said Ernest, "so we meet again."

"Drop the theatrical stunt," said Algernon. "What do you want?"

"Sir, you may put on an innocent expression, but your heart is full of guile. Once again I have discovered that you are coming between me and my love."

"Oh! Who's your love this time?"

"Sir, I am not a man to change. I refer to Miss Montgomery."

"Well, then, I haven't set eyes on her since our last meeting."

"Indeed? So it was by letter you invited her?"

"Invited her to what?"

"To the Bazaar."

"I never invited her to the Bazaar."

"Liar! I have it from her own lips. I asked her yesterday to come with me and she told me she was sorry, but she had already promised you."

"That's a pure fabrication."

"Do you imply, sir, that the lady was lying?"

"I do."

At this Ernest's denunciations became so tremendous that F. F. and Henrietta came out on to the landing to see what was the matter. As Ernest and Algernon continued shouting at each other they ran down and entered the study.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" said F. F. "Really, Algernon, I never knew you had such a temper."

"Calm yourself, Algernon," said Henrietta.

"It's this idiot's fault," said Algernon. "He wants to take Leonora Montgomery to that confounded Bazaar, and she told him she was going with me. Well, she isn't."

"Miss Wolverhampton," said Ernest, "I appeal to you. Is Miss Montgomery the kind of lady who would say what is not true?"

"I rather think she is," said Henrietta, drily.

Ernest was baffled by this. He turned to F. F.

"Mr. Wolverhampton, you, like me, have loved Leonora. Can you believe her false?"

"I don't take any interest in Leonora," said F. F.

"At any rate," said Ernest, "you once thought her worth fighting for. That's all I want Algernon to do. He's my rival for Leonora, and I want to settle the question in the time-honoured way of gentlemen."

"I'm not your rival, you ass," said Algernon. "I've no intention of going near your beloved at the Bazaar or any other place. Now go home out of this."

"Very well, sir. I shall go. But I give you this solemn warning. I am going to the Bazaar, and if I see you and Miss Montgomery anywhere in the same vicinity I shall smite you across the face in full view of everybody, so that your cowardice may be known to the whole world."

He took himself off, and the others returned to the drawingroom.

"Are we never to hear the last of Leonora?" said Henrietta. "Father, this is your doing."

When the maid knocked again at the door, almost immediately afterwards, Algernon guessed at once what was coming. It was Jack Molloy, suave and smiling as ever, with another challenge from his friend, Colman MacCarthy. Repeated irritation had driven Algernon into a mood of cold, calm, collected anger. He entered the study with a perfectly frigid countenance, read Colman MacCarthy's letter slowly, deliberately tore it into small pieces, and said:

"Tell Colman MacCarthy that if ever I have any more annoyance from him I'll smash his face in."

Molloy bowed and smiled, whereat Algernon's temper burst into fury.

"And as for you," he shouted, "you smirking, swaggering, blithering ass, if you bring me any more of his tomfool letters I'll take you up by the heels and daub the wall with your brains."

Out rushed F. F. and Henrietta again.

"Algernon!" cried F. F. from the landing, "do try and restrain yourself."

"Ah, shut up," replied Algernon. "Now, Molloy, get out of this."

Molloy bowed politely towards Henrietta, who was leaning over the balustrade, and went out. Algernon slammed the door on him. The others retired once more to the drawingroom.

"Damn! and Damn! and Damnation!" said Algernon.

He put on his hat and overcoat and sallied out into the street. He walked down to Stephen's Green, where he rang at a hall-door, and was admitted, and asked for Mr. Bertie MacIntyre. The maid showed him into a small

study off the hall, where he found Bertie studying army text books.

"Well, old bean" said Bertie, pushing his books away, "how goes it? Take a chair."

Algernon did so and said hurriedly:

"Look here, old man, I want you to do me a good turn, and incidentally do one to yourself. Would you like to have Leonora's company at the White Elephant Bazaar?"

"I've asked her already, but she said she was going with you."

"Well, she isn't. At least, not if I can help it. For some reason or other she's got a set on me, and I think she's going to try and make a fool of me at this Bazaar. Now, what I want you to do for me is this: if ever you see her with me come right over and tell me I'm wanted somewhere else—on important business or something. Then you can stay with her yourself.

"Do you really mean this?" asked Bertie.

"Of course I mean it."

"Then I'll do it."

"Be there early, then."

"Right-o. You can rely on me."

"Well, I won't keep you from your work any longer. Good-bye."

Algernon rose to go.

"Cheerio, old bean," said Bertie.

II.

The Bazaar was a tremendous success. To start with the weather was exceptionally favourable. It was a fine autumn that year, and some of the warmth of summer still lingered on in the November air. Then the organisers were for once imaginative people and knew what they were about. The halls and booths and gardens were tastefully decorated; the side-shows were carefully supervised, and all three-card tricksters and others of the racing fraternity excluded, and, while there were plenty of opportunities for the free spending of money, there were no ticket-sellers to pester the pockets of the charitable.

There was continuous music on the opening night, and the ballroom and booths blazed with light, while the gardens were a perfect twilit fairyland illuminated only by the stars and a myriad of tiny lanterns. Time and place and season were ideal for lovers; and many a romance began that night, while not a few reached their climax.

Amongst those who frequented the side-shows was Algernon Wolverhampton. The spirit in the atmosphere was such as to make even him unbend, and he was thoroughly enjoying himself at the innocent pastime of throwing rings, at six a penny, over a hook, when he felt a hand on his arm.

"Good evening, Algy, I've been looking for you everywhere. Come and have your fortune told."

It was Leonora's voice, and he turned cold at the sound of it. But under the eyes of the surrounding crowd he could not be rude to her, so perforce he had to let her lead him away.

"Miss Montgomery," he protested, when they came to a quiet spot, but she only said: "Now, no nonsense," and hurried him along to a secluded nook in a distant corner of the gardens.

"There's the grandest fortune-teller here," she said.

"Maybe he'll tell you what sort of a girl you're going to marry."

"I am not interested in that sort of superstition," said Algernon stiffly.

"Really," asked Leonora innocently. "What kind of superstition *are* you interested in?"

"None."

"What a pity! I collect superstitions. I think they're such fascinating things."

They had now reached the fortune-teller's tent, which was in a very secluded corner indeed. There was a seat hard by, left there by some tactful member of the committee. The tent was shut up, and bore a notice:—"Closed from 10 o'clock."

"How disappointing!" said Leonora. "Shall we sit down a bit?"

"Let's go back," said Algernon, ungraciously, and at that moment Bertie MacIntyre came running up.

"Algernon," he said. "Your father wants you most particularly. He's looking for you everywhere. Some old josser's just handed him some sort of a letter or other."

"Thanks, Bertie," said Algernon. "I'd better go to him, I suppose. . . . You'll excuse me, Miss Montgomery, won't you?" And he was gone.

"Good evening, Miss Montgomery," said Bertie, in his most ingratiating manner. "Would you care to come and have a dance?"

"No, thanks," said Leonora, ungraciously.

"O do!"

"No, thanks. I'm tired."

"O come. Just a quiet waltz."

"I couldn't."

"Just once," pleaded Bertie.

Leonora was annoyed at the interruption of her tete-a-tete, but Bertie's pleading was hard to resist. Besides, she liked a waltz.

"All right," she said, and Bertie, overflowing with delight, gave her his arm.

III.

A few minutes afterwards the privacy of this lonely spot was again violated. The intruders were Leila and F. F., who came in arm in arm.

"No one can see us here," said F. F., leading her to the seat. "Now I *must* kiss you," and he did, with all the ardour of one half his age.

"You are an old dear," said Leila.

"*Old?*" said F. F.

"It's only a term of endearment," said Leila.

They were silent for a while, listening to the music in the distance. The tune was "O' Star of Eve." Presently F. F. said:

"Leila, will you grant me a favour?"

"Certainly. What is it?"

"Let us have a long engagement."

"Well, if it isn't *too* long. . . . Why?"

" You see, last time I was married I had to elope, and we were never properly engaged at all. I've no idea what an engagement is like, so I'd like to have the experience this time."

" Well, how long would you like?"

" O . . . about a month. Will that suit you?"

" I suppose I can manage it," laughed Leila.

" O Star of Eve " came to an end, and the band began to play a popular waltz.

" I say," said Leila, " lets go and have a dance."

" I'd love to," replied F. F., " but I'm afraid I've spent every penny in my pocket. These bazaars are jolly expensive."

" Extravagant boy," said Leila. " Never mind. I'll stand you." And they went towards the ballroom.

IV.

Meanwhile Algernon had hurried away, seeking to lose himself among the crowds. He was afraid that Leonora might succeed in shaking off Bertie and come after him again. He returned after a while to the stall from which she had dragged him and tried to renew his interest in ring casting. But the joyful impulse was gone; the game fell flat. He went and took a seat near the band-stand, seeking to soothe his soul with music. But even here there was no rest for him, for, after a few minutes, whom should he see but Ernest O'Mahony approaching him with sinister intent.

Fairly well broken in nerve, Algernon turned and fled. He could hear Ernest increasing his pace to overtake him, so he plunged into the crowd, doubling and re-doubling his trail. Thinking that he had shaken his tormentor off he made for the quiet corner where he had left Leonora, in the hope of being left alone. But he had scarcely flung himself into the seat before Ernest, with folded arms and bristling brows, was standing over him. Ernest chose to be the calmly cynical insulting hero this time. He liked to vary his parts.

" Good evening, Mr.—ah—Northampton," he said.

Algernon made no reply.

"I beg your pardon . . . Mr. Sheffield, I mean."

"Are you doing an impersonation of Mrs. Mickleby?" asked Algernon. "Or are you merely acting according to your natural boorishness?"

"Neither, Mr. Manchester, neither. But these English names are so monotonous that one cannot remember them. Besides, Mr.—ah—Nottingham, I see so much of your back that I may be excused if your face is not more firmly fixed in my memory."

"Do you think I'm afraid of you?"

"I can't say, I'm sure. But to desert the lady one has brought to these festivities is, to say the least, ungallant."

"Oh, so that's where the shoe pinches, is it?"

"Yes, sir; if a gentleman may use so commercial a metaphor."

"Ass!" snorted Algernon.

"Sir, when gentlemen disagree, they do not call names. They fight."

"If you don't take jolly good care," said Algernon, "I will fight you one of these days."

"Algernon!" said Mr. Wolverhampton's voice (he was returning from the dancing-hall with Leila on his arm, and had come up unobserved). "Algernon, you're getting very pugnacious lately. Why can't you let Mr. O'Mahony alone?"

"I wish you'd get him to leave *me* alone," said Algernon.

"Look here, Miss Montgomery. This idiot wants to marry your sister, and because she won't have him he keeps badgering the life out of me."

"That's too bad of you, Ernest," said Leila. "It isn't Algernon's fault if she won't marry you."

"Then why did he bring her here when he told me he wouldn't?"

"I didn't," said Algernon.

"But I saw her with you."

"Good heavens, you thick-skulled idiot, can't you understand . . . Hello! who's there?"

"Me," said Lucius Loftus, coming up.

"The very man. Look here, Loftus, this theatrical humbug wants to fight me for bringing Leonora to this show. You know who she came with. Tell him."

"She came with Jack Molloy."

Ernest looked foolish.

"You needn't be jealous of Algernon," said Loftus. "I guarantee he'll die a bachelor."

"I suppose I must take your word for it," said Ernest, and went away. Lucius followed. F. F. and Leila lingered a moment in the hope that Algernon might be tactful enough to leave the nook to them, but he seemed to find the seat comfortable, so they went to seek privacy elsewhere.

V.

"I'm a bit tired," said Leonora to Bertie after a couple of dances. "Let's have a rest."

"Certainly! Certainly!" replied the solicitous Bertie, "Where would you like to go?"

"Let's go to that nice little corner where we were before."

"Delighted," said Bertie rapturously.

They pushed their way through the grounds in that direction. Bertie politely stood aside that she might pass through the gap in the shrubbery before him, so that she saw Algernon sitting on the bench, while Bertie did not.

"O, Bertie," she said, "I left my handkerchief on that chair in the ballroom. Could you get it for me?"

"Certainly," said Bertie, and was off like an arrow.

"Excuse me," said Algernon, rising and making for the entry. "I'm in the way, I think."

"Not at all," said Leonora, and remained standing in front of him.

He tried to push past her, and she gave a little scream of pain.

"O, you've trod on my toe."

"I beg your pardon," he said halting.

She put a hand on his arm.

"You needn't try to faint," he said brutally. "I'll let you drop if you do."

"I wasn't going to faint," retorted Leonora. "I was going to sit down." And she did.

For some reason or other Algernon lingered. He wanted to go away, and yet by some mysterious force he seemed to be prevented from doing so. It may have been the influence of the sensuous Puccini music which the band was playing at the moment.

"You seem disappointed," said Leonora. "Are you sorry I didn't faint? You wouldn't have dropped me, really, would you?"

"I should have done so without the faintest compunction," replied Algernon.

"Ah, no, you wouldn't."

"I would, I tell you. You'll never be found swooning in *my* arms."

"O, is that it? Algernon, you once told me you wouldn't play John Tanner to any Ann Whitefield. Well, that's what you've been doing all along."

"Yes. But if I had been John Tanner, Ann would still be an old maid."

"Not if I were Ann."

"Yes, she would."

"No, she would not."

"She would, I tell you. She would. In fact she is."

"Don't get so excited. Have some chocolate."

Leonora took a small box of chocolates from her handbag and offered them to him.

"Bertie bought me these," she said. "Have one."

"No, thanks."

"Do."

"No, thanks."

"You might as well. I can't eat them myself; they give me toothache."

"I don't want any, thanks."

"Why are you so stiff with me, Algernon? I'm always nice to you."

"Too nice."

"And if I'd fainted that time you'd have let me drop?"

"There was no possibility of your fainting that time."

"Ah, you're not as bad as you think. If I'd really fainted you wouldn't have dropped me."

"I didn't say so."

"Yes, but you know you wouldn't."

"You needn't try to catch me by being found in my arms. I'd lay you on the ground and send for help."

"What an exceedingly proper and well-brought up young man you are. I suppose you think I'm very flighty and unladylike. . . . And unmaidenly. . . . Is that why you won't marry me?"

"No."

"Then why?"

"There is one all-sufficient reason. I am the superman."

At any other time such a statement delivered with such pathetic solemnity would have made Leonora laugh. On this occasion, however, she chose to be serious.

"What has that got to do with it?" she asked.

"Everything. I must have a perfect wife."

"How do you know I'm not perfect?"

"Well, for one thing, didn't you tell me just now that you are liable to toothache?"

"And is that the only reason you won't have me?"

"That reason is sufficient. I never said there were no others."

"I wish you'd sit down," said Leonora. "I'm getting a crick in my neck looking up at you."

"Will you promise not to take an unfair advantage of me?"

"No one could get any advantage of you, fair or otherwise. Sit down, please."

Algernon sat down at a respectful distance from her.

"Now, tell me what sort of a wife do you really want," said Leonora.

"Would you like to know? You'll find my views somewhat unconventional, I'm afraid."

"Go ahead. I like to be shocked."

"O, I didn't mean that. I didn't mean that at all. I don't intend to shock you; only to startle. I'm sure my idea of a wife's position is higher even than yours."

As she is to be the mother of a superman she must be the friend and companion of a superman. I shall therefore choose her quietly and calmly. She shall never have work to do that would injure the perfection of her physique in any way. She shall never look at anything that would offend her sense of the beautiful. To other men a wife is either a housekeeper, a nurse-maid, or, perhaps, an inspiring angel. The destiny of my wife shall be something higher than that."

"Do you call that unconventional? Because I don't. I'm not over conventional myself, and house-keeping and nurse-maiding are what I don't like. And if you don't write poetry to me I'll know the reason why."

"You talk as if I was going to marry you."

"Well, and aren't you?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I've already told you."

"How can you be the superman if you disobey the Life Force?"

"The Life Force has always drawn me away from you."

"No; not the Life Force; the natural self-preserving instinct of the male. The Life Force is in me and drives me towards you. Don't run away any more from your destined mate."

"You aren't my destined mate."

"I will be if you marry me."

"Ah, but the proof that you're not is that I won't marry you."

The tone of Leonora's voice changed.

"Marry me, Algernon," she said softly.

"Miss Montgomery, you forget yourself."

Leonora tossed her head.

"O, I suppose I did," she said. "Here, do have one of these chocolates."

"No, thank you."

"Do!"

"No, thanks."

"Please!"

"No, thanks."

" I'll go on offering them until you do."

" O, *very* well," said Algernon.

He took a chocolate and chewed it; it was one of the hardish, caramelly kind that requires some chewing. He liked it. And then, all of a sudden, a change came into the expression of his face; a look of surprise—pained surprise—just such a look as Achilles must have given when the dart found his vulnerable heel. Instantaneously the surprised look was followed by one of agony, and he clapped his hand to his cheek, for a pain as if a marlin-spike were being forced through his jawbone into his brain darted through him. Algernon Wolverhampton had his first experience of toothache.

" O," he cried.

" What's the matter?" asked Leonora.

" O! Ugh! . . Whew! . . Toothache!"

" Poor boy!" said Leonora.

" Ouch!"

Leonora stroked his cheek with her hand.

" Is it very bad?" she said.

" Hell," said Algernon.

She stroked his cheek again, and at the same moment the dissolution of the caramel put an end to his pain.

" Is it better?" said Leonora.

" A little."

A third time she ran her hand across his cheek. The distant band soared to the top note of the love music in the first act of " La Boheme."

" What soft hands you have, Leonora," said Algernon.

" Have I really?" said Leonora, and took one of his hands in hers.

" Leo!" he said, and he kissed her. . . .

There was a rustle in the shrubbery.

" There's someone coming," said Leonora. " It must be Bertie."

" Confound him," said Algernon.

Bertie came rushing in.

" Here's your handkerchief, Leonora," he said. " Are you there, Algernon? An awful thing has happened. Henrietta's got shot with an arrow on the range."

"O, bother Henrietta! I'm sure she isn't hurt. She's all right, Bertie, isn't she?"

"No," said Bertie. "She's bleeding horribly and calling for you."

"You ought to go to her, Algy," said Leonora.

"Yes, come along," said Bertie. "I'll bring you to her."

"O, get out," said Algernon. "Look here, Leo, I'll confess. That story's a fake. Now Bertie, clear off. You aren't wanted."

"All right," said Bertie. "Catch me ever doing anything to oblige you again. Good evening," And he walked off.

"When you had him primed up so well, Algy," said Leonora, "you might have taken the trouble to invent more credible stories."

"Never mind that now, darling," said Algernon, and he kissed her again.

The music went on in the distance. Algernon and Leonora sat hand in hand.

"By the way," said Algernon, suddenly, "who is Colman MacCarthy?"

Leonora laughed.

"There's no such person," she said. "I invented him."

"Why?"

"Partly to frighten away the others; partly to egg you on."

"And Jack Molloy was in the secret?"

"Yes. He's a friend of mine."

Algernon looked jealous.

"Platonic," she said

"Darling," said Algernon, "why do you love me?"

"I don't know," she said.

"You *do* love me?"

"Of course I do."

"In spite of everything? . . . All that superman nonsense and everything? . . . Oh, what an ass I am!"

"No, dear, you aren't an ass . . . though sometimes you behave like one."

His eyes showed that he was hurt, so she put her arms round his neck and kissed him.

VI.

That was how Ernest O'Mahony and Lucius Loftus found them.

"Ha!" said Ernest.

"O, it's you, is it?" said Algernon.

"I've got you," said Ernest. "You can hardly deny my accusation now."

"No, and I don't want to."

"Algernon," said Lucius, "I think we're entitled to an explanation. I assured Ernest just now that you cared nothing for Miss Montgomery, and so saved you a fight. How is it that I find you kissing her?"

"I suppose you crept up on tiptoe," said Algernon. "Very tactless of you."

"Poltroon!" cried Ernest. "Miss Montgomery, how can you possibly have any regard for a man who denies his affection for you in order to save his skin?"

"What's the row here?" said another voice, and Jack Molloy came through the shrubbery.

"O, is that you Molloy?" said Ernest. "Here's your man. We've just found him kissing Miss Montgomery, and"

"How dare you speak like that," said Leonora. "Mr. Wolverhampton is my fiancée."

"Indeed?" said Jack Molloy. "Then perhaps Mr. Wolverhampton will not object to accepting the challenge of my friend, Colman MacCarthy?"

"Colman MacCarthy's dead," said Leonora.

"Abolished," said Algernon.

"But I'm still here," said Ernest.

"And the sooner you get out the better," said Algernon.

At that moment there was a sudden ingress of people to the scene. Michael O'Malley had brought his wife and Henrietta to have their fortunes told, and Leila and F. F. had followed them. There was chaos for a moment.

"Hello! What are you doing here? Where have you come from? What's up?"

"Something seems to have been happening here," said Michael O'Malley. "What is it?"

"Fighting again, Algernon?" said F. F. "This won't do."

"Leonora," said Lesbia, "If you've been annoying Algernon again, I'll never let you enter my house any more."

"Algernon, don't say you've been duelling," said Henrietta.

"Let me get a word in edgeways, if you please," said Algernon. "Come here Leonora. Father, this young lady and I are going to be married."

"I'm glad to hear it," said F. F.

"Really, Leo?" asked Lesbia and Leila together.

"I say, Leo!" said Molloy.

"Fact," said Leonora, slipping her arm into Algernon's.

"Well, then," said F. F., "after such happy news I'm sure you'll be glad to know that I'm going to be married too."

"You!" said Algernon and Henrietta together.

"Yes," said Leila. "To me."

"Well," said Algernon, "all I can say is: Bless you my children."

"This is all very satisfactory," said Michael.

"I'd like to be getting married myself, but——" said Lucius Loftus.

"How dare you!" said Lesbia.

"Well," said Molloy, "I offer my congrats. to both the happy pairs."

"I'll compose a double epithalamium," said Lucius Loftus.

"And what's to become of me?" said Ernest O'Mahony.

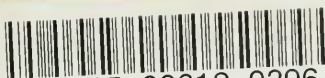
"I'd look for someone else, if I were you," said F. F. Wolverhampton.

[THE END.]

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