

manuscript like the Eastern Question, of which his readers received so many inky bodements, "that child's passion for literary work is—really unnatural! I am afraid you won't be able to read it, Noble Nolan."

"It don't matter, sir," said Noble Nolan, meekly draining off the superfluous fluid, and disappearing with a sigh which seemed to indicate that reading Mat's MS. under an eclipse was but a slight additional item in the extraordinary duties of Mat Murrin's foreman, compositor, machine-boy, job-printer, accountant, advertising agent, bill-diplomatist, and (in general) Cabinet Minister-in-waiting.

"Now, young Rohan!" said Mat, readjusting the eye-glass and the editorial chair in a more affable manner, and proceeding to charge a clay pipe and pass a depleted tobacco-pouch around. Thus encouraged, Ken Rohan unfolded his scheme, having first elicited Captain Mike's opinion that the Dublin arrests would not be allowed to force the leaders into immediate or premature action. "I don't know a darned bit myself," he said. "I only know my orders is to freeze on right here till further orders, and I'll freeze. There are fools at head-quarters fit for anything," he groaned, with recollections of his pawned revolver and unpaid hotel-bill, "but I guess they ain't such goslings as not to be prepared for a blizzard of this sort. No, sir, we ain't going to get rushed, I reckon, till the boys from the other side are signalled." In that case, young Rohan's plan was, briefly, that the work of the suppressed newspaper should be taken up, and the confidence of the organisation maintained, by a journal of which he was ready to assume the risky honors of director. One openly printed within reach of the Castle would not survive a second issue. His notion was that Mat Murrin's printing office should be availed of for the purpose. A district so sequestered would be the last in the island suspected of being the fountain of a revolutionary newspaper propaganda. The carters from the Cork breweries could convey the edition in barrels, that would pass as returned empties; and from Cork the railways would send the paper flying like the fiery cross from shore to shore of Ireland. The *Banner* would continue to wave on its own account over the local battlements; and Mat would, of course, be still worshipped with divine honors as the one undivided and indivisible Cloud-Compeller of the firm, while young Harold and young Rohan were to pour out the treasures of their capacious intellects weekly, in concussions of patriotic passion, song, wit, and story, in the secret press. "Yes, but, by all the boodlers in the Sixth Ward, I'm going to chip in too, young fellars!" sang out the Captain, in high glee. "I kin turn a rale tony yarn with any of the boys on this bar. Jest send round your shorthand man to take me on. Why I wasn't scalped at McGahan's Gulch by them red Soo divvils, or by the Nigger Ghost of the Rappahannock—guess you don't come on a streak like that this side. No, sir."

While these plans were in course of development, Mat Murrin had vanished incontinently at certain rumblings of female thunder (so to speak) on the kitchen staircase, and the plotters could hear, amidst their own eager colloquy, fragments of another stifled exchange of views from the depths—e.g. (in damaged but high soprano) "An unpardonable old fool"—(in *tenore* the least in the world *robusto*) "Eliza, my love, reelly"—(sop. con spirito) "gadding about with young spree-boys in place of putting a decent stitch of clothes on the backs of your children"—(ten.-rall.) "there now—thank you, my heart's jewel—the decanter":—after which, preceded by a light oscillatory echo, Jupiter emerged from his cloud, serenely bearing a little tray of glasses with a flat-jowled decanter of spirits.

"The resources of this establishment are at your service, gentlemen, as long as there's a tatter of the old *Banner* flying," said the Editor, as he distributed the "spirits" in a series of large-hearted, or, as he would himself say, *flauhoolach* spills. "But you see it's all a question of ha'pence—damn them same ha'pence! Swift was right—this would be the happiest little country in the world if such things were never invented. But there they are—the mean little copper sprissauns—or rather, faith, there they aren't, for I may impart to you, gentlemen, in confidence, that I'm no more in a position to start a newspaper, privately or publicly, big or little, at this

moment than to launch a fleet of ironclads into Bantry Bay to sweep British commerce from the seas, however excellent both consummations would be. What is it now, Noble Nolan?" he demanded with dignity, as the foreman reappeared at the glass door of the printing-office with a *Miserere* expression of countenance.

"The staff won't set it, sir—they refuse to set it," he said, agitating gently the MS. of Mat's black-avised leading article.

"What, can't make me out in the dark, eh?—turn up their noses at a blotch of ink, the rascals, do they? Well, I suppose we must re-indite the legend for the rogues."

"It isn't that, sir. The staff say they won't bring out the *Banner* unless they get their wages down."

"The staff say that, do they?" thundered Jupiter, arising in his wrath. "The staff say they won't bring out the *Banner*—they'll let it drop in the face of the enemy—they'll let it drop and be damned to them! Noble Nolan, this is rebellion foul and unnatural—all-aborred rebellion, sir. Tell the staff on barren mountains shall we starve ere we redeem the traitors from our coffers. Tell the staff to get them to their cases or to get them to the devil."

The foreman stood scratching his head in a mildly suggestive manner. "'Tis coming on five o'clock, sir, and I'm afraid we may lose the post," he said, gently.

"Upon my soul, we just may, most Noble Nolan—we just may, as you remark," said Jupiter, laying down the sceptre of the skies and imbibing a mouthful of the whisky-and-water. "What's to be done, ancient comrade, eh? You might drop round and collect that little thing of old Dargan's for the magistracy and the wedding—charge him election rates, a shilling a line, the thundering old thief."

"I collected that early this morning, sir, for the missus. I believe the butcher wouldn't send the chops," he added in a confidential undertone.

"Ha, domestic treason, too! Well, let us inspect the books," said Mat, running his finger down the well-thumbed pages of an anarchical old ledger. "Now, there's that double-ad. of The Drumshaughlin Crystal Palace—thirty shillings an insertion. Oh! I forgot—the Crystal Palace is in the Court. Why the devil weren't we in the Court ourselves long ago, Noble Nolan, and why didn't we come out of it as rich as Begums?—that's what I want to know. You couldn't manage to get the Town Clerk to back a little bill on the security of the next quarter's account for the Commissioners' ad—no?"

"Tried him last week, sir—said the Commissioners mightn't like it, if it oozed out."

"Never much good in that same Town Clerk since he took the pledge—the *Banner* will have to flap a protecting wing or so over our corporate institutions, I'm thinking. K.L.M.—"McGrudder—stop"—ay, the gold-spectacled Italian old son of a Sabine, "stop," as I hope he'll stop whenever he gets a distant view of Heaven! N.O.P.—running perilously low in the alphabet, as I'm a Gentleman of the Press. Stay—that damned auctioneer hasn't stumped up yet—a low fellow, with two public-houses, and a sketch of a farm, besides the auctioneering. Not a sixpence, and two months overdue."

"I called to him three times last pay-day, sir, and got nothing but the height of im-pidd-ence from him, with respects to you," said the meek foreman, showing that even meek foremen have their feelings, like the gods and rich auctioneers with two public-houses and a sketch of a farm.

"The height of im-pidd-ence, you did—did you? Noble Nolan, we'll roast that auctioneer—we'll baste him finely in his own gravy—and we'll distribute the joint among the Staff, sir, in platefuls, or what's better still, in bottlefuls. Just attend to me. This is an order from me on the auctioneer's pub. for whisky and porter to the value of one pound sterling, which, according to my reckoning, comes to sixty glasses best John Jameson, or one hundred and twenty pints J. J. Murphy & Co.'s porter, to be charged against my account. Give the black-guard one more chance, and, if he won't pay up, send down the Staff on him, as soon as they've got out the *Banner*—let them call for liquor *galore* and make a night of it, and present this note of mine in payment for it all; and if he objects, you may mention to the Staff that

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