

BLIND LOVE

THE PROLOGUE

I

SOON after sunrise, on a cloudy morning in the year 1881, a special messenger disturbed the repose of Dennis Howmore, at his place of residence in the pleasant Irish town of Ardoon.

Well acquainted apparently with the way upstairs, the man thumped on a bed-room door, and shouted his message through it: "The master wants you, and mind you don't keep him waiting."

The person sending this peremptory message was Sir Giles Mountjoy of Ardoon, knight and banker. The person receiving the message was Sir Giles's head clerk. As a matter of course, Dennis Howmore dressed himself at full speed, and hastened to his employer's private house on the outskirts of the town.

He found Sir Giles in an irritable and anxious state of mind. A letter lay open on the banker's bed, his night-cap was crumpled crookedly on his head, he was in too great a hurry to remember the claims of politeness, when the clerk said "Good morning."

"Dennis, I have got something for you to do. It must be kept a secret, and it allows of no delay."

"Is it anything connected with business, sir?"

The banker lost his temper. "How can you be such an infernal fool as to suppose that anything connected with business could happen at this time in the morning? Do you know the first milestone on the road to Garvan?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Go to the milestone, and take care that nobody sees you when you get there. Look at the back of the stone. If you discover an Object which appears to have been left in that situation on the ground, bring it to me; and