"Yes," said Mr. O'Donnell; "a bright fire of a chilly evening, with your family around you, telling some innocent stories, or singing some pretty little songs, are comfortable things, no doubt, Mr. Baker."

Mr. Baker sighed.

"I wonder you never married, Mr. Baker," said Mrs. O'Donnell."

"Never, ma'am; never. Begad, I once thought of it when young; something or another knocked it up—I should tell you, the match was made, ay, made. I was so fond of that pretty little girl. I—oh, I see, I am making a fool of myself: and"—here he wiped his eyes and blew his nose very strongly—"that snuff makes a person sneeze so. Well, as I said before, she took the fever—God forgive me for cursing—bad luck to it!—What's that I said? Yes, she died, and I never minded marrying since."

After all, there were fine feelings lurking in that blustering rough man's heart.

"Never married, Mrs. O'Donnell: though Lord Clearall, for we are particular friends, says to me, "Baker, travel where you will, there is no place so pleasant as home.'"

"Well, Mr. Baker," said Frank, "I didn't see you since the races of Cashel; how did you get home?"

"Capitally, boy, capitally. You rode well. A pleasant night we had at the hotel: pooh, hah, pooh!" and Mr. Baker leaned back in his chair, and then indulged in a pinch of snuff and a pooh. "That Mr. B—— said something to me, didn't he? They know the lion is getting old, Frank, so they do. Pooh! God be with the good old times, when, if a man said anything to you, you need but send a friend to him and appoint a nice cosy corner of a field, and there quietly settle the affair. Now the law won't allow that satisfaction. Did you see that little affair between Cooke and myself how it was prevented? The police got the scent and dogged us. I always think that Cooke sold the pass, and sent word of the whole affair: for you know he was a stag, Frank a stag: and knew well that I'd shoot him."

"The worst of it is, Mr. Baker, Mr. Cooke's friends gave out that it was you who forewarned the police."

"Oh, of course, Frank, of course, trying to shift the blame off themselves: he was a stag, sir, a stag—pooh!"

"Mr. Baker," said Mr. O'Donnell, who could scarce conceal a smile at the blundering of his guest: "Mr. Baker, I am told our worthy agent is about resigning, as he does not wish to carry out his lordship's orders about clearing the Lisduff property: do you know is it true?"

"Yes, I think he will: good man he was: he and the old lord pulled well together: tender old man that old lord was; never tossed anyone out, but supported widows and orphans, or, as the present lord calls them, idlers and stragglers—ay, faith, that's it. I don't see why he should resign. All poor people on that Lisduff. What loss are their wretched cabins? Besides, his lordship wants to make one sheep-walk of the whole, or let it to large tenants. Fine farm-houses are more comfortable and tasty than poor cabins; and, as his lordship says, 'Why shouldn't he do as he likes with his own?' And why not, Mr. O'Donnell?"

"Is it possible, Mr. Baker," said Frank, "that his lordship means to turn all the small farmers off the Lisduff property? Sure their little farms and cabins are as dear to them as is his palace to his lordship."

"Well, well: that may be, Frank—that may be: but then you know they belong to his lordship, and why not do as he pleases with them?"

"And what will become of the poor people, Mr. Baker?" said Kate.

"Can't say, Miss Kate, can't say: I suppose they will go to America, or do the best they can. They are a lot of poor wretches, poor d—— P——, hem, hem, ha! poor creatures, I mean."

Kate sighed, and Frank held down his head, for he did not wish to argue the matter further with Mr. Baker, knowing his prattling propensities, and fearing that his lordship would feel offended at any strictures on the management of his property from a tenant.

"Is it known who will replace him?" said Mr. O'Donnell.

"You see how it is, Mr. O'Donnell; of course I will get a preference, as his lordship and I are particular friends; but then I won't take it, d——n me if I do; I am now getting too old; besides, I don't like hunting out poor devils,—I am d——d if I do; so I suppose Mr. Ellie, our worthy Scotch friend, will come in."

"Now, he has feathered his nest pretty well under his lordship."

"Remarkably well; ay, that is it; I will tell—but this is between ourselves, honor bright—as I was saying, he came there a poor steward, let me see, about twenty years ago. He didn't make much hand of the old lord, but he picked up some nice farms for himself and his friends; according as the young lord wanted money, he supplied him with hundreds and thousands; so, when the old man died, he became a right-hand man with the son. He supplies him with money at his calls. His lordship finds him very easy in his terms. He sometimes takes a mortgage upon this farm or that, merely for form's sake, Mr. O'Donnell, but he is sure that it is on some property nearly out of lease; so in order to improve the land, and carry out a system of high farming, he ejects the tenants, builds houses, and improves the land, and then brings over his friends from Scotland, who get the land at about half what the poor paps—— I beg pardon, Mr. O'Donnell, I mean no offence; as I was saying, they take the land for about half the rent the pa—— O yes! the old tenants I mean, paid for it, Mr. Ellis taking care to be well paid by the new comers; but all this *sub rosa*, you see, *sub rosa*; so Mr. Ellis is getting rich every day, while his lordship is getting poor; and the poor pa—— tenants, I mean, are sent about their business, to beg, or starve, or die, as they please."

"Good God!" cried Willy Shea, "can this be true? Where is that Constitution that boasts of being the protection of the weak against the strong? The slave is fed and cared by his master, he is property; but the Irish slave cannot be bought or sold, therefore he has no value as property; it is true, he is the slave of circumstances, and his master is generally a tyrant that crushes him. Why does not the law protect the weak?"

"Pooh! all nonsense, young man; pooh! I fancy I know something about the law; don't I, Mr. O'Donnell?"

"Certainly, Mr. Baker."

"Yes, sir, I do. Frank, hand over the decanter while water is hot. So I do know something about it: now, will you tell me who makes the laws? Don't the landlords? a pity they wouldn't make laws against themselves, ay, young man?"

"But haven't we representatives, sir; what are they about?"

"Granted, granted, my young friend; who are your representatives but your landlords or their nominees; all a set of place-hunting schemers, who bamboozle the people and then laugh at them; no wonder, faith."

"God help the poor tenants," said Mr. O'Donnell; "they are the worst off."

"To be sure, man, to be sure; between the landlords and members, the poor are tossed about like a shuttle-cock."

"It is a strange country, indeed," said Willy Shea, "where men cannot live on the fruits of a soil so fertile—a soil literally teeming with milk and honey—a soil blessed by God but cursed by man. What have we gained by our modern civilisation? What by our connection with England? Why, in the feudal times there was a kind of tie of clanship, and a rough, but social intercourse between the country gentlemen and their tenants, or retainers, that made them feel that they were bound by a kind of family bond; but now the tenants are not needed as a display or protection to the landlord; they are, therefore, retained or dismissed at his whim or option. Is it a wonder,