

tear my carcass," and he spent half an hour over some legal instrument, which he then called in Deborah and a servant to witness; and, without the slightest word of explanation, kissed Deborah on the forehead. "If I had only a trifle of ready money," he said, after bundling his sister out as unceremoniously as he had embraced her. "But, curse it!—there is no time to realise, and any application at the bank might only precipitate matters. What if I try old Dargan? He is to a certain extent in the same boat."

It was a novel sensation to Hans Harman to feel his heart go pit-a-pat in a sickening way as he saw Head-Constable Muldudden's great-coated figure approach his gig on the way to Dargan's. The horse felt a sudden jerk at its jaws and nearly stumbled. The handsome spectre that held the reins hardly dared to raise his eyes out of their dark circles. "Has he the warrant?" was the question that every drop of blood seemed to ask as it jostled towards his heart. Head-Constable Muldudden had not the warrant, however, and had the usual full-dress salute for the agent. Muldudden had just been informed that he had been awarded "a record" for distinguished service against the Rebels, and could not conceive how anybody could be thinking of anything else in the world this morning.

Humphrey Dargan had but a frosty welcome for his old patron. The money-lender was sitting in the back parlor at the bank counting over sovereigns and bank-notes, which he was building into solid ramparts and pyramids in front of him. It was an immense sum—being in full discharge of all interest due on the Drumshaughlin loans; and Joshua Neville himself had just been with him to deliver the notes and gold and receive his receipt. Neville had also frightened him out of his senses by hints that a colossal fraud had been discovered, and that the degree to which criminal responsibility attached to the several parties thereto was still a subject of painful investigation. A violation of the criminal law was the very last thing Dargan's cautious soul had contemplated. That he should have pinched and schemed all his life to end his days in a convict's jacket was an idea altogether insupportable. He had reposed implicit confidence in Hans Harman's astuteness and knowledge of law; but if Harman's own feet were in the snare was he likely to be over-nice about exculpating his confederate? Ever since his failure to carry His Worship for the Club, Mrs. Dargan had conceived a distrust of, and contempt for, the agent. She blamed him for the wreck of all her ambitious dreams—for the unpleasant sensation made by her own sky-blue silk and emerald-green sunshade at the archery tournament—for little Flibbert's insolent demand of an additional thousand pounds with Lily's fortune—for the ugly cough contracted by poor Lily herself during that secret night mission to the Mill—for the three thousand pounds' worth of bills Lord Shinrone's son had inveigled Lionel into "doing" for him before bolting for the Colonies. And now that she learned that the fallen agent was himself within measurable distance of a police-cell, the worthy lady observed to His Worship, with a chaste virtuousness all her own: "Serve him quite right too. And I have to request, Humphrey, that you will give all the assistance possible to the ministers of justice. He will possibly be brought before yourself," she added, with a last touch of feminine satisfaction.

"The truth of the matter is, Mr. Harman, sir," remarked Mr. Dargan, kneading his hands together as if rubbing them with an unusually heavy lather of soap. "I'm the feather of a family, sir—humble people, sir, but still in their own way have managed by humble industriousness to keep a clean sheet, so to say, sir, as between man and man; and altogether apart from the disagreece, sir, as Mrs. D. remarked: 'You're getting on in years, Humphrey,' she says, 'and how do you think a flagged cell would agree with your rheumatism in the end of your days?' That's the way women do be talking, Mr. Harman, and in short, sir—"

"Devil take your cant! You mean that you're afraid your own crooked neck is in danger, and that if tightening the rope round my neck can save you, you'll do the strangling."

The money-lender bobbed in his chair, as if an electric battery were playing under his long nails. There was something in the agent's face that frightened him; it gave

him a thrill of relief when he saw a policeman pass the window. "Well, Mr. Harman, sir, you do put things in strong language—in powerful strong language, sir; but that was always a pleasant way of yours—he, he!" he sniggered, with a ghastly assumption of gaiety. "All that I ventured to submit—submission I always do hold by as a man that knows his pleece, sir, and ever did—all I so far trespassed as to submit was that this affair in the Landed Estates Court seems to have been, sir, ahem!—in short, a narrow squeak, sir—and now I'm told there's something behind, Mr. Harman, sir—something worse, they really do be telling me, sir—something—ahem!—in short, sir, too unpleasant to be mentioned among gentlemen, so to say, Mr. Harman, sir—"

"Fiddlesticks, Dargan, you moneyed men are always afraid of your shadows," said Harman, in his old jaunty way, appropriating the fire with his spread coat-tails as he used to do at Stone Hall, and laughing down over the shoulder of the money-lender, who was sitting in front of him. "This meddling Englishman has got under some damned Fenian influence or other, and has a plot on foot to get rid of me by cooking the estate accounts against me. I've got to remove myself out of the fellow's power for a while, or he may give you and me trouble; but it's a mere question of my quitting the country for six months, and of your giving me the means to quit it." He left the fire and walked to the opposite side of the table for the purpose of looking Dargan full in the face.

"Me, sir!" exclaimed the money-lender, bounding in the air.

"Two thousand will do it—half that heap of money you have there on the table before you. It is the merest matter of accommodation. You have got the Hugg loan secured, and I will give a lien on the 8,000*l.* that will be coming to me from the Grand Jury at the Spring Assizes. I could raise it at the bank myself within half an hour, only that I don't care to be drawing large sums there publicly at this moment. Hell and furies! Dargan, you don't mean to say you hesitate? Will it take a legal argument to hammer it into your stupid skull that you will be running absolutely no risk, and that you will be saving yourself as well as me from very substantial risk by putting me out of harm's way?"

"A stupid old skull it is, I must allow, though it served you well enough in a small way in its time, Mr. Harman, sir," said the money-lender, with that feline movement of his long nails from under their velvet sheath with which his humbler clients were familiar enough, and which even his most powerful ones had once in a way made uncomfortable acquaintance with. "My knowledge of law is not much, sir, to be sure; but they do be telling me—they really do, sir—Head-Constable Muldudden now, for example, is a deep man about the sections of an Act of Parliament—"

"Has Muldudden been talking of my name?" gasped the agent.

"Not exactly that, sir, but I once heard Head-Constable Muldudden referring the Bench to the section that makes it—in short, Mr. Harman, sir, a felony—yes, really!—to conspire for the purpose of—of course, it's a funny thing to say, sir—for the purpose of screening a criminal from justice, so to say, Mr. Harman, sir."

"May the devil roast you on a slow fire!" muttered Harman, walking round to his former position between the fire and the money-lender's chair. For a moment there was silence in the room. Harman's eyes rested on the barricade of money which Dargan had just been building up in sections. The dull gleam of the gold fascinated him, made him giddy. Suddenly a wild, bloodshot-like light flamed into his eyes. His tall figure towered up behind the money-lender like a handsome panther ready to spring. "Make it one thousand, Dargan," he said, almost carelessly. "I have been your friend. It is to me you owe your endless farms, your loan transactions with Lord Drumshaughlin, your magistracy. Make it one thousand. It will enable me to start a ranche in a small way. It will save my life, and you will have security ten times over at your mercy."

Humphrey thanked his stars that he had not to face his visitor this time. He could not for worlds have turned around and met his confederate's eye when answering this piteous appeal. "I am an old man, Mr. Harman, sir, and I never bargained for getting into collision with