

## Lady Gregory, *The Jackdaw* (1909)

### Persons

Joseph Nestor : An Army Pensioner.

Michael Cooney : A Farmer.

Mrs. Broderick : A Small Shopkeeper.

Tommy Nally : A Pauper.

Sibby Fahy An : Orange Seller.

Timothy Ward : A Process Server.

Scene: Interior of a small general shop at Cloon. Mrs. Broderick sitting down. Tommy Nally sitting eating an orange Sibby has given him. Sibby, with basket on her arm, is looking out of door.

Sibby: The people are gathering to the door of the Court. The Magistrates will be coming there before long. Here is Timothy Ward coming up the street.

Timothy Ward: (Coming to door.) Did you get that summons I left here for you ere yesterday, Mrs. Broderick?

Mrs. Broderick: I believe it's there in under the canister. (Takes it out.) It had my mind tossed looking at it there before me. I know well what is in it if I made no fist of reading it itself. It's no wonder with all I had to go through if the reading and writing got scattered on me.

Ward: You know it is on this day you have to appear in the Court?

Mrs. Broderick: It isn't easy to forget that, though indeed it is hard for me to be keeping anything in my head these times, but maybe[Pg 96] remembering to-morrow the thing I was saying to-day.

Ward: Up to one o'clock the magistrates will be able to attend to you, ma'am, before they will go out eating their meal.

Mrs. Broderick: Haven't I the mean, begrudging creditors now that would put me into the Court? Sure it's a terrible thing to go in it and to be bound to speak nothing but the truth. When people would meet with you after, they would remember your face in the Court. What way would they be certain was it in or outside of the dock?

Ward: It is not in the dock you will be put this time. And there will be no bodily harm done to you, but to seize your furniture and your goods. It's best for me to be going there myself and not to be wasting my time. (Goes out.)

Mrs. Broderick: Many a one taking my goods on credit and I seeing their face no more. But nothing would satisfy the people of this district. Sure the great God Himself when He came down couldn't please everybody.

Sibby: I am thinking you were talking of some friend, ma'am, might be apt to be coming to your aid.

Mrs. Broderick: Well able he is to do it if the Lord would but put it in his mind. Isn't it a strange thing the goods of this world to shut up the heart of a brother from his own, the same as[Pg 97] Esau and Jacob, and he having a good farm of land in the County Limerick. It is what I heard that in that place the grass does be as thick as grease.

Sibby: I suppose, ma'am, you wrote giving him an account of your case?

Mrs. Broderick: Sure, Mr. Nestor, the dear man, has his fingers wore away writing for me, and I telling him all he had or had not to say. At Christmas I wrote, and at Little Christmas, and at St. Brigit's Day, and on the Feast of St. Patrick, and after that again such time as I had news of the summons being about to be served. And you may ask Mrs. Delane at the Post Office am I telling any lie saying I got no word or answer at all.... It's long since I saw him, but it is the way he used to be, his eyes on kippeens and some way suspicious in his heart; a dark weighty tempered man.

Sibby: A person to be crabbed and he young, it is not likely he will grow kind at the latter end.

Tommy Nally: That is no less than true now. There are crabbed people and suspicious people to be met with in every place. It is much that I got a pass from the Workhouse this day, the Master making sure when I asked it that I had in my pocket the means of getting drink.

Mrs. Broderick: It would maybe be best to go join you in the Workhouse, Tommy Nally, when I am out of this, than to go walking the world from end to end.[Pg 98]

Tommy Nally: Ah, don't be saying that, ma'am; sure you couldn't be happy within those walls if you had the whole world. Clean outside, but very hard within. No rank but all mixed together, the good, the middling and the bad, the well reared and the rough.

Mrs. Broderick: Sure I'm not asking to go in it. You could never be as stiff in any place as in any sort of little cabin of your own.

Tommy Nally: The tea boiled in a boiler, you should close your eyes drinking it, and ne'er a bit of sugar hardly in it at all. And our curses on them that boil the eggs too hard! What use is an egg that is hard to any person on earth? And as to the dinner, what way would a tasty person eat it not having a knife or a fork?

Mrs. Broderick: That I may live to be in no one's way, but to have some little corner of my own!

Tommy Nally: And to come to your end in it, ma'am! If you were the Lady Mayor herself you'd be brought out to the deadhouse if it was ten o'clock at night, and not a wash unless it was just a Scotch lick, and nobody to wake you at all!

Mrs. Broderick: I will not go in it! I would sooner make any shift and die by the side of the wall. Sure heaven is the best place, heaven and this world we're in now!

Sibby: Don't be giving up now, ma'am. Here[Pg 99] is Mr. Nestor coming, and if any one will give you an advice he is the one will do it. Why wouldn't he, he being, as he is, an educated man, and such a great one to be reading books.

Mrs. Broderick: So he is too, and keeps it in his mind after. It's a wonder to me a man that does be reading to keep any memory at all.

Nally: It's easy for him to carry things light, and his pension paid regular at springtime and harvest.

(Nestor comes in reading "Tit-Bits.")

Nestor: There was a servant girl in Austria cut off her finger slicing cabbage....

All: The poor thing!

Nestor: And her master stuck it on again with glue. That now was a very foolish thing to do. What use would a finger be stuck with glue that might melt off at any time, and she to be stirring the pot?

Sibby: That is true indeed.

Nestor: Now, if I myself had been there, it is what I would have advised....

Sibby: That's what I was saying, Mr. Nestor. It is you are the grand adviser. What now will you say to poor Mrs. Broderick that has a summons out against her this day for up to ten pounds?

Nestor: It is what I am often saying, it is a very foolish thing to be getting into debt.

Mrs. Broderick: Sure what way could I help[Pg 100] it? It's a very done-up town to be striving to make a living in.

Nestor: It would be a right thing to be showing a good example.

Mrs. Broderick: They would want that indeed. There are more die with debts on them in this place than die free from debt.

Nestor: Many a poor soul has had to suffer from the weight of the debts on him, finding no rest or peace after death.

Sibby: The Magistrates are gone into the Courthouse, Mrs. Broderick. Why now wouldn't you go up to the bank and ask would the manager advance you a loan?

Mrs. Broderick: It is likely he would not do it. But maybe it's as good for me go as to be sitting here waiting for the end.

(Puts on hat and shawl.)

Nestor: I now will take charge of the shop for you, Mrs. Broderick.

Mrs. Broderick: It's little call there'll be to it. The time a person is sunk that's the time the custom will go from her. (She goes out.)

Nally: I'll be taking a ramble into the Court to see what are the lads doing. (Goes out.)

Sibby: (Following them.) I might chance some customers there myself.

(Goes out calling—oranges, good oranges.)

Nestor: (Taking a paper from his pocket, sitting[Pg 101] down, and beginning to read.) "Romantic elopement in high life. A young lady at Aberdeen, Missouri, U.S.A., having been left by her father an immense fortune...."

(Stops to wipe his spectacles, puts them on again and looks for place, which he has lost. Cooney puts his head in at door and draws it out again.)

Nestor: Come in, come in!

Cooney: (Coming in cautiously and looking round.) Whose house now might this be?

Nestor: To the Widow Broderick it belongs. She is out in the town presently.

Cooney: I saw her name up over the door.

Nestor: On business of her own she is gone. It is I am minding the place for her.

Cooney: So I see. I suppose now you have good cause to be minding it?

Nestor: It would be a pity any of her goods to go to loss.

Cooney: I suppose so. Is it to auction them you will or to sell them in bulk?

Nestor: Not at all. I can sell you any article you will require.

Cooney: It would be no profit to herself now, I suppose, if you did?

Nestor: What do you mean saying that? Do you think I would defraud her from her due in anything I would sell for her at all?[Pg 102]

Cooney: You are not the bailiff so?

Nestor: Not at all. I wonder any person to take me for a bailiff!

Cooney: You are maybe one of the creditors?

Nestor: I am not. I am not a man to have a debt upon me to any person on earth.

Cooney: I wonder what it is you are at so, if you have no claim on the goods. Is it any harm now to ask what's this your name is?

Nestor: One Joseph Nestor I am, there are few in the district but know me. Indeed they all have a great opinion of me. Travelled I did in the army, and attended school and I young, and slept in the one bed with two boys that were learning Greek.

Cooney: What way now can I be rightly sure that you are Joseph Nestor?

Nestor: (Pulling out envelope.) There is my pension docket. You will maybe believe that.

Cooney: (Examining it.) I suppose you may be him so. I saw your name often before this.

Nestor: Did you now? I suppose it may have travelled a good distance.

Cooney: It travelled as far as myself anyway at the bottom of letters that were written asking relief for the owner of this house.

Nestor: I suppose you are her brother so, Michael Cooney?

Cooney: If I am, there are some questions that[Pg 103] I want to put and to get answers to before my mind will be satisfied. Tell me this now. Is it a fact Mary Broderick to be living at all?

Nestor: What would make you think her not to be living and she sending letters to you through the post?

Cooney: I was saying to myself with myself, there was maybe some other one personating her and asking me to send relief for their own ends.

Nestor: I am in no want of any relief. That is a queer thing to say and a very queer thing. There are many worse off than myself, the Lord be praised!

Cooney: Don't be so quick now starting up to take offence. It is hard to believe the half the things you hear or that will be told to you.

Nestor: That may be so indeed; unless it is things that would be printed on the papers. But I would think you might trust one of your own blood.

Cooney: I might or I might not. I had it in my mind this long time to come hither and to look around for myself. There are seven generations of the Cooneys trusted nobody living or dead.

Nestor: Indeed I was reading in some history of one Ulysses that came back from a journey and sent no word before him but slipped in unknown to all but the house dog to see was his wife[Pg 104] minding the place, or was she, as she was, scattering his means.

Cooney: So she would be too. If Mary Broderick is in need of relief I will relieve her, but if she is not, I will bring away what I brought with me to its own place again.

Nestor: Sure here is the summons. You can read that, and if you will look out the door you can see by the stir the Magistrates are sitting in the Court. It is a great welcome she will have before you, and the relief coming at the very nick of time.

Cooney: It is too good a welcome she will give me I am thinking. It is what I am in dread of now, if she thinks I brought her the money so soft and so easy, she will never be leaving me alone, but dragging all I have out of me by little and little.

Nestor: Maybe you might let her have but the lend of it.

Cooney: Where's the use of calling it a lend when I may be sure I never will see it again? It might be as well for me to earn the value of a charity.

Nestor: You might do that and not repent of it.

Cooney: It is likely I'll be annoyed with her to the end of my lifetime if she knows I have as much as that to part with. It might be she would be following me to Limerick.[Pg 105]

Nestor: Wait now a minute till I will give you an advice.

Cooney: It is likely my own advice is the best. Look over your own shoulder and do the thing you think right. How can any other person know the reasons I have in my mind?

Nestor: I will know what is in your mind if you will tell it to me.

Cooney: It would suit me best, she to get the money and not to know at the present time where did it come from. The next time she will write wanting help from me, I will task her with it and ask her to give me an account.

Nestor: That now would take a great deal of strategy.... Wait now till I think.... I have it in my mind I was reading in a penny novel ... no but on the "Gael" ... about a boy of Kilbecanty that saved his old sweetheart from being evicted.

Cooney: I never heard my sister had any old sweetheart.

Nestor: It was playing Twenty-five he did it. Played with the husband he did, letting him win up to fifty pounds.

Cooney: Mary Broderick was no cardplayer. And if she was itself she would know me. And it's not fifty pounds I am going to leave with her, or twenty pounds, or a penny more than is needful to free her from the summons to-day.[Pg 106]

Nestor: (Excited.) I will make up a plan! I am sure I will think of a good one. It is given in to me there is no person so good at making up a plan as myself on this side of the world, not on this side of the world! I will manage all. Leave here what you have for her before she will come in. I will give it to her in some secret way.

Cooney: I don't know. I will not give it to you before I will get a receipt for it ... and I'll not leave the town till I'll see did she get it straight and fair. Into the Court I'll go to see her paying it.

(Sits down and writes out receipt.)

Nestor: I was reading on "Home Chat" about a woman put a note for five pounds into her son's prayer book and he going a voyage. And when he came back and was in the church with her it fell out, he never having turned a leaf of the book at all.

Cooney: Let you sign this and you may put it in the prayer book so long as she will get it safe. (Nestor signs. Cooney looks suspiciously at signature and compares it with a letter and then gives notes.)

Nestor: (Signing.) Joseph Nestor.

Cooney: Let me see now is it the same handwriting I used to be getting on the letters. It is. I have the notes here.

Nestor: Wait now till I see is there a prayer[Pg 107] book.... (Looks on shelf). Treacle, castor oil, marmalade.... I see no books at all.

Cooney: Hurry on now, she will be coming in and finding me.

Nestor: Here is what will do as well.... "Old Moore's Almanac." I will put it here between the leaves. I will ask her the prophecy for the month. You can come back here after she finding it.

Cooney: Amn't I after telling you I wouldn't wish her to have sight of me here at all? What are you at now, I wonder, saying that. I will take my own way to know does she pay the money. It is not my intention to be made a fool of.

(Goes out.)

Nestor: You will be satisfied and well satisfied. Let me see now where are the predictions for the month. (Reads.) "The angry appearance of Scorpio and the position of the pale Venus and Jupiter presage much danger for England. The heretofore obsequious Orangemen will refuse to respond to the tocsin of landlordism. The scales are beginning to fall from their eyes."

(Mrs. Broderick comes in without his noticing her. She gives a groan. He drops book and stuffs notes into his pocket.)

Mrs. Broderick: Here I am back again and no addition to me since I went.[Pg 108]

Nestor: You gave me a start coming in so noiseless.

Mrs. Broderick: It is time for me go to the Court, and I give you my word I'd be better pleased going to my burying at the Seven Churches. A nice slab I have there waiting for me, though the man that put it over me I never saw him at all, and he a far off cousin of my own.

Nestor: Who knows now, Mrs. Broderick, but things might turn out better than you think.

Mrs. Broderick: What way could they turn out better between this and one o'clock?

Nestor: (Scratching his head.) I suppose now you wouldn't care to play a game of Twenty-five?

Mrs. Broderick: I am surprised at you, Mr. Nestor, asking me to go cardplaying on such a day and at such an hour as this.

Nestor: I wonder might some person come in and give an order for ten pounds' worth of the stock?

Mrs. Broderick: Much good it would do me. Sure I have the most of it on credit.

Nestor: Well, there is no knowing. Some well-to-do person now passing the street might have seen you and taken a liking to you and be willing to make an advance or a loan.

Mrs. Broderick: Ah, who would be taking a liking to me as they might to a young girl in her bloom.[Pg 109]

Nestor: Oh, it's a sort of thing might happen. Sure age didn't catch on to you yet; you are clean and fresh and sound. What's this I was reading in "Answers." (Looks at it.) "Romantic elopement...."

Mrs. Broderick: I know of no one would be thinking of me for a wife ... unless it might be yourself, Mr. Nestor....

Nestor: (Jumping up and speaking fast and running finger up and down paper.) "Performance of Dick Whittington." ... There now, there is a story that I read in my reading, it was called Whittington and the Cat. It was the cat led to his fortune. There might some person take a fancy to your cat....

Mrs. Broderick: Ah, let you have done now. I have no cat this good while. I banished it on the head of it threatening the jackdaw.

Nestor: The jackdaw?

Mrs. Broderick: (Fetches cage from inner room.) Sure I reared it since the time it fell down the chimney and I going into my bed. It is often you should have seen it, in or out of its cage. Hero his name is. Come out now, Hero.

(Opens cage.)

Nestor: (Slapping his side.) That is it ... that's the very thing. Listen to me now, Mrs. Broderick, there are some might give a good price for that bird. (Sitting down to the work.) It[Pg 110] chances now there is a friend of mine in South Africa. A mine owner he is ... very rich ... but it is down in the mine he has to live by reason of the Kaffirs ... it is hard to keep a watch upon them in the half dark, they being black.

Mrs. Broderick: I suppose....

Nestor: He does be lonesome now and again, and he is longing for a bird to put him in mind of old Ireland ... but he is in dread it would die in the darkness ... and it came to his mind that it is a custom with jackdaws to be living in chimneys, and that if any birds would bear the confinement it is they that should do it.

Mrs. Broderick: And is it to buy jackdaws he is going?

Nestor: Isn't that what I am coming to. (He pulls out notes.) Here now is ten pounds I have to lay out for him. Take them now and good luck go with them, and give me the bird.

Mrs. Broderick: Notes is it? Is it waking or dreaming I am and I standing up on the floor?

Nestor: Good notes and ten of them. Look at them! National Bank they are.... Count them now, according to your fingers, and see did I tell any lie.

Mrs. Broderick: (Counting.) They are in it sure enough ... so long as they are good ones and I not made a hare of before the magistrates.

Nestor: Go out now to the Court and show[Pg 111] them to Timothy Ward, and see does he say are they good. Pay them over then, and its likely you will be let off the costs.

Mrs. Broderick: (Taking shawl.) I will go, I will go. Well, you are a great man and a kind man, Joseph Nestor, and that you may live a thousand years for this good deed.

Nestor: Look here now, ma'am, I wouldn't wish you to be mentioning my name in this business or saying I had any hand in it at all.

Mrs. Broderick: I will not so long as it's not pleasing to you. Well, it is yourself took a great load off me this day! (She goes out.)

Nestor: (Calling after her.) I might as well be putting the jackdaw back into the cage to be ready for the journey. (Comes into shop.) I hope now he will be well treated by the sailors and he travelling over the sea.... Where is he now.... (Chirrup.) Here now, come here to me, what's this your name is.... Nero! Nero! (Makes pounces behind counter.) Ah, bad manners to you, is it under the counter you are gone!

(Lies flat on the floor chirruping and calling, Nero! Nero! Nally comes in and watches him curiously.)

Nally: Is it catching blackbeetles you are, Mr. Nestor? Where are they and I will give you a hand....[Pg 112]

Nestor: (Getting up annoyed.) It's that bird I was striving to catch a hold of for to put him back in the cage.

Tommy Nally: (Making a pounce.) There he is now. (Puts bird in cage.) Wait now till I'll fasten the gate.

Nestor: Just putting everything straight and handy for the widow woman I am before she will come back from the settlement she is making in the Court.

Nally: What way will she be able to do that?

Nestor: I gave her advice. A thought I had, something that came from my reading. (Taps paper.) Education and reading and going in the army through the kingdoms of the world; that is what fits a man now to be giving out advice.

Tommy: Indeed, it's good for them to have you, all the poor ignorant people of this town.

Cooney: (Coming in hurriedly and knocking against Nally as he goes out.) What, now, would you say to be the best nesting place in this town. Nests of jackdaws I should say.

Nestor: There is the old mill should be a good place. To the west of the station it is. Chimneys there are in it. Middling high they are. Wait now till I'll tell you of the great plan I made up....

Cooney: What are you asking for those rakes in the corner? It's no matter, I'll take one on [Pg 113] credit, or maybe it is only the lend of it I'll take. ... I'll be coming back immediately. (He goes out with rake.)

Sibby: (Coming in excitedly.) If you went bird-catching, Mr. Nestor, tell me what way would you go doing it?

Nestor: It is not long since I was reading some account of that ... lads that made a trade of it ... nets they had and they used to be spreading them in the swamps where the plover do be feeding....

Sibby: Ah, sure where's the use of a plover!

Nestor: And snares they had for putting along the drains where the snipe do be picking up worms.... But if I myself saw any person going after things of the sort, it is what I would advise them to stick to the net.

Sibby: What now is the price of that net in the corner?

Nestor: (Taking it down.) It is but a little bag that is, suitable for carrying small articles; it would become your oranges well. Twopence I believe, Sibby, is what I should charge you for that.

Sibby: (Taking money out of handkerchief.) Give it to me so! Here I'll get the start of you, Timothy Ward, anyway.

(She takes it and goes out, almost overturning Timothy Ward, who is rushing in.) [Pg 114]

Nestor: Well, Timothy, did you see the Widow Broderick in the Court?

Ward: I did see her. It is in it she is, now, looking as content as in the coffin, and she paying her debt.

Nestor: Did she give you any account of herself?

Ward: She did to be sure, and to the whole Court; but look here now, I have no time to be talking. I have to be back there when the magistrates will have their lunch taken. Now you being so clever a man, Mr. Nestor, what would you say is the surest way to go catching birds?



Nestor: It is a strange thing now, I was asked the same question not three minutes ago. I was just searching my mind. It seems to me I have read in some place it is a very good way to go calling to them with calls; made for the purpose they are. You have but to sit under a tree or whatever place they may perch and to whistle ... suppose now it might be for a curlew.... (Whistles.)

Timothy Ward: Are there any of those calls in the shop?

Nestor: I would not say there are any made for the purpose, but there might be something might answer you all the same. Let me see now.... (Gets down a box of musical toys and turns them over.)[Pg 115]

Ward: Is there anything now has a sound like the croaky screech of a jackdaw?

Nestor: Here now is what we used to be calling a corncrake.... (Turns it.) Corncrake, corncrake ... but it seems to me now that to give it but the one creak, this way ... it is much like what you would hear in the chimney at the time of the making of the nests.

Ward: Give it here to me!

(Puts a penny on counter and runs out.)

Tommy Nally: (Coming in shaking with excitement.) For the love of God, Mr. Nestor, will you give me that live-trap on credit!

Nestor: A trap? Sure there is no temptation for rats to be settling themselves in the Workhouse.

Nally: Or a snare itself ... or any sort of a thing that would make the makings of a crib.

Nestor: What would you want, I wonder, going out fowling with a crib?

Nally: Why wouldn't I want it? Why wouldn't I have leave to catch a bird the same as every other one?

Nestor: And what would the likes of you be wanting with a bird?

Nally: What would I want with it, is it? Why wouldn't I be getting my own ten pounds?

Nestor: Heaven help your poor head this day!

Nally: Why wouldn't I get it the same as Mrs. Broderick got it?[Pg 116]

Nestor: Well, listen to me now. You will not get it.

Nally: Sure that man is buying them will have no objection they to come from one more than another.

Nestor: Don't be arguing now. It is a queer thing for you, Tommy Nally, to be arguing with a man like myself.

Nally: Think now all the good it would do me ten pound to be put in my hand! It is not you should be begrudging it to me, Mr. Nestor. Sure it would be a relief upon the rates.

Nestor: I tell you you will not get ten pound or any pound at all. Can't you give attention to what I say?

Nally: If I had but the price of the trap you wouldn't refuse it to me. Well, isn't there great hardship upon a man to be bet up and to have no credit in the town at all.

Nestor: (Exasperated, and giving him the cage.) Look here now, I have a right to turn you out into the street. But, as you are silly like and with no great share of wits, I will make you a present of this bird till you try what will you get for it, and till you see will you get as much as will cover its diet for one day only. Go out now looking for customers and maybe you will believe what I say.

Nally: (Seizing it.) That you may be doing the [Pg 117] same thing this day fifty years! My fortune's made now! (Goes out with cage.)

Nestor: (Sitting down.) My joy go with you, but I'm bothered with the whole of you. Everyone expecting me to do their business and to manage their affairs. That is the drawback of being an educated man!

(Takes up paper to read.)

Mrs. Broderick: (Coming in.) I declare I'm as comforted as Job coming free into the house from the Court!

Nestor: Well, indeed, ma'am, I am well satisfied to be able to do what I did for you, and for my friend from Africa as well, giving him so fine and so handsome a bird.

Mrs. Broderick: Sure Finn himself that chewed his thumb had not your wisdom, or King Solomon that kept order over his kingdom and his own seven hundred wives. There is neither of them could be put beside you for settling the business of any person at all.

(Sibby comes in holding up her netted bag.)

Nestor: What is it you have there, Sibby?

Sibby: Look at them here, look at them here.... I wasn't long getting them. Warm they are yet; they will take no injury.

Mrs. Broderick: What are they at all?

Sibby: It is eggs they are ... look at them. Jackdaws' eggs. [Pg 118]

Nestor: (Suspiciously.) And what call have you now to be bringing in jackdaws' eggs?

Sibby: Is it ten pound apiece I will get for them do you think, or is it but ten pound I will get for the whole of them?

Nestor: Is it drink, or is it tea, or is it some change that is come upon the world that is fitting the people of this place for the asylum in Ballinasloe?

Sibby: I know of a good clocking hen. I will put the eggs under her.... I will rear them when they'll be hatched out.

Nestor: I suppose now, Mrs. Broderick, you went belling the case through the town?

Mrs. Broderick: I did not, but to the Magistrates upon the bench that I told it out of respect to, and I never mentioned your name in it at all.

Sibby: Tell me now, Mrs. Broderick, who have I to apply to?

Mrs. Broderick: What is it you are wanting to apply about?

Sibby: Will you tell me where is the man that is after buying your jackdaw?

Mrs. Broderick: (Looking at Nestor.) What's that? Where is he, is it?

Nestor: (Making signs of silence.) How would you know where he is? It is not in a broken little town of this sort such a man would be stopping, and he having his business finished. [Pg 119]

Sibby: Sure he will have to be coming back here for the bird. I will stop till I'll see him drawing near.

Nestor: It is more likely he will get it consigned to the shipping agent. Mind what I say now, it is best not be speaking of him at all.

(Timothy Ward comes in triumphantly, croaking his toy. He has a bird in his hand.)

Ward: I chanced on a starling. It was not with this I tempted him, but a little chap that had him in a crib. Would you say now, Mr. Nestor, would that do as well as a jackdaw? Look now, it's as handsome every bit as the other. And anyway it is likely they will both die before they will reach to their journey's end.

Nestor: (Lifting up his hands.) Of all the foolishness that ever came upon the world!

Ward: Hurry on now, Mrs. Broderick, tell me where will I bring it to the buyer you were speaking of. He is fluttering that hard it is much if I can keep him in my hand. Is it at Noonan's Royal Hotel he is or is it at Mack's?

Nestor: (Shaking his head threateningly.) How can you tell that and you not knowing it yourself?

Ward: Sure you have a right to know what way did he go, and he after going out of this.

Mrs. Broderick: (Her eyes apprehensively on Nestor.) Ah, sure, my mind was tattered on me.[Pg 120] I couldn't know did he go east or west. Standing here in this place I was, like a ghost that got a knock upon its head.

Ward: If he is coming back for the bird it is here he will be coming, and if it is to be sent after him it is likely you will have his address.

Mrs. Broderick: So I should, too, I suppose. Where now did I put it? (She looks to Nestor for orders, but cannot understand his signs, and turns out pocket.) That's my specs ... that's the key of the box ... that's a bit of root liquorice.... Where now at all could I have left down that address?

Ward: There has no train left since he was here. Sure what does it matter so long as he did not go out of this. I'll bring this bird to the railway. Tell me what sort was he till I'll know him.

Mrs. Broderick: (Still looking at Nestor.) Well, he was middling tall ... not very gross ... about the figure now of Mr. Nestor.

Ward: What aged man was he?

Mrs. Broderick: I suppose up to sixty years. About the one age, you'd say, with Mr. Nestor.

Ward: Give me some better account now; it is hardly I would make him out by that.

Mrs. Broderick: A grey beard he has hanging down ... and a bald poll, and grey hair like a fringe around it ... just for all the world like Mr. Nestor![Pg 121]

Nestor: (Jumping up.) There is nothing so disagreeable in the whole world as a woman that has too much talk.

Mrs. Broderick: Well, let me alone. Where's the use of them all picking at me to say where did I get the money when I am under orders not to tell it?

Ward: Under orders?

Mrs. Broderick: I am, and strong orders.

Ward: Whose orders are those?

Mrs. Broderick: What's that to you, I ask you?

Ward: Isn't it a pity now a woman to be so unneighbourly and she after getting profit for herself?

Mrs. Broderick: Look now, Mr. Nestor, the way they are going on at me, and you saying no word for me at all.

Ward: How would he say any word when he hasn't it to say? The only word could be said by any one is that you are a mean grasping person, gathering what you can for your own profit and keeping yourself so close and so compact. It is back to the Court I am going, and it's no good friend I'll be to you from this out, Mrs. Broderick!

Mrs. Broderick: Amn't I telling you I was bidden not to tell?

Sibby: You were. And is it likely it was you yourself bid yourself and gave you that advice, Mrs. Broderick? It is what I think the bird was [Pg 122] never bought at all. It is in some other way she got the money. Maybe in a way she does not like to be talking of. Light weights, light fingers! Let us go away so and leave her, herself and her money and her orders! (Timothy Ward goes out, but Sibby stops at door.) And much good may they do her.

Mrs. Broderick: Listen to that, Mr. Nestor! Will you be listening to that, when one word from yourself would clear my character! I leave it now between you and the hearers. Why would I be questioned this way and that way, the same as if I was on the green table before the judges? You have my heart broke between you. It's best for me to heat the kettle and wet a drop of tea.

(Goes to inner room.)

Sibby: Tell us the truth now, Mr. Nestor, if you know anything at all about it.

Nestor: I know everything about it. It was to myself the notes were handed in the first place. I am willing to take my oath to you on that. It was a stranger, I said, came in.

Sibby: I wish I could see him and know him if I did see him.

Nestor: It is likely you would know a man of that sort if you did see him, Sibby Fahy. It is likely you never saw a man yet that owns riches would buy up the half of this town. [Pg 123]

Sibby: It is not always them that has the most that makes the most show. But it is likely he will have a good dark suit anyway, and shining boots, and a gold chain hanging over his chest.

Nestor: (Sarcastically.) He will, and gold rings and pins the same as the King of France or of Spain.

(Enter Cooney, hatless, streaked with soot and lime, speechless but triumphant. He holds up a nest with nestlings.)

Nestor: What has happened you, Mr. Cooney, at all?

Cooney: Look now, what I have got!

Nestor: A nest, is it?

Cooney: Three young ones in it!

Nestor: (Faintly.) Is it what you are going to say they are jackdaws!

Cooney: I followed your directions....

Nestor: How do you make that out?

Cooney: You said the mill chimneys were full of them....

Nestor: What has that to do with it?

Cooney: I left my rake after me broken in the loft ... my hat went away in the millrace ... I tore my coat on the stones ... there has mortar got into my eye....

Nestor: The Lord bless and save us!

Cooney: But there is no man can say I did not bring back the birds, sound and living and[Pg 124] in good health. Look now, the open mouths of them! (All gather round.) Three of them safe and living.... I lost one climbing the wall. ... Where now is the man is going to buy them?

Sibby: (Pointing at Nestor.) It is he that can tell you that.

Cooney: Make no delay bringing me to him. I'm in dread they might die on me first.

Nestor: You should know well that no one is buying them.

Sibby: No one! Sure it was you yourself told us that there was!

Nestor: If I did itself there is no such a man.

Sibby: It's not above two minutes he was telling of the rings and the pins he wore.

Nestor: He never was in it at all.

Cooney: What plan is he making up now to defraud me and to rob me?

Sibby: Question him yourself, and you will see what will he say.

Cooney: How can I ask questions of a man that is telling lies?

Nestor: I am telling no lies. I am well able to answer you and to tell you the truth.

Cooney: Tell me where is the man that will give me cash for these birds, the same as he gave it to the woman of this house?[Pg 125]

Sibby: That's it, that is it. Let him tell it out now.

Cooney: Will you have me ask it as often as the hairs of my head? If I get vexed I will make you answer me.

Nestor: It seems to me to have set fire to a rick, but I am well able to quench it after. There is no man in South Africa, or that came from South Africa, or that ever owned a mine there at all. Where is the man bought the bird, are you asking? There he is standing among us on this floor. (Points to Cooney.) That is himself, the very man!

Cooney: (Advancing a step.) What is that you are saying?

Nestor: I say that no one came in here but yourself.

Cooney: Did he say or not say there was a rich man came in?

Sibby: He did, surely.

Nestor: To make up a plan....

Cooney: I know well you have made up a plan.

Nestor: To give it unknownst....

Cooney: It is to keep it unknownst you are wanting!

Nestor: The way she would not suspect....

Cooney: It is I myself suspect and have cause to suspect! Give me back my own ten pounds and I'll be satisfied.[Pg 126]

Nestor: What way can I give it back?

Cooney: The same way as you took it, in the palm of your hand.

Nestor: Sure it is paid away and spent....

Cooney: If it is you'll repay it! I know as well as if I was inside you you are striving to make me your prey! But I'll sober you! It is into the Court I will drag you, and as far as the gaol!

Nestor: I tell you I gave it to the widow woman....

(Mrs. Broderick comes in.)

Cooney: Let her say now did you.

Mrs. Broderick: What is it at all? What is happening? Joseph Nestor threatened by a tinker or a tramp!

Nestor: I would think better of his behaviour if he was a tinker or a tramp.

Mrs. Broderick: He has drink taken so. Isn't drink the terrible tempter, a man to see flames and punishment upon the one side and drink upon the other, and to turn his face towards the drink!

Cooney: Will you stop your chat, Mary Broderick, till I will drag the truth out of this traitor?

Mrs. Broderick: Who is that calling me by my name? Och! Is it Michael Cooney is in it? Michael Cooney, my brother! O Michael, what will they think of you coming into the town and [Pg 127] much like a rag on a stick would be scaring in the wheatfield through the day?

Cooney: (Pointing at Nestor.) It was going up in the mill I destroyed myself, following the directions of that ruffian!

Mrs. Broderick: And what call has a man that has drink taken to go climbing up a loft in a mill? A crooked mind you had always, and that's a sort of person drink doesn't suit.

Cooney: I tell you I didn't take a glass over a counter this ten year.

Mrs. Broderick: You would do well to go learn behaviour from Mr. Nestor.

Cooney: The man that has me plundered and robbed! Tell me this now, if you can tell it. Did you find any pound notes in "Old Moore's Almanac"?

Mrs. Broderick: I did not to be sure, or in any other place.

Nestor: She came in at the door and I striving to put them into the book.

Cooney: Look are they in it now, and I will say he is not tricky, but honest.

Nestor: You needn't be looking....

Mrs. Broderick: (Turning over the leaves.) Ne'er a thing at all in it but the things that will or will not happen, and the days of the changes of the moon.

Cooney: (Seizing and shaking it.) Look at [Pg 128] that now! (To Nestor.) Will you believe me now telling you that you are a rogue?

Nestor: Will you listen to me, ma'am....

Cooney: No, but listen to myself. I brought the money to you.

Nestor: If he did he wouldn't trust you with it, ma'am.

Cooney: I intended it for your relief.

Nestor: In dread he was you would go follow him to Limerick.

Mrs. Broderick: It is not likely I would be following the like of him to Limerick, a man that left me to the charity of strangers from Africa!

Cooney: I gave the money to him....

Nestor: And I gave it to yourself paying for the jackdaw. Are you satisfied now, Mary Broderick?

Mrs. Broderick: Satisfied, is it? It would be a queer thing indeed I to be satisfied. My brother to be spending money on birds, and his sister with a summons on her head. Michael Cooney to be passing himself off as a mine-owner, and I myself being the way I am!

Cooney: What would I want doing that? I tell you I ask no birds, black, blue or white!

Mrs. Broderick: I wonder at you now saying that, and you with that clutch on your arm! (Cooney indignantly flings away nest.) Searching[Pg 129] out jackdaws and his sister without the price of a needle in the house! I tell you, Michael Cooney, it is yourself will be wandering after your burying, naked and perishing, through winds and through frosts, in satisfaction for the way you went wasting your money and your means on such vanities, and she that was reared on the one floor with you going knocking at the Workhouse door! What good will jackdaws be to you that time?

Cooney: It is what I would wish to know, what scheme are the whole of you at? It is long till I will trust any one but my own eyes again in the whole of the living world.

(She wipes her eyes indignantly. Tommy Nally rushes in the bird and cage still in his hands.)

Nally: Where is the bird buyer? It is here he is said to be. It is well for me get here the first. It is the whole of the town will be here within half an hour; they have put a great scatter on themselves hunting and searching in every place, but I am the first!

Nestor: What is it you are talking about?

Nally: Not a house in the whole street but is deserted. It is much if the Magistrates themselves didn't quit the bench for the pursuit, the way Tim Ward quitted the place he had a right to be![Pg 130]

Nestor: It is some curse in the air, or some scourge?

Nally: Birds they are getting by the score! Old and young! Where is the bird-buyer? Who is it now will give me my price?

(He holds up the cage.)

Cooney: There is surely some root for all this. There must be some buyer after all. It's to keep him to themselves they are wanting. (Goes to door.) But I'll get my own profit in spite of them.

(He goes outside door, looking up and down the street.)

Mrs. Broderick: Look at what Tommy Nally has. That's my bird.

Nally: It is not, it's my own!

Mrs. Broderick: That is my cage!

Nally: It is not, it is mine!

Mrs. Broderick: Wouldn't I know my own cage and my own bird? Don't be telling lies that way!

Nally: It is no lie I am telling. The bird and the cage were made a present to me.

Mrs. Broderick: Who would make a present to you of the things that belong to myself?

Nally: It was Mr. Nestor gave them to me.

Mrs. Broderick: Do you hear what he says, Joseph Nestor? What call have you to be giving a present of my bird?[Pg 131]

Nestor: And wasn't I after buying it from you?

Mrs. Broderick: If you were it was not for yourself you bought it, but for the poor man in South Africa you bought it, and you defrauding him now, giving it away to a man has no claim to it at all. Well, now, isn't it hard for any man to find a person he can trust?

Nestor: Didn't you hear me saying I bought it for no person at all?

Mrs. Broderick: Give it up now, Tommy Nally, or I'll have you in gaol on the head of it.

Nally: Oh, you wouldn't do such a thing, ma'am, I am sure!

Mrs. Broderick: Indeed and I will, and have you on the treadmill for a thief.

Nally: Oh, oh, oh, look now, Mr. Nestor, the way you have made me a thief and to be lodged in the gaol!

Nestor: I wish to God you were lodged in it, and we would have less annoyance in this place!

Nally: Oh, that is a terrible thing for you to be saying! Sure the poorhouse itself is better than the gaol! The nuns preparing you for heaven and the Mass every morning of your life....

Nestor: If you go on with your talk and your arguments it's to gaol you will surely go.

Nally: Milk of a Wednesday and a Friday,[Pg 132] the potatoes steamed very good.... It's the skins of the potatoes they were telling me you do have to be eating in the gaol. It is what I am thinking, Mr. Nestor, that bird will lie heavy on you at the last!

Nestor: (Seizing cage and letting the bird out of the door.) Bad cess and a bad end to it, and that I may never see it or hear of it again!

Mrs. Broderick: Look what he is after doing! Get it back for me! Give it here into my hands I say! Why wouldn't I sell it secondly to the buyer and he to be coming to the door? It is in my own pocket I will keep the price of it that time!

Nally: It would have been as good you to have left it with me as to be sending itself and the worth of it up into the skies!

Mrs. Broderick: (Taking Nestor's arm.) Get it back for me I tell you! There it is above in the ash tree, and it flapping its wings on a bough!

Nestor: Give me the cage, if that will content you, and I will strive to entice it to come in.

Cooney: (Coming in.) Everyone running this way and that way. It is for birds they are looking sure enough. Why now would they go through such hardship if there was not a demand in some place?

Nestor: (Pushing him away.) Let me go now before that bird will quit the branch where it is.[Pg 133]

Cooney: (Seizing hold of him.) Is it striving to catch a bird for yourself you are now?

Nestor: Let me pass if you please. I have nothing to say to you at all.

Cooney: Laying down to me they were worth nothing! I knew well you had made up some plan! The grand adviser is it! It is to yourself you gave good advice that time!

Nestor: Let me out I tell you before that uproar you are making will drive it from its perch on the tree.

Cooney: Is it to rob me of my own money you did and to be keeping me out of the money I earned along with it!

(Threatens Nestor with "Moore's Almanac," which he has picked up.)



Sibby: Take care would there be murder done in this place!

(She seizes Nestor, Mrs. Broderick seizes Cooney. Tommy Nally wrings his hands.)

Nestor: Tommy Nally, will you kindly go and call for the police.

Cooney: Is it into a den of wild beasts I am come that must go calling out for the police?

Nestor: A very unmannerly person indeed!

Cooney: Everyone thinking to take advantage of me and to make their own trap for my ruin.[Pg 134]

Nestor: I don't know what cause has he at all to have taken any umbrage against me.

Cooney: You that had your eye on my notes from the first like a goat in a cabbage garden!

Nestor: Coming with a gift in the one hand and holding a dagger in the other!

Cooney: If you say that again I will break your collar bone!

Nestor: O, but you are the terrible wicked man!

Cooney: I'll squeeze satisfaction out of you if I had to hang for it! I will be well satisfied if I'll kill you!

(Flings "Moore's Almanac" at him.)

Nestor: (Throwing his bundle of newspapers.) Oh, good jewel!

Ward: (Coming in hastily.) Whist the whole of you, I tell you! The Magistrates are coming to the door! (Comes in and shuts it after him.)

Mrs. Broderick: The Lord be between us and harm! What made them go quit the Court?

Ward: The whole of the witnesses and of the prosecution made off bird-catching. The Magistrates sent to invite the great mine-owner to go lunch at Noonan's with themselves.

Cooney: Horses of their own to stick him with they have. I wouldn't doubt them at all.

Ward: He could not be found in any place. They are informed he was never seen leaving[Pg 135] this house. They are coming to make an investigation.

Nestor: Don't be anyway uneasy. I will explain the whole case.

Ward: The police along with them....

Cooney: Is the whole of this district turned into a trap?

Ward: It is what they are thinking, that the stranger was made away with for his gold!

Cooney: And if he was, as sure as you are living, it was done by that blackguard there!

(Points at Nestor.)

Ward: If he is not found they will arrest all they see upon the premises....

Cooney: It is best for me to quit this.

(Goes to door.)

Ward: Here they are at the door. Sergeant Carden along with them. Hide yourself, Mr. Nestor, if you've anyway to do it at all.

(Sounds of feet and talking and knock at the door. Cooney hides under counter. Nestor lies down on top of bench, spreads his newspaper over him. Mrs. Broderick goes behind counter.)

Nestor: (Raising paper from his face and looking out.) Tommy Nally, I will give you five shillings if you will draw "Tit-Bits" over my feet.

Curtain