

other members of the Government, may result in legislation of a more promising nature than any that has yet taken place with regard to Irish affairs. The meeting was addressed by several noblemen and gentlemen, all of whom were unanimous in their desire to see the company established and who agreed in believing that in such a way a great benefit might be conferred upon a large number of people, and a good deal done towards removing the depression under which agriculture suffers—the depression, nevertheless, not being confined to agriculture only, as the Duke of Argyll remarked.—It was, again, stated that the present time was unusually opportune for purchasing the estates needed, as landed property was of so low a price.—Indeed, Lord Derby, in a letter read from him excusing his absence and expressing his agreement with the objects of the meeting, said that the difficulty was not to buy but to sell land, and the Duke of Argyll mentioned that in Essex alone, in the immediate neighbourhood of London, there were at least 60,000 acres in the market.—As to the advantages of a peasant proprietary, on which several of these speakers insisted, it is not necessary that we should again enter into a discussion of them.—We have frequently advocated the cause in our columns, and taken from many sources various arguments and various facts bearing upon it.—What we desire to call attention to is the wisdom and prudence as well as the benevolence with which English landlords come forward to aid the poorer classes of their fellow countrymen, when the occasion offers.—And although doubtless, the circumstances of the times,—not only the existing depression, and the low price and decreasing value of land—but the onward march of the democracy also—have had a good deal to do with this movement—we are still desirous of giving these gentlemen full credit for their kindly intentions as well as their prudent action.—The Irish landlords, on the other hand, although they also must have recognised that the cause of the people was making its way into the ascendant, put up their backs, and in the obstinate prejudices and hard-heartedness of their condition, resolved only to resist, and to cling to their ill-gotten monopoly let what would happen,—but such is the difference between the upper classes of a country who are of the blood of the nation, and those who are of an alien race.—Even in their exalted rank the one body can feel a common interest with those beneath them—while, in a rank much less exalted for the most part,—and often a mere shabby pretence and imitation, the other body exists but as the high and mighty despisers of the people, and has for its motto, engraved in pinchebeck, *odi profanum vulgus*. The noble generosity especially of Sir R. Loyd Lindsay is deserving of note, and which prompted him to present to the Company an estate of 400 acres which he had just purchased in Berkshire at an expense of £4000. Meantime, let us hope that, if Lord Carnarvon goes to Ireland and occupies the Lord Lieutenantcy for any sufficient time, he may take the opportunity of spreading abroad there also his opinion as to the benefits of a peasant proprietorship. Or must we fear that the shadow of Dublin Castle will prove as blighting as it has ever been, and banish from the heart of its occupant every vestige of a benevolent feeling? The probabilities unfortunately are that so it will be.

## THE WICKED WOODS OF TOBEREEVIL.

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND.

AUTHOR OF "THE WILD BIRDS OF KILLEEVY," ETC.

### CHAPTER XII.

#### THE PEDDLER AT TOBEREEVIL.

Tibbie knotted her knuckles together to keep down her amazement, while she glugged her eyes upon the beauties of this bargain. It was many a day since she had dreamed of such a gown as that. At sight of it, long dead memories of past fairs and dances, and youthful frolics, and blithe companions, got up and jostled each other through the old creature's brain.

"Ye'll make it twopence!" said the wily Tibbie.

"Sorrah penny now under fippence," said the peddler, beginning with dignity to roll up the stuff. "When a lady doesn't know a bargain when she sees it, why it's part of my profession to tache her at a little inconvenience."

"Fourpence, ye said!"

"Fippence," said the peddler.

"Oh, musha, musha, but ye're miserly an' hard! An' 'twas fourpence ye tould me at the first."

"If ye say another word, I'll make it sixpence," said the peddler.

Tibbie groaned, and rocked herself, with her eyes upon the chintz. The material before her was worth eighteen pence a yard. Tibbie knew it well. It was strong and soft, and warm and silky; printed in good colours, and of the most brilliant design. Why the ordinary peddler would not give her a calico at the price! But to part with so many fippences cut Tibbie to the heart; and the thought of walking about Toberrevil, amidst the cobwebs and mildew, dressed out in all this finery, was like to make her crazy between horror and delight. And in the meantime, while she deliberated, the coveted stuff retreated, yard after yard, into the peddler's pack.

"I'll be biddin' a good evenin' to ye," said the peddler, shouldering his bundle.

"Stop! stop!" shrieked Tibbie, and she huddled herself away, across the kitchen. She seized the poker, so that the peddler thought

at first that she was going to lay it about his head; but she only poked it up the chimney, bringing down a shower of soot, and a grimy little bag which chinked as it fell among the ashes.

"Wan, two, three, four!" said Tibbie, counting out the money. "Oh! my curse on you for a villain, would ye take it from me!"

The peddler put the money in his pocket, Tibbie glaring at him strangely the while, as if she had given him poison, and he had swallowed it. The peddler cut off the cloth, folded it neatly, and placed it in a roll in Tibbie's arms, where she gripped it, and pinched it, so that, had it been a living thing, it certainly would have been strangled.

"Now, thin!" said the peddler, "would you be lettin' the master know that I am here?"

"The master?"

"Mister Finiston hissel'."

"Ah, thin, young man, ye come a long piece out o' yer way to get yer head broke."

"Anan!" said the peddler.

"Wid the poker, or the hind leg o' a chair," went on Tibbie.

"There's no luck in axin' for a sight o' Simon's money."

"But I want to show him mine," said the peddler.

"Is it laughin' at him ye are?"

"Sorrah laugh in the matter. If so be he has anythin' to sell—old coats, or gownds, or curtains, or jewelry, why it's mesel' will give the best price for the goods."

"Sit down, thin, good man, an' wait a bit; for that's a quare different tune ye're whistlin' now. He's out gleanin'; but he'll be in for his dinner by'n bye."

"Gleanin'?" asked the peddler.

"Pickin' what he can get," returned Tibbie. "Sticks for the fire, an' odd praties an' turnips out o' the rigs."

The peddler stared. "It amuses the old soul, I suppose," he said.

"Oh, aye!" said Tibbie, with a whine, "an' helps to keep the roof over his head, the crature!"

There was silence upon this, during which the black-beetles came a journey across the kitchen flags, and walked playfully over the peddler's boots, while Tibbie went on with her cooking, making the woodcock spin giddily from its string as she basted it before the fire. She was considering whether the peddler would buy rags and bones which she had been storing in the cellar for the past ten years.

By and by a sound was heard from above, and Tibbie left off torturing the woodcock, and placed him on a dish. A slice of bread and a glass of water were added on a tray, and then the miser's dinner was carried up stairs.

"Ye may wait, my man," said Tibbie, coming back; and, when the tray had come down again, she ushered the peddler into the presence of her master.

He was sitting, all alive with expectation, in the dreary state of his dilapidated dining-room, a little leaner, more wrinkled, more surly and fretful-looking than on the day when he scared Miss Martha out of his presence. In the corner of the room lay a small heap of the spoils which he had gleaned off the country since the morning.

"Take them away, Tibbie, take them away," he said, waving his hand toward the meagre pile, "and be careful about picking up the straws. They have cost me a hard day's work, good woman; and see that you do not lose the fruits of your master's toil. You perceive, young man, we will have no waste here; and I am glad to learn that you are one of those who count nothing too old or decayed to be of use. I am told that you are anxious to do a little business with me, and, that being so, we will proceed up stairs."

The miser's nose was long, thin, and almost transparent, and as he spoke, he sat sharpening the end of it—as it seemed to the looker-on—with a many-coloured rag, which had once been a pocket-handkerchief.

The peddler stood, hat in hand, a little in the shadow thrown by the strong red sunset and the heavy oaken framework of the window. His attitude was respectful, but there was a strange look of loathing mixed with fear in his eyes, which now fixed themselves, as if fascinated, on the face of the miser, and now roved about the room.

"You will see a great house," said the miser, while he shuffled across the hall, looking nervously over his shoulder, as the keys jingled in his hand—"a dilapidated house, which the owner has no means of repairing. What it costs me, young man, to keep the holes in the windows stopped, so as to shut out the wind, and prevent the roof flying off on a stormy night—why, it makes me what I am," he said, flapping his patched garments ostentatiously. "It makes me what I am."

The first Finiston of Toberrevil, the man who had brought the blight upon his race, had had in his princely days a grand idea about the planning of a dwelling. The staircase was wide enough for eight men to ascend its black steps abreast. Inky faces of demons and satyrs grinned from among vine leaves in the carvings of the balustrades. Black marble nymphs twined their arms and their hair round pillars on the landing, and lost themselves amid foliage and shadows. Formerly, all the sinister effect of this blackness had been carried off by the ruddy velvet hangings which had glowed between the arches and the deeply-stained windows, which had loaded every ray of sunlight with a special flush of colour. Flora and Bacchus had crowned themselves in the splendours of the illuminated glass, making the inner air warm with the reflection of their frolics. Their wretched attendants had chased each other laughingly under the lower arches of the side-lights. Now Flora's azure robe still fluttered against the sun, and her feet still twinkled among clouds and roses, but her fair round throat had become a spike of ragged glass, and the sky looked in rudely where her face had used to smile. Bacchus had had his lower limbs completely shivered away, and seemed to soar out of an intrusive bush of ivy. As the miser crept feel up the staircase the scarlet midsummer sunset had assailed all the colours in the window, flung fire to right and left, and streaming triumphantly through the rents in the glass. The black-nymphs were all burning as they clung round their pillars, each like an Indian widow upon her pyre.