

The teacher had more to add:

'Maurice, keep up the studies—the Latin, the reading of English authors—and write a composition sometimes. I'll help you.'

And straightway this man of axioms wrote down a schedule of work for his shepherd pupil and promised to help him along.

Maurice went off in better spirits than he had come; for, in spite of drudgery and long vigils, his dream was not blotted out forever, though it was far away.

To tell of his daily round of work—keeping guard and count of the sheep, warding off disease, and fighting it out when it entered the fold; his long walks from end to end of the wide estate; his watchfulness to protect the interests of his master; his tact in getting those under him to render full and careful service—to tell all this would be to repeat the story of many another lad born at the base of the mountain, who, because he longed for larger vision, could not be gainsaid, and climbed to the summit. There were, in his watch, periods of lull, when he sat under a tree and pored over his Latin, or worked a problem in mathematics, or read the books loaned to him by his teacher. There were many occasions, too, when the teacher himself happened along and removed difficulties from before the active lad, or showed him new ways. It was like fighting one's path against a high wind on a treeless plain, this battling against circumstance. Maurice liked it, waxed stronger of purpose under the force of it, and saw his dream come nearer day by day. But for one opposing force he would have advanced so joyously as almost to forget he was a sheep-tender.

Sir Robert Ferendale had three sons and as many daughters. Five of these children one may dismiss without a word or a nod, as they had no relations whatever with the young dreamer of dreams. The second son, who carried his father's name, was about a year and a-half Maurice's senior. Like his brothers and sisters, he had a private teacher, following the traditional ideas of 'gentleman born.' Probably he was clever enough—one is not concerned. Doubtless he made progress in his studies—it is not so important. But what surprises one even now is that this young, pampered, petted boy, with the way of life rosy before him, could stoop to notice with envy a lad who ran barefoot about his father's fields and wrestled with his father's sheep. Yet he did. The reason for his jealousy is simple enough.

On three occasions his own father, in his presence, praised the grit and serious manner of Maurice. Twice the talented young minister, an Oxford man, who occupied the manse close by the estate, spoke at dinner of the 'wonderful eyes of Sir Robert's shepherd lad.' A lady, whose flighty horse Maurice had held for a little, spoke of the 'remarkable working boy who took care of the sheep.' Then Maurice's talents were spoken of once or so, and Lady Ferendale said she wished 'Master Bob had as bright a head as young Ahern.'

From then on Robert Ferendale, Jr., seemed to have but one aim in his young life—to keep in the low dust Master Maurice Ahern, Jr., official guardian of his sire's sheep. It was an unequal contest, you may be sure. Poor Maurice had to grin and be silent while the rich young gentleman raged and abused him. He might have inflicted bodily punishment on young Ferendale, for Maurice was known as a hard hitter at school. But he had a mother, and it would be small satisfaction to her if some time he were to say: 'Mother, I have made Master Robert Ferendale's face black and blue with my fists. I am glad of it, too, although I must give up the sheep and get out of the house.' It was an unequal contest, therefore. For if a man's hands are tied behind his back, a brave opponent may smite him with impunity.

Young Master Robert would say, as he galloped his pony across the fields to where Maurice was branding a sheep:

'You insolent dog, don't you see you're in my way? Move off, you beggar!'

Maurice would move away a little, though there were acres of fields on either side of him for the young gentleman to pass.

Again, young Ferendale might come upon him during the brief periods he snatched for study.

'You worthless brat; do you suppose my father pays you and gives you a house, in order to have you spend your time reading? You ignorant peasant! I'd like to know what you want books for?'

Maurice would put the little volume in his pocket and glide away to another section of the field.

He might have stopped the persecution if he had complained of the pampered boy to his father; for Ferendale was a strict man, who would accept no nonsense from his children. But, with the instinct of his race against 'spy' and 'informer,' he could never bring himself to lodge a complaint. All the same his young mind planned revenge, and his young heart longed for the day when his turn would come.

When Maurice was in his eighteenth year, John Crimmins' housekeeper died. Owing to the careful tutelage of the teacher and his own patient work, Maurice was ready to go away somewhere to begin his study of law. But he had not enough money to carry him through nor did he see any prospect of getting it. Then the unexpected happened, and John Crimmins offered the position of housekeeper to his mother, and told Maurice to make ready to cross the channel to take up the studies of his profession in England. Some days later Mrs. Ahern began her new duties. Robert Ferendale had taken up the study of law in a select school some time before.

The years went their swift way, and fate or circumstances, or what not, at last brought Robert Ferendale, Q.C., and Maurice Ahern, Q.C., into conflict. The former sheep-tender remembered the burning insults of days gone by, you may be sure; for personal wrong sometimes leaves a deep, red wound that time does not heal. The trial in which they both appeared as celebrated opponents is so well remembered that one need only offer the merest outline.

Smithfield was an 'emergency man,' placed over the farms of two evicted tenants some miles outside Ardee. The landlord of these tenants was an 'absentee,' who spent most of his time in keeping up with the races, the yachts, and those games of chance which are a part of the pastime of the 'idle rich.' He gave no thought to the struggling peasants who were trying to eke out a living and to hold up under the crushing weight of the rents. Probably the landlord did not know who they were, and did not care to know. He was a hard, bad spendthrift at best; and the agent he employed to collect his rents was no better than himself. Two tenants were evicted for non-payment of rent, and this Smithfield, from somewhere, was sent to occupy one of the houses and take care of both farms.

An 'emergency man' at his highest was a hateful beast, whose presence defiled the abandoned hearth, whose very shadow was unholy on the land. Smithfield was the most offensive of a very offensive tribe. He swaggered and put on the airs of a gentleman, and by and by told the two 'peelers' sent to guard him to go home, as he could take care of himself. The poorest beggar on the road would neither salute him nor answer his salutation. He drank freely and his swagger rose to insolence. But the people had no mind to borrow more trouble than they had already, and let him go his way.

One evening, Margaret Sheehy, a young woman of fine appearance, was coming home from the dress-maker's at Ardee, and was met by Smithfield. She fought the fight of her race for the priceless treasure of her sex, and was found insensible on the road an hour later. When the people heard of the outrage their anger leaped out in burning tongues of fire. Next morning the police found Smithfield dead in the exact spot where the girl was found, with three bullets lodged in his head. Margaret Sheehy had three brothers, who were at once placed under arrest, charged with the deed. There was a great deal of talk about circumstantial evidence among the attorneys, which the laymen could not follow. The concrete facts were the death of Smithfield, the arrest of the Sheehy brothers, and the great trial at Limerick.

Young, rich, and brilliant Robert Ferendale, Q.C., was to prosecute for the Crown. Everybody expected