

I need not disguise the fact; I was fond of that kind of fame, as who that is successful at athletic sports is not? The presence of those people gratified me, and gave me both courage and resolution – I almost think I may add strength. I stripped; I seized the half hundredweight, I swung it before me with both hands, and then letting it come down with its own impetus until it raised itself behind me, I took it on the back swing as it rose towards my shoulder, and by this piece of skill I hurled it to the beam at least fifteen or twenty pounds less than its actual weight. This was a discovery of my own, of which I had been in possession for more than a year, and it should be explained by action rather than by description. In the twinkling of an eye, the feat was accomplished – the weight went clearly over the beam without touching it, and from that moment Frank Farrell's pride in the performance of his remarkable feat was brought low. Except myself, no other man in the parish was ever able to accomplish it, although hundreds made the attempt. Old Bill Dickey, who kept the public-house in Miltown, and of whom I shall have something to say again, brought Frank Farrell, my brother and myself to his establishment, and treated us to some of as good poteen as ever was drunk. In the course of a couple of days my exploit was known to the whole parish, and added largely to my fame.

Poor Frank's end was a melancholy one, as I have stated, I think, in 'The Battle of the Factions'. In my day most millers were carpenters; Frank was no exception to this rule, and had the reputation of being an excellent artisan. In the cathedral of Clogher there is a set of bells, one, the largest, being, it is said, a ton in weight. Frank was engaged in his capacity of carpenter to adjust something in connection either with the bells or the belfry. While so engaged, he took it into his head to try whether he could lift the great bell, and made due preparation for this tremendous effort by placing a thick board across the mouth of the bell, under which he stood and actually raised it about six inches. The result was fatal to him; he had severely injured his spine, and in the course of three months the bell was rung over his coffin.

I now led a very desultory life. I had no fixed residence, no abiding shelter – no home. I passed from one relative to another, and was often asked by my wealthy neighbours to go and spend a week or a month with them. Many of them expected me to read and translate Latin or Greek for them, but this anxiety to hear the learned languages was almost uniformly confined to those who themselves could not read, and were of course totally illiterate. Such is human nature; we always value that which we don't possess more than do those who possess it. In this way I paid many a pleasant visit to friends and acquaintances throughout the parish – if those visits could be called pleasant which were paid by a homeless young man, who had not an object in life towards which he could look with the least hope.

I was now in my twenty-first year, one, I think, the greatest and most remarkable for youthful exploits. My eldest brother Michael lived in a townland named Aughenclash, not five minutes' walk from the residence of my sister Sarah, or Sally as we always called her. This eldest brother of mine and I never could, and never did, pull well together. He was perpetually abusing me for my idleness, which he attributed to me as a crime, although he knew right well – no man better – that it was the result of circumstances over which I had no control, and besides, he knew that I read the classics several hours a day. So far as I was concerned, the tongue of Timon of Athens was eulogy compared to his; there was a low, gnawing, bitter, sneering spirit in it which was never laid so long as I was in his house. I had been living with him, much to my vexation, for a couple of months.

'Why don't you go and learn a trade?' said he to me one evening after he had come in from his work in the fields. 'Look at Lanty Doain,¹ the stone-cutter, see how comfortable and wealthy he is. It wasn't spending his time on going about the country, attending wakes and fairs and dances, throwing the stone and leaping; sure I'm told you are going to leap Clogher Karry – no less. I believe you got one wet jacket there already, and that

¹ Duane?