

to me. Captain MacCarthy is as incapable of that horrid deed as—as you are!”

“Yes, yes, I am not going to enter into arguments with school-girls. It is not with you I am angry, Mabel,” he said, magnanimously. “You meant it all for the best, and that kind of thing, and what was a child like you to know of the world? It was my fault, my crime, not to have guided you—not to have enforced my authority and restrained you. I confess my weakness, and I shall not be guilty of it again. I have come to take up possession of my own house—to rule in my own family—and to do what I like with my own property; and I tell you once for all that it will be my first duty to deliver you from the associations into which your ignorance of the world has betrayed you, and my second duty to purge my estate of this bloodguiltiness, if I have to clear it of its savages as bare as the day it was created. Now, child, remember I require some sleep—let Harman be informed that he will find me breakfasting at two.” And he swept off in a blaze of stern resolution and self-sacrifice.

Harman found him expanding in all the vainglory of an indolent man who has suddenly asserted his mastery over his own affairs. He had taken the reins of a restive team at a dangerous pass, and he felt all the old teamster's exhilaration in testing the strength of his wrist, and observing how his wild team responded to the crack of his whip. “Things have got into a confoundedly ugly mess all round, Harman,” he said, with the air of a Sultan who had taken a sudden fit of industry with his Grand Vizier. “It will require prompt and decisive measures to pull them out again, and I've come over in the mood to do something decisive, I can tell you.”

“I should say your lordship, at all times, is nothing if not decisive,” said the agent, howling like a handsome cat licking her velvet paws.

“That's what I'm not—never was till now. You think it's an attack of the gout, Harman, and that it's necessary to say something pleasant. No, sir; it's necessary to say things unpleasant—damnable unpleasant—and they shall be said. First, as to this murder of unfortunate Quish—Quish was that boy's evil genius, but he was a faithful animal in his way, and I am not going to have a servant of mine butchered at my door by a pack of ungrateful barbarians. They shall have to find the murderer—they shall have to give up the murderer and bring him to the gallows, or they shall sweat for it—every rafter in their murderous roofs shall shake for it, Harman. Do you understand? If the curs will bite the hand that fondled them—that gave them their own way all these years—why then,” with an oath, “we'll try a cut of the horsewhip on their cowardly carcasses—we'll tickle them—we'll see if the bounds can't be made to squeal, Harman, you and I.”

“I wouldn't be for doing anything precipitate, my lord,” said the velvety agent, rubbing his whiskers reflectively.

“Yes, but, by God, that's the very thing I would do and will do,” roared Lord Drumshaughlin. “They humbug you, Harman—this splash of bloodshed has unnerved you—has intimidated you, plainly.”

“At least, I may plead that my nerves have been broken down in your lordship's service—in doing your lordship's work,” said the agent, with downcast eyes.

“You were always a good fellow, Harman—as reliable as the multiplication table, by God,” said his lordship, encouragingly. “But it always did strike me you trusted too much to the silent operation of a writ served with a good-humored joke or two—in dealing with an imaginative people like the Irish, the grand thing is to do something sudden and striking. Let me see. Did I understand you to mention that this fellow who is arrested is under notice of eviction? Very good, the eviction must be carried out at once—to-morrow morning. Now, I want to know is there anybody except this American fellow—anybody connected with the estate—whom you suspect to be the ringleader, the man in the background, in devilry of this kind?”

“Well,” said the agent, hesitatingly, “young Rohan, the miller's son, is, I should say, the most pestilent young cub in the parish, and there is a writ for possession out against the father, but—”

“Let it be executed without a day's delay. Do you hear? To-morrow, if you have already given notice at the workhouse.”

“I was about to mention to your lordship—”

“Damn it, Harman, none of your lawyer's quibbles and wriggings. I insist! I'll superintend the evictions myself, if your stomach is at all qualmish. Now that I think of it, my presence would probably have an excellent moral effect. I'll shoulder a crowbar myself, if you please, but I'm resolved these fellows shall learn that they are dealing with a man who'll stand no nonsense until we've washed the stain of blood off this estate—until we've watered it with the fellows' tears of penance, by Jove!” cried Lord Drumshaughlin, enamored of his own Cromwellian thoroughness.

Mr. Hans Harman listened in an attitude in which he might either have seemed tranquilly self-satisfied or overawed by his principal's imposing cannon smoke and bounce. “There is a difficulty, my lord, although it is one that can be got over,” he said, quietly, “and that is that the writs for possession in both these cases are in the hands of our friend Dargan, as security for advances of rent made by him.”

Lord Drumshaughlin bounded at the name, as if it had been the point of a javelin piercing his flesh. “Then,” he cried, furiously, “they will have to be got out of his hands, and not only these writs but this estate will have to be got out of his hands—and, to be plain with you, Harman, it was mainly to shake that fellow's clammy thievish hands off my estate that I have come over—much more than to teach the police how to clear the country of these Irish-American vermin.”

It was Hans Harman's turn to be startled. His fine eyes shot out from their ambush as if to discover how much Lord Drumshaughlin had discovered.

“Yes,” pursued his lordship, fortified by the agent's attitude of attention. “It was the bitterest dose that poverty ever shoved down a man's throat to have to recommend the fellow for the Commission—you ought never to have let things go so far as that, Harman. But imagine the creature's effrontery, his cold-blooded, patronising, inconceivable insolence—would you believe it?—Pshaw! no matter!” he said, on second thoughts, as if the blood in his corded veins would have burst, if he were to dwell on the details of Humphrey Dargan's letter of gratitude and its accompanying cheque. “It's enough for you to know that life is not worth living while I feel that fellow's creepy hand upon my throat, and at any cost I'm determined that we shall shake him off, pay him, discharge him, kick him out, damn him—you and I, Harman,” he added, with a sudden show of coaxing tenderness to the agent, as if conscious that, however proudly he could afford to stand alone in other respects, Hans Harman was an indispensable *rule mecum* in the details of finance. “The fact of it is, Harman, your friend Hugg will have to come to the rescue. His rate of interest is stiffer, but at least he does not cross and recross my life every day in the intolerable way in which old Dargan does. Hugg doesn't pester me for the commission of the peace—Hugg does not take me by the arm and invite himself to my dinner-table, and sit on my stomach like a nightmare. You've saved me from that, Harman. Be my fairy godfather once more, there's a good chap—consolidate the mortgages at eight per cent. if necessary—call in Hugg—call in the twelve tribes of Judea if you will—but for Heaven's sake place me in a position in which I can present my compliments to Humphrey Dargan in just three unmanacled sentences.”

“This, my lord, is a grave matter,” said the agent, shaking his head portentously, “and I am grieved that you have formed so rooted an ill-opinion of Humphrey Dargan. His incumbrance tots up to fifty-five thousand, with three gales of interest—the terms, too, very advantageous, and I need hardly tell you that the present moment, with the bailiff's corpse still unburied on our hands, would be an unfortunate one to go into the market for so enormous an operation.”

Lord Drumshaughlin made a gesture of impatience. “I beg you will step down out of the pulpit, Harman,” he said, “and tell me how we are to kick the gombeen-man off my premises.”

“For one moment, bear with me,” continued Harman, with quiet decision. “I grant your lordship Dargan is a preposterous animal when he struts in peacock's feathers—though I'm bound to say it's that ridiculous wife of his