

Neville. I think it is Schiller who gives us a test of what real nobles ought to be—"

"Ah! yes, Schiller," observed Mr. Neville, smiling and stroking his beard profoundly.

Their names ought to have a good ring in the country—"

"*Ein guter Klang im Lande!*" said Mr. Neville, in higher delight with the quotation than he had ever been with the poetry.

"How many of our nobles would pass the mint if they were assayed in that way? Why, they rather pique themselves on being detested."

"That is a just observation, Miss Westropp," said the ironmaster. "I have often remarked it myself—my poor wife used to have a good many of these people about the house—an Irish landlord would have nothing to talk about if he was not bragging about being shot at or deserving to be."

"Oh, come, hang it, there are no better judges of a horse," said his son, who thought it a duty to stand up for Horace's Irish friends.

"And no worse judges of a human being," said Miss Westropp: "at least a human being in frieze and with a Kerry accent. Here they are, for centuries, with millions of the kindest hearts in the world around them pining for somebody to idolise, and they have never yet been able to see there was anything but a crew of beggars and assassins on their estates or any cure for them except to clear them out."

"And are you really interested in—in—that sort of thing?" asked Reggy, with an earnest astonishment that made Miss Westropp smile. He would as soon have expected to hear that her bright eyes were secretly addicted to logarithms, or that she had fallen in love with one of his father's forges.

"I am only a woman, and a very helpless one," said Mabel, "but I should like very much to interest people—important people—in doing something to brighten the world around them a bit."

Young Neville's eyes said what his English tongue refused to say for him. "You brighten the world every moment of your existence. You have nothing to do but to live to brighten it. But what sort of brightness do you expect from a poor devil like me?"

"But politics is such a dull subject, and so—so argumentative," said one of the Misses Neville (people were never quite sure who was who among the Neville girls). "You can't get people to talk politics—can you, dear?"

"Why not? What better do they talk about?" said Mabel warmly. "The weather?"

"The weather, very largely," assented Joshua Neville.

"Or the betting, or some French milliner's new way of twisting a hat out of shape. Three-fourths of what people say in society bores the person who says and the person who hears it. Yet how many hard and cheerless lives are sacrificed to bring those two people together in a London drawing-room to bore one another! How much less dull the thousands might be if they would only give themselves a little trouble to make the millions happier! And yet society will admit any well-dressed crime except enthusiasm. You may talk for hours and hours about all that is worst in your neighbors; you will hear a roomful of young women pretend to know all about the odds that a parcel of rascally bookmakers have settled in some public-house; but the moment you start any topic in the least generous or noble—if it be the freedom or happiness of millions of people here in the world, and for endless ages—you are denounced as a prig, if a man; and, if a woman—I really don't know what name they would find for a monster like myself."

"I should like to catch them!" muttered young Neville between his teeth.

"They would have you up for seditious language, Mabel," said Harry with a laugh, "and they will if you don't mind."

"Then I won't mind, for I am a born rebel against a great deal that passes for law in England and against almost everything that is called law in Ireland. In England you at all events regard the people as part of your establishment, like your dogs—you feed them and

fondle them. In Ireland we treat them as beggars at the gate, and send for the police for them—nay, it is still worse, for we first knock the people down and empty their wallets, and then we call on the constable, and abuse them to the world for mendicants."

"These are very remarkable observations—"first knock the people down and rob them, and then abuse them as beggars." I must really take a note of it," said Joshua Neville, whose face during Mabel's tirade was a curious study—the Wild Irish Girl held something so like his own rugged sentiments, yet so transformed with Irish poetry, that he was puzzled to recognise them. Joshua Neville had poetry in his own texture, but it was of the fossiliferous order—embedded in rocks—rather than of the subtle Ariel sort which lights up the hills and whispers through the woodlands. Miss Westropp impressed him like the Glengariff landscape—his Cromhola grits were the only parts of it he understood: the rest was unintelligible but wondrous fair—though, of course, shadowy and impracticable, as became Irish views either in politics or scenery. "Who would have expected to hear all this from a person in your class?"

"No, indeed: and in me it is extremely vulgar. But, do you know, it seems to me vulgarity is just what we want—if vulgarity means being a little like our neighbors and feeling like them. The most vulgar—and the most blessed—system I know was the Irish clan system, in which the chief was everybody's cousin. Our system is to keep the chief everybody's enemy. People are more in dread of being thought vulgar than of being wicked. But to my mind, so far as there is any reproach in the word, there is no vulgarity like the vulgarity of the man who will run down his countrymen as beggars over champagne bought with the beggars' pence, and give himself the airs of a god because some ancestor of his was successful in a highway robbery—or, as he would call it, won a battle—three or four hundred years ago. The worst vulgarities you will meet in Ireland are those who have titles or are hunting for titles. There was only one Irish nobleman for the past century that anybody remembers, and in speaking of him, as of the Kings of England, people do not even mention his family name. It is enough to say 'Lord Edward.'"

"Yes, I remember," said the ironmaster, who had conscientiously read a History of Ireland, as a qualification for his Irish trip. He was not the man to be content with the guide-book. "He was a fine fellow; but don't you think he rather threw himself away, if I may say so—speaking as a practical man, you know, Miss Westropp?"

"I dare say every man has to throw himself away on something, or on nothing. Men throw themselves away on studying the habits of frogs—and great men. Men throw themselves away on brandy-and-soda at the Club below. How many Irish peers have gone to their grave since Lord Edward's time: and who loves them! who even remembers their names? All the gazettes of Europe could not give a man more enviable fame than to be mentioned in Irish peasants' cabins in their evening prayers. I am afraid you will find most of us ambitious rather to be mentioned in their curses. You happy-tempered English folk don't curse, or I should have deserved to be mentioned in your curses for making disagreeable speeches to you, instead of doing what I came to do—asking you all over to our old den—Harry's and mine. You will let me drive the girls over this afternoon for a cup of tea, won't you? But you will find this Irish question haunting your window, whether you will or no, like the face of a hungry child: and believe me, when you hear people say they detest politics, that only means that they have sent for a policeman and removed the pale cheeks and the hungry eyes to prison. The rest you will have to find out for yourself, but I wanted you to know, when you hear people rating Harry with low tastes and agitation and rebellion and the rest of it, it is all my fault. Harry fights under my flag, and his enemies are my enemies."

"Happy Harry! I only wish the Guards were in such luck!" said young Neville, in a low tone.

"Mabel always takes my part," said the Lord

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