

Lady Gregory, *Hyacinth Halvey* (1906)

Persons

Hyacinth Halvey.

James Quirke, a butcher.

Fardy Farrell, a telegraph boy.

Sergeant Carden.

Mrs. Delane, Postmistress at Cloon.

Miss Joyce, the Priest's House-keeper.

Scene: Outside the Post Office at the little town of Cloon. Mrs. Delane at Post Office door. Mr. Quirke sitting on a chair at butcher's door. A dead sheep hanging beside it, and a thrush in a cage above. Fardy Farrell playing on a mouth organ. Train whistle heard.

Mrs. Delane: There is the four o'clock train, Mr. Quirke.

Mr. Quirke: Is it now, Mrs. Delane, and I not long after rising? It makes a man drowsy to be doing the half of his work in the night time. Going about the country, looking for little stags of sheep, striving to knock a few shillings together. That contract for the soldiers gives me a great deal to attend to.

Mrs. Delane: I suppose so. It's hard enough on myself to be down ready for the mail car in the morning, sorting letters in the half dark. It's often I haven't time to look who are the letters from—or the cards.

Mr. Quirke: It would be a pity you not to know any little news might be knocking about. If you did not have information of what is going [Pg 32] on who should have it? Was it you, ma'am, was telling me that the new Sub-Sanitary Inspector would be arriving to-day?

Mrs. Delane: To-day it is he is coming, and it's likely he was in that train. There was a card about him to Sergeant Carden this morning.

Mr. Quirke: A young chap from Carrow they were saying he was.

Mrs. Delane: So he is, one Hyacinth Halvey; and indeed if all that is said of him is true, or if a quarter of it is true, he will be a credit to this town.

Mr. Quirke: Is that so?

Mrs. Delane: Testimonials he has by the score. To Father Gregan they were sent. Registered they were coming and going. Would you believe me telling you that they weighed up to three pounds?

Mr. Quirke: There must be great bulk in them indeed.

Mrs. Delane: It is no wonder he to get the job. He must have a great character so many persons to write for him as what there did.

Fardy: It would be a great thing to have a character like that.

Mrs. Delane: Indeed I am thinking it will be long before you will get the like of it, Fardy Farrell.

Fardy: If I had the like of that of a character it is not here carrying messages I would be. It's in Noonan's Hotel I would be, driving cars.

[Pg 33] Mr. Quirke: Here is the priest's housekeeper coming.

Mrs. Delane: So she is; and there is the Sergeant a little while after her.

(Enter Miss Joyce.)

Mrs. Delane: Good-evening to you, Miss Joyce. What way is his Reverence to-day? Did he get any ease from the cough?

Miss Joyce: He did not indeed, Mrs. Delane. He has it sticking to him yet. Smothering he is in the night time. The most thing he comes short in is the voice.

Mrs. Delane: I am sorry, now, to hear that. He should mind himself well.

Miss Joyce: It's easy to say let him mind himself. What do you say to him going to the meeting to-night? (Sergeant comes in.) It's for his Reverence's Freeman I am come, Mrs. Delane.

Mrs. Delane: Here it is ready. I was just throwing an eye on it to see was there any news. Good-evening, Sergeant.

Sergeant: (Holding up a placard.) I brought this notice, Mrs. Delane, the announcement of the meeting to be held to-night in the Courthouse. You might put it up here convenient to the window. I hope you are coming to it yourself?

Mrs. Delane: I will come, and welcome. I would do more than that for you, Sergeant.

Sergeant: And you, Mr. Quirke.

[Pg 34] Mr. Quirke: I'll come, to be sure. I forget what's this the meeting is about.

Sergeant: The Department of Agriculture is sending round a lecturer in furtherance of the moral development of the rural classes. (Reads.) "A lecture will be given this evening in Cloon Courthouse, illustrated by magic lantern slides—" Those will not be in it; I am informed they were all broken in the first journey, the railway company taking them to be eggs. The subject of the lecture is "The Building of Character."

Mrs. Delane: Very nice, indeed. I knew a girl lost her character, and she washed her feet in a blessed well after, and it dried up on the minute.

Sergeant: The arrangements have all been left to me, the Archdeacon being away. He knows I have a good intellect for things of the sort. But the loss of those slides puts a man out. The thing people will not see it is not likely it is the thing they will believe. I saw what they call tableaux—standing pictures, you know—one time in Dundrum——

Mrs. Delane: Miss Joyce was saying Father Gregan is supporting you.

Sergeant: I am accepting his assistance. No bigotry about me when there is a question of the welfare of any fellow-creatures. Orange and green will stand together to-night. I myself [Pg 35] and the station-master on the one side; your parish priest in the chair.

Miss Joyce: If his Reverence would mind me he would not quit the house to-night. He is no more fit to go speak at a meeting than (pointing to the one hanging outside Quirke's door) that sheep.

Sergeant: I am willing to take the responsibility. He will have no speaking to do at all, unless it might be to bid them give the lecturer a hearing. The loss of those slides now is a great annoyance to me—and no time for anything. The lecturer will be coming by the next train.

Miss Joyce: Who is this coming up the street, Mrs. Delane?

Mrs. Delane: I wouldn't doubt it to be the new Sub-Sanitary Inspector. Was I telling you of the weight of the testimonials he got, Miss Joyce?

Miss Joyce: Sure I heard the curate reading them to his Reverence. He must be a wonder for principles.

Mrs. Delane: Indeed it is what I was saying to myself, he must be a very saintly young man.

(Enter Hyacinth Halvey. He carries a small bag and a large brown paper parcel. He stops and nods bashfully.)

Hyacinth: Good-evening to you. I was bid to come to the post office——

Sergeant: I suppose you are Hyacinth Halvey? [Pg 36] I had a letter about you from the Resident Magistrate.

Hyacinth: I heard he was writing. It was my mother got a friend he deals with to ask him.

Sergeant: He gives you a very high character.

Hyacinth: It is very kind of him indeed, and he not knowing me at all. But indeed all the neighbours were very friendly. Anything any one could do to help me they did it.

Mrs. Delane: I'll engage it is the testimonials you have in your parcel? I know the wrapping paper, but they grew in bulk since I handled them.

Hyacinth: Indeed I was getting them to the last. There was not one refused me. It is what my mother was saying, a good character is no burden.

Fardy: I would believe that indeed.

Sergeant: Let us have a look at the testimonials.

(Hyacinth Halvey opens parcel, and a large number of envelopes fall out.)

Sergeant: (Opening and reading one by one). "He possesses the fire of the Gael, the strength of the Norman, the vigour of the Dane, the stolidity of the Saxon"——

Hyacinth: It was the Chairman of the Poor Law Guardians wrote that.

Sergeant: "A magnificent example to old and young"——

[Pg 37]Hyacinth: That was the Secretary of the DeWet Hurling Club——

Sergeant: "A shining example of the value conferred by an eminently careful and high class education"——

Hyacinth: That was the National Schoolmaster.

Sergeant: "Devoted to the highest ideals of his Mother-land to such an extent as is compatible with a hitherto non-parliamentary career"——

Hyacinth: That was the Member for Carrow.

Sergeant: "A splendid exponent of the purity of the race"——

Hyacinth: The Editor of the Carrow Champion.

Sergeant: "Admirably adapted for the efficient discharge of all possible duties that may in future be laid upon him"——

Hyacinth: The new Station-master.

Sergeant: "A champion of every cause that can legitimately benefit his fellow-creatures"—— Why, look here, my man, you are the very one to come to our assistance to-night.

Hyacinth: I would be glad to do that. What way can I do it?

Sergeant: You are a newcomer—your example would carry weight—you must stand up as a living proof of the beneficial effect of a high character, moral fibre, temperance—there is something [Pg 38] about it here I am sure—(Looks.) I am sure I saw "unparalleled temperance" in some place——

Hyacinth: It was my mother's cousin wrote that—I am no drinker, but I haven't the pledge taken——

Sergeant: You might take it for the purpose.

Mr. Quirke: (Eagerly.) Here is an anti-treating button. I was made a present of it by one of my customers—I'll give it to you (sticks it in Hyacinth's coat) and welcome.

Sergeant: That is it. You can wear the button on the platform—or a bit of blue ribbon—hundreds will follow your example—I know the boys from the Workhouse will——

Hyacinth: I am in no way wishful to be an example——

Sergeant: I will read extracts from the testimonials. "There he is," I will say, "an example of one in early life who by his own unaided efforts and his high character has obtained a profitable situation"—(Slaps his side.) I know what I'll do. I'll engage a few corner-boys from Noonan's bar, just as they are, greasy and sodden, to stand in a group—there will be the contrast—The sight will deter others from a similar fate—That's the way to do a tableau—I knew I could turn out a success.

Hyacinth: I wouldn't like to be a contrast——

Sergeant: (Puts testimonials in his pocket.) I [Pg 39] will go now and engage those lads—sixpence each, and well worth it—Nothing like an example for the rural classes.

(Goes off, Hyacinth feebly trying to detain him.)

Mrs. Delane: A very nice man indeed. A little high up in himself, may be. I'm not one that blames the police. Sure they have their own bread to earn like every other one. And indeed it is often they will let a thing pass.

Mr. Quirke: (Gloomily.) Sometimes they will, and more times they will not.

Miss Joyce: And where will you be finding a lodging, Mr. Halvey?

Hyacinth: I was going to ask that myself, ma'am. I don't know the town.

Miss Joyce: I know of a good lodging, but it is only a very good man would be taken into it.

Mrs. Delane: Sure there could be no objection there to Mr. Halvey. There is no appearance on him but what is good, and the Sergeant after taking him up the way he is doing.

Miss Joyce: You will be near to the Sergeant in the lodging I speak of. The house is convenient to the barracks.

Hyacinth: (Doubtfully.) To the barracks?

Miss Joyce: Alongside of it and the barrack yard behind. And that's not all. It is opposite to the priest's house.

[Pg 40] Hyacinth: Opposite, is it?

Miss Joyce: A very respectable place, indeed, and a very clean room you will get. I know it well. The curate can see into it from his window.

Hyacinth: Can he now?

Fardy: There was a good many, I am thinking, went into that lodging and left it after.

Miss Joyce: (Sharply.) It is a lodging you will never be let into or let stop in, Fardy. If they did go they were a good riddance.

Fardy: John Hart, the plumber, left it——

Miss Joyce: If he did it was because he dared not pass the police coming in, as he used, with a rabbit he was after snaring in his hand.

Fardy: The schoolmaster himself left it.

Miss Joyce: He needn't have left it if he hadn't taken to card-playing. What way could you say your prayers, and shadows shuffling and dealing before you on the blind?

Hyacinth: I think maybe I'd best look around a bit before I'll settle in a lodging——

Miss Joyce: Not at all. You won't be wanting to pull down the blind.

Mrs. Delane: It is not likely you will be snaring rabbits.

Miss Joyce: Or bringing in a bottle and taking an odd glass the way James Kelly did.

Mrs. Delane: Or writing threatening notices, and the police taking a view of you from the rear.

[Pg 41]Miss Joyce: Or going to roadside dances, or running after good-for-nothing young girls——
—

Hyacinth: I give you my word I'm not so harmless as you think.

Mrs. Delane: Would you be putting a lie on these, Mr. Halvey? (Touching testimonials.) I know well the way you will be spending the evenings, writing letters to your relations——

Miss Joyce: Learning O'Growney's exercises——

Mrs. Delane: Sticking post cards in an album for the convent bazaar.

Miss Joyce: Reading the Catholic Young Man——

Mrs. Delane: Playing the melodies on a melodeon——

Miss Joyce: Looking at the pictures in the Lives of the Saints. I'll hurry on and engage the room for you.

Hyacinth: Wait. Wait a minute——

Miss Joyce: No trouble at all. I told you it was just opposite. (Goes.)

Mr. Quirke: I suppose I must go upstairs and ready myself for the meeting. If it wasn't for the contract I have for the soldiers' barracks and the Sergeant's good word, I wouldn't go anear it. (Goes into shop.)

Mrs. Delane: I should be making myself ready too. I must be in good time to see you being made an example of, Mr. Halvey. It is I myself [Pg 42] was the first to say it; you will be a credit to the town. (Goes.)

Hyacinth: (In a tone of agony.) I wish I had never seen Cloon.

Fardy: What is on you?

Hyacinth: I wish I had never left Carrow. I wish I had been drowned the first day I thought of it, and I'd be better off.

Fardy: What is it ails you?

Hyacinth: I wouldn't for the best pound ever I had be in this place to-day.

Fardy: I don't know what you are talking about.

Hyacinth: To have left Carrow, if it was a poor place, where I had my comrades, and an odd spree, and a game of cards—and a coursing match coming on, and I promised a new greyhound from the city of Cork. I'll die in this place, the way I am. I'll be too much closed in.

Fardy: Sure it mightn't be as bad as what you think.

Hyacinth: Will you tell me, I ask you, what way can I undo it?

Fardy: What is it you are wanting to undo?

Hyacinth: Will you tell me what way can I get rid of my character?

Fardy: To get rid of it, is it?

Hyacinth: That is what I said. Aren't you after hearing the great character they are after putting on me?

[Pg 43]Fardy: That is a good thing to have.

Hyacinth: It is not. It's the worst in the world. If I hadn't it, I wouldn't be like a prize mangold at a show with every person praising me.

Fardy: If I had it, I wouldn't be like a head in a barrel, with every person making hits at me.

Hyacinth: If I hadn't it, I wouldn't be shoved into a room with all the clergy watching me and the police in the back yard.

Fardy: If I had it, I wouldn't be but a message-carrier now, and a clapper scaring birds in the summer time.

Hyacinth: If I hadn't it, I wouldn't be wearing this button and brought up for an example at the meeting.

Fardy: (Whistles.) Maybe you're not, so, what those papers make you out to be?

Hyacinth: How would I be what they make me out to be? Was there ever any person of that sort since the world was a world, unless it might be Saint Antony of Padua looking down from the chapel wall? If it is like that I was, isn't it in Mount Melleray I would be, or with the Friars at Esker? Why would I be living in the world at all, or doing the world's work?

Fardy: (Taking up parcel.) Who would think, now, there would be so much lies in a small place like Carrow?

[Pg 44] Hyacinth: It was my mother's cousin did it. He said I was not reared for labouring—he gave me a new suit and bid me never to come back again. I daren't go back to face him—the neighbours knew my mother had a long family—bad luck to them the day they gave me these. (Tears letters and scatters them.) I'm done with testimonials. They won't be here to bear witness against me.

Fardy: The Sergeant thought them to be great. Sure he has the samples of them in his pocket. There's not one in the town but will know before morning that you are the next thing to an earthly saint.

Hyacinth: (Stamping.) I'll stop their mouths. I'll show them I can be a terror for badness. I'll do some injury. I'll commit some crime. The first thing I'll do I'll go and get drunk. If I never did it before I'll do it now. I'll get drunk—then I'll make an assault—I tell you I'd think as little of taking a life as of blowing out a candle.

Fardy: If you get drunk you are done for. Sure that will be held up after as an excuse for any breaking of the law.

Hyacinth: I will break the law. Drunk or sober I'll break it. I'll do something that will have no excuse. What would you say is the worst crime that any man can do?

Fardy: I don't know. I heard the Sergeant [Pg 45] saying one time it was to obstruct the police in the discharge of their duty——

Hyacinth: That won't do. It's a patriot I would be then, worse than before, with my picture in the weeklies. It's a red crime I must commit that will make all respectable people quit minding me. What can I do? Search your mind now.

Fardy: It's what I heard the old people saying there could be no worse crime than to steal a sheep——

Hyacinth: I'll steal a sheep—or a cow—or a horse—if that will leave me the way I was before.

Fardy: It's maybe in gaol it will leave you.

Hyacinth: I don't care—I'll confess—I'll tell why I did it—I give you my word I would as soon be picking oakum or breaking stones as to be perched in the daylight the same as that bird, and all the town chirruping to me or bidding me chirrup——

Fardy: There is reason in that, now.

Hyacinth: Help me, will you?

Fardy: Well, if it is to steal a sheep you want, you haven't far to go.

Hyacinth: (Looking round wildly.) Where is it? I see no sheep.

Fardy: Look around you.

Hyacinth: I see no living thing but that thrush——

Fardy: Did I say it was living? What is that hanging on Quirke's rack?

[Pg 46] Hyacinth: It's (fingers it) a sheep, sure enough——

Fardy: Well, what ails you that you can't bring it away?

Hyacinth: It's a dead one——

Fardy: What matter if it is?

Hyacinth: If it was living I could drive it before me——

Fardy: You could. Is it to your own lodging you would drive it? Sure everyone would take it to be a pet you brought from Carrow.

Hyacinth: I suppose they might.

Fardy: Miss Joyce sending in for news of it and it bleating behind the bed.

Hyacinth: (Distracted). Stop! stop!

Mrs. Delane: (From upper window.) Fardy! Are you there, Fardy Farrell?

Fardy: I am, ma'am.

Mrs. Delane: (From window.) Look and tell me is that the telegraph I hear ticking?

Fardy: (Looking in at door.) It is, ma'am.

Mrs. Delane: Then botheration to it, and I not dressed or undressed. Wouldn't you say, now, it's to annoy me it is calling me down. I'm coming! I'm coming! (Disappears.)

Fardy: Hurry on, now! hurry! She'll be coming out on you. If you are going to do it, do it, and if you are not, let it alone.

Hyacinth: I'll do it! I'll do it!

[Pg 47]Fardy: (Lifting the sheep on his back.) I'll give you a hand with it.

Hyacinth: (Goes a step or two and turns round.) You told me no place where I could hide it.

Fardy: You needn't go far. There is the church beyond at the side of the Square. Go round to the ditch behind the wall—there's nettles in it.

Hyacinth: That'll do.

Fardy: She's coming out—run! run!

Hyacinth: (Runs a step or two.) It's slipping!

Fardy: Hoist it up! I'll give it a hoist! (Halvey runs out.)

Mrs. Delane: (Calling out.) What are you doing Fardy Farrell? Is it idling you are?

Fardy: Waiting I am, ma'am, for the message——

Mrs. Delane: Never mind the message yet. Who said it was ready? (Going to door.) Go ask for the loan of—no, but ask news of—Here, now go bring that bag of Mr. Halvey's to the lodging Miss Joyce has taken——

Fardy: I will, ma'am. (Takes bag and goes out.)

Mrs. Delane: (Coming out with a telegram in her hand.) Nobody here? (Looks round and calls cautiously.) Mr. Quirke! Mr. Quirke! James Quirke!

Mr. Quirke: (Looking out of his upper window with soap-suddy face). What is it, Mrs. Delane?

[Pg 48] Mrs. Delane: (Beckoning.) Come down here till I tell you.

Mr. Quirke: I cannot do that. I'm not fully shaved.

Mrs. Delane: You'd come if you knew the news I have.

Mr. Quirke: Tell it to me now. I'm not so supple as I was.

Mrs. Delane: Whisper now, have you an enemy in any place?

Mr. Quirke: It's likely I may have. A man in business——

Mrs. Delane: I was thinking you had one.

Mr. Quirke: Why would you think that at this time more than any other time?

Mrs. Delane: If you could know what is in this envelope you would know that, James Quirke.

Mr. Quirke: Is that so? And what, now, is there in it?

Mrs. Delane: Who do you think now is it addressed to?

Mr. Quirke: How would I know that, and I not seeing it?

Mrs. Delane: That is true. Well, it is a message from Dublin Castle to the Sergeant of Police!

Mr. Quirke: To Sergeant Carden, is it?

Mrs. Delane: It is. And it concerns yourself.

Mr. Quirke: Myself, is it? What accusation can they be bringing against me? I'm a peaceable man.

[Pg 49] Mrs. Delane: Wait till you hear.

Mr. Quirke: Maybe they think I was in that moonlighting case——

Mrs. Delane: That is not it——

Mr. Quirke: I was not in it—I was but in the neighbouring field—cutting up a dead cow, that those never had a hand in——

Mrs. Delane: You're out of it——

Mr. Quirke: They had their faces blackened. There is no man can say I recognized them.

Mrs. Delane: That's not what they're saying——

Mr. Quirke: I'll swear I did not hear their voices or know them if I did hear them.

Mrs. Delane: I tell you it has nothing to do with that. It might be better for you if it had.

Mr. Quirke: What is it, so?

Mrs. Delane: It is an order to the Sergeant bidding him immediately to seize all suspicious meat in your house. There is an officer coming down. There are complaints from the Shannon Fort Barracks.

Mr. Quirke: I'll engage it was that pork.

Mrs. Delane: What ailed it for them to find fault?

Mr. Quirke: People are so hard to please nowadays, and I recommended them to salt it.

Mrs. Delane: They had a right to have minded your advice.

[Pg 50] Mr. Quirke: There was nothing on that pig at all but that it went mad on poor O'Grady that owned it.

Mrs. Delane: So I heard, and went killing all before it.

Mr. Quirke: Sure it's only in the brain madness can be. I heard the doctor saying that.

Mrs. Delane: He should know.

Mr. Quirke: I give you my word I cut the head off it. I went to the loss of it, throwing it to the eels in the river. If they had salted the meat, as I advised them, what harm would it have done to any person on earth?

Mrs. Delane: I hope no harm will come on poor Mrs. Quirke and the family.

Mr. Quirke: Maybe it wasn't that but some other thing——

Mrs. Delane: Here is Fardy. I must send the message to the Sergeant. Well, Mr. Quirke, I'm glad I had the time to give you a warning.

Mr. Quirke: I'm obliged to you, indeed. You were always very neighbourly, Mrs. Delane. Don't be too quick now sending the message. There is just one article I would like to put away out of the house before the Sergeant will come. (Enter Fardy.)

Mrs. Delane: Here now, Fardy—that's not the way you're going to the barracks. Anyone would think you were scaring birds yet. Put on your uniform. (Fardy goes into office.) You [Pg 51] have this message to bring to the Sergeant of Police. Get your cap now, it's under the counter. (Fardy reappears, and she gives him telegram.)

Fardy: I'll bring it to the station. It's there he was going.

Mrs. Delane: You will not, but to the barracks. It can wait for him there.

(Fardy goes off. Mr. Quirke has appeared at door.)

Mr. Quirke: It was indeed a very neighbourly act, Mrs. Delane, and I'm obliged to you. There is just one article to put out of the way. The Sergeant may look about him then and welcome. It's well I cleared the premises on yesterday. A consignment to Birmingham I sent. The Lord be praised isn't England a terrible country with all it consumes?

Mrs. Delane: Indeed you always treat the neighbours very decent, Mr. Quirke, not asking them to buy from you.

Mr. Quirke: Just one article. (Turns to rack.) That sheep I brought in last night. It was for a charity indeed I bought it from the widow woman at Kiltartan Cross. Where would the poor make a profit out of their dead meat without me? Where now is it? Well, now, I could have sworn that that sheep was hanging there on the rack when I went in——

[Pg 52] Mrs. Delane: You must have put it in some other place.

Mr. Quirke: (Going in and searching and coming out.) I did not; there is no other place for me to put it. Is it gone blind I am, or is it not in it, it is?

Mrs. Delane: It's not there now anyway.

Mr. Quirke: Didn't you take notice of it there yourself this morning?

Mrs. Delane: I have it in my mind that I did; but it's not there now.

Mr. Quirke: There was no one here could bring it away?

Mrs. Delane: Is it me myself you suspect of taking it, James Quirke?

Mr. Quirke: Where is it at all? It is certain it was not of itself it walked away. It was dead, and very dead, the time I bought it.

Mrs. Delane: I have a pleasant neighbour indeed that accuses me that I took his sheep. I wonder, indeed, you to say a thing like that! I to steal your sheep or your rack or anything that belongs to you or to your trade! Thank you, James Quirke. I am much obliged to you indeed.

Mr. Quirke: Ah, be quiet, woman; be quiet——

Mrs. Delane: And let me tell you, James Quirke, that I would sooner starve and see everyone belonging to me starve than to eat the size [Pg 53] of a thimble of any joint that ever was on your rack or that ever will be on it, whatever the soldiers may eat that have no other thing to get, or the English that devour all sorts, or the poor ravenous people that's down by the sea! (She turns to go into shop.)

Mr. Quirke: (Stopping her.) Don't be talking foolishness, woman. Who said you took my meat? Give heed to me now. There must some other message have come. The Sergeant must have got some other message.

Mrs. Delane: (Sulkily.) If there is any way for a message to come that is quicker than to come by the wires, tell me what it is and I'll be obliged to you.

Mr. Quirke: The Sergeant was up here making an excuse he was sticking up that notice. What was he doing here, I ask you?

Mrs. Delane: How would I know what brought him?

Mr. Quirke: It is what he did; he made as if to go away—he turned back again and I shaving—he brought away the sheep—he will have it for evidence against me——

Mrs. Delane: (Interested.) That might be so.

Mr. Quirke: I would sooner it to have been any other beast nearly ever I had upon the rack.

Mrs. Delane: Is that so?

Mr. Quirke: I bade the Widow Early to kill [Pg 54] it a fortnight ago—but she would not, she was that covetous!

Mrs. Delane: What was on it?

Mr. Quirke: How would I know what was on it? Whatever was on it, it was the will of God put it upon it—wasted it was, and shivering and refusing its share.

Mrs. Delane: The poor thing.

Mr. Quirke: Gone all to nothing—wore away like a flock of thread. It did not weigh as much as a lamb of two months.

Mrs. Delane: It is likely the Inspector will bring it to Dublin?

Mr. Quirke: The ribs of it streaky with the dint of patent medicines——

Mrs. Delane: I wonder is it to the Petty Sessions you'll be brought or is it to the Assizes?

Mr. Quirke: I'll speak up to them. I'll make my defence. What can the Army expect at fippence a pound?

Mrs. Delane: It is likely there will be no bail allowed?

Mr. Quirke: Would they be wanting me to give them good quality meat out of my own pocket? Is it to encourage them to fight the poor Indians and Africans they would have me? It's the Anti-Enlisting Societies should pay the fine for me.

Mrs. Delane: It's not a fine will be put on you, [Pg 55] I'm afraid. It's five years in gaol you will be apt to be getting. Well, I'll try and be a good neighbour to poor Mrs. Quirke.

(Mr. Quirke, who has been stamping up and down, sits down and weeps. Halvey comes in and stands on one side.)

Mr. Quirke: Hadn't I heart-scalding enough before, striving to rear five weak children?

Mrs. Delane: I suppose they will be sent to the Industrial Schools?

Mr. Quirke: My poor wife——

Mrs. Delane: I'm afraid the workhouse——

Mr. Quirke: And she out in an ass-car at this minute helping me to follow my trade.

Mrs. Delane: I hope they will not arrest her along with you.

Mr. Quirke: I'll give myself up to justice. I'll plead guilty! I'll be recommended to mercy!

Mrs. Delane: It might be best for you.

Mr. Quirke: Who would think so great a misfortune could come upon a family through the bringing away of one sheep!

Hyacinth: (Coming forward.) Let you make yourself easy.

Mr. Quirke: Easy! It's easy to say let you make yourself easy.

Hyacinth: I can tell you where it is.

Mr. Quirke: Where what is?

Hyacinth: The sheep you are fretting after.

[Pg 56] Mr. Quirke: What do you know about it?

Hyacinth: I know everything about it.

Mr. Quirke: I suppose the Sergeant told you?

Hyacinth: He told me nothing.

Mr. Quirke: I suppose the whole town knows it, so?

Hyacinth: No one knows it, as yet.

Mr. Quirke: And the Sergeant didn't see it?

Hyacinth: No one saw it or brought it away but myself.

Mr. Quirke: Where did you put it at all?

Hyacinth: In the ditch behind the church wall. In among the nettles it is. Look at the way they have me stung. (Holds out hands.)

Mr. Quirke: In the ditch! The best hiding place in the town.

Hyacinth: I never thought it would bring such great trouble upon you. You can't say anyway I did not tell you.

Mr. Quirke: You yourself that brought it away and that hid it! I suppose it was coming in the train you got information about the message to the police.

Hyacinth: What now do you say to me?

Mr. Quirke: Say! I say I am as glad to hear what you said as if it was the Lord telling me I'd be in heaven this minute.

Hyacinth: What are you going to do to me?

Mr. Quirke: Do, is it? (Grasps his hand.) [Pg 57] Any earthly thing you would wish me to do, I will do it.

Hyacinth: I suppose you will tell——

Mr. Quirke: Tell! It's I that will tell when all is quiet. It is I will give you the good name through the town!

Hyacinth: I don't well understand.

Mr. Quirke: (Embracing him.) The man that preserved me!

Hyacinth: That preserved you?

Mr. Quirke: That kept me from ruin!

Hyacinth: From ruin?

Mr. Quirke: That saved me from disgrace!

Hyacinth: (To Mrs. Delane.) What is he saying at all?

Mr. Quirke: From the Inspector!

Hyacinth: What is he talking about?

Mr. Quirke: From the magistrates!

Hyacinth: He is making some mistake.

Mr. Quirke: From the Winter Assizes!

Hyacinth: Is he out of his wits?

Mr. Quirke: Five years in gaol!

Hyacinth: Hasn't he the queer talk?

Mr. Quirke: The loss of the contract!

Hyacinth: Are my own wits gone astray?

Mr. Quirke: What way can I repay you?

Hyacinth: (Shouting.) I tell you I took the sheep——

Mr. Quirke: You did, God reward you!

[Pg 58] Hyacinth: I stole away with it——

Mr. Quirke: The blessing of the poor on you!

Hyacinth: I put it out of sight——

Mr. Quirke: The blessing of my five children——

Hyacinth: I may as well say nothing——

Mrs. Delane: Let you be quiet now, Quirke. Here's the Sergeant coming to search the shop——

(Sergeant comes in: Quirke leaves go of Halvey, who arranges his hat, etc.)

Sergeant: The Department to blazes!

Mrs. Delane: What is it putting you out?

Sergeant: To go to the train to meet the lecturer, and there to get a message through the guard that he was unavoidably detained in the South, holding an inquest on the remains of a drake.

Mrs. Delane: The lecturer, is it?

Sergeant: To be sure. What else would I be talking of? The lecturer has failed me, and where am I to go looking for a person that I would think fitting to take his place?

Mrs. Delane: And that's all? And you didn't get any message but the one?

Sergeant: Is that all? I am surprised at you, Mrs. Delane. Isn't it enough to upset a man, within three quarters of an hour of the time of the meeting? Where, I would ask you, am I to find a man that has education enough and wit [Pg 59] enough and character enough to put up speaking on the platform on the minute?

Mr. Quirke: (Jumps up.) It is I myself will tell you that.

Sergeant: You!

Mr. Quirke: (Slapping Halvey on the back.) Look at here, Sergeant. There is not one word was said in all those papers about this young man before you but it is true. And there could be no good thing said of him that would be too good for him.

Sergeant: It might not be a bad idea.

Mr. Quirke: Whatever the paper said about him, Sergeant, I can say more again. It has come to my knowledge—by chance—that since he came to this town that young man has saved a whole family from destruction.

Sergeant: That is much to his credit—helping the rural classes——

Mr. Quirke: A family and a long family, big and little, like sods of turf—and they depending on a—on one that might be on his way to dark trouble at this minute if it was not for his assistance. Believe me, he is the most sensible man, and the wittiest, and the kindest, and the best helper of the poor that ever stood before you in this square. Is not that so, Mrs. Delane?

Mrs. Delane: It is true indeed. Where he gets his wisdom and his wit and his information from [Pg 60] I don't know, unless it might be that he is gifted from above.

Sergeant: Well, Mrs. Delane, I think we have settled that question. Mr. Halvey, you will be the speaker at the meeting. The lecturer sent these notes—you can lengthen them into a speech. You can call to the people of Cloon to stand out, to begin the building of their character. I saw a lecturer do it one time at Dundrum. "Come up here," he said, "Dare to be a Daniel," he said——

Hyacinth: I can't—I won't——

Sergeant: (Looking at papers and thrusting them into his hand.) You will find it quite easy. I will conduct you to the platform—these papers before you and a glass of water—That's settled. (Turns to go.) Follow me on to the Courthouse in half an hour—I must go to the barracks first—I heard there was a telegram—(Calls back as he goes.) Don't be late, Mrs. Delane. Mind, Quirke, you promised to come.

Mrs. Delane: Well, it's time for me to make an end of settling myself—and indeed, Mr. Quirke, you'd best do the same.

Mr. Quirke: (Rubbing his cheek.) I suppose so. I had best keep on good terms with him for the present. (Turns.) Well, now, I had a great escape this day.

(Both go in as Fardy reappears whistling.)

[Pg 61] Hyacinth: (Sitting down.) I don't know in the world what has come upon the world that the half of the people of it should be cracked!

Fardy: Weren't you found out yet?

Hyacinth: Found out, is it? I don't know what you mean by being found out.

Fardy: Didn't he miss the sheep?

Hyacinth: He did, and I told him it was I took it—and what happened I declare to goodness I don't know—Will you look at these? (Holds out notes.)

Fardy: Papers! Are they more testimonials?

Hyacinth: They are what is worse. (Gives a hoarse laugh.) Will you come and see me on the platform—these in my hand—and I speaking—giving out advice. (Fardy whistles.) Why didn't you tell me, the time you advised me to steal a sheep, that in this town it would qualify a man to go preaching, and the priest in the chair looking on.

Fardy: The time I took a few apples that had fallen off a stall, they did not ask me to hold a meeting. They welted me well.

Hyacinth: (Looking round.) I would take apples if I could see them. I wish I had broke my neck before I left Carrow and I'd be better off! I wish I had got six months the time I was caught setting snares—I wish I had robbed a church.

Fardy: Would a Protestant church do?

[Pg 62] Hyacinth: I suppose it wouldn't be so great a sin.

Fardy: It's likely the Sergeant would think worse of it—Anyway, if you want to rob one, it's the Protestant church is the handiest.

Hyacinth: (Getting up.) Show me what way to do it?

Fardy: (Pointing.) I was going around it a few minutes ago, to see might there be e'er a dog scenting the sheep, and I noticed the window being out.

Hyacinth: Out, out and out?

Fardy: It was, where they are putting coloured glass in it for the distiller——

Hyacinth: What good does that do me?

Fardy: Every good. You could go in by that window if you had some person to give you a hoist. Whatever riches there is to get in it then, you'll get them.

Hyacinth: I don't want riches. I'll give you all I will find if you will come and hoist me.

Fardy: Here is Miss Joyce coming to bring you to your lodging. Sure I brought your bag to it, the time you were away with the sheep——

Hyacinth: Run! Run!

(They go off. Enter Miss Joyce.)

Miss Joyce: Are you here, Mrs. Delane? Where, can you tell me, is Mr. Halvey?

Mrs. Delane: (Coming out dressed.) It's likely he [Pg 63] is gone on to the Courthouse. Did you hear he is to be in the chair and to make an address to the meeting?

Miss Joyce: He is getting on fast. His Reverence says he will be a good help in the parish. Who would think, now, there would be such a godly young man in a little place like Carrow!

(Enter Sergeant in a hurry, with telegram.)

Sergeant: What time did this telegram arrive, Mrs. Delane?

Mrs. Delane: I couldn't be rightly sure, Sergeant. But sure it's marked on it, unless the clock I have is gone wrong.

Sergeant: It is marked on it. And I have the time I got it marked on my own watch.

Mrs. Delane: Well, now, I wonder none of the police would have followed you with it from the barracks—and they with so little to do——

Sergeant: (Looking in at Quirke's shop.) Well, I am sorry to do what I have to do, but duty is duty.

(He ransacks shop. Mrs. Delane looks on. Mr. Quirke puts his head out of window.)

Mr. Quirke: What is that going on inside? (No answer.) Is there any one inside, I ask? (No answer.) It must be that dog of Tannian's—wait till I get at him.

Mrs. Delane: It is Sergeant Carden, Mr. [Pg 64] Quirke. He would seem to be looking for something——

(Mr. Quirke appears in shop. Sergeant comes out, makes another dive, taking up sacks, etc.)

Mr. Quirke: I'm greatly afraid I am just out of meat, Sergeant—and I'm sorry now to disoblige you, and you not being in the habit of dealing with me——

Sergeant: I should think not, indeed.

Mr. Quirke: Looking for a tender little bit of lamb, I suppose you are, for Mrs. Carden and the youngsters?

Sergeant: I am not.

Mr. Quirke: If I had it now, I'd be proud to offer it to you, and make no charge. I'll be killing a good kid to-morrow. Mrs. Carden might fancy a bit of it——

Sergeant: I have had orders to search your establishment for unwholesome meat, and I am come here to do it.

Mr. Quirke: (Sitting down with a smile.) Is that so? Well, isn't it a wonder the schemers does be in the world.

Sergeant: It is not the first time there have been complaints.

Mr. Quirke: I suppose not. Well, it is on their own head it will fall at the last!

Sergeant: I have found nothing so far.

[Pg 65] Mr. Quirke: I suppose not, indeed. What is there you could find, and it not in it?

Sergeant: Have you no meat at all upon the premises?

Mr. Quirke: I have, indeed, a nice barrel of bacon.

Sergeant: What way did it die?

Mr. Quirke: It would be hard for me to say that. American it is. How would I know what way they do be killing the pigs out there? Machinery, I suppose, they have—steam hammers——

Sergeant: Is there nothing else here at all?

Mr. Quirke: I give you my word, there is no meat living or dead in this place, but yourself and myself and that bird above in the cage.

Sergeant: Well, I must tell the Inspector I could find nothing. But mind yourself for the future.

Mr. Quirke: Thank you, Sergeant. I will do that. (Enter Fardy. He stops short.)

Sergeant: It was you delayed that message to me, I suppose? You'd best mend your ways or I'll have something to say to you. (Seizes and shakes him.)

Fardy: That's the way everyone does be faulting me. (Whimpers.)

(The Sergeant gives him another shake. A half-crown falls out of his pocket.)[Pg 66]

Miss Joyce: (Picking it up.) A half-a-crown! Where, now, did you get that much, Fardy?

Fardy: Where did I get it, is it!

Miss Joyce: I'll engage it was in no honest way you got it.

Fardy: I picked it up in the street——

Miss Joyce: If you did, why didn't you bring it to the Sergeant or to his Reverence?

Mrs. Delane: And some poor person, may be, being at the loss of it.

Miss Joyce: I'd best bring it to his Reverence. Come with me, Fardy, till he will question you about it.

Fardy: It was not altogether in the street I found it——

Miss Joyce: There, now! I knew you got it in no good way! Tell me, now.

Fardy: It was playing pitch and toss I won it——

Miss Joyce: And who would play for half-crowns with the like of you, Fardy Farrell? Who was it, now?

Fardy: It was—a stranger——

Miss Joyce: Do you hear that? A stranger! Did you see e'er a stranger in this town, Mrs. Delane, or Sergeant Carden, or Mr. Quirke?

Mr. Quirke: Not a one.

Sergeant: There was no stranger here.

Mrs. Delane: There could not be one here without me knowing it.[Pg 67]

Fardy: I tell you there was.

Miss Joyce: Come on, then, and tell who was he to his Reverence.

Sergeant: (Taking other arm.) Or to the bench.

Fardy: I did get it, I tell you, from a stranger.

Sergeant: Where is he, so?

Fardy: He's in some place—not far away.

Sergeant: Bring me to him.

Fardy: He'll be coming here.

Sergeant: Tell me the truth and it will be better for you.

Fardy: (Weeping.) Let me go and I will.

Sergeant: (Letting go.) Now—who did you get it from?

Fardy: From that young chap came to-day, Mr. Halvey.

All: Mr. Halvey!

Mr. Quirke: (Indignantly.) What are you saying, you young ruffian you? Hyacinth Halvey to be playing pitch and toss with the like of you!

Fardy: I didn't say that.

Miss Joyce: You did say it. You said it now.

Mr. Quirke: Hyacinth Halvey! The best man that ever came into this town!

Miss Joyce: Well, what lies he has!

Mr. Quirke: It's my belief the half-crown is a bad one. May be it's to pass it off it was given to him. There were tinkers in the town at the time of the fair. Give it here to me. (Bites it.)[Pg 68] No, indeed, it's sound enough. Here, Sergeant, it's best for you take it.

(Gives it to Sergeant, who examines it.)

Sergeant: Can it be? Can it be what I think it to be?

Mr. Quirke: What is it? What do you take it to be?

Sergeant: It is, it is. I know it. I know this half-crown——

Mr. Quirke: That is a queer thing, now.

Sergeant: I know it well. I have been handling it in the church for the last twelvemonth——

Mr. Quirke: Is that so?

Sergeant: It is the nest-egg half-crown we hand round in the collection plate every Sunday morning. I know it by the dint on the Queen's temples and the crooked scratch under her nose.

Mr. Quirke: (Examining it.) So there is, too.

Sergeant: This is a bad business. It has been stolen from the church.

All: O! O! O!

Sergeant: (Seizing Fardy.) You have robbed the church!

Fardy: (Terrified.) I tell you I never did!

Sergeant: I have the proof of it.

Fardy: Say what you like! I never put a foot in it!

Sergeant: How did you get this, so?

Miss Joyce: I suppose from the stranger?[Pg 69]

Mrs. Delane: I suppose it was Hyacinth Halvey gave it to you, now?

Fardy: It was so.

Sergeant: I suppose it was he robbed the church?

Fardy: (Sobs.) You will not believe me if I say it.

Mr. Quirke: O! the young vagabond! Let me get at him!

Mrs. Delane: Here he is himself now!

(Hyacinth comes in. Fardy releases himself and creeps behind him.)

Mrs. Delane: It is time you to come, Mr. Halvey, and shut the mouth of this young schemer.

Miss Joyce: I would like you to hear what he says of you, Mr. Halvey. Pitch and toss, he says.

Mr. Quirke: Robbery, he says.

Mrs. Delane: Robbery of a church.

Sergeant: He has had a bad name long enough. Let him go to a reformatory now.

Fardy: (Clinging to Hyacinth.) Save me, save me! I'm a poor boy trying to knock out a way of living; I'll be destroyed if I go to a reformatory. (Kneels and clings to Hyacinth's knees.)

Hyacinth: I'll save you easy enough.

Fardy: Don't let me be gaoled!

Hyacinth: I am going to tell them.

Fardy: I'm a poor orphan—[Pg 70]—

Hyacinth: Will you let me speak?

Fardy: I'll get no more chance in the world——

Hyacinth: Sure I'm trying to free you——

Fardy: It will be tasked to me always.

Hyacinth: Be quiet, can't you.

Fardy: Don't you desert me!

Hyacinth: Will you be silent?

Fardy: Take it on yourself.

Hyacinth: I will if you'll let me.

Fardy: Tell them you did it.

Hyacinth: I am going to do that.

Fardy: Tell them it was you got in at the window.

Hyacinth: I will! I will!

Fardy: Say it was you robbed the box.

Hyacinth: I'll say it! I'll say it!

Fardy: It being open!

Hyacinth: Let me tell, let me tell.

Fardy: Of all that was in it.

Hyacinth: I'll tell them that.

Fardy: And gave it to me.

Hyacinth: (Putting hand on his mouth and dragging him up.) Will you stop and let me speak?

Sergeant: We can't be wasting time. Give him here to me.

Hyacinth: I can't do that. He must be let alone.

Sergeant: (Seizing him.) He'll be let alone in the lock-up.[Pg 71]

Hyacinth: He must not be brought there.

Sergeant: I'll let no man get him off.

Hyacinth: I will get him off.

Sergeant: You will not!

Hyacinth: I will.

Sergeant: Do you think to buy him off?

Hyacinth: I will buy him off with my own confession.

Sergeant: And what will that be?

Hyacinth: It was I robbed the church.

Sergeant: That is likely indeed!

Hyacinth: Let him go, and take me. I tell you I did it.

Sergeant: It would take witnesses to prove that.

Hyacinth: (Pointing to Fardy.) He will be witness.

Fardy: O! Mr. Halvey, I would not wish to do that. Get me off and I will say nothing.

Hyacinth: Sure you must. You will be put on oath in the court.

Fardy: I will not! I will not! All the world knows I don't understand the nature of an oath!

Mr. Quirke: (Coming forward.) Is it blind ye all are?

Mrs. Delane: What are you talking about?

Mr. Quirke: Is it fools ye all are?

Miss Joyce: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Quirke: Is it idiots ye all are?[Pg 72]

Sergeant: Mind who you're talking to.

Mr. Quirke: (Seizing Hyacinth's hands.) Can't you see? Can't you hear? Where are your wits? Was ever such a thing seen in this town?

Mrs. Delane: Say out what you have to say.

Mr. Quirke: A walking saint he is!

Mrs. Delane: Maybe so.

Mr. Quirke: The preserver of the poor! Talk of the holy martyrs! They are nothing at all to what he is! Will you look at him! To save that poor boy he is going! To take the blame on himself he is going! To say he himself did the robbery he is going! Before the magistrate he is going! To gaol he is going! Taking the blame on his own head! Putting the sin on his own shoulders! Letting

on to have done a robbery! Telling a lie—that it may be forgiven him—to his own injury! Doing all that I tell you to save the character of a miserable slack lad, that rose in poverty.

(Murmur of admiration from all.)

Mr. Quirke: Now, what do you say?

Sergeant: (Pressing his hand.) Mr. Halvey, you have given us all a lesson. To please you, I will make no information against the boy. (Shakes him and helps him up.) I will put back the half-crown in the poor-box next Sunday. (To Fardy.) What have you to say to your benefactor?

Fardy: I'm obliged to you, Mr. Halvey. You [Pg 73] behaved very decent to me, very decent indeed. I'll never let a word be said against you if I live to be a hundred years.

Sergeant: (Wiping eyes with a blue handkerchief.) I will tell it at the meeting. It will be a great encouragement to them to build up their character. I'll tell it to the priest and he taking the chair—

—

Hyacinth: O stop, will you——

Mr. Quirke: The chair. It's in the chair he himself should be. It's in a chair we will put him now. It's to chair him through the streets we will. Sure he'll be an example and a blessing to the whole of the town. (Seizes Halvey and seats him in chair.) Now, Sergeant, give a hand. Here, Fardy.

(They all lift the chair with Halvey in it, wildly protesting.)

Mr. Quirke: Come along now to the Courthouse. Three cheers for Hyacinth Halvey! Hip! hip! hoora!

(Cheers heard in the distance as the curtain drops.)