

"Indeed, papa, I shall certainly mention the subject to him."

"By the soul of Schomberg, Helen, if you do you'll convert him."

Helen was about to make some good-natured reply, when the noise of carriage wheels was heard at the hall door, and her father, going to the window, asked:—

"What noise is that? A carriage! Who can it be? Whitecraft, by the Boyne! Well, it can't be helped."

"I will leave you, papa," she said. "I do not wish to see this unfeeling and repulsive man, unless when it is unavoidable and in your presence."

She then withdrew.

Before we introduce Sir Robert Whitecraft, we must beg our readers to accompany us to the residence of that worthy gentleman, which was not more than three miles from that of Reilly. Sir Robert had large estates and a sumptuous residence in Ireland, as well as in England, and had made the former principally his place of abode since he became enamored of the celebrated *Calcutta Bawn*. On the occasion in question, he was walking about through his grounds, when a female approached him, whom we beg the reader to recognise as Mary Mahon. This mischievous woman, implacable, and without principle, had, with the utmost secrecy, served Sir Robert and many others in a capacity discreditable alike to virtue and her sex, by luring the weak or the innocent within their toils.

"Well, Mary," said he, "what news in the country? You, who are always on the move, should know."

"No very good news for you, Sir Robert," she replied.

"How is that, Mary?"

"Why, sir, Willy Reilly, the famous Willy Reilly, has got a footing in the house of old Squire Folliard."

"And how can that be had news to me, Mary?"

"Well, I don't know," said she, with a cunning leer; "but this I know, that they had a love scene together this very morning, and that he kissed her very sweetly near the chimney-piece."

Sir Robert Whitecraft did not get into a rage; he neither cursed nor swore, nor even looked angry; but he gave a peculiar smile, which should be seen in order to be understood. "Where is your nephew now?" he asked; and as he did so he began to whistle.

"Have you another job for him?" she inquired, in her turn, with a peculiar meaning. "Whenever the aunt fails by fair play, her nephew tries it with foul."

"Well, and have not I often saved his neck, as well by my influence as by allowing him to take shelter under my roof whenever he was hard pressed?"

"I know that, your honor; and hasn't he and I often sarved you, on the other hand?"

"I grant it, Molly; but that is a matter known only to ourselves. You know I have the reputation of being very correct and virtuous."

"I know you have," said Molly, "with most people, but not with all. You do everything snug and close, and on the cheapest terms."

"Well, Molly, you know, as far as we are concerned, one good turn deserves another. Where is your nephew now, I ask again."

"Why, then, to tell you the truth, it's more than I know, at the present speaking."

"Follow me, then," replied the wily baronet; "I wish you to see him; he is now concealed in my house; but, first, mark me, I don't believe a word of what you have just repeated."

"It's as true as Gospel for all that," she replied; "and if you wish to hear how I found it out I'll tell you."

"Well," said the baronet, calmly, "let us hear it."

"You must know," she proceeded, "that I have a cousin, one Betty Beatty, who is a housemaid in the squire's. Now, this same Betty Beatty was in the back parlor—for the squire always dines in the front—and from a kind of natural curiosity she's afflicted with, she puts her ear to the keyhole, and afterwards her eye. I happened to be at the squire's, at the time, and, as blood is thicker than wather, and as she knew I was a friend of yours, she told me what she had both heard and seen, what they said, and how he kissed her."

Sir Robert seemed very calm, and merely said, "Follow me into the house"; which she accordingly did, and remained in consultation with him and the Red Rapparee for nearly an hour, after which Sir Robert ordered his carriage and went to pay a visit, as we have seen, at Corbo Castle.

Sir Robert Whitecraft, on entering the parlor, shook hands as a matter of course with the squire. At this particular crisis, the vehement, but whimsical old man, whose mind was now full of another project with reference to his daughter, experienced no great gratification from this visit, and as the baronet shook hands with him he exclaimed somewhat testily:—

"D—n it, Sir Robert, why don't you shake hands like a man? You put that long yellow paw of yours, all

skin and bones, into a man's hand, and there you let it lie. But, no matter, everyone to his nature. Be seated, and tell me what news. Are the Papists quiet?"

"There is little news stirring, sir; at least, if there be it does not come my way, with the exception of this report about yourself, which I hope is not true; that there was an attempt made on your life yesterday evening?"

"What signifies that, my dear fellow, when your wig is out of balance? It's a little to the one side, like the ear of an empty jug, as they say."

"Why, sir," replied the baronet, "the fact is, that I felt—hum!—hum! so much—so much—a—anxiety—hum!—to see you and—a—a—to know all about it—that—a—I didn't take time to—a—look to my dress. And, besides, as I—hum!—expect to have—a—the pleasure of an interview with Miss Folliard—a—hum!—now that I am here—I feel anxious to appear to the best advantage—a—hum!"

Whilst speaking, he proceeded with the readjustment of his toilet at the large mirror, an operation which appeared to constitute the great object on which his mind was engaged, the affair of the squire's life or death coming in only parenthetically, or as a consideration of minor importance.

In height, Sir Robert Whitecraft was fully six feet two; but being extremely thin and lank, and to all appearance utterly devoid of substance, and of everything like proportion, he appeared much taller than even Nature had made him. His forehead was low, and its whole character felonious; his eyes were small, deep-set, and cunning; his nose was hooked; his mouth was wide, but his lips thin to a miracle, and such as always are to be found under the nose of a miser; as for chin, we could not conscientiously allow him any; his under-lip sloped off until it met the throat with a curve not larger than that of an oyster, which, when open to the tide, his mouth very much resembled. As for his neck, it was so long that no portion of dress, at that time discovered, was capable of covering more than one-third of it; so that there were always two parts out of three left stark naked and helplessly exposed to the elements. Whenever he smiled he looked as about to weep. As the squire said, he was dreadfully round-shouldered, had dangling arms that kept flapping about him as if they were moved by some machinery that had gone out of order, was close-kneed, had the true telescopic leg, and feet that brought a very large portion of him into the closest possible contact with the earth.

"Are you succeeding, Sir Robert?" inquired the old man, sarcastically, "because if you are, I swear you're achieving wonders, considering the slight materials you have to work upon."

"Ah! sir," replied the baronet, "I perceive you are in one of your biting humors to-day."

"Biting!" exclaimed the other, "egad, it's very well for most of your acquaintances that you're free from hydrophobia; if you were not, I'd have died pleasantly between two feather beds, leaving my child an orphan long before this."

"O ay, you allude to the affair of 'Hop-and-go-constant' and 'Pat the Spanker'; but you know, my dear sir, I gave you heavy boot"; and as he spoke, he pulled up the lapels of his coat, and glanced complacently at the profile of his face and person in the glass.

"Pray, is Miss Folliard at home, sir?"

"Again I'm forgotten," thought the squire. "Ah! what an affectionate son-in-law he'd make! What a tender husband for Helen! Why, hang the fellow, he has a heart for nobody but himself—She is at home, Sir Robert, but the truth is, I don't think it would become me, as a father anxious for the happiness of his child, and that child an only one, to sacrifice her happiness—the happiness of her whole life—to wealth or ambition. You know she herself entertains a strong prejudice—no, that is not the word—"

"I beg your pardon, sir; that is the word; her distaste to me is a prejudice, and nothing else."

"No, Sir Robert; it is *not* the word. Antipathy is the word. No, I tell you once for all, that I will not force my child."

"This change, Mr. Folliard," observed the baronet, "is somewhat of the suddenest. Has anything occurred on my part to occasion it?"

"Perhaps I may have other views for her, Sir Robert."

"That may be, but is such conduct either fair or honorable towards me, Mr. Folliard? Have I got a rival, and if so, who is he?"

"O Lord! I wouldn't tell you that for the world."

"And why not, pray?"

"Because," replied the squire, "if you found out who he was, you'd be hanged for cannibalism."

"I really don't understand you, Mr. Folliard. Excuse me, but it would seem to me that something has put you into no very agreeable humor to-day."