

**BEYOND THE
BREAKERS. A STORY
OF THE PRESENT DAY**

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Beyond the breakers. A story of the present day by Robert Dale Owen

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ROBERT DALE OWEN

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THE HEEDLESS EXPOSURE.

VILLAGE LIFE IN THE WEST.

BEYOND THE BREAKERS.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

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CALIFORNIA

"From seeming evil still educing good,
And better yet again and better still,
In infinite progression."

THOMSON.



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TO AN EXCELLENT FRIEND,

IN WHOSE LIBRARY THE FIRST OF THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS WAS WRITTEN.

FERDINAND J. DREER, OF PHILADELPHIA,

THIS STORY

IS INSCRIBED.

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BEYOND THE BREAKERS.

"From seeming evil still educing good;
And better thence again, and better still,
In infinite progression." THOMSON.

CHAPTER I. THE ACCUSATION.

IT was in the old days, now almost forgotten, when bits of gold and silver passed current among us as money. As we mortals reckon time, it was some twelve or fourteen years ago, but if one estimates by thick-crowding events and revolutions, social and political, there has passed a generation since the incidents that are to be related occurred in the sober Quaker State of Pennsylvania.

One cold, rainy evening, late in the spring, there sauntered into a tavern kept in Water street, Philadelphia, a man not beyond middle age and somewhat shabbily dressed. It was a tavern, not only in the strict old sense of the term—to wit, a resort of the thirsty, where wines and sundry hot potations might be had at retail, as eighteen hundred years ago they were in the *thermopolia* of Pompeii (whose marble *tabulae* are cup-stained still)—but also taken according to the modernized American phraseology; for its hearty, bright-eyed owner furnished

to the emigrant and to the chance traveler board and lodging, as well as grog and punch. Terence O'Reilly was an Irishman, every inch of him: one saw that at a glance. The high cheek-bones, the ruddy color, the touch of the brogue, came unmistakably from the Green Island. The world had gone well with Terence. He liked it: he thoroughly enjoyed life, and sought to make it as pleasant to others as to himself. He had selected a sorry mode of doing so, it is true, not being satisfied to dispense Cowper's cups that "cheer but not inebriate." I dare say he had not heard Gough lecture, and probably had never taken a serious thought as to whether the world was the better or the worse for the gin and the whisky that are made in it. He had imbibed, with his hardy mother's milk, her careless, thoughtless, hopeful temperament. His father, hail-fellow-well-met with every one, had not improved his son's habits by suffering him, when he had outgrown the maternal beverage, occasionally to taste a little of the *potheen* that had the sweetness of stolen waters about it, being

manufactured of nights in a small underground still, of which the masked entrance could be reached only through the intricacies of an Irish bog, and so had escaped, for years, the argus-eyed revenue officers. The lad grew up light-hearted, jovial, but not intemperate, nor yet without a wholesome ambition to better his condition, and attain the respectability which he saw that money was wont to bring.

His first step in life had been as hostler in a country inn. There the hard-working fellow served faithfully, finally attracting the attention of a young officer in the Guards, the eldest son of the Honorable Patrick Halloran, a wealthy landed proprietor, on whose property Terence's father lived. Captain Halloran, pleased with the lad's spirit and good-humor, took him into his service as groom, promoting him, in gay livery, to a seat behind his stylish curricule when he drove that fine-stepping pair of black-limbed bays of his in Hyde Park. It was not a situation to improve the young groom's morals; for those of his master were none of the best, especially in his relations with women; and the white-cravatted, black-clothed valet whom the Captain had picked up in Paris, and who stood high in his confidence, pandered to vices from which the scoundrel well knew how to profit. But here again, as in the article of *potteen*, Terence escaped any serious contamination. This happened partly because of the fact that though the young man's ideas on ethics were of the vaguest sort, he had a sturdy, rude-fashioned sense of the fair and the honorable; partly because he had an in-born dislike of anything French, and barely tolerated his fellow-servant, who, on his part, looked down with supreme contempt on the rough young Irishman.

Had Terence been less of a favorite with Captain Halloran, this mutual aversion would probably have cost him his place within the first few months; but Louis Villemont—so the valet was called—was a man to bide his time, and let his revenge sleep till the moment came when it could be safely indulged. He was rewarded for his patience after

enduring Terence nearly a year and a half. Reckless self-indulgence, long continued, readily hardens into vice when the tempter is at hand to encourage and facilitate. So it was with Captain Halloran. Aided and prompted by Louis, he committed an act of villainy from which, in the early part of his career as a young man of fashion, he would have shrunk with abhorrence. His victim, an interesting and accomplished young girl, fled, one night, in an agony of despair, no one knew whither. Terence, getting to know the main facts, and stirred by that spirit of rude chivalry which is not unfrequently found in his class and nation, broke forth upon Louis, calling him names which caused the Frenchman's dark eyes to flash with fury; and not satisfied with that, his indignation once fairly roused, he proceeded to denounce the master himself in no measured terms. Thereupon Louis' wrath subsided into a sinister smile. "Tu me le payeras," he muttered under his breath, as his master's bell rung. Half an hour later he returned, and, with a civil leer, handed the groom his wages to date, with a handsome gratuity and a message from Captain Halloran that he had no further occasion for his services. Terence found himself possessor of a sum sufficient to pay a steerage passage to New York, and leave him a hundred and fifty dollars to begin life with in the New World. Nor, up to this stormy May evening, had he ever once had cause to repent his change of country.

The shabby stranger sat by the stove, leaning forward, drying himself; his white hands (for they *were* white) resting on his knees, and gleaming through the dull steam that rose from his wet clothes. Handsome, most people would have called him; yet it was a bad countenance, furtive and gloomy. The large gray eyes were well formed, but they seemed not to look straight at any one; the features well cut; brown curling hair and whiskers of the same color. One could see, however, that there was power about the man. Though the forehead was low, it was a fair-sized head, fully developed above the eyes and behind the

large ears, of which one was somewhat disfigured by a purple line across it, as from an old wound. The features bore the stamp of self-indulgence and something of the flush of dissipation. A sullen frown passed over them from time to time, prompted, it was evident, by thoughts that were anything but pleasant.

After a time he rose and approached the bar. "A glass of grog, landlord," he said: "I want it stiff. A hell of a wet night I've had of it!"

"In a minute," replied the other: then to a man with whom he had been conversing: "You haven't got that last sack of potatoes down: how much is the bill, altogether?"

"Seventeen dollars and a half, Terence; but I don't want the money now if it isn't just handy."

"Never handier," said Terence. "I don't buy till I have the cash ready." And producing from an inner breast-pocket a stout linen bag, he poured on the counter its entire contents, consisting of a number of eagles, together with a few half-eagles and bank-bills. "Is it gold you'll be wanting?"

"Well," said the other, "city bills are good enough, but I'm going South to-morrow, and you may as well give me a couple of those half-eagles."

"Heartily welcome," said Terence, paying him, and taking a receipt in return.

If the two men who happened at the moment to be the only occupants of the bar-room except the stranger, had chanced to notice the eager, sidelong, persistent look which the latter cast on the gold that still lay scattered on the counter, it might have been interpreted to his discredit; yet one ought not to think hard of the hungry vagrant who, as he passes the brilliantly-lighted window of a pastry cook's shop, casts wistful glances at tart and cheese-cake.

As it was, Terence was scarcely conscious of the man's presence, until the latter repeated his request for a glass of brandy and water.

"Faith, an' I clane forgot ye," he said, pouring out a liberal portion, as if to atone for the delay.

The man tossed off the potent dram with a relish.

Several lodgers came in. Then he asked: "Can I put up with you, Mr. O'Reilly, to-night?"

Terence stopped in the act of closing the bag whence he had poured the gold, looked hard at the questioner, and hesitated. The man spoke, as if in answer to the hesitation:

"You wouldn't be turning a poor man, and a countryman of your own, out in a stormy night like this? I'm from Tipperary."

"What's your name?"

"My name? — Byron — Byron Cassidy."

"Well, Bryan—"

"It's Byron, not Bryan, I told you," retorted the other, more sharply than the occasion seemed to call for.

"Well, Byron, then: ye needn't flare up. Bryan's a better Irish name, any way."

"If you're afraid of the pay, there's my watch," pulling a silver one from his fob.

"Who said I was afraid? Put up your watch. It's an ugly night, and I'll not turn you from the door," pushing the register toward him, in which the man entered his name, with the address, "Port Richmond," and the remark: "I've been working in the country, but I came last from Port Richmond."

"He can write, any bow," said the landlord to himself, glancing at the name: "maybe he's dacent;" and he led the way to a small bed-room, setting a candlestick on the washstand.

Left alone, Cassidy sat down on a straight-backed, rush-bottomed chair, tilted it back against the bed, and sank into moody thought. Half an hour passed ere he stirred. At last, muttering, "A man must do something for a living: nothing venture, nothing have," he rose and examined the fastenings of the bed-room door. There was a lock, with the key inside. It locked readily, but that did not seem to satisfy him. Unlocking it, he wrenched the key forcibly to the left. Something snapped. Then he tried repeatedly to lock the