'But it is my property,' cried Mary, aghast.

'Pooh! You think it is. The people don't think, and Teig doesn't think so. You know the property came to the Latimers by marriage. The O'Donnell's lost it originally by a game at cards. Teig would put a debt of honor before any other debt, being Teig. But they say that Walter Burke—whose daughter married Hugh Latimer—cheated at the cards. It is even said that he wanted to make restitution on his death-bed. Peasants' stories. I don't attach any importance to them; but the people do, and Teig does, and Cecilia and Madam look on them as gospel truth. So Teig poaches your game and salmon; and the whole countryside follows his excellent example.'

'I am going to stop it,' said Mary, setting her teeth.

'Better be like Charlie Latimer, and let it go,' counselled her friend. 'You'll only make the country too hot to hold you.'

'We'll see. Why doesn't Sir Teig O'Donnell do something to earn an honest living instead of poaching?'

'Faith, my dear, the poor chap never got a chance. His mother can't bear him out of her sight. She hasn't been well this many a year. He's had no education except what he scraped up from Madam's old chaplain, Father Roche. He's full of learning, and he's given what he could to Teig. Cecilia, too, stays with her mother, although she's wedded to the convent since she could think for herself. Teig would have made a fine soldier. Perhaps he'd never have done as brave a thing as staying by his sick mother and leaving it to people to ask the question you've just asked.'

Unfortunately the Laughing Philosopher, as Mary had come to call Lord Dunanaghy, was away, and likely to be away for some time, when the events occurred which embroiled Miss Glynn with the O'Donnells.

It was a perplexity and a vexation that the country and the people, and the old family, had come to interest her to a disproportionate extent. She had a profound interest in things that baffled her; and the more unsatisfactory the people were, from her point of view, the more interesting they became. Why could she not dispossess the O'Donnells in their affections? Why must they always look at her as though she were a stranger? She had been oddly fascinated by Cecilia O'Donnell's spiritual, pale face, and had made overtures to her with a generous impulsiveness when she had met her by accident at the bedside of a sick woman. The nun-like creature had looked at her with a startled gaze. Mary had seen that when they met Cecilia's thought had been for flight. She had always acted on impulse and had rarely had cause to regret it. Now she spoke and acted impulsively.

'I am sorry to hear that Madam O'Donnell is not so well,' she had said. 'Is there nothing that I can do? May I call to inquire how she is?'

'She is better, thank you,' Cecilia replied, with an alarmed look. 'There is nothing you could do, thank you. And we live so quietly. My mother sees no one but old friends.'

It was while smarting from the rebuff that Mary gave orders about mending the gaps in the stone walls which enclosed Lismoyne. She had wondered when she first came what the gray, buttressed stone walls were needed for. At Greenings the woods were open wherever they skirted a public road; and nothing was the worse for it.

But here it was different. She supposed the people were more destructive, less law-abiding than the English. Anyhow, gaps had been broken everywhere in the wall. The people had helped themselves to whatever they could carry away. The plantations had been destroyed for firewood; the people's sheep and goats and lean cattle wandered and fed where they would. On the day Mary gave the order she had found a whole encampment of tinkers, i. e., gypsies, settled down comfortably within sight of her front windows.

Masons had to be brought from a distance to rebuild the walls. Mary's farm bailiff, a young Yorkshireman, very amiable until the bull-dog fit fell on him, thoroughly devoted to his young mistress, was very much interested in the mending of the walls. Within the walls Harding was going to establish English order, English law-abidingness. He was in favor of English gamekeepers, too. If he had dared, he would have suggested English servants. He had his way so far as the head-gamekeeper was concerned.

The first breach in the wall was repaired, made good. Harding saw and approved and reported well of the mason's progress to his mistress. It happened to be at the nearest point of the wall to where the bare stone-keep and the little dwelling-house adjoining housed the O'Donnells. The next morning the masonry was down; except for the new stones lying in all directions the gap was as it had been.

It made Mary very angry. It made Harding's face lose its amiable expression and assume one dark and dogged.

'There was one of the wild deer shot last night,' he said to Mary. 'If you'll give me orders Miss, I'll stop it.'

'Stop it,' said Mary, shortly. She was too furious to ask what Harding intended to do.

That day the gap was rebuilt, and the next morning the wall was down again. It happened two or three times. Mary drove over herself to the nearest police barracks to lay an information against Sir Teig O'Donnell. The red-faced sergeant was hypocritically sympathetic, but at the same time plainly anxious that she should not prosecute Sir Teig.

'Your ladyship wouldn't be feeling the loss of a few birds,' he said. 'Sure, what would a young lady like yourself want with them? 'Tisn't as though your ladyship was a gentleman.'

'Sir Teig O'Donnell is a poacher,' she said. 'He shall go to jail like any other poacher.'

'Go to jail!' cried the sergeant, aghast. 'Sir Teig O'Donnell go to jail! Now, look here, your ladyship, your ladyship's young. Don't go for to be destroying yourself talking that way. I wish Mr. Latimer was here to-day. Sir Teig in prison! Oh, Lord! Your ladyship wouldn't be let live in the country if people was to hear you talking that way.'

It made Mary angrier than ever. She answered the sergeant sharply that it was his duty to arrest Sir Teig O'Donnell like any other poacher. As she drove off, sitting behind her high-stepping horse, she was aware that the sergeant and his 'subs.' were looking after her in amazement. She had an idea that perhaps they, too, were among the poachers. She recalled some of Lord Dunanaghy's humorous tales, over which she had laughed with a wry mouth, having too much of the English land-owner in her to be able to enjoy them thoroughly.

A few days later she was awake in the gray dawn, and she heard a shot fired in her woods. She was up in an instant. For a few nights all had been quiet, and she wondered if the head-gamekeeper and his men were on the watch.

She was broad awake and tingling with indignation. She dressed herself with what speed she might, and went down through the quiet house. Outside the dews lay heavy on the grass; and the east was troubled. She thought the clouds looked as though there were thunder behind them. Lines of rose trembled in the gray. The mountain peaks began to grow light while yet their flanks were in deepest shadow. The first birds were twittering in the nests. The wind came up from the sea with a delicious freshness.

She might have been Aurora walking through the dewy grasses, so fresh was she, so fair, with the roses in her cheeks, and the proud, angry light in her eyes. She had not thought what was going to happen if she came upon the poachers. She had set the law in motion against them; and if they were inclined to be rough with her she was quite defenceless, quite unarmed. She had not thought even to bring a dog with her.

She walked some way through the woods before she came upon anything more formidable than the rabbits and the squirrels, and the birds that were all singing now since the sun was up, and warming the wood through and through. Not a sign of any human creature. If there had been poachers, they had apparently gone home to their beds. There was no sign of her own men either. She had walked a mile or two and had had the wood to herself.

Then—she came out in a clearing, and her heart leaped and dropped. The wide, grassy path stretched before her to a gap in the wall. Lying within the gap there was something huddled up, face downward on the grass. As she went up to it she saw a gun lying beside it.

Her heart was cold within her as she went up to the quiet figure. A low moan startled her, at the same time gave her an exquisite relief. Then he was not dead; but he must be very badly wounded. As she stooped down beside him she all but knelt on a wide patch of blood, already becoming glazed in the sun.

The figure stirred under her hand. Then, to her immense relief, the golden head turned a little way about, and a pair of gray eyes, exhausted with pain and loss of blood, stared at her heavily.

'I thought no one would ever come,' he said. 'It was my own gun. There was barbed wire across the