

placed his back against the wall between the two windows, and commenced rubbing his hand over his face as if a swarm of midges were persecuting him.

"Well, if that could be done," he replied, "it might be no harm. But I don't see how it could be managed."

"I was talking to Darby about it," rejoined his son, "and I think we can manage it."

"Well, Beresford, be cautious. Don't do anything rash. Easy things are best."

"That's a fine place Kearney has," Beresford observed, after opening the shutter his father had closed, and looking out on the unsheltered fields around Wellington Lodge. "Do you think he can hold?"

"I don't know," his father replied. "He was always extravagant. Always extravagant," he repeated, as if he were very sorry that so good a man as Maurice Kearney had not more sense. "But 'tis time enough to think of that. 'Tis the Ballyraheen business that's making me uneasy." And Isaac rubbed his face as if the midges began biting him again.

"I'd hunt 'em," returned Beresford, "like rats."

"Now, Beresford—now, Beresford, don't be rash. These things should be done quietly. There's no use in making a noise when it can be avoided. If I had my own way I could manage them. But I don't like making a noise and exasperating people when it can be done in a quiet way."

"No surrender!" muttered Beresford.

"Now, Beresford! There is Stubbleton has his property cleared out to a man without even bringing out the Sheriff. I know 'twas rather expensive at first, but he got it back on the double after a little time; besides avoiding talk."

"How did he do it?"

"Well, he let them run into arrears first, and then 'twas easy to manage them. They gave up one by one. Then he commenced extensive drainage and improvements, and gave employment to all the small tenants on condition that they would give up possession, and they could then remain as caretakers. Some of them were earning thirty shillings and two pounds a week with their horses. They were never so well off in their lives, and were always praying for their landlord. But when the work was finished, they saw whatever they had spared would soon be gone; and as they were after giving up their land—some of them thought they would get it back again, for his steward is a knowing man, and when he saw any of them unwilling to give up possession he used to give them a hint that if they did not give any trouble they might get back the farms, and larger farms—but when they saw they should leave even the houses at a week's notice, they went to America while they were able. So that Stubbleton had his whole property cleared without as much as a paragraph in the newspapers about it. He divided it into large farms, then, and got heavy fines and a good rent that more than repaid him for what he lost. The parish priest denounced him as an exterminator; but Stubbleton gave a farm to the priest's nephew, and it put a stop to that. I'm told he's thinking of standing for the county on Liberal principles at the next election. So you see, Beresford, easy things are best."

"And do you mean to say," Beresford asked, "that you'd let the Ballyraheen fellows run two or three years in arrears?"

"No, no; that would be too much. But I'd put out only a few at first and give their land to the larger tenants. Then others would be expecting the same, and they'd offer money to the small holders for their good-will. In fact they'd evict one another. The great point is to divide them; for when they pull together 'tis dangerous," added old Isaac, rubbing his face as if he were bent upon rubbing the shrivelled skin off.

"And what are you going to do with Kearney?"

"Well, he owes about a year's rent, but I don't think Sir Garrett will press him. We'll try and let him alone for a while. Maurice Kearney is a good sort of man, and his lease is nearly expired. I'd like to have him let run on till the lease drops, and then we could see what would be best."

"Why couldn't you press him and make him pay up? I'd be down on him the very day the rent fell due."

"Now Beresford, I wonder at you. Just think, if he had his rent paid up when the lease dropped, how much harder it would be to get him out than if he owed a

couple of years' rent. He's an open-hearted sort of man that never looks before him; and I don't think Sir Garrett would like to press him at present."

"Is Hanly threatening still to come down on you for that bond?" Beresford inquired.

Old Isaac shambled all round the table, and was again attacked by the midges.

"I'm afraid," he replied at last, "I'm afraid, if we can't manage to get him a farm, he'll do something. The two Donnellys are giving up possession; and there will be no trouble about the Widow Keating; but without Tom Hogan's farm there is no use offering their places to Hanly."

"An' sure Hogan has no lase?"

"I know that—I know that. But he has improved the place so much, and pays such a high rent, and is so well able to pay it, I'm afraid 'twill make a noise if he can't be induced to go of his own free will. He's a headstrong kind of a man, and I'm afraid he can't be got to listen to reason."

"But if nothing else will satisfy Hanly?"

"That's true—that's true, Beresford. 'Tis a hard case. A very hard case." And Isaac fell to rubbing his face again.

The fact was Mr. Isaac Pender had speculated in railway shares, and burnt his fingers, and Attorney Hanly held his bond for a considerable sum. But if Attorney Hanly could get about a hundred acres of land adjoining his own, including Tom Hogan's farm, he would be accommodating in the matter of the bond. To be sure he never said so—but a nod is as good as a wink from an eccentric attorney to an old land agent. And between these two worthies it will, we fear, go hard with poor Tom Hogan! particularly as his "heart is stuck" in the little farm, which has cost him the labor of thirty long years to make it what it is now, like "a piece of the Golden Vale dropped among the rushes and yellow clay all around it," as Mat Donovan said.

"But do you think Kearney can hold long?" Beresford asked again, putting his flexible nose against the window so that he could see the fine old trees and young plantations around Maurice Kearney's cottage.

"Indeed I don't think he can," his worthy father replied, as if in the charity of his benevolent heart he wished to believe that Maurice Kearney was not quite devoid of Christian principles. "I don't think he can. He lost too much by draining that bog; and he met with many disappointments from time to time. He lost his cattle by the distemper, and I don't think the sheep pay so well. He has the Raheen farm all under tillage, too, and if prices continue low he must lose by it. So that I don't think he is likely to hold long."

"Here is Lowe," said Beresford. "I just want to spake to Darby. I'll be back in a few minutes."

"My worthy sir," exclaimed old Isaac, as he shambled out to receive his visitor, "I'm proud to welcome you to my humble residence—proud to welcome you to Wellington Lodge. Come 'in, Mr. Lowe—come in. Darby, take Mr. Lowe's horse—take Mr. Lowe's horse."

Mr. Lowe glanced at the "humble residence," and thought that Wellington Lodge, with its unplastered walls—for the house was unfinished, though not new—was by no means an inviting domicile.

"Sit down, Mr. Lowe—sit down. Here is Beresford—here is Beresford."

"A fine day, Mr. Lowe," said Beresford, advancing with his arm stretched out like a pump-handle. "I hope you will dine with us to-day," he added; and immediately the runaway look came into his countenance, as if he expected to be forthwith ordered out of the room, for his assurance.

"I promised Mrs. Kearney to be back to dinner," returned Mr. Lowe quietly. "I had a letter to-day, and it appears Sir Garrett is returning to the Continent immediately. I must be in Dublin early next week."

"I knew Sir Garrett would not stay long in Ireland. I knew he would soon go back to the Continent," exclaimed Mr. Isaac Pender in a voice almost as big as his son's—the midges which seemed hovering above his head at the mention of the letter, vanishing when he heard that the landlord was about leaving Ireland without visiting Tipperary.

"I think we had better go," Mr. Lowe observed, laughing. "It would be too bad if I went back without