



THE NOBLE FLORENTINE AND THE LORD CHANCELOR.

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In the sixteenth century, there lived in Florence a merchant whose name was Francis Frescobald—a man of noble family, of liberal and well-informed mind, and who, by the success of his mercantile enterprise, had amassed considerable wealth. One day a young man, with all the indications of the most miserable poverty about him, implored him to bestow upon him something to relieve his distresses. In spite of his emaciation and rags, Frescobald imagined that he saw about him the evidences of capacity and virtue, and inquired what was his name, and in what country he was born. "I came," said the young man, "from England; my name is Thomas Cromwell; my father (meaning his father-in-law) is a poor man, a cloth-shearer; I strayed from my own country, and came into Italy with the French army, where I was the servant of a soldier, carrying after him his pike and burganet." Frescobald's pity and affection were strongly excited; he took the young man into his house, paid every attention to him as his guest, clothed him in new apparel, and upon his departure, presented him with a horse and sixteen ducats of gold. Cromwell, thus assisted, returned to his own country, diligently availed himself of every opportunity of advancing in life, and at length, having obtained the peculiar favour of Henry VIII., he was made Lord High Chancellor of England.

In the meantime Frescobald was proving that "riches make for themselves wings, and fly away." His commerce became unsuccessful, his enterprises failed, his credit was destroyed, and he was reduced to penury and ruin. In this extremity he recollected that some English merchants owed him fifteen thousand ducats; and he instantly set out for London to obtain the debt as a last supply. As he was prosecuting with great earnestness the business which had brought him to England, he accidentally met with the Chancellor as he was riding to court. Cromwell instantly recollected him, alighted from his horse, embraced him before all his retinue, and inquired if he was not Francis Frescobald the Florentine, concluding his address by earnestly requesting him that very day to pay a visit at his house. Frescobald was lost in astonishment at the circumstance, and some time elapsed before he recognised, in the person of the dignified officer he had seen, the poor young Englishman he had formerly relieved in Italy. Not a little animated by so propitious an event in the midst of all his discouragements, he repaired to the Chancellor's house, and walking about in the courtyard, he awaited with some agitation the return of his friend. The Chancellor soon arrived, and the tokens of extraordinary attention and regard which he heaped upon the Florentine merchant, excited both the curiosity and the surprise of the Lord High Admiral, and of some other noblemen who were present. Holding Frescobald by the hand, Cromwell, addressing the nobleman just named, said, "You wonder, my lord, that I should so highly prize this man. It is he by whose means I have achieved this my present degree." He then proceeded to narrate the history of himself which has been detailed, and concluded by leading Frescobald into an inner apartment, where he first opened a coffer, and gave Frescobald sixteen ducats. "Here," said he, "my friend, is the money which you lent me on my departure from Florence; here are other ten which you

bestowed upon my apparel, with ten more you disbursed for the horse I rode upon. Considering that you are a merchant, it seemed to me not honest to return your money without some consideration for its long detention. Take, therefore, these four bags, in every one of which is four hundred ducats, to receive and enjoy from the hand of your assured friend." Frescobald wished to have declined this generous gift, but the other pressed him to accept of these tokens of his gratitude. Cromwell then inquired into the reason of his presence in England, and obtained from him the names of all his debtors, with the respective sums they owed. As soon as he obtained this information, he sent an official servant to each of them, commanding them to pay the money within fifteen days upon the pain of his displeasure. The servant so well performed the wishes of his master, and the persons to whom he applied were so afraid of incurring the displeasure of a person so high in dignity and power, that the whole sum was obtained in a very short time. Nor did the gratitude of the Lord Chancellor stop here: he made to Frescobald the most magnificent offers of establishment in London if he would consent to remain in England; but the Florentine pined to return to his own country, which he did, but he died within a year after his return.

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#### THE MICHELSTOWN CAVES; OR, "DE PROFUNDIS."

NOT far from Michelstown, County Cork, Ireland, there is a very remarkable range of caverns with a single entrance. Like all the known caverns in the world—such as those of Kentucky, North America, that in the island of Antiparos, on the coast of Greece, several in Italy, and the well-known cave of the Peak, Derbyshire, England—the caverns near Michelstown are found in limestone rock, all the hills and mountains in the neighbourhood (the long range of the lofty Galtees included) being of that formation. The Michelstown caverns have not been known many years, and their discovery was the result of accident. A farmer in the district, close to the hill where the caverns begin, one day lost a sheep, and a lad who was near had observed it disappear down a large hole beside an elevated rock. Hastening to the spot, on looking down the orifice, the animal, however, could not be seen, but its voice of distress and terror was heard a considerable distance underground. Its owner on reaching the place descended the opening with some difficulty, as it was steep and narrow—and led by the cries of the terrified creature, to his great surprise discovered the caves while he rescued his sheep.

As Michelstown is not a very attractive place (at the period of the following narrative it was half in ruins), and as, since railways have been constructed in the south of the sister island, it has virtually been removed from the main line of traffic, the caves, though well worthy of inspection, are seldom visited and are little known. We are therefore induced to give an account of a visit paid to them some years ago in company with a friend.

We started on a summer's day from Clonmel, County Tipperary, and as we had several miles to travel, left at an early hour. The heavens were bright and the country rich and undulating; every grove was musical with the voices of birds, so that we much enjoyed our ride. Our driver, Pat Malone, a true Irishman of that day, added