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Frank Sheehy Skeffington.

IN DARK AND EVIL DAYS

BY

FRANCIS SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON

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To Owen

" Did they dare, did they dare to slay Owen Roe O'Neill?"

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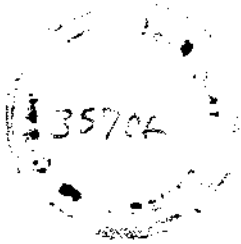

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

"A martyr fights in death more terrible
Than many warring saints. He is entrenched.
You cannot reach him with your heaviest shot."
—*F. H. Visiak.*

FRANCIS SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON was born on December 23rd, 1878, in Bailieboro', Co. Cavan. His family originally came from the neighbourhood of Downpatrick, Co. Down, where lies the historic triple grave of Patrick, Brigid and Columba. He was an only child and was educated at home by his father, Dr. Skeffington, a distinguished educationist. A precocious boy, he won high places, exhibitions, gold medals in his Intermediate course, and even in his teens interested himself in public affairs. From his mother he learned to be a patriot: his boyish hero was Michael Davitt. In 1896 he came to Dublin to study at University College for his degree, and the rest of his life was spent almost entirely in the city that he loved. In later years offers were made to him to take up more lucrative work in England and in America: he always refused, holding that an Irishman's place was in his own land and that his best work should be done there. "I'd rather be in jail in Dublin than free in New York,"

he replied recently to friends in the United States who urged him to remain there.

He had a brilliant collegiate course, and in 1902, took his M.A. degree with honours, in the Royal University. The same year he was appointed first lay Registrar of University College, Stephen's Green, and the following year, 1903, he won the Chancellor's Gold Medal for an English Prose Essay on Henry Grattan. On June 27th, 1903, he married his classmate, Hanna Sheehy, daughter of David Sheehy, M.P., and, true to his feminist principles, adopted her name thenceforth as part of his own. Their son, Owen, was born in May, 1909.

In 1904 he resigned his post of Registrar owing to a difference with the President on a question of the admission of women to full collegiate privileges in the new University. About this time he wrote an essay on, "A Forgotten Aspect of the University Question," in which he pleaded this cause. Later, in large measure owing to the result of his pioneer work and that of others, he had the satisfaction of seeing most of his ideals become realities, for, in spite of initial opposition, women were admitted to full equality with men in the new National University. His advocacy, however, of the then doubtful question, cost him his place in the University. It was but the first of many such serious sacrifices to principle.

Throughout his college career, as later, he always interested himself keenly in public affairs, being in those days a warm supporter of the Irish Party and a great believer in

the good-will of the British Democracy towards Ireland. Later events made him more sceptical of both, especially of British Liberalism. He helped to found the Young Ireland Branch of the United Irish League, a band of young intellectuals, formed to promote interest in politics among University students. This branch afterwards gave several members to the Irish Party, among them T. M. Kettle, Stephen Gwynn, E. J. Kelly and Richard Hazleton.

His early interest in International Peace was shown by his canvassing among his college chums for signatures to the Peace Rescript issued in 1897, by Nicholas II., the famous appeal to the peoples, which led to the establishment of the Hague Tribunal. Many of his fellow students who refused to sign "because there might be a chance of striking a blow sometime for Ireland," afterwards died wearing the British uniform. Skeffington to the end remained a "fighting pacifist," preaching the gospel of Internationalism, while true to his own "small nationality," a hater of all oppressions, whether of class, creed, sex or nation.

He helped to found the Independent Labour Party of Ireland in 1908, and became intimately associated henceforth with the Labour War in Ireland, and an advocate of better conditions for the workers. In 1908 he brought out his "Life of Michael Davitt," the standard biography of that great Irishman, written with all the enthusiasm of an ardent disciple. Commenting on Davitt's dramatic exit from the House of Commons as a protest against the

war of extermination on the valiant Boer republic, he made a passionate plea for the rights of small nations.

As a free lance journalist he was connected with many brilliant, if short-lived, publications. He helped with T. M. Kettle, to edit *The Nationist*, an Irish weekly; with Frederick Ryan, the *National Democrat*, a progressive organ of Irish Democracy. In 1913 he took over from J. H. Cousins the editorship of the *Irish Citizen*, a weekly suffragist organ, which he edited until his death. He also issued—single-handed, in 1906-7—a unique weekly commentary on Irish affairs, entitled *Dialogues of the Day*, a production which shows at its best the writer's rare insight into Irish life in all its phases, his fine tolerance, clear judgment and kindly humour. About this time he also contributed to the *Review of Reviews* some remarkable character-sketches of Irish leaders, including one of Thomas Sexton, containing a warm appreciation of his genius for finance. He was also associated journalistically with the *Irish Peasant*, *Young Ireland*, the *Freeman's Journal*, acted as Irish correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, of the London *Herald*, and latterly of the *Call*, the American Socialist daily, as well as of *L'Humanité*, the organ of French socialism, founded by Jaurès, the great French pacifist, whose efforts to keep France out of the war were cut short by his assassination on the eve of the outbreak of hostilities, by a militarist fanatic, who also escaped punishment for his crime by the plea of insanity.

In 1913 Sheehy Skeffington flung himself whole-heartedly

into the struggle for better conditions waged by the workers of the Irish Transport Union, under Larkin and Connolly. He formed one of the Citizens' Peace Committee called together to secure arbitration and good terms for the locked-out. In 1914 he took part in a deputation to the Irish and Labour Members to press for an inquiry into the conduct of the police during the Dublin riots.

It would be impossible within the scope of this brief notice to mention the many movements with which Sheehy Skeffington was identified: let it suffice to say that there was no cause that ever appealed for the support of a lover of freedom that had not his adhesion, and, like the true pioneer, he never hesitated to pay the price in sacrifice. A writer in *New Ireland* aptly says of him:—

"In Skeffington there was an ideal champion of lost causes, or, to speak more accurately, of causes which have not so far 'found themselves' in the estimation of the general public. He was in many matters ahead of his day, a voice crying in the wilderness. The lot of such is hard, harder than that of the transgressor, or of those conservative and out-of-date. Recognition, appreciation, gratitude come not in their lifetime, and, as often as not, they are martyrs for their beliefs. Yet, surely, such a fate is not unwelcome to them. The leader of a Forlorn Hope, or of what the world may declare one, does not count the cost. Those who are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings; the martyr's crown is a far finer diadem than that of any king in the eyes of the enthusiastic reformer.

His foes recognized these qualities also. The man-in-the-street, the man whose mind is made up for him by his newspaper, vaguely disliked Skeffington, much, I think, as the Athenians disliked Aristides, or, even more, as they hated Socrates. A cup of hemlock might have been his fate had he lived in Ancient Greece. Christianity and the twentieth century found a substitute in the rifles at Portobello Barracks."

At the outbreak of the war Sheehy Skeffington led a strong campaign against Conscription, addressing no fewer than forty weekly meetings (from the autumn of 1914 to the spring of 1915) in Beresford Place, Dublin, against the recruiting of Irishmen "to uphold the British supremacy of the seas." When Mr. Asquith came over to Dublin in September, 1914, to offer "a free gift" to "a free people" before a carefully-selected audience, Sheehy Skeffington held a protest meeting outside the Mansion House, and was arrested and detained in custody by the police until the meeting was over.

On the advent of the Coalition Government, about Whitsuntide, 1915, when a fresh demand was being made for Conscription, the authorities at length determined to stop the weekly anti-war meetings, and Sheehy Skeffington was arrested at midnight on Saturday, May 31st, at his home, and conveyed to Mountjoy Jail to await trial. He was tried by a Dublin police magistrate, and defended himself, making a strong plea for freedom of speech and conscience, and the right of passive resistance.

"Had I lived in England," he said, "I should still deem it my duty to insist on the propaganda to stop the war in the only way in which the people can stop the war namely, by stopping recruiting, by ceasing to provide the food for powder. . . . Whatever may be said of the English people, the Irish people never at any time gave the slightest mandate or authority to commit them to a European war. Ireland, from its depopulation, from its impoverishment, requires peace more than any other, nation in Europe. That is one of the strongest points in the case I present. On the basis of that claim for 'small nationalities,' which is assumedly the basis of this war, it is now taken for granted that it is right and rational for the people of Bohemia and Transylvania to rejoice in the defeats and break-up of the Austrian Empire; that it is right and rational for the people of Alsace-Lorraine and of Posen to rejoice in the break-up of the German Empire. It used to be taken for granted that the people of Poland had a right to rejoice in the break-up of the Russian Empire, but that opinion is no longer——"

MR. MAHONY—"You are wandering very far away. You must be brief. The only point I have to consider is whether you spoke against recruiting in his Majesty's army,—and I know nothing about Irish politics, or Austrian politics, or Transylvanian politics."

MR. SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON—"I claim that to put this argument before the Irish people in the form which I have shown, and to tell them that it was just as right and

natural for them to rejoice in the danger of the British Empire was a constitutional right."

MR. MAHONY—"I cannot allow you to go on in this way."

MR. SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON—"You will say that is a breach of the law. What of it? We have had distinguished law-breakers before in Ireland. I am prosecuted, not for the attacks on recruiting, on voluntary enlistment in the army, but for my attacks on Conscription. In attacking Conscription, not only were my moral duty and my constitutional right equally strong, but here there was no breach of law whatever. To say that 'if Conscription comes, we will not have it,' is no more a breach of law than it was treason for Sir Edward Carson to say that 'if Home Rule comes, we will not have it.' In England an Anti-Conscription League has been formed, whose members declare their intention to resist to the death. In this case you will not find it possible to condemn me for breaking the law. I have only advocated passive resistance, because I believe that that form of resistance is sufficient to smash any Compulsory Military Service Act that may be put in force. It is because I have advocated passive resistance, and because as Conscription came nearer, I have pledged an increasing number to resist Conscription that this prosecution is brought against me. This prosecution would be intelligible in a country ruled by an autocrat—in a country under the iron heel of military despotism; in a country ruled by a narrow oligarchy, fearing the smallest breath of criticism. It would be intelligible above all in a country

held by force by another country, the rulers of which would fear to allow any expression of opinion amongst the subject people. If you condemn me, you condemn the system you represent as being some, or all, of these things. Any sentence you may pass on me is a sentence upon British rule in Ireland."

He received the maximum penalty which the magistrate could bestow—six months with hard labour and an additional six months in default of bail, which he refused to give. In protest he refused to take food or drink and was released on the eve of the seventh day in a state of utter exhaustion, the governor notifying his wife that she must remove her husband on "her own responsibility." He was released under the "Cat and Mouse" Act, a species of "ticket of leave," his licence to expire in fourteen days, when he would be liable to re-arrest.

George Bernard Shaw wrote to his wife of his sentence: "If Mr. Sheehy Skeffington deserves six months for his speech, Lord Northcliffe must deserve about sixty years. However, there is nothing to be done. The Defence of the Realm Act abolishes all liberty in Great Britain and Ireland, except such as the authorities choose to leave us. *Therefore, if they should decide for any reason to hang your husband you will have no practical remedy.*" His words were to prove in the sequel only too true.

Sheehy Skeffington recovered slowly. As a result of the widespread indignation at his sentence in Ireland and Great Britain, the Government decided not to re-arrest him on the

expiry of his "licence;" and, on his partial recovery, he left the country to fulfil a lecture engagement in the United States. He had a most successful tour, lecturing to large audiences in four of the largest cities in the States, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis. His article on "A Forgotten Small Nationality," in the February issue of the *Century Magazine*, puts the case for Ireland to America with unanswerable logic.

On his arrival in Liverpool, on December 18th, 1915, he was detained and searched by the military authorities. After some hours' detention, however, he was allowed to proceed on his journey home and returned to Dublin next day. His trunks and papers were confiscated, but were subsequently returned after examination.

He lectured on January 4th, on his "Impressions of America;" and on February 18th, held a remarkable debate with the Countess Marcievicz on the question "Do We Want Peace Now?" in which he put the case strongly that a speedy conclusion of the war would make for the welfare of Ireland, while a prolonged war would but lead to ultimate ruin. Most of his audience though visibly impressed by his arguments, were carried away by Mme. Marcievicz's declaration, that a prolonged war, by weakening Britain, would thereby benefit Ireland. James Connolly also supported this view. On March 1st, he lectured in the Sinn Fein Rooms, Harcourt Street, on "Internationalism and World Politics."

From his return to Ireland until his murder, he actively

interested himself in the question of the excessive taxation of Ireland and the extra unfair burdens imposed on our country by the war. He was one of the founders of the Irish Financial Relations Committee, and spoke at a large protest meeting in the Mansion House, on February 29th. In view of the very critical situation between the Government and the Irish Volunteers he held that in the new movement a safety valve was provided, "militant but not militarist."

Robert Lynd writes of his fighting pacifism (which some failed to understand):—

"Skeffington's pacifism was double-edged. It was the pacifism of the Nationalist and of the Internationalist. If he had been an Englishman or a German he would no doubt have been a conscientious objector . . . He believed that Ireland as a nation has the same right to remain neutral in this war as Denmark has: and he argued his case on comparable grounds to those on which Henri Bourassa, the Canadian Nationalist, claimed that Canada ought to remain neutral. He was intellectually a pacifist. His interests were social—democratic and internationalist. He would have stood by the side of Liebknecht if he had been a German. He hated Imperialist wars as denials of the brotherhood of man."

It was about this time that Sheehy Skeffington wrote his remarkable letter to the *New Statesman* and other English papers in which he predicted the tragedy of Easter week. The British press ignored his letter. They published it

after his death, however, to show how remarkably his predictions had proved to be correct—too late, as usual, to prevent catastrophe.

His views on the Volunteer movement (so repeatedly misnamed "Sinn Fein") he expressed clearly in his well-known "Open Letter to Thomas McDonagh": while friendly to the aims and aspirations of the new movement, he remained always opposed to militarism in whatever guise.

"It is a clean open-air movement, which gives the young men of Ireland something better to do than cheer at meetings and pass resolutions.

"But, you will say, Ireland is too small, too poor, ever to be a militarist nation in the European sense. True, Ireland's militarism can never be on so great a scale as that of Germany or England; but it may be equally fatal to the best interests of Ireland. European militarism has drenched Europe in blood; Irish militarism may only crimson the fields of Ireland. For us that would be disaster enough.

"You fervently hope never to employ armed force against a fellow-Irishman. But a few weeks ago I heard a friend, who is also a Volunteer, speaking from the same platform with me, win plaudits by saying that the hills of Ireland would be crimsoned with blood rather than that the partition of Ireland should be allowed. That is the spirit that I dread. I am opposed to partition; but partition could be defeated at too dear a price.

"I advocate no mere servile lazy acquiescence in injustice. I am, and always will be, a fighter. But I want to see the age-long fight against injustice clothe itself in new forms, suited to a new age. I want to see the manhood of Ireland no longer hypnotized by the glamour of 'the glory of arms,' no longer blind to the horrors of organized murder.

"We are on the threshold of a new era in human history. After this war, nothing can be as it was before. The foundations of all things must be re-examined. Things which we might have let pass, lightheartedly, as unimportant, now come to be charged with a tragic and intense significance. Formerly we could only imagine the chaos to which we were being led by the military spirit. Now we realize it. And we must never fall into that abyss again.

"Can you not conceive an organization, a body of men and women banded together to secure and maintain the rights and liberties of the people of Ireland, a body animated with a high purpose, united by a bond of comradeship, trained and disciplined in the ways of self-sacrifice and true patriotism, armed and equipped with the weapons of intellect and of will that are irresistible?—an organization of people prepared to dare all things for their object, prepared to suffer and to die rather than abandon one jot of their principles—but an organization that will not lay it down as its fundamental principle, 'We will prepare to kill our fellow men?'"

At the outbreak of the rising Sheehy Skeffington actively

interested himself to prevent looting, when the police were withdrawn from the streets. He was successful in some of his efforts, and enlisted the help of several civilians and many priests. The Volunteers also fired blank volleys from time to time to scare away the looters. He called a meeting of citizens for Tuesday evening to organize a civic police, but by that time there were none but himself who would venture to take up such dangerous duty—a duty which would bring them into conflict with the criminal elements of the population, eager for plunder and free in the general chaos to commit acts of rapine with impunity.

When a British officer (Captain Pinfield) was reported to be bleeding to death in the street after the assault on Dublin Castle, and the crowd was afraid (owing to the cross firing) to go to his assistance, Skeffington went at the risk of his life to help to bring the mortally wounded man to a place of safety, remarking when reminded of his peril: "Oh, I could not let anyone bleed to death while I could help him." He found, however, on reaching the place indicated that the body had already been dragged away, there being left merely a pool of blood to mark the spot. This last act was characteristic of the man, his simple heroism, his horror of bloodshed, his cool courage.

Already he was himself marked for death. Returning to his home between seven and eight o'clock, on Tuesday, April 25th (his description had been already circulated at the city bridges), he was arrested on Portobello Bridge, and conveyed to Portobello Barracks. The poignant

details of his last hours are already well known. Though no charge was entered against him, orders were issued from head-quarters that he was to be "detained," and he was kept a prisoner in a separate locked cell. At midnight he was forcibly removed from the guard by Captain Bowen-Colthurst, of the Royal Irish Rifles, and taken as hostage, with his hands bound behind his back, as far as Portobello Bridge. On the way he beheld the murder of the boy, Coade; he saw him left weltering in his blood, his jaw "bashed" by the butt-end of a rifle. At the bridge he was left in charge of Lieutenant Leslie Wilson, with orders that he was to be shot if there were any sniping, or any attack on the raiding party which was detailed to search Alderman Kelly's premises, a little further down. Escorted back with the raiding party and other prisoners, he was locked up for the night, handcuffed. He asked in vain that word be sent to his wife, who lived within ten minutes' distance of the barracks. At ten next morning, Captain Bowen-Colthurst again removed him from the guard and had him shot without warning and without any form of trial, in the yard adjoining his cell. Noticing a movement in his body, the officer had a second volley fired at the dying man as he lay on the ground. That night his body, sewn in a sack, was buried in the barracks. On the following Sunday bricklayers were brought to remove from the walls all traces of the crime.

On Friday, 28th, the Royal Irish Rifles, under Colonel Allett and Captain Colthurst, raided the murdered man's

house in search of incriminating documents, fired a volley at the premises, and sacked the house, ordering the seven-year-old boy to put his "hands up!" and keeping him and his mother under arrest, with a guard of soldiers with fixed bayonets. On Monday a second raid took place.

The guilty officer—afterwards declared to be "insane" by a courtmartial held on June 6th—was continued in command of troops, promoted on May 1st, and sent with a detachment to Newry on May 9th. The officer, Sir Francis Vane, by whose efforts he was at length put under arrest, has since been "relegated to unemployment," and deprived of his command. Subsequently, owing to persistent pressure on the authorities, a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the "Skeffington Case," but the terms of reference were too limited to permit any full investigation. Up to the time of writing the Commission has not issued its report. Sheehy Skeffington's last reported words to his captors in Portobello—"I am in sympathy with the Sinn Fein movement, but opposed to militarism," have been amply justified, for a more terrible indictment of militarism could not be found, even in the annals of the North Corks.

His soldier brother-in-law, Thomas Kettle, recently killed at Ginchy, wrote of him a few weeks before he met his own death :—

"He was to me the good comrade of many hopes, and though the ways of this scurvy and disastrous world led us

apart, he remained to me an inextinguishable flame. This 'agitator,' this 'public menace,' this 'disturber' was wholly emancipated from egotism, and incapable of personal hatred. He was a man who had ranged the whole world of ideas. Strangest of all, he, who turned away from soldiers, left to all soldiers an example of courage in death to which there are not many parallels. This brave and honourable man died to the rattle of musketry. His name will be recalled to the ruffle of drums."

IN DARK AND EVIL DAYS was written some years ago.

H. S. S.

[The Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the murder of F. Sheehy Skeffington has since been issued. Its scope was very limited owing to the extremely narrow terms of reference and the Inquiry was therefore shorn of much of its value, and much important evidence was ruled out as irrelevant. Its findings are none the less remarkable, and the document is a striking indictment of martial law and of militarism generally, showing that officers and men acted under the "delusion" that the proclamation of martial law entitled them to murder with impunity unarmed civilians and helpless prisoners. The Report also reveals a deliberate attempt to hush up the triple murder, and, when that failed, to concoct evidence after the event to palliate the crime, and a complete failure of the higher authorities to take any steps whatever, until compelled by public pressure, to put the murderer under restraint. Repeatedly, as the Report shows, Head-quarters in Dublin Castle was informed of the arrest, the taking out as a

"hostage" and the murder of Sheehy Skeffington, but, beyond giving directions as to his burial—without notification to his widow—in the Barracks, no orders were given to restrain Captain Colthurst, who continued for over ten days in command, and still holds his rank as Captain. It is also shown that Major Sir Francis Vane only succeeded in having the murderer put under arrest on direct application to Lord Kitchener. Many vital facts, suppressed or distorted at the courtmartial, are now brought out, but much is still held back—we are left in ignorance as to how many other murders were committed during the period of Captain Colthurst's activity. The Report leaves much still open to question and comment and casts strong doubt on the alleged insanity of Captain Colthurst. "Apart from the defence of insanity there can be no excuse for his conduct from first to last." The whole transaction reads like a page torn from the bloody annals of Cromwell's massacres in Ireland, or of '98. The story of which Mr. Asquith declared on May 11th to Mr. Dillon in the House of Commons, "I confess I cannot believe it and I do not believe it. Does anyone suppose that Sir John Maxwell has any object in shielding officers and soldiers, if there be such, who have been guilty of such ungentlemanlike and such inhuman conduct? *It is the last thing the British Army would dream of,*" has since been proved by the Inquiry to be accurate in every particular, yet the only officer effectively punished is the officer who insisted on reporting the matter to Lord Kitchener, while, but for the overwhelming pressure of public opinion it is clear that even this belated and restricted Inquiry, which was powerless to punish, would never have been held. Francis Sheehy Skeffington could not have imagined any more scathing exposure of the system he detested and under which he perished; no writer of fiction could have invented a more harrowing tale of unrelieved brutality than will be found in the cold, lawyer-like language of the Simon Report.—H. S. S.]

IN DARK AND EVIL DAYS

A Tale of '98

CHAPTER I

A HALT AT KYAN'S

IT was a bright spring day in 1798, and the plains of Wexford, as yet unstained by military massacre, breathed out all the fragrance of the youthful year in response to the caressing rays of the sun. Sweetly sang the mating songsters on every tree and hedge, but nowhere, surely, more sweetly and contentedly than in the pleasant grove that stood close by Kyan's farm. For here all around spoke of peace, plenty, and content; the young corn and the fresh meadow-grass rustled with life over the gently undulating plain that stretched away beyond the eye's range to the distant sea on one side, on the other to the mountain chains that fringe the county from Blackstairs to Croghan Kinsella, while hard by flowed the swift Slaney, no trace of blood yet sullying its dark waves. Industrious comfort quietly proclaimed itself in the curling smoke of each white-washed cottage, or clustered group of farm buildings;

from the poorest labourer to the most prosperous farmer, the land in its rich bounty produced ample sustenance for all. A splendid spot, surely, to spend one's days, living the free life of the open country, feeling the independence of the self-supporting farmer, at once tiller and owner of the soil he tilled; ever in touch with the elemental forces of beneficent nature; nor lacking human society, while all around were poorer workers whom one could help to make the best of life.

Some such thoughts were those of the young horseman who, riding northward from Enniscorthy, viewed the smiling scene with an admiring eye, and gratified his tired horse with a gentler pace, the better to contemplate its unpretentious beauty. He was a man of middle size, whose well-proportioned figure seemed to make one with his horse in the manner unattainable, save by the most accomplished riders. His smooth-shaven chin and scanty moustache proclaimed him young; but the earnest brow, the large, reflective eyes, the firm-set mouth, and square jaw, marked him out as a man of thought and purpose beyond his years. His dusty dress and weary horse showed that he had travelled far, though it was still early in the afternoon; and now, seemingly, he was considering whether he had better go further, or stop awhile and rest. At the spot where the main road sent off a carriage-way leading down to Kyan's farm, he halted his horse, and gazed in an undecided manner, now at the chimneys and gables of the house half-hidden among the trees, now at the long, white road stretching away in front towards Wicklow

and Dublin. His horse's jaded condition, and his own travel-stained accoutrements, with the promptings of his heart to aid, seemed to incline him to turn aside; but as his hand fell on a letter in his pocket, his brow contracted, and with an impatient shrug he prepared to resume his journey northwards.

"Sure, Mr. Fitzgerald, an' is it yerself that's in it? I was just thinkin', then, that it was near the time you said you'd be back in these parts."

Hailed in these words, the rider turned his head and saw emerging from a boreen on the other side of the road, a man clad in a labourer's garb, but spruce and clean; a man of nearly fifty years of age, but straight of back and strong of limb—one of those men who, by the careful husbanding of their youthful strength, preserve in growing old the vigorous energy of early manhood. A rugged face, strong and mobile; an honest eye, that twinkled by times in roguish fun; a general air of frankness and sturdiness; such was the man who greeted Dermot Fitzgerald, and who was recognized by him as Dan Murphy, an old and faithful servant of the Kyan family.

"You are one of the very people I was wishing to see, Dan. And how are you? and how are they all—Esmond, Miss Eileen, and the rest?"

"All well, sir, thanks be to God. You've come in a good time, too; it's Miss Eileen's birthday, an' a few of the neighbours 'll likely drop in."

"I should be glad to see them all once more, but ——."

"Sure you wudn't think of goin' by, Mr. Fitzgerald, without comin' down to rest yerself, an' have a bit

to eat? I'm thinkin' ye've a long journey before ye, an' both you an' the baste will be the better of a rest."

"That's true, Dan; I'll go down to the house—though I cannot stay long—just to say good-bye—perhaps for ever." And he dismounted to lead his horse down the lane at which he had hesitated; Dan Murphy walking by his side.

"An' how did you prosper, sir, down in the south o' the county?"

"Badly, very badly," answered Fitzgerald, with an air of deep depression. "They are just as blind, all over the county, to the signs of the times as they are hereabouts. My mission has been a failure, Dan."

"Aye, sure the people hereabouts were always quiet an' peaceable—God bless them!" said Dan, sarcastically.

"Yet I feel, Dan, that they have staunch and sturdy hearts, if I could but touch them! if I could but fire them with any spark of martial enthusiasm, any patriotic warmth!—now, above all, in this hour of imminent danger."

"Why, Mr. Dermot," said Dan, struck by the emphasis he laid on the last few words, "have you had any bad news from Dublin?"

Dermot Fitzgerald looked sharply around before replying, and then spoke softly. "The worst, or next to the worst, Dan. Half of our trustiest leaders have been betrayed to the Government. Oliver Bond and Thomas Addis Emmet have been arrested in Dublin; Arthur O'Connor in England, on his way to France. This is old news; but it only reached me

last night, at New Ross, when I had completed my fruitlesss organizing tour in South Wexford."

"The Lord save us! An' Lord Edward, Mr. Dermot?"

"Lord Edward, I hear, is hiding in Dublin; Major Sirr and his gang are hourly on his track. Even now, while we are speaking, my lion-hearted kinsman may be dead—in prison, I am sure he is not, for he would never submit to be arrested without fighting to the death."

"An' what are you goin' to do, at all, at all, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"I am hurrying back to Dublin to consult with Lord Edward, and such other leaders as we have left. We must act at once, or all is lost."

"I wish I was goin' with you, Mr. Dermot!" exclaimed Dan, vehemently. "I'd like to be strikin' a blow for the oul' counthry, if blows is goin'!"

"Well, then, Dan, why not come? I should be glad to see you in the fighting line, and there will be no fighting in Wexford, I see."

Dan Murphy paused a moment, and then answered sadly, yet decisively, "No, Mr. Fitzgerald. I'm sorry not to be able to fight with you an' the rest; an' I'm not so old, nayther, that I cudn't be of some use. But, sir, I've lived here nigh all my life; it's thirty-three year agin' next harvest since the first day's work I done for oul' Mr. Kyan, an' plase God, I won't lave the oul' place now. If there was to be fightin' here in Wexford, it'd be different—an' if Mr. Esmond was to be leadin' us, as he ought to be."

"I don't blame you, Dan," replied the young

organizer. "I suppose Esmond is no more disposed to join us than when I was here last, is he?"

"No, then, sir, he isn't; but sure, 'tisn't for want of persuasions," added Dan. "Miss Eileen is at him about it, day in an' day out, but fond as Mr. Esmond is of his sister, she can make no hand of him in this."

"Ah!" said Dermot, with more concentrated attention, however, than the monosyllabic reply would seem to convey.

"You'd wonder, now," went on Murphy (not altogether unconscious, perhaps, of the effect he was producing on his hearer), "that a gentle little slip iv a crature like her would be that hot about it. But she has the rale oul' Irish spirit in her."

"God bless her!" half involuntarily murmured Fitzgerald.

"To be sure," said Dan, not heeding him, "Miss Kavanagh has the same, but it's only what ye'd expect from a big, dashin' girl like her."

"Here we are," said Dermot, as they turned a corner and found themselves in front of the old house. "And there is Esmond himself, I see, at the gate."

"He'll be right glad to see you, sir; for, though he couldn't think as you think, many's the time since you wur here before that he's been talkin' about you."

With these words, Dan took Fitzgerald's horse to lead it round to the back, while Dermot advanced to meet Esmond Kyan, who heartily greeted his friend, and led him at once into the best room in the quaint

old mansion—half farmhouse, half gentleman's residence—where they proceeded to discuss the troublous times.

The two young men presented a strong contrast as they sat together, over the wine which had been brought in on Esmond's order. Esmond Kyan was older than his friend; but the few years' difference between them was more than compensated for by the advantage in experience of a bustling world which Dermot possessed, and which had stamped itself upon his grave and earnest features. The light-haired, blue-eyed Esmond would have been taken for the younger by any chance spectator. His open, boyish countenance expressed a happy carelessness, a joy in life as he found it, a serene content with himself and his surroundings, natural to the heir of one of the most prosperous little properties in a prosperous district. Taller and stronger in build than Fitzgerald, there was yet no coarseness in his figure or his habits; the French college, where his father's means had permitted him to spend some years, had secured so much; and had given him, too, that distaste for anything like revolutionary movements, which at present made him the despair of his friend.

"It is nearly a month, Dermot," said he, "since you passed through on your way to the south."

"And I have had much trouble and weariness since then, Esmond."

"Trouble! of course you had," laughed Esmond. "That's your natural element, I think. You didn't recruit many United Irishmen in Wexford, did you?"

"Scarce any, Esmond," replied Fitzgerald despondingly.

"Well, have you given up these mad ideas, and made up your mind to be a quiet and law-abiding citizen?" pursued Esmond.

"A quiet and law-abiding citizen!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, all aflame in an instant. "In God's name, Esmond Kyan, how can you speak so calmly? Have you, Wexfordmen, no spark of Celtic fire in your cold composition?"

"Fire enough, perhaps," returned Esmond coolly, "if need were to show it."

"If need were! Are you an Irishman? Do you know that English troops hold your land by force and are ever ready to stamp out the last spark of your liberty? Do you know the torture that English martial law is even now inflicting on your co-religionists in the north? Do you know ——."

"Yes, I have heard all that before," said Esmond, breaking in on his friend's excited harangue, "but if there are sad things being done in the north, it is only because Catholics and Protestants were quarrelling among themselves; the Government had to send troops to keep order of course. Here in Wexford we have more sense than to quarrel with our Protestant neighbours."

"And what if they quarrel with you?" asked Dermot in a quieter tone.

"Oh, they won't!" was Esmond's confident reply.

"Are you sure? You trust absolutely to the good wishes of the Protestant gentry?"

"After all," said Esmond impatiently, "why should

they complain or raise disturbances as long as we are content? All the money is in their hands."

"And you are content to leave it so?" said Dermot bitterly.

"There now!" said Esmond triumphantly. "You want me to break the peace and to clamour against the county gentry. Fortunately, we are wiser in Wexford."

"Wiser!" exclaimed Fitzgerald with sarcastic emphasis.

"Yes, wiser. If I listened to you and induced my friends to start an attack upon the privileges of our superiors ——."

"Superiors!" Dermot ironically repeated the word; but Kyan continued without heeding him.

"How long would it be before the country was in a blaze? But so long as we keep quiet and turn a deaf ear to dangerous agitators like you, we are quite safe."

"Fool!" said Dermot sharply, "to trust to the tender mercies of Pitt and his Irish hirelings! Are your rights as men not worth fighting for? Are you, Catholic Irishmen, content to be treated as an inferior race by a handful of English and Irish Protestants."

There was anger in his voice, not unmixed with contempt, the contempt of the free man for what he believed to be grovelling; and Esmond was unable to refrain from the obvious, though unworthy retort.

"Tut, man," said he, with much asperity, "what is it to you in any case? *You* are not oppressed. *You* are no down-trodden Catholic. To *you*, as a Protestant, every avenue of promotion is open. Why should

you endeavour to stir up envy and dissatisfaction amongst us? Perhaps a Catholic rising would throw more opportunities into the hands of the Protestants, eh? Perhaps ——."

"Shame, Esmond, shame!" said a clear girlish voice, ringing out in indignant tones; and Eileen Kyan, who had entered the room unobserved, advanced past her brother and held out her hand to Dermot Fitzgerald. The latter, who had sprung to his feet in hot resentment of Esmond's taunt, bowed his head over the dainty little hand, too much overcome by conflicting passions to utter a word of greeting.

"Why, Eileen—!" said Esmond, half-laughing, half-remonstrant, astonished at this display of emotion on the part of this slight, delicate girl who resembled him so closely and whose heart, he flattered himself, he knew to its inmost depth. But she turned on him again with a fury that he had never seen in her before.

"You have no right to speak so to Mr. Fitzgerald. It is unworthy of my brother to insult a guest. And it is all the more unworthy of you, Esmond, because he has worked and suffered for justice to us Catholics, for no end of his own—from the purest and noblest patriotism!"

Esmond stood abashed before the flashing eyes and burning words of his sister. His affection for her combined with his natural generosity to make him feel ashamed of his hasty outburst.

"You are right, Eileen," he said, smoothing her hair, "my hasty tongue was running too fast."

Then, turning to Fitzgerald he added, "Do not be vexed at what I said, Dermot; I would not say it in cold blood. I disagree with all your opinions, but I know you are a disinterested and a patriotic Irishman."

And he held out his hand, which the other at once shook warmly, saying, "It does not matter Esmond; I know your worth and your honesty. If only I could get you, and others like you, to stand by my side!"

"I have been trying hard, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Eileen, "to induce him to join you, but I cannot move Esmond. He dreads too much what a rebellion might mean, not for himself, but for father and mother, for me and for Dora."

"Are you talking about me, Eileen?" said a voice from the passage; and a tall, stately girl, entered the room. This was Dora Kavanagh, the ward of old Mr. Kyan, and the betrothed of Esmond whose playmate from early childhood she had been. In her dark and regal beauty she offered a striking contrast to the dainty fragility of Eileen Kyan.

"You are welcome, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, on perceiving the visitor. "What fortune on your organizing mission? Good, I hope?"

"You see, Fitzgerald," said Esmond, laughing, "you have *two* proselytes in this household; and if you have not won me also, it is not for want of exhortations from both of them."

"I wish, Miss Kavanngh," said Dermot, "I had the same success in convincing the rest of Wexford as I have had with you and Miss Eileen."

"Oh, if we could only *do* anything!" burst forth Dora vehemently. "Poor, weak creatures that we women are! we have no weapon but the tongue, and no one heeds even that! Oh, I wish I were a man!" she went on, her whole frame quivering in intense agitation. "If I had your hands and your strength, Esmond, and your influence over all the young men along the countryside, I'd raise a trusty band of pikemen that would free, first my own county Wexford, then all Ireland from the Saxon scourge!"

"Bravo, Dora!" said Esmond still laughing. He was not unimpressed by the passionate declamation of his betrothed, and thought within himself that she never seemed more beautiful than when she thus spoke, as if inspired from the depths of her burning patriotism. Yet he could not help throwing into his words an accent of scorn for her vehemence; and slight as it was, it did not escape his betrothed's ear. She immediately mastered herself and said in a calmer tone:—

"But I did not come here to renew these wranglings, but to bid you to the birthday feast. It is Eileen's birthday, Mr. Fitzgerald, and all her friends and admirers—need I say how many they are!——" (here Eileen tried in vain to stop her friend's mouth) "are here to toast her. All is prepared in the old dining-hall; your father has already taken his seat, Esmond, and bade me fetch you and Eileen; and Mr. Fitzgerald, of course, must share our festivities. Now,——" (as Fitzgerald began to protest, half-heartedly enough, his haste to be gone) "you can

well spare us an hour or two; and you must, that is all. Come!"

Eileen's downcast eyes, now tremulously hiding themselves in reaction from her previous boldness, yet seemed to look a similiar invitation from beneath their light fringing lashes; and what wonder if Dermot Fitzgerald set aside his desire for haste, and followed Esmond, Eileen and Dora to where the feast was spread!

CHAPTER II

THE BIRTHDAY FEAST

THE long oak-raftered hall, once the dining-hall of an Irish chief, now used mostly for the meals of the farm servants, seemed to have gone back to its ancient honour and dignity on this day. The twentieth birthday of his daughter had been made the occasion of a gathering of all Patrick Kyan's friends and neighbours, rich and poor, a renewal of old bonds of acquaintance and kinship, and a general holiday for the district, throughout which the Kyan family were loved and respected. Though prosperous rather than rich—their ancient patrimony had dwindled away in successive confiscations—the name of the old Irish Catholic family still made them natural leaders of the people; and they had never been wanting in men who, apart from the prestige of their family, were of such personal character as to be worthy of the respect which they commanded. Thus it was that, at the time of which we speak, the hostile or apathetic attitude of the people of the district towards the movement inaugurated by Wolfe Tone was largely due to the personal influence of Patrick Kyan amongst the older men, and of his son Esmond over those younger spirits who might have been expected to welcome a prospect of insurrection. The Society of the United Irishmen

had taken hardly any root in any part of Wexford; the people were at peace, they had, as yet, been spared the horrors of martial law, and the disabilities under which they suffered as Catholics were not sufficient to stir their innate conservatism into action. By none was this conservatism more fully shared than by Patrick Kyan, and by him it was impressed upon his neighbours; while Esmond cooled the ardour of his contemporaries with recollections of what he had witnessed in France, and imbued them all, as fully as himself, with an abhorrence of aught that looked like Jacobinism, or was inspired in any degree from a French source.

When Dermot Fitzgerald, commissioned by his kinsman and leader to spread the propaganda of the United Irishmen in Wexford, first presented himself at Kyan's, armed with letters of introduction from mutual friends, he found himself at once bitterly disappointed in the hope that they would aid him in his work. They received him hospitably: they warned him against those who could not be trusted with the knowledge of his identity or purpose; they even presented him to the neighbouring small gentry and large farmers, whom he wished to influence; but at the same time they counteracted his efforts at every step, if ever any friend of theirs showed a tendency to be moved by his eloquent exhortations. And this was the manner of his reception everywhere, from Arklow to Hook Head; everywhere, a patient hearing, a kind reception, a simple loyalty that would scorn the betrayal of him to the emissaries of the Government—but a stolid opposition to his

theories and an obstinate refusal to commit themselves to the programme of the organization. A month's weary and fruitless toil of this kind had preceded the arrival of the bad news which summoned him back to Dublin; and, what with his own ill-success and his gloomy forebodings for the future of the cause, it was with a heavy and down-cast heart that he prepared to play his part in the festival.

Old Mr. Kyan, a hale and strong man of sixty, bade him a hearty welcome, and placed him at his own right hand, beside Eileen—the very position that Dermot coveted most. At the other end of the long table sat Mrs. Kyan, and near her was Dora, who, much more than her own daughter, was her chief lieutenant and practical helper in all household government; and who, though only distantly related to the Kyans, was on the footing of a very favoured niece. Esmond was not far from the side of his betrothed. The guests were nearly all known to Fitzgerald, from the occasion of his last visit; and, though they all knew his mission, he felt perfectly safe in trusting to their honour. They belonged, for the most part, to that class which held, and which still to some extent holds, a position midway between the gentry and the peasants. Descended as they are from the old owners of the soil, from the princes and chieftains of Ireland's heroic age, this class would, in the normal growth of the nation, have been the country gentry, marked out by birth and position as the headmen of the people; but the intrusion of an alien race of "superiors," and the long years of exclusion from education and from citizenship, inevitably

gave them the stamp of slavery, sinking them into a nondescript type, which is only to-day beginning to emerge from the depths, and to take its proper position in the leadership of the country. Mingled with these, however, were many of a still poorer class; and old and trusty servants of the family, like Dan Murphy, sat at the same board and shared their master's cheer.

Amid all the gaiety of the feast, Dermot Fitzgerald sat silent and distraught. It galled him to think that here, merry-making in light-hearted heedlessness, were men whose adherence would be of priceless value to an armed rebellion, absolutely without a thought of the perils of their country and the sacrifices that were being made for the sake of her freedom. He contrasted the blind content of Wexford with the tortures endured by Ulster; and shuddered to think that these might soon be extended over all the land, and might reduce this smiling country to a blood-stained desert. He profited but little by his proximity to Eileen Kyan; she, on her side, was silent with the deadly silence of shyness. She felt that Esmond was observing her curiously, warned into watchfulness by her energetic championship of Dermot, and there were many young men, too, seated around the board whose scrutiny of her, as she sat beside the handsome Geraldine, had a touch of unwonted anxiety and suspicion.

When one of these brawny young fellows, a professed admirer of Eileen's, proposed her name as a toast, it hardly roused this silent couple from their meditations. Dermot glared for a moment at the

intruder, and after drinking the toast, sank back again into his gloomy thoughts. But a moment after his attention was more effectually arrested; for Esmond proposed a fresh toast.

"Drink to the health of my friend and guest, Dermot Fitzgerald," he cried; and at his invitation all responded heartily. Dermot tried to escape further notice by saying merely, "I thank you, friends;" but Esmond, bent on shaking Dermot out of the lethargy of despair which threatened to spread from him to the whole company, called on him for a speech—"you used not be so silent," he added mockingly. The playful taunt went home and Fitzgerald rose to his feet, determined to make one more effort, ere he left Wexford, to show these sluggish people where their duty lay.

"What should I say," he began, "that you do not know? Yet of what can I speak but that which is nearest my heart? You are Irishmen and you love your country. Can you stand idly by and see her liberty extinguished for ever? You have now a Parliament of your own—corrupt, perhaps; imperfect certainly, since the Catholic population has no share in the making of it; but still your own to amend and to preserve. This Parliament, Pitt and his minions mean to filch from you. They would reduce our ancient nation to the rank of an English province. If you would prevent that infamous crime, now is the moment to strike a decisive blow!"

"We will strike fast enough," said the young farmer who had proposed Eileen's health, "when we see need."

"Ah, when will that be?" said Dermot earnestly. "When the organized troops of the enemy are already upon you? Then, no doubt, you will snatch the first weapons that lie to your hand and strike blindly, frantically, hopelessly! What can that avail against disciplined troops? Braver than you, they cannot be, but naught can meet organization save organization. When you wish to defend yourselves and your rights, you will find that it is too late; without plan, without leaders, without arms, without discipline, you will be mowed down like grass. But if you hearken now to me, who speak to you in the name of the great national organization, the United Irishmen—if you band yourselves together in the ranks of that brotherly union, forge the pikes and choose the leaders and plan the methods which can best win the day, holding yourselves ready to spring to the field, as one man, on the day when the Executive calls on all Ireland to rise—then, a disciplined portion of a united whole, you will be irresistible; in union with the men of all the rest of Ireland you will drive the hated Saxon for ever from the shores of our fair and beloved native land!"

Dermot sat down with a heightened colour and a renewed sense of gratification. There is pleasure in well-directed action, even when foreseen to be fruitless. At least, he thought he had done his best; and it was with an unexpected calm that he looked round the table to observe the effect of his appeal. Eileen—poor, shy, joyous little Eileen!—flushed and quivered with eagerness and pleasure; Dora's great dark eyes burned with enthusiasm, then turned half-

hopingly, to search Esmond's face for any sympathetic response. But Esmond only smiled half-pityingly; the senior Kyans shook their heads with sage significance; and the rest of the company, though stirred into murmured and semi-appreciative comment, took their cue from this attitude of uncompromising aloofness. One man alone, a burly man of forty, who sat near the centre of the table, had followed Fitzgerald's remarks with manifest delight, and now broke forth eagerly :—

"Well said, well said! Come, boys"—looking around on his friends—"shall we join him?"

Esmond and his father looked both surprised and displeased at this unexpected outburst. Dermot rose again. "If you really wish it," said he, "I will administer the oath of brotherhood to you here and now. Who will swear first?"

But even as he spoke, he saw that his words, and and those of his solitary adherent, were producing no effect. Murmurs arose from all sides at the mention of the oath.

"Why should we swear?" said one. "We are ready to do our duty without swearing."

"It's time enough to bid the devil good day whin you meet him," said Hugh Kelly.

"We'll only get ourselves into trouble," said young Thomas Furlong, Eileen's suitor, "an' maybe bring the soldiers down on us."

Fitzgerald's supporter, Michael Delaney, turned on the grumblers with deep scorn. "If you have no more to say than that," he began.

"We have plenty more to say, Michael," said

Patrick Gilligan, "only we're not able to talk like Mr. Fitzgerald."

"Esmond, do you answer him," said Furlong suddenly. "You know what we think, an' can put the right turn on it."

The appeal accorded exactly with the mood uppermost in Esmond's mind at the moment. He dreaded the effect of Dermot's words, yet did not see his way to interfere. "Yes, I will answer," said he, standing up.

"Good, my son," said his father. "Let them hear some sense."

But Dora, under her breath, murmured reproachfully, "Oh, Esmond, Esmond!" He heard her, but the opposition only flung an accent of greater determination into his words when he spoke. "You talk, Dermot Fitzgerald, of our need for discipline. But we have a better defence—the surety of a good conscience. We have mixed in no political agitations; we have asked for no concessions. We have simply devoted ourselves to to the work of our hands, the daily task that God has given us to do. And this quiet, unexpectant, patient toil of ours will bring its own reward. We have the goodwill of all the Protestant gentry of the county. We can rely on them to befriend us in any turmoils that may arise. If need be, we can always strike in our own defence; and we shall strike, if necessary, all the more effectively because we have never hampered ourselves with plots, intrigues, and oath-bound secret societies."

"Bravo, bravo!" cried Furlong and the others, as

Esmond sat down, "There's an answer for you, now Michael!"

"A toast, friends!" cried Hugh Kelly, rising to his feet. "I give you Esmond Kyan!"

And as the whole assembly rose up and drank the toast with enthusiasm, Dermot felt that it was no mere personal compliment they paid to the son of their host, but an expression of unity with him in sympathies. He joined, of course, heartily in the compliment to Esmond; but he knew as he did so, that his last effort to rouse Wexford had failed.

"Well," he said, when the enthusiasm had subsided, "I see clearly enough where your hearts lie. Since you will it so, your fate be on your own heads. I have done my duty. And now I must begone. Good-bye, all; and I thank you for your hospitality," he added, to Mr. Kyan.

Esmond and the others began at once to press Dermot to remain a few hours longer; but he was not to be detained. Worsted in this effort for the cause, his thoughts flew back all the more constantly to the work that was yet before him; he was eager to accomplish something that might free him from the self-reproach of failure. And then, Eileen seemed inaccessible, close to him though she was. He had half-hoped, when he allowed Dan Murphy to persuade him to halt, that perhaps to-day, before he left Eileen finally to plunge into the perils of a revolution —— Well! it was impossible; and perhaps it was better so—better for both.

But fate was kinder to Dermot Fitzgerald that day than he anticipated. When he left the dining-

hall, he was accompanied by Esmond, by Dora, and by Eileen, who temporarily deserted the table to speed the parting guest. And when Esmond himself went off to see that his friend's horse was brought round to the garden gate, Dora went with him—partly from an intuitive knowledge that Dermot would be grateful for a few minutes' private conversation with Eileen, and partly because she was eager, at the earliest possible opportunity, to let Esmond know how thoroughly disgusted she was with his frustration of Fitzgerald's organizing efforts! So Dermot and Eileen were left standing by the garden gate together. No one was about; the feast was still in progress at the back of the house; the sounds of revelry hardly rippled the silence of the closing afternoon. Eileen gazed unseeingly at the Blackstairs, towards whose summits the sun was rapidly sinking. Agitated as she was, she yet felt that she must say something; the commonplace of politeness was her refuge, though it was now more than a commonplace.

"I— we are very sorry, Mr. Fitzgerald, that you have to go away so soon."

"I ought to have gone earlier, Miss Kyan; but I stayed for a purpose."

Did he mean for the purpose of speaking to the people once more? Eileen wondered. There was something in his tone which seemed to convey more than that.

There was a pause. Eileen stood with her arm leaning on the pillar of the little gate, her eyes fixed on her shoe, which was beating restlessly upon the

gravel path. Dermot felt that the moment he longed for had come. There was no time for preface or hesitation; at any moment Esmond and Dora might re-appear, and then—good-bye to Eileen, perhaps for ever. And straightforward directness, suited better with Dermot's character than any circumlocution. But, cool and wary man as he was, an agitation he had never felt in the most desperate or difficult situation of his life seized on him as he took the plunge.

"Eileen!" She started at the familiar address; yet not as if displeased, he thought. "Eileen! I have something to say to you."

"What is it, Mr. Fitzgerald?" she murmured tremulously, not daring to raise her eyes from the ground. That magic sympathy, by which love reads love, had already told her what he meant to say.

"I am not a practised wooer," went on Dermot, hastily and stumblingly. "I know little, alas! of woman's heart. Therefore, in plain and simple words—I love you! I want you for my wife."

It was done; the irrevocable words were said. A long-drawn "Oh!" escaped from Eileen—a gasp that uttered a strange joy, and yet a nameless fear.

"Eileen! Darling, do not turn away from me. Let me tell you—will you listen?—what you are to me."

"Yes, Dermot," came the murmured reply. Encouraged by the use of his Christian name, Dermot took her hand, and went on, more quietly and steadily.

"Eileen, from my earliest youth—almost from my

childhood—I have been working for the cause, and have given to it all my thoughts, all my life. I never knew my parents; all that I am, all that I can be, I owe to my cousin, Lord Edward. With him I have laboured for years on behalf of our poor down-trodden people. No woman's love has touched me no woman's smile has lured me aside for a moment. But since I first saw you, Eileen——."

He gained courage as he proceeded, and his arm was now around her waist; she did not attempt to remove it, but whispered, as he mentioned their first meeting, "Four weeks yesterday."

"Ah! you too, remember it, Eileen! Well, since that day I have had a double thought, a double longing—a double duty. My heart is full of you, and I cannot put you out; nor would I if I could. Eileen, my beloved! you will not reject me because I am engaged in this dangerous enterprise? For I love you, and that is all." And bending his head down close to her's, he murmured in her ear, "Will you be my wife, Eileen?"

Eileen's fair head drooped lower yet, and her dainty ear, which was all he could see, flamed yet more rosily; but she did not withdraw herself from Dermot's embrace, and the lover's watchful ear caught the softly-uttered reply—"Yes, Dermot, my love!"

"My darling!"—and both his arms encircled her, and her blushing face, at first seeking shelter on his breast, was gently raised towards his, and the kisses of a long-suppressed, passionate devotion fell on her forehead, on her eyes, on her parted lips.

The last rays of the departing sun sought them out, and played laughingly on Eileen's curls, on Dermot's clustering black locks. The sweet evening breeze whispered to them of happiness and joy, of self-fulfilment in the sacred bonds of loving union. Let them be happy while they may; for all too soon may come the cloud that shall dim the radiant light of happy youth and love.

CHAPTER III

FOREBODINGS

"WHY, Mr. Fitzgerald, I thought you were away to Dublin long ago!"

The sun had set behind the distant mountain, the breeze blew as before, but it seemed changed and colder since the sun was gone; Dermot and Eileen awoke from their blissful trance with a sense of having been lost to the world's cares for a long, long time; though in truth but a few brief minutes had elapsed before they heard old Patrick Kyan's voice ringing in their ears.

They separated hastily, Dermot, however, still holding Eileen's hand. Patrick Kyan and his wife stood behind them, having, indeed, left the table to see what had become of their daughter, whose absence from the feast of which she was the occasion was noted and disliked by the younger guests. There was a strong note of asperity in Mr. Kyan's voice as he spoke the words which disturbed the lovers; but, with the innate courtesy of his race, he made no direct remark on the sight which met his eyes, awaiting with a stern look some explanation. Dermot's resolution was taken in a moment.

"I am going now, Mr. Kyan, in a very few moments. But I have something to say to you and to your good wife first."

Mr. Kyan inclined his head, and stood, his hands crossed upon his stick, waiting for Dermot to proceed. But Mrs. Kyan, whose maternal susceptibilities, already greatly disturbed, were offended at the sight of Eileen holding her lover's hand, interposed.

"Eileen, dear, go back at once to the table, they're all asking for you. Shame on you to be loitering out here, and it your birthday feast, child!"

"Let her stay, Mrs. Kyan," said Dermot, holding Eileen's hand the more tightly. "What I have to say concerns her. I will not waste words; in brief, I love your daughter, and she has promised, just now, to be my wife. Will you give your consent?"

"Sure, she's only a child yet, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the mother, as if to put aside the whole matter as too slight for serious discussion.

"I'm twenty, mother!" said Eileen, impulsively, "twenty to-day."

Patrick Kyan signed to his wife to say nothing. "I'm surprised at this, Mr. Fitzgerald," he remarked quietly. "You must know that it is quite impossible."

"But she has promised, sir, to marry me," said Dermot, respectfully but firmly.

"Ah, what does a little slip of a girl like that know about marrying?" said Mr. Kyan impatiently. "And you a Protestant, and a United Irishman, too. A nice sort of match for our little Eileen. Ridiculous!"

"Why, Uncle Pat, what's all this about? Who's talking about Eileen getting married?"

The speaker was Dora, who had just come on the scene in company with Esmond. They had gone

through all the customary phases of a lovers' quarrel, and had emerged from it triumphantly, with their affection unscathed. On perceiving them, Eileen who had been trembling on the verge of tears, broke away from Dermot and ran to Dora, putting her arms round her friend's neck, and hiding her face on her breast.

"Oh, Dora," she sobbed, "get Esmond to say a word for me." Then, in a tremulous whisper, she added, "I am *very* fond of him, Dora!"

Dora kissed her and began to soothe and strengthen her, while Dermot addressed himself to Esmond.

"I have been asking your father and mother, Esmond, to give their consent to my marriage with Eileen; but they don't favour me, it seems. Will *you* help us?"

"I'm afraid I can't, Dermot," said Esmond, kindly, but not encouragingly.

"Talk to him you, Esmond," said Mr. Kyan. "Let him see it's quite impossible. I must get back to the visitors. Come, Mary."

He turned away without another word, leaving to his son, as he was accustomed to do, the further treatment of a delicate situation. His wife accompanied him, bowing a cold farewell to Fitzgerald, and saying to Dora as she passed—"Try to bring Eileen to her senses, Dora, she minds you more than anybody."

There was a few minutes silence among the four young people who were left together, except for the hysterical sobbing of Eileen, and the softly spoken words of Dora in the endeavour to comfort her.

Then Esmond spoke; gravely, calmly, and gently. "I am very sorry for this, Dermot."

"Why should you be sorry?" retorted Fitzgerald.

"Well! my father and mother are vexed; Eileen is crying; and you——."

"But why should you all object to me?" broke in Dermot, flinging out his hands with an impetuous gesture. "What is there against me, if Eileen is willing to have me?"

"You are a United Irishman," returned Esmond.

"Is that a crime in your eyes?"

"Not a crime—a mistake."

"Suppose it is," said Dermot, with gathering anger, "am I to be debarred from marrying the woman I love on account of that?"

"The woman you love!" returned Esmond, with a scornful inflection. "Considering what you would bring her to, I wonder how you can dare to speak of love."

"Esmond!" broke in Dora, hotly. Her lover looked at her, and checked his angry mood.

"Well, Dora, I do not mean to be harsh. I suppose"—turning again to Dermot—"you do love Eileen."

"She thinks I do," retorted Dermot, stung by Esmond's somewhat patronizing tone.

"That is the best test," went on Esmond, calmly. "Love will find out Love. And I am sure a fearless, tireless man like you, when he loves, will love well."

"Then, why——" began Dermot somewhat appeased.

"Yes, Esmond, why do you not help?" said Dora. "See here," and she bent towards Eileen's pretty, fair head, still half-hidden on her breast.

"Oh, Esmond," sobbed out poor Eileen, "you were always kind to me till now!"

"I will still be kind to you, little sister," said her brother, stepping closer to her and smoothing her hair. "Come, Dermot! look on this matter like a man. Where are you going now, and for what purpose?"

"You know I am going to Dublin, to——" Dermot stopped, and Esmond finished the sentence.

"To organize an armed rebellion? Yes, I know that. What are your chances of success?"

"With Lord Edward to lead us," began Dermot, but again he broke off, and murmured, half to himself, "But how can I tell where he is now?"

"And without him," pursued Esmond, in the same even, dispassionate tone, "what are your chances?" Dermot made no reply. "You cannot honestly say you have any. And for you, a leader, an organizer, what hope is there, when the rising fails? Even if you escape the bullet——."

"I run the risk of the scaffold—I know it," said Dermot resolutely, and I accept that risk.

"Shame on you, Esmond, a thousandfold," cried Dora, once again moved to anger by the line her lover was taking, "if you would turn him from his noble devotion to a great cause! The man who loses his life for his country dies a martyr as truly as if he died for his religion. And you would urge him to desert the fight!"

"No, Dora, I urge no such desertion," said Esmond. "But, Dermot, since you said so, how can I entrust my sister to your care? To be your wife would mean that she would be exposed to all the dangers you might run, if not in battle, at least, after defeat."

"I would gladly share all his dangers, Esmond," exclaimed Eileen, brokenly. Her brother made no answer, but waited for Dermot to speak; his last words, he saw, had produced a great effect. A train of thought was awakened in Dermot Fitzgerald's mind which led him to abate his resentment against Esmond, and to appreciate more clearly the genuine interest in his sister which prompted the young man's opposition. He stood silent for some minutes, lost in reflection, while all three watched him expectantly, Eileen with a growing dread.

"All my dangers," he murmured, giving voice to his inward thought. "Yes, she would be exposed to them all—and to worse—worse than any a man can suffer!"

"Dermot!" said Eileen, appealingly, frightened by the gloom of his countenance.

"Dermot!" exclaimed Dora, interpreting the unspoken fear of her friend. "You cannot mean to desert her!"

"Desert her!" exclaimed Dermot indignantly. "I will cherish her name and the thought of her love to the last moment of my life, be that long or short. But—Esmond is right, Eileen—I cannot, I must not ask you to share the last moments of a man virtually condemned to death."

In grave accents he concluded, like a man taking

a solemn farewell. The strain was too much for Eileen's overstrung nerves; sobbing wildly, she ran to Dermot, and as he received her in his arms, she laid her head on his shoulder and cried, despairingly, with all the anguish of a warm, sensitive heart's disappointment.

"Dermot! Dermot! don't leave me! I may never see you again, and" (her voice faltered, but she went on earnestly and tenderly) "I love you, I love you with all my heart! Let me go with you—be your wife—share all your dangers—die with you—if you must die, Dermot!" Her voice was choked in a paroxysm of weeping.

Esmond and Dora looked on in helpless grief; and the latter whispered to Dermot: "Strengthen her; she is overwrought."

"My darling," said Dermot, carressing her passionately, and half-turning aside as if to shield her from view, "my own beloved Eileen—listen to me. All is not so bad as it seems. We may win—if the country responds promptly to our call, we *shall* win. And then, dearest Eileen, when the people come to their own again, and the stranger rules no more, in the land ——."

"Then Dermot," interposed Esmond, "come again, and I promise you that my father will give you our Eileen."

"Come, Eileen!" pursued the anxious lover, "my own brave girl! Esmond will help us then, and we shall marry and live our lives happily in a free Ireland. Dry your tears, my sweet one, and till then ——."

What more he said was for her ear alone, as he sank his voice to a tender whisper.

But the leave-taking could not be of long duration; for now Dan Murphy appeared, leading Dermot's horse. Truth to tell, Dan might have come on the scene long ago, had he wished, but a sympathetic inkling of what was going on kept him in the background; and it was at a sign from Esmond, who saw no need to prolong his sister's agony, that he now came forward. At sight of the horse, Eileen, though somewhat soothed, broke out weeping afresh.

"Oh Dermot! I cannot let you go! We may never meet again."

"Think of his work, Eileen," said Dora, quietly. "You should inspire, not hinder him."

Confusedly, the grief-stricken girl began to dry her tears. "Do not mind me, Dermot," she said, amid sobs that she could not suppress, "I am not myself. I will wait: I will hope!"

"My own brave girl! And you shall not wait in vain. Esmond, good-bye, and I thank you for your promise. Miss Kavanagh, I thank you too, from my heart, for all you have done and said to-day. Eileen —my love—good-bye!"

One more passionate embrace, and Dermot swung himself into the saddle and galloped off, turning and waving hat and hand repeatedly to the little group that watched him. When he was out of sight, Eileen, still weeping violently, ran into the house; Dora judged it best to let her be alone with her heartache for a time. Dan, too, was gone; and Dora and Esmond stood together by the gate.

They had no inclination to return to the festivity which was still proceeding, and from which the uproar became more and more hilarious as the minutes flew by. So, instead of joining once more in the revels, Esmond and Dora profited by them to stroll through the neighbouring grove in the gathering gloom.

"Esmond," said Dora, as they paced slowly, arm in arm, "I am glad you were so kind to Eileen after all."

"'Twas your eyes, dear, and the thought of you, that made me kind. A lover cannot be hard on love."

"But, oh, Esmond!" said Dora, wistfully, "I wish I could but get you to think as Dermot Fitzgerald does."

"What, my pretty one," said Esmond, playfully, "not yet done with Dermot Fitzgerald and his wild enthusiasms? Has this handsome Geraldine fascinated my sweetheart as well as my sister? That, I fear, I should find it harder to forgive him."

"Esmond," said Dora, reproachfully, "how can you think ——."

"Nay, love, I only spoke in jest. Ever since we first played at sweethearts together—long ago—we have loved each other; and as we have grown up together, Dora, our love has only deepened and strengthened, has it not?"

"Yes, Esmond."

"And you will love me still, Dora, even though you wish I had joined this rebel League?"

"Of course I will," responded Dora without

hesitation. "I *am* disappointed, Esmond—a little, a great deal—that you have not found the heart to join the patriot band. But I love you—nothing makes any difference in that."

"That's my true-hearted girl," said Esmond. "And maybe, Dora, later on you will see that it was wiser to wish to keep in settled peace here—later on this year, dearest—after the fifteenth of September—when we are married!"

"When we are married! Ah, Esmond!"

"Why, love, what is the matter? Why do you sigh?"

"I was wondering," said Dora, dreamily, "if—we shall ever be married, Esmond."

"And why, pray? You are not usually a prophetess of evil, Dora."

"No; but this troubled time—these reports of massacre and savagery make me quiver." And Esmond felt a slight tremor pass through the arm linked in his.

"But these are far away, Dora," he said in a tone of cheery remonstrance.

"They may soon be here," said Dora in a still gloomier tone.

"*We* have done nothing to deserve ill-treatment," pursued Esmond, advancing his usual line of argument.

"Englishmen are never at a loss to find pretexts for tyranny," replied Dora.

"I don't particularly love the English," said Esmond, "but our Protestant neighbours here will stand by us in any need."

Dora was silent for a moment, while her lover watched her anxiously for any brightening of her mood. Then she spoke, wearily.

"I suppose you know best, Esmond, but I wish, I wish we were ready. I wish the men were armed and able to defend themselves."

"But we shall always be able to defend ourselves if there is any attack. There is really nothing to fear, sweetest," he continued earnestly. "Dermot's speeches and Eileen's excitement have told on your nerves, that is all."

"I am not nervous, Esmond," she responded more firmly. "The fear that is over me is a vague presentiment of a coming horror. It haunts me: it has haunted me for days and nights, but to-day it is stronger and more lurid than ever. I feel it everywhere."

And shuddering, she clung closer to her lover as if for protection.

"Feel what, Dora?" asked Esmond amazed at this hysterical outburst, as he deemed it, on the part of this healthy-minded and self-contained girl.

"I seem to see—to see!" Clasping Esmond's arm with both her hands, she gazed with a fixed yet vacant look amid the leafy shadows.

"Dora!" exclaimed Esmond, now thoroughly alarmed, and half-thinking that his sweetheart was going mad. "What is it that you see? Tell me!"

"The soldiers—the coarse, brutal hirelings of the English—burning, murdering, outraging!"

"But, my Dora," said Esmond, in vigorous remonstrances, "there are no soldiers near; and these

murderings and burnings, even if all they tell of them be true, are out of Leinster altogether—away in the North."

Dora sighed heavily, but more composedly. The strange paroxysm which had seized on her was passing away, and her stronger, calmer self was re-asserting itself. It was almost in her natural tone that she rejoined, as they neared the house once more.

"What security have we that they may not be here at any moment?"

"Security? The best," said Esmond, reassured by her quieter manner. "Here we are not turbulent; we are not seditious. They may quarter soldiers elsewhere, but not in Wexford. In all the length and breadth of Ireland there is not one county, I am sure, so quiet, so free from organized or latent rebellion as Wexford is to-day!"

It was true. But there were those at work who were soon to falsify his confident predictions.

CHAPTER IV

THE CASTLE

IN a small, but carefully-furnished room in Dublin Castle, a small, carefully-dressed man sat writing. He was all alone, for this was his private cabinet—all alone with the secrets that were contained in the old oak chests, in the drawers and pigeonhole-recesses, of that crowded room. Not only his figure, but his face and features were small and mean-looking; his eyes, deep-sunken in his head, wore an unchanging aspect of cunning and despicable ingenuity; his nervously-twitching mouth might have betrayed to a physiognomist an abnormal insincerity and an over-reaching greed. He was smiling now, and his smile was not pleasant to behold; for it was evoked by the pleasurable occupation of penning instructions to one of the numerous gang of informers who depended on him for subsistence. This agreeable gentleman was Mr. Cooke, Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland—the primary instigator of more acts of treachery and baseness than any other man, save perhaps one, of the time.

Mr. Cooke's self-satisfied chuckles and his beneficent work were intercepted, on the morning with which we are dealing, by a visitor, who with a brusque "Good morning, Mr. Cooke," entered the room and seated himself opposite the Secretary. A

man of some importance in the State, obviously; else Mr. Cooke's bow were not so low, nor his "How do you do, your Lordship?" uttered in such an obsequious tone. Yet a disinterested spectator would hardly have deemed his Lordship's personal appearance one to command respect, however it might inspire fear in a dependent. A small man, yet with the truculent aspect of the habitual bully, his glare might move a slave to cringe, but would inevitably excite opposition in the breast of any man of spirit and independence. This was Lord Clare, the life-long enemy of Grattan, who was now, in reward for his services as Attorney-General, in possession of the dignity of Lord Chancellor of Ireland. A fierce bigot, his voice was for ever raised for sterner and more crushing measures against the Catholics; and his was the driving force that most of all compelled the weak Lord Lieutenant, Camden, to subject the country to the horrors of martial law.

"Always busy, Mr. Cooke, I see," remarked his lordship, with as much geniality as he was ever able to throw into his domineering tones.

"In these troublous times, my lord," purred the Secretary in his smoothest accents, "it behoves loyal men to be ever at their posts."

"Yes, these rebels are an infernal nuisance," said Lord Clare, rapping out an oath to emphasize his remark.

"If we could only force them to disclose themselves," went on Cooke, in his slow, even tone, "we could crush them easily."

"I thought," said Clare, "when we bagged Oliver

Bond, Emmet, and O'Connor, that there would be no more difficulty."

"They still have many leaders, my Lord."

"Who?" asked the Chancellor contemptuously. "Tone is out of the country; Lord Edward Fitzgerald is a damnably able soldier, but he's only one."

"They still have John and Henry Sheares, and Samuel Neilson," replied Cooke.

"Well, damn your eyes, Cooke," said Lord Clare impatiently, "why don't you bag these men? What are all your spies doing?"

"It takes time, my Lord," said Cooke, without the shadow of resentment at the other's brusqueness, "but our men are working well. Thomas Reynolds keeps us informed of every move of their executive. Then Armstrong is proving very useful."

"Armstrong?" said his Lordship, interrogatively.

"Captain Armstrong, of the King's County Militia, oh, a very clever man!" said Cooke, rubbing his hands delightedly at the thought of Captain Armstrong's cleverness.

"What has he done?"

"Done!" replied Cooke, warmly (he was never so enthusiastic as when gloating over the work of his brigade of spies and informers). "I never saw anything finer than the way in which Armstrong has wormed his way into the confidence of the brothers Sheares. It was a marvellous piece of work, oh, most creditable, I assure you, my Lord! Your Lordship would have been delighted if you could have heard Armstrong himself tell the story."

Cooke rubbed his hands in high glee, and Clare's small, beady eyes glistened with an evil joy.

"They trust him with the secrets of the United Irishmen, do they?"

"Oh, yes. Why, he,"—and Cooke chuckled in delight at his protégés astuteness,—"he dines with them every Sunday, my Lord."

"I should like to see this Armstrong," said Clare reflectively. "He must be a smooth, oily-tongued rascal—something like yourself, Cooke."

"Not at all—there's the miracle about it," returned Cooke, not in the least disconcerted by the Chancellor's playful allusion to himself. "He's a fellow of the bluffest and boldest exterior you could imagine; no one could suspect him of planning *anything*, much less a betrayal. If your Lordship will remain a few minutes, you will see him."

"He comes here, then?"

"He has an appointment at eleven o'clock with his Excellency. I am expecting him, and also his Excellency, at any moment," said Cooke, looking at his watch.

It was just after eleven o'clock, and almost as he spoke, the Lord Lientenant entered the room. His Excellency, Lord Camden, was much more pleasing, as to his exterior man, than either of the worthy gentlemen whose company he joined. His tall, slightly-stooping figure was, however, thin and frail; his handsome features, attractive enough at first sight, showed on closer inspection the sure marks of a weak character—the wavering mouth, the shifty eyes, the nervous twitching of the nose and eyelids.

They were surmounted by a low and narrow forehead, not indicative of any great intelligence. This was the man who, without much active ill-will towards the the people he governed, had permitted himself to become the tool of Clare, Beresford, and the other bigots of the ascendency, and at their instigation had made himself responsible for a system of atrocious crime, having for its object the suppression of the liberties of Ireland. Like most weak men, indeed, when once started, he went further on the paths of injustice and intolerance than his sinister advisers.

"Good-morning, my Lord Chancellor," said his Excellency. "How are things in your department?"

"Fairly satisfactory, your Excellency, fairly satisfactory. I have conveyed quiet hints to such of the Judges as may be required in dealing with captured rebels," said Lord Clare, significantly.

"They may be relied upon, I trust?" said Lord Camden.

"Yes," said the Chancellor, drily, "I think we need not fear any awkward acquittals."

"That is very important," declared the Lord Lieutenant. "Most of the rebels can be disposed of by the troops, of course; but for such as escape martial law, it is essential to have the civil courts prepared, so that there may be no mistake. I am glad to hear you can rely on the judges."

"Still, 'tis best to let the soldiers do their work pretty thoroughly," said Clare. "The less the courts——."

"The less the civil courts have to do with the matter the better, I quite agree with you," said Camden.

"An obstinate advocate, for instance," pursued the Chancellor, "might give us infinite trouble before we could silence him."

"You're thinking of that plaguey dog, Curran, I'll be bound?" said Camden, with a faint smile, as he remembered the old antagonism between Curran and the Chancellor in the House of Commons and at the Bar.

"Yes, curse him," said Clare, irritated by what seemed the Viceroy's mockery. "I wish we could lay hands on him, but he keeps clear of any part in the conspiracy himself."

Cooke had taken no part in this pleasant colloquy; but now, a message having been brought to him by a servant, he came forward to announce that Captain Armstrong was in waiting. The Viceroy directed that he should be ushered in; Lord Clare requesting permission to be present at the interview. The Captain's appearance, on his entry into such distinguished company, did not belie the description of him given by Mr. Cooke. Cool, self-possessed, and to all appearances self-respecting, there was an air of soldierly frankness in his manner of receiving the Lord Lieutenant's greetings which might well have deceived even a skilled observer into mistaking his callous, calculating arrogance for the open, plain demeanour of an independent-spirited man. So little was he impressed by the preliminary compliments with which Lord Camden opened the conversation,

that the latter changed his tone, and came directly to the business in hand.

"I am anxious, Captain Armstrong," Lord Camden said, "to have you expedite as much as possible the affairs in which you are engaged. How soon can you undertake to deliver up the Sheares brothers to us?"

"In four days, your Excellency," replied Armstrong, in clear, decisive tones. "On Sunday next I dine with them as usual, and I shall then get all the gaps in my information filled up. You may have them arrested on Monday."

"Good! You have taken a note of that, Mr. Cooke? You understand, of course, Captain Armstrong, that we shall require you to give evidence at the trial?"

"I am quite prepared to do so, your Excellency," returned the informer, "in consideration of your Excellency's continued kindness to me."

"We may have to rely altogether on your evidence for a conviction against these men," pursued Lord Camden, with a view of testing to the utmost the reliability of his man, which was indeed the chief object of the present interview.

Armstrong did not flinch from the prospect of infamy laid before him. "It shall be forthcoming, your Excellency," he said as coolly as if it were some trinket he was required to produce, instead of the testimony that would bring to the gallows men who had believed and confided in him. "And the money?" he added, inquiringly.

"As to that," said Camden, smiling at the man's

abruptness, "you must continue to settle about remuneration with Mr. Secretary Cooke. I don't think you will have any reason to quarrel on that score."

"Faith, no. Mr. Cooke is a good man of business to deal with," said Armstrong, with a satisfied smile.

"Take Captain Armstrong into the next room, Mr. Cooke," said his Excellency, "and settle with him all necessary details. Good morning, Captain Armstrong. The Government will not be unmindful of your services."

Armstrong bowed, and followed Cooke out of the room with the same air of indifference and self-possession which he had manifested throughout the interview. When the door closed behind them, Clare exclaimed:

"On my word, a remarkable man! By his face you'd think him sincerity itself; yet by Cooke's account he's an adept schemer."

"Yes, a very able man," remarked Camden complacently. "His evidence against the Sheares brothers will be most useful to us; it will enable us to keep Reynolds still in the background."

The two excellent noblemen then plunged into a discussion of ways and means for the furtherance of the "pacification of the country," into which we need not follow them. They were soon interrupted, however, by fresh visitors, General Lake and Lord Kingsborough being announced. These two officers, who entered together, were amongst those most relied on by the Government to carry into execution their tyrannous measures, Lake being fresh from the perpetration of nameless horrors in Ulster, the

Government was, at this time, anxious to install him as Commander-in-Chief, dispossessing Sir Ralph Abercrombie, who was not so accommodating as his superiors desired. A hint of this project was now conveyed to General Lake, in almost the first words spoken to him by the Lord Lieutenant.

"You are anxious, General, are you not, to take a soldier's part in the extermination of these rebels?"

"I should be delighted, your Excellency," replied the General, "to give any assistance I could towards the re-establishment of order in this unhappy country."

"The damned Papist dogs!" exclaimed Lord Kingsborough, expressing more forcibly the thought underlying Lake's polished phrase. "They must be shown no quarter."

"I am pleased to find you so resolute, Lord Kingsborough," said Lord Camden. "You will soon have an opportunity of displaying your zeal, as you are now, I understand, under orders to proceed with the North Cork Militia to the County Wexford." Kingsborough bowed in recognition of the correctness of his Excellency's statement. "I assume we need not fear the prevalence of any ill-advised leniency in your regiment."

"Leniency!" said Kingsborough. "You certainly need have no fear of any leniency among the North Corks, your Excellency. They're the gamest, daringest, bloodthirstiest set of men you'd find in all the army, by God!"

"And their Colonel, your Excellency," said General Lake, "is of the same loyal and sturdy character."

Kingsborough bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment, and Lord Clare spoke.

"Your regiment is also a very religious one, I believe, Lord Kingsborough? Greatly attached to the cause of the Church as well as to the State?"

"That is so, my Lord. Every man in it is a sworn Orangeman. There's little chance for any Papist dog they come across, still less for any Papist wench, unless she's complying to a redcoat." And Lord Kingsborough laughed, a vile laugh that rang mirthless and repulsive in the air, but found a ready response in the select audience that heard it.

"Spoken like a true English soldier!" said Lord Camden, genially. "You understand perfectly, my Lord Kingsborough, what the object of your mission to Wexford is?"

"Perfectly!" returned Kingsborough confidently. "I am to keep pricking at the people till they come out of their holes and face us in the open."

"Precisely," said Camden, turning with an air of satisfaction to Lord Clare. They latter deemed it advisable to emphasize the point still more unmistakeably.

"So long as rebellion is secret, it is dangerous," said he. "If they are driven to show themselves plainly, we can crush them."

"Especially," observed Lake, "if we can make them rise before their plans are matured."

"Quite so," remarked Lord Camden. "No means must be left untried to this end. You have a free hand, Lord Kingsborough; do not let any misplaced tenderness interfere with you in the discharge of your duty."

"You may rely on that, most assuredly, my Lord," said the worthy Colonel of the North Corks, laughing meaningly. And he assuredly meant what he said; so that when he took his leave, which he did shortly, it was little wonder that the Lord Lieutenant was moved to say:

"A fine fellow, that Kingsborough; no false sentimentality about him."

"An admirable Colonel of the North Corks," concurred Clare.

"Your Excellency," interposed Lake, who feared that his subordinate was receiving too much of the beneficent attention of the authorities, "what share am I to have in the further execution of your plans?"

"I can hardly answer that just yet, General Lake," returned Camden, suavely, "but I am hoping to enlarge your sphere of influence considerably. Your services in Ulster entitle you to promotion."

"Your Excellency is very good," said the General. He endeavoured, however, to extract from the Viceroy some more definite statement of his intentions; but in vain. All that Lord Camden would say was that General Lake might expect to hear from him shortly; and with this the General was fain to be content, and to take his leave. When he was gone, however, the conversation of the Viceroy and the Chancellor soon revealed the real difficulty of the position.

"I wish to God, Camden," said Lord Clare, "we had General Lake at the head of affairs instead of the present Commander-in-Chief."

"What can I do?" said Camden, helplessly. "Sir

Ralph Abercrombie won't give me a chance of dismissing him."

"Get him to resign, then," insisted Clare.

"Aye,—but how?"

Lord Clare had a reply on the tip of his tongue, when Mr. Secretary Cooke re-entered the room, and he suppressed it for the moment.

"Have you settled that business with Captain Armstrong, Cooke?" inquired Lord Camden.

"Yes, your Excellency; and I am at present engaged with Mr. Reynolds."

"No need for me to see him, I suppose?"

"Not that I am aware of, your Excellency. But Sir Ralph Abercrombie is here, and wishes to see you."

Lord Camden started at the mention of the man he had just been plotting against, and looked at Clare in some apprehension. But the ready Chancellor at once saw in the presence of Reynolds the opportunity for a piece of strategy, which the duller mind of Lord Camden would have missed. He spoke eagerly, in a hoarse semi-whisper.

"Gad, Camden, now's your chance! Have Reynolds in, and let Abercrombie listen to him. Sir Ralph has a prejudice against spies, and he may get disgusted."

Lord Camden gazed vacantly at the Chancellor for a moment; then, as the full import of his words came to him, his face lit up exultantly.

"I'll try it, by George! Cooke"—turning to the Secretary—"send Reynolds to me; and then, in a minute or two, General Abercrombie."

"Yes, your Excellency," said Cooke, and retired. A few minutes afterwards Reynolds entered the room. Stooping in his gait and slinking in his manner, this man presented a striking contrast to the soldier-like exterior of Armstrong. Here was a man born, if there was one such, to the plotter's trade. His cold, steely blue eyes veiled themselves under their lids as though they saw nothing, yet marked every move in his surroundings. The narrow nostrils of a pinched-up nose aggravated the meanness of his appearance; and his thin, treacherous, tightly-pressed lips opened with difficulty, as though it were a pain to him to hear the sound of his own slow, breathless voice, even in humbly responding to the Lord Lieutenant's cordial greetings and invitation to be seated.

Hardly had Mr. Reynolds taken his seat than Sir Ralph Abercrombie was announced. Reynolds, with an uncomfortable feeling of being under the surveillance of too many eyes, greeted the General's entrance with a low bow, and scrutinized him keenly the while. Sir Ralph, his broad chest distended with a haughty dignity, returned Reynolds' salutation with a half-nod, and, greeting Lord Clare with scarcely more ceremony, seated himself as far away from Reynolds as possible, and at the same side of the table as the Lord Lieutenant. Reynolds sat opposite the latter, while opposite Sir Ralph was Lord Clare, his keen eyes fixed on Abercrombie with a malignant searching.

"My dear Sir Ralph," said Camden, with an air of the utmost cordiality, "I am delighted to see you.

You find me investigating something of this treasonable conspiracy that has taken such a deep root in the kingdom." Lord Clare noted gleefully that Abercrombie's lip curled in a perceptible sneer; but he made no reply. Lord Camden went on: "You know this gentleman, Sir Ralph?—Mr. Reynolds?"

Abercrombie viewed Reynolds up and down with as much scornful aloofness as if he were an inanimate object, taking no notice of the respectful inclination with which the informer again greeted him; then said curtly:

"No, my Lord. Who is he?"

Camden leant over towards the General, and said triumphantly, "He is a member of the Executive of the United Irishmen!"

"A rebel!" said Sir Ralph, starting to his feet with such a menacing aspect that the informer hurriedly exclaimed:

"I beseech your Excellency to be more cautious in speaking of me. I run great dangers in his Majesty's service."

"I am surprised, Lord Camden," began Abercrombie—then he abruptly broke off, and again seated himself, saying, "No, I'm not, though."

"You were about to observe, Sir Ralph?" said Camden, with an air of bland astonishment.

"I was going to say, sir, that I was surprised at your having anything to do with a dastardly scoundrel like this," said Sir Ralph vehemently.

"Mr. Reynolds has rendered many services to the Government," replied Camden in his suavest tones.

"The arrest of Oliver Bond was entirely due to information supplied by him."

With a muttered exclamation of disgust, Sir Ralph Abercrombie deliberately turned his back on the Lord Lieutenant, and paid no further heed to his conversation. The malignant gleam in the eyes of Lord Clare grew brighter, and he shot an exultant glance at Camden, rejoicing in the obvious success of his scheme.

"And, if I mistake not," pursued the Lord Lieutenant, regardless of Abercrombie's inattention, "he comes now to give us further valuable information—at great personal risk."

He turned to Reynolds for corroboration. That worthy, now somewhat recovered from the nervous shock which Abercrombie's precipitancy had given him, replied:

"The greatest, your Excellency. I am suspected, I fear, by a few members of the Society—in particular by Neilson. And Neilson is such a huge powerful man! he—he could throttle me with one hand if he found me out!" The informer shivered a little as he spoke. Clare smiled grimly, and said with a malicious glee:

"You have already had a little rencontre with Neilson; eh, Mr. Reynolds?"

At the sound of the Chancellor's grating voice, Abercrombie turned further round in his seat, so as to present his back to Clare also.

"Yes, my Lord Clare," replied Reynolds, "He caught me by the throat and pinned me to the wall—it was at an entry off Thomas Street, your Lord-

ship—saying 'Reynolds, what punishment should be inflicted on a villian who would betray us?' It was a dark night and a solitary place; I was absolutely in his power."

"But you proved equal to the emergency, Mr. Reynolds?" said Lord Camden, encouragingly.

"Fortunately, your Excellency, I have considerable control over myself. I answered calmly: 'Bring me to the atrocious villian, and with this hand I will blow his brains out.'"

"Capital, indeed, Mr. Reynolds," said Camden with every sign of approval. "And now—you have made your report to Mr. Cooke, have you not?" Reynolds assented. The Lord Lieutenant was at a loss as to how he should proceed. He had really nothing to say to Reynolds, having introduced him for the sole purpose of irritating Abercrombie. Lord Clare, however, profited by the latter's ostentatious inattention to pass a slip of paper across the table to Camden. Glancing at it, his Excellency addressed the informer again.

"There are just a few points I wish to emphasize. We are anxious to have the rebellion break out as soon as possible, that it may be the easier crushed."

"I understand, your Excellency. Any influence I may have in the councils of the Society shall be exerted in favour of an immediate outbreak."

The wily Chancellor had played his game well in suggesting this line of conversation to his fellow-plotter. The choleric General, who had been exhibiting symptoms of increasing impatience as he listened to the interview, now sprang to his feet and

turned towards the Lord Lieutenant with a furious air.

"God's life, my lord," he exclaimed, "what does this infamy mean?"

"To what do you allude, General Abercrombie?" said Camden, decidedly disconcerted by the blazing eyes and angry voice of the indignant soldier.

"Is it possible," continued Sir Ralph, "that you the representative of the King, are using your agents to spur the unfortunate people to rebellion, in order that their punishment may be the surer? I repeat, sir, it is infamous!"

Lord Camden found no ready reply; but Clare remarked, without a trace of discomposure,

"You are a soldier, General Abercrombie, and do not understand these matters."

"Thank heaven, I do *not*, my Lord Clare! They belong to the province of the lawyers."

Ordinarily the most ill-tempered of men, Clare's delight at seeing Abercrombie lash himself into such a fury enabled him to preserve his serenity under the direct attack. He made no reply, and Camden, without attending further to Sir Ralph, resumed his dialogue with Reynolds. The General remained standing, one hand resting on the table, the other on his breast. Evidently he restrained his rage with the greatest difficulty, by the resolve to see and hear how far the Lord Lieutenant would go in this traffic with the traitor.

"Another point is this, Mr. Reynolds," said Lord Camden. "The brothers Sheares may shortly be arrested: so kindly furnish Mr. Cooke with all

possible information about their part in the conspiracy. You will not, however, be called on to give evidence at the trial."

"What about Lord Edward Fitzgerald?" Clare struck in, as Reynolds signified his comprehension of these instructions.

"I see him only at the meetings of the Executive; I do not know his place of concealment."

"You cannot, then," pursued the Chancellor, "give any information that would lead to his capture?"

"I regret to say that I cannot, my Lord." Then, the name having awakened an association in his mind, he added, "his kinsman, Dermot Fitzgerald, who has come prominently forward of late, has just returned from an organizing tour in Wexford."

"How do things stand there?" asked Camden.

"Fitzgerald reports that there is no liking for the United Irishmen among the people there; even the Papists hold aloof."

"Lord Kingsborough and his North Corks will soon draw them out." remarked Camden cheerily. "You may go, Mr. Reynolds; your manifold services will not be forgotten by the Government."

"I am obliged to your Excellency," said Reynolds rising at the intimation, "for the consideration you have to-day shown me."

"Pray don't speak of that, Mr. Reynolds," replied his Excellency in a tone that was deliberately cordial, rather than condescending. "It is always a pleasure to me to converse with men of your stamp. Good morning."

The informer bowed himself out, not omitting an

obsequious glance in the direction of Abercrombie, who heeded him no more than if he had been a dog slinking out of the room. The Lord Lieutenant and the Lord Chancellor were left to deal with the man whom they had deliberately goaded into a fury of honest indignation.

CHAPTER V

TREASON AT ITS BLACKEST

WHEN the door closed behind the sinister figure of the informer, Sir Ralph Abercrombie's heaving chest gave forth a great gasp of relief, as though the very presence of Reynolds had had a stifling effect upon him. As he still remained standing, Lord Camden rose and faced him with an inquiring air, trying to estimate whether his provocation had gone as far as he desired. Clare kept his seat; he had stirred up the strife, and now he felt that the concluding strokes of the plan might safely be left to Lord Camden's unaided initiative.

The Commander-in-Chief was the first to speak, with a bitter sneer at Camden's last words to the spy.

"Gad, sir, I must say your Excellency has strange notions of pleasure."

"Your tone this morning is very singular to me, Sir Ralph Abercrombie," said Camden, now resolved to push the quarrel to its utmost limit.

"And entirely lacking," interposed Clare, "in the respect due to the representative of his Majesty."

"If I am to respect the representative of his Majesty," burst forth Abercrombie, his words now rolling out uncontrolled as his fury at last got free vent, "His Majesty's representative must first respect

himself, and not degrade his high position by becoming the tool of an unscrupulous partisan gang."

"Since you constitute yourself my censor, General Abercrombie," said the Lord Lieutenant coldly, "have the kindness to inform me how my action has been unworthy of my high position."

"Why, sir, I have the admission of it from your own lips; you, the representative of law and order, are using your agents to create crime, to goad the people into rebellion—and what agents! My blood boils at the thought of that wretch Reynolds!"

"General Abercrombie!" cried Camden, angrily and warningly. Sir Ralph went on without listening to him.

"But if you count on the army to carry out your wishes you are mistaken, Lord Camden. So long as I am Commander-in-Chief ——"

A sudden interruption prevented Abercrombie from finishing the sentence. There was a loud knock at the door of the room, and before the Lord Lieutenant could say "come in!" Lord Kingsborough, the gallant Colonel of the North Corks, burst into the room. His countenance was purple with anger and savage disappointment; his hand shook as he held out to the Lord Lieutenant the document in his grasp.

"Your Excellency!" he gasped, "what is the meaning of this?" He would have said more, but that he suddenly checked himself on catching sight of the General.

"What have you there, Lord Kingsborough?" said Camden, in an encouraging tone.

"A military order, your Excellency, which has just been issued, signed by the Commander-in-Chief. It appears to me a very extraordinary one."

"Sir," said Sir Ralph, "it is not your business to criticise the orders I give you, but to obey them."

Kingsborough commenced to stammer a reply, but stopped at a sign from Clare. Camden took the paper from the Colonel's hand, and read it. It was that famous document, redounding for ever to the credit of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, by which he did all that one man could do to put a stop to the horrors that the Ascendancy section wished to inflict on the Catholic Irish. It was the order which finally knit the issue between the generous policy of the honest soldier, anxious to maintain real discipline and true order, and the grinding savagery of the junto into whose hands the Lord Lieutenant had now completely fallen. "The very disgraceful frequency of courts-martial," it ran, "and the many complaints of irregularities in the conduct of the troops in this kingdom, having too unfortunately proved the army to be in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to everyone but the enemy, the Commander-in-Chief thinks it necessary to demand from all generals commanding districts and brigades, as well as commanding officers of regiments, that they exert for themselves and compel from all officers under their command the strictest and most unremitting attention to the discipline, good order, and conduct of their men, such as may restore the high and distinguished reputation which the British troops

have been accustomed to enjoy in every part of the world. It becomes necessary to recur, and in every point to attend to the standing orders of the kingdom, which at the same time that they direct military assistance to be given at the requisitions of the civil magistrate, positively forbid the troops to act (but in case of attack) without his presence and authority; and the most positive orders are to be given to the officers commanding the party for this purpose."

Clare stepped to the Lord Lieutenant's side and read the document, of which this was the salient passage, over his shoulder. It was little wonder that their faces first showed dismay; then they exchanged glances which meant that Abercrombie must be got rid of at all costs. This order would mean an end to the burnings and massacres which Lake had carried out in Ulster, and which were about to be repeated in another sphere. Camden tapped the paper angrily as he spoke, not, however, venturing to address Abercrombie directly.

"You are quite right, Colonel Lord Kingsborough; this is a monstrous document. It would absolutely nullify all the work we are trying to accomplish and render the proclamation of martial law useless."

"Useless for your vile purposes, I hope," said Abercrombie boldly.

"I don't quite understand, General Abercrombie," said Clare, "what the purpose of this order is."

"It's purpose, my Lord Chancellor, is to stop the floggings, the burnings, the tortures, the outrages that you would fain have the soldiers commit, and to prevent you, Colonel Kingsborough, and your fellows

from giving provocation of any kind to a peaceful peasantry."

"This is all very well, General," began Camden; but Abercrombie interrupted him fiercely.

"Sir, do not interfere between myself and my immediate subordinates. Colonel Kingsborough, when you join your regiment in Wexford, remember my orders. Any outrages on the people will be punished with the full force of military law."

"This must not be, General Abercrombie," said Lord Camden, in as firm a tone as he could muster up.

"I am the head of the army—and it shall be!" retorted Sir Ralph.

"You are the head of the army," replied the Lord Lieutenant, "but the army must obey the civil power. This order must be rescinded. The wishes of his Majesty's Government must be carried out without such hampering restrictions."

"I refuse to rescind the order," said Abercrombie, bluntly.

"Then it must be made inoperative," pursued Camden. "Do your duty to the Government, Lord Kingsborough; you will be protected against any evil consequences resulting from the foolish anger of the Commander-in-Chief."

"Does your Excellency incite to mutiny as well as to rebellion?" asked Sir Ralph.

"I must teach the officers and soldiers that the urgent necessities of Government are above the requirements of military discipline," was the only reply of the Lord Lieutenant.

"Then," said Abercrombie, "there is no alternative for me. I beg to resign my position as Commander-in-Chief."

"I have great pleasure," replied Camden promptly, "in accepting your resignation, Sir Ralph Abercrombie."

The Lord Chancellor turned aside to conceal his evil leer, and dropped in a chair with a chuckle of satisfaction. His plan had worked; the one man who had steadily opposed his schemes was cleared from his path. Kingsborough straightened himself, and cast an insolent look at his late superior, rejoicing at being relieved from the disciplinary duty of obedience to a General with a conscience. Camden, anxious to clinch the matter beyond all possibility of doubt, sat down at the table and commenced a note to General Lake, offering him the vacant position at the head of the army. Abercrombie watched these manifestations with contempt, and walked out of the room. At the door he turned to give the Lord Lieutenant a parting word of warning.

"I leave the army in your hands, sir, and I wish you joy of it. The lack of discipline makes it formidable only to its friends. Have a care, Lord Camden! If the French effect a landing in Ireland, your disorganized ragamuffins could not stand a moment against them."

"Good morning, General Abercrombie," was Camden's only reply.

Sir Ralph went out, slamming the door forcibly. The three who remained gave perceptible sighs of relief. It is always an uncomfortable sensation for

the unprincipled to be conscious of the presence of a superior moral sense. No one spoke, however, until the Lord Lieutenant had finished writing, then, sealing up the letter, he said:

"Kingsborough, may I ask you to be my messenger to General Lake? You are pretty intimate with him, I believe. Will you take this note to him from me?"

"With pleasure, your Excellency. I hope we shall have General Lake for Commander-in-Chief?"

"I don't think he'll refuse the offer I am making him. Meantime, spare no pains and lose no time, Lord Kingsborough. To Wexford! You know your orders?"

"Trust me! They are too much to my taste for me to forget them. I beg to take my leave, your Excellency. My Lord Clare! I bid your Lordship good-bye."

Clare rose and followed Kingsborough to the door, to whisper in his ear as he went:

"Don't leave a Papist alive if you can help it!"

Kingsborough smiled, then broke into a laugh, and with a final bow departed, thoroughly satisfied with himself and his mission. Lord Clare returned to his chair opposite the Lord Lieutenant, and the two exchanged satisfied glances for a few minutes without speaking. Then Camden said:

"Well, I think all is going right now; eh, Clare?"

"All but one thing."

"What is that?"

"Lord Edward Fitzgerald is still at large."

"You fear him?"

"I do," said Clare; "he is an able soldier and may give us much trouble."

"Yes," said Camden reflectively, "if he were only in our hands the rebels would be absolutely without a leader of any military experience."

The two sat thoughtful for some minutes; then Lord Clare prepared to take his leave. But the surprises of this memorable day were not yet over. As Clare rose to his feet, Mr. Cooke re-entered the room. The Secretary's face wore a grave and puzzled aspect, and he hesitated to announce the object of his coming.

"What is it, Cooke?" asked the Lord Lieutenant.

"There is a mysterious man here, your Excellency, all muffled up, who won't tell his business to anyone but yourself."

Camden started and grew pale. "Perhaps a plot to assassinate me!" he ejaculated affrightedly. "Don't let him in, Cooke; have him seized and searched for concealed weapons."

"Nonsense," said Clare, brusquely. "More likely its another offer of information. Better have him in."

"But ——" stammered Lord Camden.

"Cooke and myself will be here," pursued Clare, fixing a contemptuous glance on the Lord Lieutenant; "one against three is not to be feared."

Still Camden hesitated; then Clare, who was at least no coward, said,

"Tell him *I* am the Lord Lieutenant if that will relieve your mind; *I* am not afraid that he will attempt assassination in a private room in the Castle."

"No, Clare," said Lord Camden, shamed into some courage by the Chancellor's steady gaze, "I will see him in my own person; but stay here; he may be a desperate man. Show him in Cooke; but stay close to him, and watch his every move."

The Secretary went out to fetch the mysterious stranger. During his absence, Camden fidgetted about, and re-arranged the chairs so that he might be as far as possible from that which a person entering the room would occupy. Clare watched him narrowly, scornfully; but said nothing.

Presently Cooke returned, ushering in a man wrapped up in a long cloak, with a felt hat pressed down over his forehead, and a muffler, though the day was warm, covering the lower part of his face. Hardly more than his eyes were visible; these, bloodshot and sunken, shifted fearfully from side to side. He made no attempt to remove his hat on entering; his hands hung by his sides, tightly clenched but trembling violently. He cast suspicious glances at Camden and Clare, and was so manifestly terror-stricken and affrighted that even Camden plucked up courage at the sight of the quaking wretch. He motioned him, however, to a chair near Clare, and signed to Cooke to sit between himself and the stranger. Then he said,

"You wished to speak with me? I am the Lord Lieutenant."

The visitor, looking around as if he feared something would spring on him from the walls or ceiling, glanced at Clare then at Cooke, and finally spoke—in a semi-whisper, hoarsely and fearfully.

"Can I speak in private, your—your Excellency!"

The demand renewed all the Viceroy's fears. He replied promptly, lest either of the other two should think of leaving the room.

"This is private enough. This gentleman is the Lord Chancellor; this, Mr. Secretary Cooke. You may speak freely."

The man hesitated; then, leaning forward as though to make his voice reach Camden's ears alone, he said, in the same hoarse, raucous voice,

"I have some reliable information to offer, your Excellency."

"About what?"

Instead of replying, the informer stretched out one of his tightly closed hands, offering the slip of paper which it contained to the Lord Lieutenant. The latter, desirous of avoiding all possible mishap, signed to Cooke to take the paper.

"Open it, Cooke, and pass it on to me."

The paper proving harmless, the Secretary passed it to the Viceroy; who read aloud, with an irrepressible exultation, the name written on it:—"Lord Edward Fitzgerald!"

"I can give him up, your Excellency," said the informer, in response to the inquiring glances that fell on him.

"When? How?" demanded Camden eagerly.

For answer the informer passed up another piece of paper. This time Lord Camden ventured to take it himself. Clare leant across the table to him, and they read the document together. It was all there—the place, the time, the manner—

the whole scheme which would betray into the hands of the Government the man whom most they feared.

"This is splendid, my man!" said Lord Camden, when he and the Chancellor had completed their perusal of the document. "What is your name?"

Lower still sank the informer's voice as he replied; for not even in this select company would his conscience allow him to feel safe. But, stooping towards him, Lord Camden caught the words:—"Francis Higgins, your Excellency."

Cooke scrutinized the informer closely, seeking to penetrate the wrappings in which he had enveloped himself; then he nodded in corroboration, and whispered to Camden, "Otherwise known as the Sham Squire."

"Well, Mr. Higgins," said Camden once more cheerful, breezy, and almost dignified, "if you only accomplish as much as is promised here, I think you need not work for your living any more. Cooke, read this; make up the points—the time, the place—and communicate with Major Sirr directly."

"I will, your Excellency."

"And see that Mr. Higgins is suitably recompensed for his risk in coming here. Go with Mr. Cooke, Mr. Higgins. Good-morning."

Higgins followed the Secretary out of the room without another word; displaying, however, some symptoms of renewed animation at the prospect of a rich reward.

"This," said the Lord Lieutenant, "is a fitting conclusion to an excellent morning's work!" He

stepped to a sideboard, and poured out a couple of glasses of brandy. "Come, Clare, sample this."

"I'll give you a toast," said Clare, as he seized his glass. "Death to the Papishes!"

And the Governor of the most Catholic country in the world responded heartily, as he drained off his draught with gusto, "Death to the Papishes!"

CHAPTER VI

ON THE BRINK

AN excellent morning's work! Thomas Reynolds felt that too as he reflected upon his interview with the Lord Lieutenant, and more particularly on his subsequent business transactions with his paymaster, Cooke. But this worthy man had not finished his day's work with his visit to the Castle in the morning. That same evening he sallied forth again, with a very different destination, but with the same sinister purpose at heart. He was going to a meeting of the Executive of the United Irishmen, to greet in the friendliest fashion the men against whom he was informing and whose blood he was conspiring to shed.

Many dark and winding streets he had to traverse, ere he reached his destination in a small chandler's shop in a dirty alley. Through the shop, where he was recognized with a nod by the staunch old woman who kept it, he passed up the stairs to the back room where, since the arrest of Oliver Bond, the rare Executive meetings had occasionally been held. Three other members of the Executive were there before him. One, towering high above the rest, a massive figure that ever rendered its owner unhappily conspicuous, was Samuel Neilson, that lion-hearted giant with the deep-rolling voice that inspired multitudes,

the inexhaustible energy that never flagged in the work of the patriot organization, the abounding vivacity that endeared him to every chance acquaintance; and, alas! the uncontrollable impetuosity that was to destroy the work his other grand qualities might have fitted him for. The second was the lithe and active figure of John Sheares, the younger and more fiery of these two gallant brothers whom Armstrong had even then betrayed to their death. The third was Dermot Fitzgerald, who, having entered the room before Reynolds, was engaged in an animated conversation with Neilson.

"We are all punctual, I see," said Reynolds, in his usual measured tones. "Good evening, brethren."

His greeting was returned by Neilson and Fitzgerald with a cold nod; but Sheares advanced to shake the informer by the hand, and began at once, with his accustomed exuberance of speech, to discuss the position of the movement with him. Though never very animated in manner, Reynolds entered into the conversation with every appearance of interest and anxiety for the fortunes of the patriot party—all the while thinking, as he listened to John Sheares' burning words, that he must get all he could from Sheares now, as his arrest was to take place in a few days.

Meantime Dermot and Neilson drew apart to the other side of the room. Each glanced at Reynolds with misgivings, and each caught the look of doubt in the other's eye.

"I distrust that man," said Neilson in a low tone to Dermot's ear.

"And I," replied Dermot, in the same undertone. "His smooth demeanour repels me unaccountably. But, after all, he would never betray us."

"No; 'twould be too great an infamy," said Neilson, tossing his great head as though to shake away the impossible notion. "I doubted him strongly, two months' ago; but he stood the test I put him to; and since then, I know not what to think."

They put the subject from them, and spoke of other things. Both had much of interest to tell the other, for, while Fitzgerald had been in Wexford, similar missions in Kildare, and the other counties bordering on Dublin, had kept Neilson fully occupied. Reports of their progress, comparison of notes on the prospects of a rising in the various districts, hopes and fears for the safety of their remaining leaders, were the subjects of their talk. Yet the thought of treachery was never far distant from their minds; the fate of Oliver Bond had cast an irremovable gloom over the heart and the spirits of the national leaders, who felt themselves thenceforward dogged at every step, and knew not whence the next betrayal might arise.

So they talked, Fitzgerald for the most part in gloom, Neilson in a more sanguine mood, till some time after the hour appointed for their meeting, the gathering was completed by the arrival of the elder Sheares and of Lord Edward Fitzgerald himself. The noble Geraldine flung off the cloak that but ill-disguised his handsome form, and grasped the hands of his friends with the easy cordiality that ever distinguished him.

"A thousand apologies for my delay," he said, "but I must be cautious how I come, and have to seek devious ways."

"You are in excellent time, my Lord," said the smooth-voiced Reynolds. "We have but just assembled."

"Come, then, to business. The times are too critical to admit of lengthened greetings."

So saying, Lord Edward seated himself at the head of the little table, Reynolds taking a place at his left hand. Beyond Reynolds sat John Sheares; on the other side of the table were Henry Sheares, Neilson, and Dermot Fitzgerald.

The discussions entered on were brief and pointed. Practically all the details of the approaching insurrection had already been arranged; they were again considered and rehandled in the light of the latest reports from the provinces; every weak spot in the plan had to be discovered, and remedied as far as possible. Heavy beyond words was the responsibility on the shoulders of these leaders, about to make one glorious effort to free their land for ever from the Saxon yoke. A solemn sense of the magnitude and the sacredness of their task sank deep into the hearts of every man.

Of every man save one—the informer who sat in their midst, gleaning, unsuspected, the means of ruining all these carefully-formed plans, stimulating to every foolish step that was suggested, gloating inwardly over his own astuteness, and the fortune he was preparing for himself.

"If all go well," said Samuel Neilson, "this may be the last meeting of our Executive."

Reynolds thought within himself. "If all go well, it may!" but no outward sign of the traitorous ideas within was visible on that serene, impassive countenance.

"That is just the question, Neilson," said Lord Edward. "Is it indeed to be the last?"

"All else is now settled, I think," said Dermot, "save the date of the rising."

"That is so," said Henry Sheares; "the stopping of the coaches, the simultaneous rising in all parts of the country on that signal, the seizure of the Castle here—all has been carefully planned out, and it only remains to give the word."

"When, then?" said Lord Edward. "Neilson has already given us to understand that he favours speed."

"I do," said Neilson. "I fear longer waiting will but give the Government a chance to weaken us further by abstracting others of our leaders, through the traitors whom they may find in our ranks."

He spoke with a deliberation unusual with him, and fixed his eyes steadily on Reynolds as he alluded to the possibility of treachery. But the informer had nerves of steel, and well knew that his life depended on his imperturbability. As if Neilson had merely looked to him for corroboration of his opinion, he said calmly:

"You are right, Neilson; that danger is ever increasing. I, too, vote for an immediate rising."

"And I!" cried John Sheares. "We have waited long enough, God knows! The centuries of our country's agony must end at last! Delay saps our spirits and wastes our vital strength, while it gives the Government time to concentrate all its powers for defence. Let us strike now!"

"As well now as at any time," said Dermot Fitzgerald, in a dull voice. "Let it be now."

"Dermot," said Lord Edward, kindly, "you speak gloomily."

"The situation warrants gloom," returned Dermot.

"Tut, Dermot," said his noble kinsman, "your ill-success in Wexford has unduly depressed you. Wexford is but one county, and though it cannot be relied on to do any fighting, all the other parts of the country will spring to arms together. With a hundred thousand armed men, we shall drive the oppressor out of the land with ease, and triumphantly establish our Irish Republic. Henry, what say you?"

"I vote for delay, my Lord," said the elder Sheares.

"You stand alone in that opinion, then," observed Reynolds, always anxious to accentuate, if possible, any trifling disagreement that might arise.

"Your reasons, Henry," asked Lord Edward.

Before Henry could reply, his brother broke in:

"His reasons are his coldness and caution, my Lord. Know you not of old that my brother's prudence often leads him to excessive deliberation?"

"Of you, John, that never could be said," remarked Lord Edward, smiling.

"No, my Lord," said Henry Sheares, "John's impetuosity is apt to outrun his discretion."

"'Twas France that gave me fire!" cried John Sheares, excitedly. "France, five years ago, when I lived through the Terror there—the bloody birth of Liberty."

"I too, John," returned his brother, quietly, "lived through the Terror, but it taught me caution."

"But come, Henry," interposed Neilson, "your reasons! Why do you oppose an immediate rising?"

"Well," said Henry Sheares, in a modest and hesitant tone, "I can hardly hope to prevail where all think otherwise."

"Nevertheless, let us hear what you have to say," said Lord Edward.

"I would wait for the French," said Henry Sheares, briefly. "Without French officers we can never hope to cope with well-disciplined troops."

"Well-disciplined!" exclaimed Lord Edward. "Why, the King's troops are now utterly lacking in any semblance of discipline! Have you not heard—I have it from a trusty friend—that Sir Ralph Abercrombie has resigned, in despair of effecting any reform?"

"That may well be," replied the elder Sheares. "But I am not talking of the restraining or civilizing discipline—merely of drill. The King's troops have learned their drill, and they will never forget it, no matter how licentious they may become; ours are ignorant of the elements of military training."

"But if we wait for the French," objected Neilson,

"we may never be able to dispense with their aid afterwards."

"A few officers will do," said Henry, "just to teach our men the rudiments of military tactics; and if we can conquer our enemies, our allies will give us no trouble."

"But the delay would be fatal, Henry," said Lord Edward, impetuously. "Here are all of us, not knowing when we may be arrested; and, without leaders, our poor people could do nothing, drilled or not."

"Since you are all against me," said Henry Sheares, "I submit. I will play my part in this rising, whenever it shall be."

"Well said, Henry!" said Reynolds, patronizingly. "And so will we all."

"I hope so," snapped out Neilson, stung again to suspicion by Reynolds' arrogant air.

"You hope only?" said Reynolds suavely. "Surely *you* are not inclined to draw back?"

"No, but others may be," retorted Neilson fiercely.

"If you mean me ——" began the informer rising to his feet, as Neilson also stood up. But Lord Edward interfered.

"Come, gentlemen, no bickering; such suits not with our noble cause. Neilson, Reynolds, shake hands."

"Gladly, my Lord," said Reynolds promptly. "Here is my hand, brother Neilson."

Neilson scowled for a moment; but a glance from Lord Edward and a whisper from Dermot warned him of the madness of a quarrel, and he laid his hand in the informer's.

"At your request, Lord Edward," he said, sullenly, and the two sat down again.

"Now," resumed their leader, "we are all agreed he rising must be soon; but when?" There was no reply for a moment, and Lord Edward continued, "What say you, gentlemen, to the night of the 23rd — next Wednesday?"

"Admirable," said John Sheares. "We can stop the coaches that night."

"And that," added Lord Edward, "will raise the country by the morning of the 24th."

"My brother and I will take charge of the Dublin rising, of course," said John Sheares.

"Yes," said Lord Edward, "and you also, Neilson, had better remain here."

Neilson assented.

"I too," said Reynolds, "shall remain in Dublin to take part in the attack on the Castle."

"Good," said Lord Edward. "For my part, I am for Kildare."

"For Kildare!" said Reynolds, sharply. He could scarcely avoid showing traces of dismay at the possibility of his victim escaping him.

"I will leave the city on the 20th—Sunday," said Lord Edward. "When Kildare rises, I will put myself at the head of the detachments there, and lead them to Dublin to co-operate with you."

"I shall not breathe freely till you are out of Dublin, my Lord," said Neilson. "For you run more risk than any of us."

"The risk is of the smallest, Neilson," said Lord

Edward, laughing lightly, as he prepared to depart. "No one would betray me."

"No! No wretch would dare to be guilty of such base treachery," said Reynolds, vehemently.

Dermot, who had sat silent through nearly the whole of the discussion, and had watched Reynolds closely, felt a strong renewal of his instinctive distrust of this man.

"Remember Oliver Bond!" he said, significantly.

Was it fancy, or did he really perceive a slight tremor agitate the lip of the impassive Reynolds at the mention of Bond's name? He had no time to look more closely, or to consult Neilson about his suspicions; for Lord Edward now drew him aside to ask if he would accompany him to Kildare.

"Where you wish, my Lord," was Dermot's loyal response, "wherever I can be most useful."

"Good; come with me a little way and we shall settle where to meet. Gentlemen!" He turned at the door and lifted his hat in salutation. "Before we meet together again, Ireland may be free!"

The door closed behind him. It was their last glimpse on earth of the patriot Geraldine.

CHAPTER VII

ESMOND'S PROMISE

IN the great dining-room at Kyan's farm, Dora Kavanagh sat pensively by the window. Within the room, Eileen Kyan, with the assistance of two maids, was preparing the table for the mid-day meal of the numerous farm labourers. Dora, usually so busy, was now strangely inactive, and all the work was left upon Eileen's shoulders. A few short weeks had indeed changed much in Dora's former habits. Upon her mind, deeper than upon that of any other member of the household, sank the horrible tidings which now reached their ears from day to day. For the soldiers had descended like a devouring plague of locusts upon Wexford; the North Corks were in the neighbourhood, and the fame of their cruelties spread far and wide. Only in report, as yet, had Dora known the horrors that their presence brought; but each wove around her more fatally a veil of ominous presentiment, that seemed to settle on herself as the coming victim. Try as she would, she was unable to shake off this lurking demon that wrecked her peace. Most of all it goaded her to see that Esmond still persisted in holding as exaggerated the rumours of the soldiers' doings, and still, because they had not as yet appeared in his immediate district, exerted all his influence to suppress the growing

tendency to insurrection. Gloom-encompassed on every side, the once energetic Dora grew morbid and depressed, and languished visibly to the anxious eye of her friends, and especially of her betrothed. Yet though Esmond saw and was grieved by her despair, not for that could he deem it his duty to depart from the line he marked out for himself, the line he so fervently believed to be right.

Esmond came in and stood beside Dora, looking at her wistfully. Neither spoke. Soon the room began to fill with the labourers—and with others, too—neighbouring farmers and artisans, who came to seek counsel from the Kyans in the dread straits to which they saw themselves reduced. The babble of their voices filled the room as they clustered excitedly round Esmond.

"What is the matter? What fresh news is there?" asked Esmond.

It was the same tale that they had all heard for days past, the same floggings, the same burnings, the same outrages; but it was nearer now, more certain, and touched them closelier home. Esmond could hardly gather, amid the throng of voices that pressed for his attention, the facts of the separate horrors that they told of. One poor lad, whom he had known well, had been picketted five times, they said. "The lad's not able to stand, he's maimed for life."

"And why was this done?" asked Esmond.

"Why? because the poor lad was a Catholic, of course!"

"They've burnt down Tim Moloney's house," said another.

"Burnt down!" exclaimed Esmond.

"Yes, they suspected him of being a United Irishman."

"Ah!" exclaimed Esmond triumphantly, "*there* is the cause of it all! If we had been fools enough to join that proclaimed society, we too might fear for ourselves. As it is, we are quite safe—quite safe," he repeated emphatically. "Our consciences protect us."

Dora and Eileen both stood beside him, but neither seemed reassured by what he said: no more did the agitated crowd to whom he spoke. Suddenly Dora, catching sight of a whispering group around Michael Delaney, the smith, cried out:

"What are you whispering about? Tell what you have to tell, Michael Delaney! Speak out! any horror is better than this suspense!"

Delaney hesitated; looked first at Dora, then at Eileen; and finally said,

"'Twas about two young girls, Miss——."

"Well?" said Dora, as he paused again. "Quick! you can tell nothing worse than I am prepared to hear!"

"The soldiers met them on the road, an' said they were rebels because they dressed in green." Again the smith stopped; he had obviously great difficulty in proceeding.

"Who told you this tale, Michael?" interposed Esmond.

"There's wan o' the poor things down in the town," replied Delaney, "but she's not long for this world."

"They murdered the women, then?"

"They murdered them, sure enough," said Delaney, "for nayther of them cud live through it, an' wan's dead already; but it's not for me to tell how."

A cry of anguish broke from Dora.

"My God! Did the beasts dishonour the girls?"

"They did," said Patrick Gilligan, solemnly.

A hush fell on the crowd for a few moments. This last atrocity seemed to strike them into a dumb despair. Then Thomas Furlong, removing his hat reverently, said:

"May God protect us! that is all."

Dora had sunk back against the widow-seat with a low moan, resisting Esmond's proffer of support, and stood with her hands pressed over her eyes. She turned upon Furlong with a flash of fury.

"All! Where is your manhood? Where is your Irish chivalry, men of Wexford? Are you going to stand idly by while your homes are violated, your nearest and dearest tortured, your women outraged? If this last infamy does not stir your coward blood, may you be accursed for ever, before God and man!"

Clarion-clear and pulsating with emotion, her magnificent voice rang through the old room and thrilled the most intimate chords in the heart of each of her hearers. Eileen, who had been weeping silently, raised her head and watched her friend's flashing eye with a kind of despairing exultation. Esmond stepped towards her to try to calm her; she thrust him aside impatiently, and went on, stretching out her arm towards the now deeply-agitated gathering:

"To arms! to arms! Prepare to fight for your hearths and homes; for the Faith and the Fatherland and the purity of your women! Come!" she cried, mounting in the window-seat the better to command them, "swear with me never to rest till you have avenged these wrongs, or have perished nobly as martyrs of liberty and virtue! Swear!" And she held her right arm on high, standing before the assembled peasants like an avenging deity. The impulse seized on all together; no attempt of Esmond to intervene could prove fruitful now; the fire of Dora's righteous wrath had kindled an answering blaze in every heart; and as one man, they heaved up their arms and sent forth a great shout, "We swear!"

A new light—a light of triumph and of joy—shone in Dora's dark eyes and lit up her glowing features as her glance swept the gathering she had roused to such enthusiasm. A new strength came into her voice as she steadily continued:

"Now we are pledge-bound all! Would I could fight amongst you! But, go—concert your plans of defence; choose as your leader——."

She paused a moment, turning wistfully to Esmond. But he had withdrawn from her side the moment he perceived that it was vain to try to stem the awakened enthusiasm of the crowd; and he now stood apart from the rest, moodily eyeing the scene with folded arms. He caught Dora's glance, understood well the tacit invitation, and resolutely shook his head. The insurgent band, as we may now call them, who had followed her gaze, saw her tremble for a moment and

press her hand tightly to her side. But in an instant she went on with renewed energy:

"Choose as your leader someone from among yourselves whom your know and can trust. Pass round the word through the countryside. 'For Ireland and Liberty!' Above all, turn all you can seize into weapons—pitchforks and shovels, reaping-hooks and knives!"

"Aye, and pikes!" cried Delaney the smith.

"Where would we get pikes?" exclaimed Hugh Kelly, "unless you forge them for us, Michael."

"They are forged!" cried Delaney.

"They are forged?" repeated several voices, in amazement.

"Yes! I knew this would come and am prepared for it, even since Dermot Fitzgerald first came here, I have been preparing. There is a store of pikes in my cabin—in the thatch, and among the potatoes and the turf-heaps—enough to supply the whole country-side. Come!"

"Bravo, Michael! bring us to them, quick!" cried Furlong.

"Delaney shall be our captain," cried one from the back of the crowd. The cry was taken up, and they pressed round the smith and would have hoisted him on their shoulders.

"Quick!" cried Dora, "there is no time to lose! Go and arm yourselves."

Delaney extricated himself from his exuberant admirers, and marched out of the room. The others rapidly defiled out after him, each respectfully saluting Dora as he passed, and only a few casting a

regretful glance at the silent and unsympathetic Esmond.

"Oh," cried Eileen, eagerly, "how glad Dermot would be! If he were only here, they should not want for a leader! How grand they look as they march down the path! If he were only at their head!"

Eileen flew out of the room as she spoke, the better to watch the gallant little band as it went its way. Dora and Esmond were alone.

Dora had sunk down into the window-seat again; the unnatural excitement had told severely on her overstrung nerves, and now a pallor as of death overspread her countenance. Esmond approached again, and as she felt his hand on her shoulder she raised to him sad and appealing eyes. But in his there was no response such as she wished; pity there was, and love, too, but no sign that he shared her zeal for the rising or approved of what she had done.

Pityingly and sadly he spoke:

"Dora, what mad thing is this you have done? You are sending these poor fellows to their death."

Her spirit flashed out once more.

"It is you who would send them to their death, by keeping them from defending themselves! But, thank God, they are awake at last to the truth; you cannot now quench the flame that is enkindled in their hearts!"

"So you taunt and defy me, Dora?" said Esmond quietly.

In a moment she was on her feet and clinging to him with a passionate embrace.

"Oh, forgive—forgive me, Esmond," she wailed. "I am stung to the heart by your indifference; but oh, it is just because I love you! How you could have led them, Esmond, if you would!"

"My love! My Dora, my betrothed wife!" He clasped her closely to his heart, and kissed her forehead, her eyes, her lips, again and again. "Oh, I am sorry for you—for us all!"

"Dear, you will not fail me now?" she pleaded. "Now, when I loved you most of all?"

"Fail you, sweetest?" he said, not well understanding. "No, I shall be ever at your side, not fighting afar from you. Believe me"—as he saw her tears burst out—"there is nothing to fear."

"There is! there is! Esmond!—did you hear that horrible story?"

"Of the girls? Yes." His voice was grave, but he did not yet understand what was working in her mind.

"You will save me from that fate—from dishonour that is worse than death?"

"I swear I will, my Dora, my stainless one! No man shall touch you roughly without meeting death at my sword!"

"That is not enough," she continued, in deep, thrilling tones that pierced her lover's heart, "that is not all that I would ask of your love."

Puzzled by something strangely ominous in her voice, Esmond raised her head from his shoulder to gaze straight into her tear-swollen eyes again.

"I will fight till I die on your behalf, Dora," he said, pressing a kiss on her damp cheek. "I can do no more."

"You *can* do more—you can do better!" she cried with renewed animation. "Do you not see, my love? You are but one, they are many. Your death" (a painful shudder convulsed her frame) "would leave me helpless in their hands!"

"But others will be there to help me," he returned. "All this is exaggerated, frantic. There will be no such danger. Be at rest, my dear one."

"If there were such danger!" she insisted. She raised her head and laid her hands on his shoulders, facing him. "Esmond—say it is frantic, say it is madness—but promise me, if there were—promise me——."

"Promise what?"

"Promise to *kill me!*" The words came, vibrating with passionate horror, from her tight-shut lips.

"Kill—*you!*" Esmond exclaimed, doubting the correctness of his hearing.

"Yes!" Her voice rose in earnest pleading. "If they were many—if you were alone, or overpowered—it is the only way to save me. If you were overpowered, and I left at their cruel mercy! Oh, Esmond, you cannot know, no man can know what a woman feels about that last, that deadliest dishonour!" She fell on her knees in supplication, her tear-stained eyes fixed on his face. "My love, out of the love you bear me, promise to kill me rather than let me be dishonoured! You will, my Esmond, my betrothed husband?"

Moved with a whirlwind of emotions he could not contain, Esmond raised her gently from the ground—pressed his lips to the clustering locks that hung in

wild disorder over her cold forehead—and said, solemnly, "I will."

"Ah!" A deep sigh—a gasp of immeasurable relief—and Dora was almost herself again. "Then nothing matters else, my love." She passed close to him, and rejoiced his eyes once more with the sudden flash of her smile, breaking through her tears like the sunbeams of an April day.

CHAPTER VIII

A LAST RALLY

IT was the evening of the 22nd of May—the day before that fixed for the insurrection. The twilight greys were settling over that vacant ground, close to Dublin, then known as the Barley Fields, whither Dermot Fitzgerald was hastening. His step was hurried, but not with the eagerness of hope; the events of the preceding few days had chilled the last remnants of confidence in his heart.

What a week it had been! Lord Edward had been arrested on the 19th—just when twenty-four hours more would have placed him in safety at the head of the Kildare insurgents. Then came the capture of the Sheares brothers, on the 21st, and with them went the last vestige of organization. Neilson and Dermot had not been seen since the last meeting of the Executive; Reynolds had disappeared from the ken of his betrayed associates. Those who still were staunch knew not whom to trust; the betrayal of Lord Edward was the last and deadliest blow to mutual confidence. Each man looked askance on his neighbour; even Neilson was suspected by some of being the author of Lord Edward's capture. This suspicion Dermot Fitzgerald strenuously repudiated, feeling assured in his heart that Reynolds, and no other, was the culprit;

and though, as we know, Reynolds was not guilty of this particular infamy, Dermot's instinctive distrust of him was none the less a healthy and a thoroughly justified feeling.

Dermot paced softly beneath the few trees that overshadowed, on one side, the waste plot whereon he stood. From time to time he looked around anxiously, seeking for someone in the gathering gloom. He had that morning received a verbal message from Samuel Neilson, requesting his presence in the Barley Fields at dusk; and the messenger had hinted that Neilson had some fresh scheme in his brain, in which he required Fitzgerald's assistance. Now he was on the spot, but Neilson had not appeared. Waiting was an anxious business, in such critical times; his own arrest might be effected at any moment. Yet this feverish expectancy was better than the dumb inaction of the previous four days; and the fresh evening air more bracing than the close atmosphere of the hiding-place whence he could not venture save after nightfall.

He thought of that other sunset time—so short a time ago, yet so long in seeming!—when he and Eileen Kyan had plighted their troth. A tear stood in his eye as he recalled the image of his graceful, dainty little sweetheart, and tried to steel himself to the conviction that he would never see her again. He felt that the rising, leaderless, disorganized, precipitate, was bound to end in failure; he had no thoughts of shirking his share in it, nor deemed that he could avoid death. And then a momentary regret seized on him; why had he ever spoken to

Eileen at all? Even then, he was virtually condemned to death; why had he disturbed her peace by his avowals of love, and induced her to join her fate to his? Now every torture that he endured (he smiled grimly as he contemplated them) would be so many piercing wounds to her gentle heart. Yet so it would have been in any case; she loved him; he had but called forth her avowal. And he would die the more bravely, the more cheerfully, in the consciousness that he had earned this sweet, pure girl's first love. Yes, it was well; even though they should never meet again, the blissful knowledge of mutual love was the crowning glory of his life.

Neilson was very late; could anything have happened him? Quite likely—but no, there he was. Disguised and closely muffled, of course; but through it all, even in the semi-darkness, the giant form, the springing gait, were unmistakable—alas! too much so!

"Is it you?—Fitzgerald!" said the deep voice.

"Yes." The two friends clasped hands. "My God, Neilson, what a week this has been! All our best and most trusted leaders in prison! The whole revolution will collapse!"

"Not yet," responded Neilson, grimly determined. "I have a plan."

"But what avails it? What can we do without Lord Edward and the brothers Sheares? There is only Reynolds, and he——"

"Sooner than trust *him*," exclaimed Neilson, fiercely, "I'd give myself up to Major Sirr! No, we

must get our leaders back again—Lord Edward first."

"Back again! from the cells of Newgate!"

"Aye, Fitzgerald! The Bastille was stormed, and why not Newgate? Listen." His voice sank lower yet. "These three days, since I learned of Lord Edward's arrest, I have been busy organizing a band to sack Newgate and set him free!"

"But is it possible?"

"It is, it is! Many that I spoke to were afraid; others that were willing at first were terrified by the arrest of the Sheares yesterday; it shows so clearly that there are traitors in our midst. But still, I have a staunch band ready."

"When will you make the attempt?"

"To-night!"

"To-night!" exclaimed Dermot.

"Now!" returned the undaunted Neilson. "That was why I sent for you to join us. My men will be here immediately. Many of them you know, and they know you for Lord Edward's kinsman; they will trust you more readily than any other after myself."

"But you yourself will lead us, Neilson?"

"Yes; but first I must reconnoitre the ground; that I can entrust to no one but myself. Stay you here, and keep the men together till I return."

"I will," said Fitzgerald. "Do not be long."

"A quarter of an hour only," said Neilson, preparing to hide his features still more closely in a cap and muffler.

"And be cautious, Neilson, for Heaven's sake!

Let your rash humour lead you into no danger, remember"—and Dermot laid his hand on his friend's shoulder—"you are now the last hope of the cause."

"Never fear for me," returned Neilson, confidently. "See, here come some of them." He pointed to a few dark shadows that began to creep into the field from various directions. "Tell them where I am gone, and keep them ready till I come."

Dermot would have renewed his exhortations of carefulness, but Neilson had already set out on his reconnoitring mission. Half-way across the field he stopped to speak to some of the new arrivals, and indicated where Dermot stood. These came up, and formed around Fitzgerald, with silent signs of greeting. To the others, who kept arriving, Dermot, explained the object of Neilson's mission.

They gathered and stood in silence, overmuch oppressed by the sorrow of the times and the responsibility of their undertaking for much speech. They were mostly young men, of Neilson's immediate entourage, whom his inspiring enthusiasm and inexhaustible energy had captured heart and soul to the patriot movement, and who were prepared to follow him to the death. Dermot they knew—most of them, and trusted as a relative of their beloved leader, and as a friend of their own special Captain, Neilson. They were armed, some with pikes, some with muskets, a few with pistols; their steady aspect and their fast-swelling numbers filled Dermot's heart once more with pride and hope. In murmured tones they occasionally gave vent to their firm deter-

mination to release the General whom they revered as the truest and noblest of leaders.

"Lord Edward shall not sleep another night in a prison cell," said one.

"But," said another, less sanguine, "if it's true he is sore wounded, he may not be able to come with us."

"We can carry him," said Dermot. "Let us but get there, and all will settle itself."

"Aye," said another of the band, "with Lord Edward among us, even if he had to ride in a litter, we would win."

"You are right, friend," said Dermot heartily. "Lord Edward's presence would inspire the dullest crowd of cowards that were ever gathered together to fight for liberty like heroes." He uncovered his head, and added solemnly, "God keep him safe for us!"

The aspiration was repeated in like solemn fashion by the assembled band, which had now attained large dimensions. They were all assembled; the minutes were flying; every moment made discovery more likely; yet Neilson did not return. Murmurs of impatient anxiety began to arise.

"We are all here now, sure enough," said the man nearest to Dermot, raising himself on a tree-stump to get a view, as best he could in the darkness. "I wish Colonel Neilson was back."

"Be patient, 'tis not yet time," replied Dermot. Yet he well knew that the quarter of an hour fixed by Neilson for his absence had more than passed; and he, too, could not avoid a growing uneasiness.

"There is someone now," cried the man on the tree-stump, "but he hasn't Neilson's bulk."

A voice at the verge of the crowd accosted the newcomer sharply. "Who goes there?"

"A friend," replied the unknown.

"What friend? I don't know you?" Several men surrounded the intruder, who was quite alone, seizing him and gazing at him suspiciously.

"Bring me to your leader," he said calmly.

Dermot gave the word that he should be passed into the centre of the group, where he himself stood under the trees. This done, Dermot was just able to make out that the capture was in civilian costume, and appeared, by voice and dress, to be a gentleman of culture. In his hand he held a bundle of papers; the rapid search he had undergone at the hands of his captors disclosed no weapons.

"Who is this man?" asked Dermot, wonderingly. Then, seeing that all were ignorant, he addressed the gentleman himself. "Who are you?" he demanded.

Instead of replying directly, the unknown said:

"I come to give you news, and to hand you these papers." And he passed the roll into Fitzgerald's hand.

"What news? what papers?" exclaimed Dermot, impatiently. Then, as his eyes fell on a seal he knew well—the writing it was too dark to read—he uttered a cry. "Why, these are Neilson's private papers! How came you by them?"

"Where's Neilson?" demanded the man who had constituted himself Dermot's lieutenant, fiercely seizing the gentleman by the arm.

"He has been arrested!" was the reply.

"Neilson arrested." The cry went out to the

limits of the crowd, and struck a chill to every hopeful heart—despair of their cause, grief for their loved Colonel, fear of unavoidable impending fate. Dermot perceived at once the change in the temper of his followers, but ere he could encourage them, he must obtain full particulars of what had befallen his friend.

"Come, man," he said, almost menacingly, "don't delay; tell us what you know at once."

With unruffled composure, the stranger told his tale.

"As I was walking past Newgate prison just now, I saw a tall, strong man emerge from the shadow and examine the prison wall carefully, as if he were counting the tiers of masonry. It was Neilson—I knew his appearance well, though I had never spoken to him. As he stood out in the open, his commanding figure attracted the attention of the soldier on guard."

"Ah, my unfortunate comrade!" groaned Fitzgerald. "His rashness has ruined him. But go on."

"Before I could warn him of his danger," continued their informant, whose tones manifested a strong sympathy with the patriot party, "a band of soldiers was upon him. He struggled desperately; but it was ten to one, and all his efforts were fruitless. I walked quietly up, but saw that all hope of a rescue was vain. The street was empty; there was no one to whom I could call. But Neilson's ready wit conceived a means of saving his papers from inspection. 'Sir,' said he to me, 'I know you to be a magistrate; I commit these papers to your

charge, lest these ruffians should rob me of them!' I took the papers silently, and the soldiers, believing from my dress that I was a magistrate, allowed me to go away with them."

"You are no magistrate?" said Dermot, inquiringly.

"No; nor did Neilson know who I was. Only he thought, and thought rightly, that his papers would be safer with me than with the soldiers. I have given them to you, his friend and colleague. Farewell."

And the mysterious stranger turned towards the extremities of the crowd.

"Stay, sir!" cried Dermot, "you must not go like this! you have not told us who it is we must thank for this service."

"I want no thanks, and I beg of you not to detain me. My name you need not know. I am not one of you, but I wish you well. Good night."

There was nothing more to be said; no one ventured to oppose the unknown gentleman's departure. Indeed as he disappeared into the evening gloom, the crowd, too, seemed to melt and lose itself in the lengthening shadows. First, one by one men on the outskirts of the little knot began to slip away silently with an air of hopelessness and profound discouragement. Then those in the centre who had thronged eagerly around Dermot, perceiving how thin the ranks were growing, turned also away and prepared to depart, muttering words of doubt and panic as they dispersed. Dermot, at first too deeply moved at the terrible tidings, and realizing

but slowly the full force of this new blow on an already stricken band, did not observe the silent desertion of the crowd. When he saw that they were all moving away he turned swiftly upon those who still lingered, determined to make a supreme effort to rally the scattered forces. Arresting them with an imperious gesture, he said sharply:

"Where are you going, men?"

"There is nothing more to be done. If we stay here we'll be caught ourselves," was the answer from many voices. The men had paused at his words, but were impatient to be gone.

"There is no question of staying here! We must march at once on Newgate; we have now two leaders to rescue, Neilson, as well as Lord Edward," continued Dermot passionately pleading.

"We'd only be running our heads into the noose," answered one, drawing away the young brother who stood beside him irresolute. "They're sure to be ready, waitin' for us," said another on the edge of the crowd.

"Aye, no chance of surprisin' them now—there are traitors everywhere—they betrayed Neilson, and they will betray us," The voices were lost in a general clamour of dissent. Dermot turned to appeal to them personally.

"Friends! Brothers! United Irishmen! listen to me! play the part of men! Do not let us disperse without striking a blow! The moment is propitious. If our leaders are lost, for that very reason the Government will be over-confident and easy to take by surprise. One bold dash, and Newgate is ours!

Remember your oaths, United Irishman! remember your down-trodden country and your persecuted faith! Ah!" He stopped abruptly, for he saw that he was almost alone. Like shadows the men had come and now, like shadows, they were gone.

"Cowards! cravens," he cried fiercely, but checked himself suddenly. Why blame them? he thought. The cause had suffered blows that might appal the stoutest of heart. With their loved and chosen leaders in prison, with traitors in their very midst, though where they knew not, with no hope of foreign aid—all was indeed over! The chance had been missed; Ireland's freedom must be the work of another generation. For this time all was lost!

Dermot seated himself sadly on a stone and buried his face in his hands, giving full vent to the gloomy thoughts that thronged upon him. He did not hear a step beside him and started as a hand was placed on his shoulder.

"Mr. Fitzgerald!"

"Who's that?" said Dermot not recognizing the voice and fearing treachery.

"It's me, Mr. Fitzgerald—Dan Murphy."

Dermot stood up and took Dan's hand warmly.

"How came you here?" he said.

"Wexford is up at last!" answered Dan in a whisper.

"Up? In arms, do you mean?"

"Yes, Mr. Fitzgerald. What all your eloquence couldn't do, the cruelty of the soldiers did," answered Dan bitterly.

"The soldiers! cruelty!—soldiers in Wexford?" gasped Dermot brokenly, a nameless fear gripping his heart.

"Aye, the Bloody North Corks, with a divil called Kingsborough at the head of them," said Dan grimly.

"God! Wexford at the mercy of those ruffians! And Eileen? the Kyans?" asked Dermot.

"All safe, thank God, so far. But it's hard to tell —the risin's not going on well. The men are brave enough, but they've no leaders," Dan answered. His homely honest face looked full of perplexity and care.

"What of Esmond Kyan?" said Dermot.

Dan sighed heavily as he answered: "Ah, sure he won't join the boys at all, sir, even now! So, I'm here, Mr. Fitzgerald, to see if the Union could send down a man that *can* and will lead."

"The Union! have you heard? do you know the position we are in?" said Dermot desperately.

"I do, Mr. Fitzgerald, I only come up last night an' the first thing I heard was that Lord Edward and the two Sheares was in jail. So I've been lookin' all day for you and Mr. Neilson."

"Neilson has been arrested too, Dan," said Dermot wearily.

"What? Neilson too? Then who's left?"

"No one, Dan. All is lost!" Dermot's head fell forward on his breast and his voice broke at these words. Dan, however, recovered himself quickly. As long as Dermot Fitzgerald lived all was not lost, he thought, for he knew the fire and power of the man.

"No, no, Mr. Fitzgerald, all's not lost yet. *You* are still free!"

"What can I do? Even now, I tried to keep a band together, and they would not listen to me," said Dermot as they slowly moved away towards the city.

"Come to Wexford, Mr. Fitzgerald!" was Dan's reply.

"To Wexford!"

"Aye! They didn't listen to you before, but they'll listen to you now. All your words have come true, an' many a man I heard say it. Come down, Mr. Fitzgerald. You'll find the bouldest set 'iv men that ever struck a blow for Ireland, gatherin' together around Oulart Hill!"

Dan's words enkindled anew the hope in Dermot's breast. Besides his heart hungered to be with Eileen, near her to protect her if there was danger. He shuddered to think of her tender love in the midst of the brutal soldiery, at their bitter mercy.

"Yes, Dan, I will go," he answered. "I may not be able to do all you expect of me; but *here* I can do nothing. Oh, if Wexford can but hold out for a few days!—then to join with the men of Carlow, Wicklow, Kildare and Kilkenny! Thus allied we can hold our own till Tone brings the French—and then—the new year may yet see freedom's dawn on the hills of Ireland!"

The thought of action, of being able to strike a blow for liberty brought back the light to Dermot's eye and the glow to his cheek. His step quickened as he thought of the journey that would bring him

back to Eileen, and he resolutely checked the current of his previous gloomy forebodings to discuss more fully with Dan the situation of Wexford, and all the hopes and fears of the brave hearts that were arming for the fight—that glorious last stand of Irish liberty.

CHAPTER IX

ALARMS

WHEN Dan Murphy told Dermot Fitzgerald that leaders were the great need of the insurrectionists in Wexford, he indicated correctly the main weakness of the rising. All over the county groups of young fellows, like that which Dora Kavanagh's burning words had called to the field, were coming together in secret, and striving towards coherence and a united front; but the lack of previous organization hampered every attempt, and the absence of support from the more prominent men in each district made the efforts at tactical planning feeble and fruitless. Such men as Michael Delaney, the smith, whom his fellows had acclaimed, in Kyan's, as captain of the little band brought together in that neighbourhood, were brave, sturdy, respected by their followers; but inevitably their conceptions of methods of attack or defence were narrow and ineffective. Not till Father John Murphy put himself at the head of the patriot army, and grouped the scattered items into one solid mass, did the rebellion take on any semblance of success; and then precious time had been lost. Had the richer and more intelligent farmers been earlier in the field—had Esmond Kyan, and those like him, not been sunk so deeply in love of peace as to be blind to the urgent necessity for

war—the fate of the Wexford rising and of Ireland might have been far other than the ultimate result.

But Esmond Kyan—and in this he was typical of many—to the last moment obstinately refused to believe that the danger was imminent. By chance the erratic wanderings of the soldiers in their search for arms had as yet spared his house and those in the immediate vicinity; and he persisted in believing, as we have seen, that only those who committed themselves to opposition to the Government would suffer. Not that, even in this case, his generous heart contemplated with equanimity the prospect of the sufferings of these misguided ones (as he deemed them) from his own position of security; but he fancied that, by steadily preserving an attitude of hostility to the popular tumults, by manifesting himself as a consistent friend to peace and good order, he could maintain the respect and confidence of the ruling powers, and might be able at critical moments to exert great influence on behalf of his beaten countrymen. Fatal policy! he was yet to learn by tragic experience that the hireling troops of the British Government reverenced not peaceful dispositions nor good intentions, that their object was exasperation, not pacification, and that cold steel alone could command their respect by commanding their fear.

Blind to all this—being deaf alike to the bitter reproaches of his indignant betrothed, and the entreaties of his grief-stricken sister—Esmond Kyan resolutely maintained his desperately precarious

position. In France his young mind had become imbued with a deep dread of aught in the nature of Jacobinism; and, disregarding the immense difference between the situation of France and the situation of Ireland, he viewed all popular risings, all attempts to overthrow established government, with horror and loathing; or, at the most favourable estimation, with contemptuous pity, as he might regard the frantic struggle of a suddenly-crazed friend. So it came about that, on the day when at last the North Corks penetrated into his immediate neighbourhood, he was practically alone. All around, the alarm of the soldiers' arrival had cleared the country of men, women, and children—these last brought away by the loving care of relatives, in the determination to shelter them to the death. The farm-hands and servants of the Kyans went off with the rest to join one or other of the still scattered patriot bands; Dan Murphy had disappeared some days before, and all knew that he was heart and soul in the armed rising. The women servants, too, were gone; fear proved stronger than their attachment to their master and mistress, and they accompanied their nearest of kin to take refuge behind the line of pikes. But Esmond Kyan and his father, with the united obstinacy of age and obstinacy of youth, refused to leave their home. They were safe, they said, and believed no one would harm *them*, who were known to be opposed to the projects of the rebels. They would guard their women-folk, and see that no harm befell them. The soldiers would respect their situation, and pass on; and all would

be well. The fatuity of noble but narrow minds !—the inability to conceive what possibilities of savagery might lie in the breasts of an undisciplined and reckless soldiery !

Mrs. Kyan, though with some doubts and apprehensions, yet trusted implicitly in the wisdom of her husband and her son ; and so might Eileen have acquiesced silently in their arrangements, sinking her misgivings in her confidence of Esmond's superior knowledge. But it was far otherwise with Dora Kavanagh. With that subtile intuitive perception which so often surpasses in acuteness the rational deductive powers, she saw clearly the fallacy of all Esmond's hopes. An inward warning, a solemn presentiment of impending evil, continually darkened her spirit ; and it was with an ever-increasing mental torture that she watched Esmond's impassive demeanour. Her deep love for him was only an added torment ; while it assisted her to understand the true courage and nobility of character that underlay his seemingly timid action, it yet rendered more bitter the conviction that he was pursuing the path which would lead them all to destruction. Little wonder if, at times, her spirit flashed forth in outbursts of reproach ; yet each such occasion followed repentance, reconciliation, and loving entreaty. To all, however, Esmond was immovable ; and Dora glided about the house, wan as a ghost, awaiting with forced calm the doom which she felt to be inevitable. Or, mounting the hill at the back of the house, she sat watching—watching for the lurid glint of military uniform and accoutrements, as a con-

demned criminal might watch for the arrival of the executioner.

Within, Mr. and Mrs. Kyan sat in the old dining-hall, now empty to desolation. Bending over the fire, they too waited—waited and grumbled; he, upraiding the folly of the servants who had joined in the rising; she, less assured, plaintively bemoaning the unprotected condition of the house. Esmond paced the room impatiently, joining from time to time in their conversation. On his confidence there was still no shadow; he only longed for the soldiers to come, that he might demonstrate to Dora how thoroughly justified he had been in trusting them. To Dora! yes, it was her doubt that most of all tormented him. That such a cloud should intervene between himself and his beloved, his betrothed bride! But he could not yield to her entreaties; he felt it would be wrong, it would be fatal. He had not forgotten her intense agitation when, a few days before she lit the torch of insurrection in the breasts of the young men of the district, and the promise he had then made vaguely troubled him from time to time. He strove to dismiss it from his thoughts, as merely a necessary expedient to soothe Dora's hysterical condition. That *she* should be so overstrung was strange; however, the excitement she had undergone that day would account for it. That he would ever be called upon to keep that promise he regarded as a fantastic absurdity; yet the indefinite uneasiness of mind was there, and he could not eradicate it. Blended with it was his anxiety for his friends and neighbours who had taken up arms. It

was but that morning that the last of these had departed, in fear of the advent of the North Corks.

"'Tis terrible!" he said, pausing in his walk to gaze out of the window, where his eye met the deserted cottage of one of the pikemen. "The unfortunate fellows are simply playing into the hands of the Orangemen by this desperate attempt at rebellion."

He spoke as much to himself as to his parents; his father answered moodily.

"Aye, the militia will make short work of them, I'm thinking." He drew closer to the fire, though the bright May sun was shining. The anxious times through which the country was passing had aged Patrick Kyan greatly in a few days, as such shocks do affect those whose ordinary current of life is uneventful.

"And it would have been so easy to be safe!" went on Esmond, in the same dreamy way. "No evil could have befallen them if they had only remained quiet—as we are."

His father nodded a silent assent. Mrs. Kyan sighed heavily and said,

"Ah, well, my son, I wish, all the same, we had a few of the boys round the house with pikes: it might be safer."

"Nonsense, woman!" said her husband gruffly. "That's what would ruin us entirely. It's the way we are, with nothing at all rebellious, or suspicious even about the place, that we're safest."

Mrs. Kyan was silent for a moment, nursing her troubles in her own mind; till a fresh regret found expression.

"Ah, well, Pat, I was sorry to see Dan Murphy go, after he being with us all these years."

"He'll have to pay the penalty of his folly," said Patrick Kyan, angrily. Dan Murphy had been an especial favourite of his and he keenly felt his desertion; but his feelings found vent in anger. "Since he has joined the rebels," he went on, "it would be very dangerous for us to have him here at all."

"Yes, at present it would," said Esmond. "But afterwards—unless the poor fellow is killed in battle—we may be able to save him from the vengeance of the law."

This was the hope that Esmond was nursing, the hope of intervening at the close of the rebellion, to protect the vanquished from paying too heavy a penalty for defeat.

"Where is Eileen?" asked her mother, after another interval of silence.

"Gone up the hill with Dora, I suppose," replied Esmond. But even as he spoke, Eileen came rushing in. Her tear-stained face was all aglow; the excitement that pervaded her was one of intense joy.

"Oh, Esmond!" she cried, "I see two horsemen coming straight here! and I don't think they're soldiers!"

"Who, then, Eileen?" asked her brother, gently drawing her towards him; glancing wistfully the while at Dora, who glided in in Eileen's wake.

"One has a green coat," she replied. "I think—he's like—Dermot Fitzgerald!"

Eileen dropped her voice almost to a whisper, but

her father heard the name, and rose to his feet in anger.

"That rascal back again!" he exclaimed. "It would be just like him, when there's mischief to be made."

Esmond looked deprecatingly at his father, wishing to have him spare Eileen's feelings. But she had run to the window and did not heed.

"Oh, it is, it is he!" she exclaimed joyously, "and Dan Murphy with him!"

"Dan Murphy!" exclaimed Esmond in surprise, as he too stepped to the window. Yes, sure enough Dermot Fitzgerald and Dan Murphy were alighting in the courtyard. Haste and concern manifested themselves in their every movement. Flinging their horses' reins hurriedly over a gate-post, they entered together, hatless, stained with travel and with blood. With a little cry of joy, which half-turned into pain at sight of the blood-stains on his coat, Eileen flung herself into her lover's arms, regardless of the angry attitude of her father, who advanced towards Dermot menacingly. Fearing an unpleasant conflict, Esmond hastily stepped between, and signed to his father to retire.

"I wish I could honestly bid you welcome, Dermot," he said.

"And why not, Esmond?" said Eileen, indignantly. "*I* welcome you, Dermot!"

Dermot bent over her fair head and caressed her cheek in silence. The joy of a meeting, which, but a few days ago, had seemed almost impossible, overcame for the moment his power of speech.

"You came in a troublous time," went on Esmond, "and I fear you came, not to assuage the passions of the people, but to increase them—if I may judge from your being in the company of a rebel."

"Rebel, Masther Esmond! 'Tis a patriot you ought to say!" said Dan, hurt at the coldness with which his loved master received him. More he might have added, but Dermot checked him.

"This is no time to bandy words," he said, still holding Eileen's hand. "Esmond—Eileen—you are all in the gravest danger."

"Aye, so long as *you* are on the premises," growled Patrick Kyan.

Dermot went on without heeding him:—

"The soldiers are marching straight here, Dan and I almost rode through them; one bullet grazed my arm, another carried off Dan's hat. They will be here now—in half an hour."

"They're the North Corks," added Dan, "that show no mercy to man, woman or child."

"Come!" said Dermot, persuasively, "you have time enough yet to fly. Harness a waggon, saddle your horses, and bring all your household to Oulart, where a camp was formed this morning. There is no other safety, Esmond," he concluded in tones of earnest entreaty.

"Why, what is there to fear?" said Esmond, calmly.

"My God, man," almost wailed Fitzgerald, "do you still persist in this blind folly?"

"Am I not a loyal and peaceful subject? Why should I be banned by troops coming to enforce the

law?" demanded Esmond, with an air of conscious rectitude.

"Are you not a Catholic?" retorted Fitzgerald, fiercely. "That is enough to justify any outrage on your person or property."

The old man who thought his son was dealing too gently with this persistent intruder, broke in:

"There is only one thing that could expose us to any danger, Mr. Fitzgerald; and that is your presence here."

Dermot started, and made a motion as if to go; but, recollecting himself, clasped Eileen once more in his arms. Esmond at once set himself to mitigate the harshness of his father's words.

"No matter for that!" he said, holding out his hand towards Dermot, who grasped it heartily. "I will never refuse shelter to fugitives, even if they were not old friends. Come, and I will show you where to conceal yourselves in the barn."

"Impossible, Esmond!" returned Dermot, hastily. "There is no safety here. Kingsborough's ruffians will leave no corner unsearched—perhaps they will burn the whole place down. We are off to Oulart."

"Yes, Mr. Esmond," said Dan, with a dry laugh, "the line of pikes is our best security."

Esmond shook his head, with a mute gesture of dissent. He then crossed over to where his father stood and laid his hand on the old man's shoulder, speaking softly with him in order to avert his rising anger. Dora stood silent near Mrs. Kyan and Dermot was left a little apart with Eileen. He

quickly availed himself of this opportunity to urge her at least to follow his advice.

"Eileen," he said, taking her hand fondly in his, "if your father and brother are deaf to our warnings, will you not listen? Come with Dan and me; you will be safe, much safer than at home, and I will guard you with my life."

Eileen looked up, startled, and uttered a cry of surprise.

"Dermot, you don't want me to leave them here?"

Patrick Kyan heard her and at once stepped forward, his face darkening with anger, his clenched fist upraised to Dermot.

"How dare you, sir, try to carry off my daughter like that, before my very eyes, too? Take your hands off her, I say! Come, Eileen."

"Patience, patience, father," said Esmond intervening. "You mean well, Dermot, but Eileen must not go. Her place is by her father and mother. If she is in any danger, I will guard her."

He drew himself up proudly, conscious of his manly strength and power, yet his glance was tempered with tenderness and love as he looked around smiling upon his dear ones. Who could protect them, who could cherish them better than he?

Nevertheless Dermot remained unmoved in his determination to induce Eileen to leave this place of hourly danger.

"I take my answer," he said, "only from Eileen herself. Will you come with me, Eileen?"

"Oh, Dermot, I cannot go! I cannot leave my

mother! If there is danger I must share it with her."

"But, dearest, hear me," he continued, pleadingly.

Eileen interrupted him, hastily:

"Esmond will take care of us—I am not afraid, except for you, Dermot! Go at once, if you must go; this place is not safe for you. Oh, Dan, make him go!"

"Miss Eileen is right, sir," said Dan, coming forward. "If we are to save ourselves, we must be off at once. There's no good in talkin' to them, I see," he added dolefully.

"I cannot leave you like this, Eileen! I know too well what the vile English soldiery are!"

"Sure, what cud we do, sir, if we stayed? Better make for the camp an' bring a party o' the boys back here. We'll be in time if we hurry," said Dan.

Dermot's face brightened at this suggestion. It was the one thing possible, for, leave Eileen and the others to their fate, he dare not, however foolishly they might disregard his warnings.

"You are right, Dan," he said. "Good-bye, Eileen. I will be back in time to save you yet. Esmond, look to yourself. For God's sake, guard the house, at any rate, till I return."

He left the room with Dan and was gone in a few moments, a terrible fear upon him lest he might even now be too late with the relief party.

Dora gazed wistfully, with straining eyes after the departing figures until Dermot's green coat was blended with the far hedges along the road. She had listened, trance-like, to what had passed. Never

would she desert Esmond, or show by the slightest sign a wish for greater security than he could give. Yet her heart prayed that Dermot would come back speedily for the sake of all. She would go to the hill and scan the country round for those signs of danger she so dreaded—the white gleam of sabres, the blood-like glare of England's red. Dora flung a loose cloak over her head and passed quietly from the house.

CHAPTER X

DORA AT PEACE

PATRICK KYAN sat in silence a little while after Dermot's departure, turning over the late occurrences in his mind. No one, save Esmond, had noticed Dora's absence.

"It's glad I am they're gone, the vagabonds," said Patrick Kyan, breaking the silence at last. "We'll be all right with them away."

Mrs. Kyan rose timidly and turned to Esmond anxiously.

"Hadn't you better shut up the house, Esmond, so that the soldiers won't know there's anyone here?"

"Nonsense, mother," answered her son impatiently, "we are perfectly safe, I tell you. Come, Eileen, don't look so woe-begone, child. Dermot will be all right, never fear."

The door was flung open suddenly and Dora appeared, pale as a phantom, on the threshold.

"Esmond, from the top of the hill I saw a regiment of soldiers marching along the road in this direction. I flew down to tell you—they will be here at any moment now!"

She paused breathless.

"Well, Dora?" said Esmond smiling calmly. At last she would have her fears for ever laid at rest and all would be well between them.

"It is not well!" she said slowly. "They are coming to bring ruin and destruction on us all."

Eileen, who had been standing by the window, gave a cry of fear and drew back into the room.

"Oh, they are here, Esmond, they are here!"

"Be calm, Eileen. Everything will be all right. Leave me to speak with the officer."

"Esmond," said Dora solemnly, looking at him long and fixedly, while the clash of spurs and the sound of loud talking in the yard outside announced the arrival of the soldiers, "Esmond, remember your promise!"

He was silent, and she repeated the question more gravely still.

"You will remember, Esmond?"

"I will remember."

Hardly had he spoken when several soldiers entered the room noisily, accompanied by Lord Kingsborough.

Esmond advanced towards them and addressed Lord Kingsborough, whom he assumed to be the officer in command.

"Whom have I the honour of welcoming?"

Kingsborough looked at him from head to foot, then turning insolently from him, to a stout Corporal standing by,

"Who's this fellow?" he asked.

"He's a bloody Papist, Colonel," answered the Corporal with a grin.

"My name is Esmond Kyan, Colonel," said Esmond quietly. "I am a loyal subject of his Majesty."

Kingsborough uttered a loud guffaw as if extremely tickled by the rejoinder.

"Ha, ha, ha! Loyal, a Papist loyal!"

Dragging a chair forward, he flung himself into it and looked around the room, bestowing a rude stare on Mr. and Mrs. Kyan.

Dora and Eileen had withdrawn a little behind and were as yet unseen.

Esmond flushed angrily at Kingsborough's tone and pointing to his father said as calmly as he could.

"Before you seat yourself, sir, may I remind you that this is my father's house, and that his permission, and mine, should be asked before you make yourself at home in it."

"Confound your damnable insolence! Seize the fellow, men!" exclaimed Kingsborough violently, glad to be able to tyrannize over this Papist, who had dared to bandy words with him.

Three or four soldiers slipped up nimbly and seized Esmond's arms, holding him fast. At first he seemed disposed to resist their force by force, but desisted and replied in a dignified tone,

"This is an outrage on liberty, Colonel, for which you will suffer at the hands of the law."

A rough blow on the mouth from the Corporal was the only reply, for Kingsborough's attention had been directed elsewhere, by a movement of Dora's, who had hastily stepped forward when she saw Esmond pinioned by the soldiers.

"Hallo! Tom, drag those girls forward till I get a view of what they're like."

The Corporal advanced, nothing loth, to obey his command, but Patrick Kyan barred his way.

"Hands off, ye scoundrels!" he cried, hitting the Corporal a smart blow with his stick. The latter, started back, surprised at the suddenness of the blow and dazed at its heaviness. One of the soldiers laughed jeeringly as the blood streamed from his nose down his bloated face and bright uniform. Maddened by this taunt, the Corporal swiftly drew his sword and rushed at Patrick Kyan. The old man threw up his arms with a cry and fell prone, stabbed to the heart.

Mary Kyan flung herself wildly on her husband's dead body, and tried to lift his head on her lap, in hope of catching one last conscious glance from his eyes. But they were already glazing with the film of death. She kissed the cold cheek passionately, then rose and, with trembling hands uplifted called down a terrible curse on the hand that had widowed her and on the foreign power that had armed that hand. Very weird and terrible she looked, her grey locks scattered over her face, her hands stained with the life blood of her husband. Some of the most brutal seemed in awe of the old woman who looked almost supernatural in her avenging mien. The Corporal stood mute before her. His leering comrade whose smile at his friend's bleeding nose had hardly yet died on his face, suddenly leant forward and snatched one of the guns from the wall against which a soldier had placed it. Poising it in his powerful hand he aimed a blow at the old woman's head. But Eileen, with a scream, flung herself in

front of her mother to shield her with her own body. The butt end of the gun struck her on the temple and she dropped down senseless beside her father.

Kingsborough turned angrily on the soldier.

"Damn you, you clumsy brute, you've killed the girl! Mind what you're about man, and don't wound the dark one. Hallo! look out for the old harridan!"

For Mary Kyan, seeing her daughter fall, had now rushed wildly upon the soldier who had dealt the blow. But one of the soldiers from behind pierced her with his bayonet before she could reach him.

All this time Esmond had been making desperate efforts to free himself from the grasp of his captors.

"Murderers, demons of hell!" he cried, as he saw his mother fall almost at his feet, his soul stung to madness at his helplessness,

"Father, Mother, Eileen—oh God, all dead! Dora! Dora!"

Dora ran swiftly towards him.

"I am with you still, Esmond," she cried.

"Catch that girl! She may do us a mischief," cried Kingsborough, drawing back, fear in his tone. "There's murder in her eye!"

Two soldiers seized her roughly by the arms and dragged her towards Kingsborough.

"Don't be frightened," said one of them with a sneer. "The Colonel has a tender heart——."

"Esmond! Esmond, my love! save me!" cried Dora in anguished entreaty as she vainly tried to free herself from her torturers.

Kingsborough's eyes blazed with a wicked light.

Cruelty added an increased vehemence to his evil intent and he smiled with devilish glee as he looked from Dora to Esmond.

"Your love, eh? If you know what love is, my black-eyed beauty, you'll not refuse a kiss from a gallant soldier like me."

He pulled her roughly from the soldiers and, seizing her hands he pressed his vile lips on hers. Dora's whole frame quivered at this insult, but she was powerless as a wounded bird in the claws of a hawk.

"Esmond!" she moaned piteously, "remember your promise."

But Esmond did not answer, for he too was helpless, a maddened captive struggling vainly to be free. Kingsborough flung his arm around her neck and tried to tear away her neckerchief.

"This rebel green ill becomes you, sweet one," he laughed, catching it from Dora's throat and flinging it towards Esmond. Her black hair became loosened in the struggle and fell like a protecting mantle over her shoulders, descending in a dim mass to her knees.

"Damn your eyes! Look out, Colonel!"

Esmond had broken from the soldiers and had wrested a bayonet from one of them. Quick as a lightening flash he darted forward, making a feint at Kingsborough. The latter terrified, started back, loosening his grasp of Dora. Then Esmond raised his weapon and pierced Dora's breast.

"I keep my promise, my betrothed," he said gently as she sank at his feet.

"My faithful Esmond! Good-bye!" A sweet tender smile lighted up her pale face. The cloud was gone for ever indeed between them, but it was not so that Esmond had fancied that it would end. Wrapped in her wavy tresses his love lay undefiled beyond the danger of brute violence for ever more.

Esmond had not moved since he dealt the fatal blow. Kingsborough had now recovered himself.

"Keep that fellow off there!" he cried to the soldiers, who had again seized the now passive Esmond.

"Don't stab him! Save him for the whip and the pitchcap!"

They bound his quiet limbs securely.

"Now string him up there and flog him!" said Kingsborough, indicating one of the low beams.

Esmond smiled to see them making these preparations for flogging.

"You may torture me now as you like," he said calmly. "My love is dead, and I would rejoin her."

"Why the devil did you kill the girl, if you were so fond of her, you madman?" asked Kingsborough in amazement.

Decidedly, these Papish Irish had a strange way of loving!

Esmond smiled scornfully.

"Do not mention such a word, you foul villain. Better that my Dora should endure a thousand deaths than suffer at your hands."

"Curse you! You'll pay for this, you croppy scoundrel!" threatened Kingsborough, his face distorted with fury.

"My comfort is, that all I loved is out of your reach," said Esmond indifferently.

"Are you sure of that? You've done for this girl, right enough. How about the other, Tom?" turning to the Corporal. "Was she killed or only stunned?"

The Corporal bent over Eileen and answered:

"Stunned only, Colonel. She's coming to."

Esmond moaned to himself, "Oh, God, grant her death! grant her death!"

Kingsborough's face gleamed with delight as he watched Esmond.

"Rouse her up, lads, quickly, and fetch her here. We'll torture her before the fellow's eyes, then we'll flog and hang him and take off the girl."

"Hurrah!" they cried, as they busied themselves to carry out his orders. Some prepared for the flogging, while others hastened to apply restoratives to the hapless Eileen, with the same cruel zeal.

They were interrupted suddenly, however, by the entrance of one of the soldiers who had been set on guard outside.

CHAPTER XI

FIRE

"COLONEL KINGSBOROUGH," cried the soldier, panic-stricken, "there's a big party of croppies coming—twice as many as we have! We must clear out!"

The North Corks hardly waited for the Colonel's commands, for they had reason to dread an encounter with the rebels whom their fiendish outrages had maddened beyond human endurance. They collected their arms that were lying about, paying no further heed to Eileen.

Kingsborough pointed to Esmond.

"Tie this fellow up," he ordered. "Throw the corpses beside him. Strap the girl on a horse, out of the stable, and saddle another for me."

Eileen had now fully recovered her senses and had realized in a few moments the whole ghastly tragedy. Esmond, now firmly bound on a chair which was fastened to the kitchen table, was utterly powerless to save her. The soldiers seized her and bore her to the horse outside on which they bound her, still resisting violently. Kingsborough turned to follow her, ordering the men to fire the house and then follow him to Enniscorthy. He left in haste, not waiting to see the order carried out, for he dreaded, as much as his men, a meeting with the rebel forces,

and felt more in his element torturing helpless victims like the frail girl now borne before him, than fighting men on the battle-field.

Once more there was quiet at Kyan's—the soldiers had gone, after setting fire to the house. Esmond was alone at last, alone save for the dead. There on the blood-stained floor on his left, near the hearth-stone where they were wont to sit, lay his father and mother side by side, together in death. And, at his feet, her soft hair, sweeping the ground beneath him was Dora—great God, her blood was staining the very bonds that tied him! But he must not think of her thus. He must think of her spirit hovering near him and lovingly bidding him hasten to her. . . . Ah, a light, a tongue of flame by the window, then a great leaping flashing of light upon the timber-work. It was the end; soon, soon all would be over!

But there was Eileen still alive, even now, perhaps, an agonized victim of unspeakable violence! Esmond remembered his little sister with a sharp pang of remorse for, in his despair at this triple tragedy of death, he had momentarily forgotten that Eileen yet lived and was doomed for the greatest wrong of all—far bitterer, far crueller than his aged father's untimely end, than his pious mother's savage butchery, aye than Dora's sacrifice by her lover's protecting bayonet-thrust!

Esmond, awakened again to a fierce desire for life and liberty, struggled frantically with his bonds, watching meantime the creeping flames that were rapidly invading the room. But his captors had

bound him beyond all hope of escape. He but drew the knots the tighter around his twining limbs and straining flesh in his efforts to loosen them or find a flaw in their firm strands.

All at once above the crackling and roaring of the fire, arose the sound of trampling feet and agitated voices—yes, yes, the rebel band had come. Dan dismounted first and rushed into the house, Dermot following immediately.

"This way, Mr. Fitzgerald!" cried Dan in front.

"Is anyone alive there?" asked Dermot, his voice quivering with agony at the sight of the burning homestead, a manifest sign of the presence of the North Corks. And though he asked, he already guessed the answer—none had been spared, save with a view to greater ignominy.

"Yes, yes!" came Esmond's eager reply. "If you would save Eileen, make haste!"

By this time a group of the insurgents had entered, most of them armed with pikes, though some had much ruder weapons consisting of flails and scythes and reaping hooks. All had a stern, grave look and seemed, as indeed they were, men goaded out of honest peace to a fury of war by untold deeds of shame and wrong. Some were but boys; many were men already grey-haired.

They hastened to free Esmond, plying him with eager questions and casting many a shuddering look at the corpses that lay at his feet. But Esmond cut his story short and told of Eileen's plight, urging to instant pursuit. Even while they spoke it might be too late!

"To Enniscorthy!" cried Dermot wildly. "We must take the town and pay the ruffians home for this. Come Esmond. The house is in a blaze and will soon fall in."

Dan and the other men were already outside. The house was already gone beyond all rescue, but even if rescue were possible none would have lingered there. Yet Esmond remained rooted to the fatal spot, his face already lighted up by the glowing flames that lapped the timbers around. His thoughts had flown back to the dead—alas, that help had come too late, too late, but to avenge them. Dermot laid his hand gently upon his arm. He longed to be gone, yet hardly dared to intrude upon the sacredness of a grief like this.

"Esmond," he said, "remember Eileen—come."

Esmond summoned his strength for a final parting. He bent softly, tearlessly, over his father and mother, laying them reverently to rest in the ruins of their home. Then he turned to Dora, and touched her forehead with his lips in a last caress, while he drew her dark hair around her like a pall. Taking her torn kerchief, now stained red with blood, he trust it into his bosom.

"This I must take," he murmured to himself, "to keep me in mind of my vengeance."

The rites were over.

"I am ready, Dermot," he said, and left the house without a backward glance. It was not a moment too soon, for even as they quitted the courtyard, they heard the crashing of the heavy roof-tree beams behind them.

Esmond paused as he heard, and stretched his hand to Dermot solemnly.

"I am with you," he said.

"At last!" cried Dermot.

"To the death," he answered gravely. "I swear."

He raised the hand in which he held the bloody scarf aloft to Heaven.

"I swear before God, to the sacred and beloved dead, never to rest so long as life remains to me, till I have sated to the full my thirst for vengeance on those who have robbed me of my happiness and my love! I will show no mercy. I will spare neither man, nor woman, nor child. I will shoot them, stab them, burn them, laugh at them in their agonies! I will know no other joy henceforth than the death groan of an English soldier! To vengeance, for my dead love's sake, I consecrate my life. I swear it, God."

Dermot was silent, for he guessed the terrible strain that had wrought such transformation in the calm, peaceful nature of Esmond. None knew better than he since his arrival in Wexford of these wondrous changes wrought by torture in the souls of the men of Wexford, transforming in one dread hour quiet, law-abiding peasants into grim and desperate warriors, maddened with unquenchable thirst for slaughter.

Silently they left the farmyard and hastened after the rebel band who had already started. As they reached the brow of the hill where Dora had last stood and scanned the country-side for the bringers of death, Esmond cast one long look backward and murmured passionate regret,

"Farewell, my Dora! I will join you soon!"

CHAPTER XII

IN DEMON GRIP

FAST as Esmond and Dermot led their party in pursuit, the scurrying troopers footed it faster still. Their work had been very pleasant up to this, but a chase like this was a totally different matter. Searching everywhere for arms, without respect for the privacy of property or person; quartering themselves arbitrarily upon the people, regardless of the decencies of family life; applying the pitch-cap, the triangle, the lash, the stake, and all the other gentle instruments of persuasion to the "bloody Papists;" burning down a house here, butchering an infant there, outraging a woman elsewhere—these were all very agreeable pastimes, calculated to make the days pass gaily for these gallant soldiers of his Majesty King George III; especially when they were sustained in their labours by the consciousness that they were performing a meritorious service to their superiors, facilitating the final extirpation of the "croppy dogs." But when these croppy dogs showed their teeth, and turned savagely upon their oppressors, the military began to take a very different view of affairs. This kind of thing was not at all what they had bargained for. True they knew—at least the better-informed among them did—that it was the desire of their com-

mandant (General Lake), the new Commander-in-chief, to "bring the rebels into the open"—in other words, to exasperate a peaceful peasantry to a mad fury of despair. But that the process might be an extremely dangerous one for the provoking parties was an idea which had not occurred to them, until it was forcibly impressed upon their minds by circumstances. Lord Kingsborough himself found it no more to his liking than his men did. Already, that day, he had had a couple of severe skirmishes with small bands of insurgents, who, after inflicting considerable damage, had managed to get away—which had tended to make his temper more than ordinarily savage on his arrival at Kyan's. So his flight from the party headed by Dermot, which was about equal in numbers to his own troop, was extremely precipitate. He knew well that his men were, like himself, in ill-humour for fighting, and he dreaded the effect of a hand-to-hand encounter. At Enniscorthy, he calculated, he would be safe; there were other troops there; and in any case the rebels would not dare to attack the town. In this calculation he might possibly have proved correct, had he not left one important factor out of his reckoning. His possession of Eileen Kyan as a captive, was, he knew, one of the causes of the steady pursuit; but he did not realize how predominant an idea it was in the minds of his pursuers. Accustomed to think lightly of a woman's honour, his dulled brain could not understand that the immediate rescue of this slight girl from his bestial clutch would seem to the Wexfordmen sufficient to outweigh all prudential

considerations, sufficient to justify the extremest risks. He could not conceive how this last, this worst outrage seared the brain and the heart of the Irishman, goading him to a fury of vengeance that no massacre, no arson, no torture even, so long as it was inflicted on men only, could ever have produced.

Heedless of this, in Enniscorthy Kingsborough stopped his headlong career, and allowed his wearied men to disperse and refresh themselves after their laudable exertions, which they set about doing without loss of time. The Colonel himself proceeded to the principal square of the town, where stood a large house, deserted by its inhabitants, which he and some other officers made their headquarters; and here he directed that Eileen Kyan should be brought. The town seemed as if deserted save by soldiers; for many of the citizens had fled from the presence of the troops as from a plague-stricken spot; and those who remained feared to show themselves in public, knowing well how easily the infuriated troops might take to burning down the houses over their heads. The Catholic church they had already burnt down; its ruins, in the square, offered a pleasing prospect to the officers as they took their ease in their quarters. A few crumbling, blackened walls were all that remained of the sacred building; and only the outline of the gable marked where the altar had stood. A veritable emblem this, of the spirit in which the English and Orange military set about their work; and their bitter hatred towards the religion of the old Celtic people!

The horse on which Eileen had been bound was

halted in the square; and, as she was unbound and lifted down, the ruined chapel was the first object that met her eye—horror of horrors for her who had delighted so often in the simple beauty of its outlines. She shuddered at the sacrilege; but soon she was recalled to the imminent danger which menaced her own person. Still half stunned from the heavy blow she had received, dazed by the horrors she had witnessed, and further confused by the speed at which she had been carried along, the poor girl had not yet had time to awaken to a consciousness of her position. Now, however, the whole hideous situation dawned on her. She was in the power of that man—that vile wretch whose evil leer had seemed to curdle her blood from his first glance at her, whose hands were red with the murder of all her kith and kin—for Esmond she believed to have perished amid the flames she had indistinctly seen in the sky as outstretched on the horse's back, she was roughly jostled along. Hitherto, the haste of her captors had shielded her from insult; but even in the moment of the loosening of her bonds she recognized that she could expect no consideration from the brutal creatures who surrounded her. Of the pursuit she knew nothing; and, as she stood amid the ring of soldiers, and saw all around faces of the lowest and most animal type, with no trace of human feeling that she could appeal to, her courage gave way completely. Burying her head in her hands, she burst out weeping frantically. How she longed at that bitter moment to be at peace with her mother and father!—to be secure as Dora was!

The soldiers looked on unpityingly, and jeered at her helpless state with loathsome words; then two of them seized on her and dragged her, making vain resistance, into the presence of their Colonel, who had ordered that she should be brought to him.

Before she was ushered into his presence, however, Lord Kingsborough had had a surprise to face. When he strode into the room where sat two other officers, bosom friends of his own and of like calibre, he did not notice, in his excitement, that they appeared to have news to impart to him; but commenced talking, in his boisterous, unrestrained fashion, of the events of the day. Glozing over any portion of the day's proceedings tinctured with ill-success, he gave a vivid account of the dangerous nest of Papists he had unearthed, and how he had put them all to the sword and burned the building with the most scoundrelly of the croppies still alive in it. He gloated over the narration, which indeed his choice comrades appeared to relish as much as himself, especially when he proceeded to speak of the girl he had captured.

"Bring in the wench," he ordered one of the soldiers, for the second time, "and see that none of ye touch her till I give you leave. It was good, by God," he continued, addressing his companions, "to see the blazing house in the distance as we came along—burning up that insolent Papist and sending him to hell."

His exuberance of language hardly permitted the other officers to reply to him, or to communicate their tidings. When at last one of them secured his at-

tention, it was too late to prepare Kingsborough properly for the shock that awaited him, for, just as he said, "Colonel, Lady Kingsborough is here," that lady herself entered the room. She was a tall, dignified and stately lady, whose finely chiselled features bespoke aristocratic culture, and whose hair was prematurely grey—not a surprising circumstance in the unhappy wife of so worthless a man.

Kingsborough sprang to his feet with an oath as his wife confronted him. He had left her in Dublin, and believed her to be still there. Ill-matched as they always were, her presence was never very agreeable to him; but here and now, above all, she was the last person he would have wished to see. Old experience taught him what she would think of his conduct. At once he resorted to the congenial role of the bully, as the best screen for his chagrin.

"How now, my lady?" he roughly demanded. "What are you doing here? Why have you left Dublin, contrary to my injunctions?"

His bluster produced not the slightest effect on his wife, who had long learned to despise it. She met his attempted hauteur with the dignity of a being of a higher grade.

"I have followed you here, my Lord," she said, her deep voice filling the room, "because I have heard of your conduct." Her tone conveyed unmistakably her contempt and disapproval.

"Indeed, madam?" sneered Kingsborough. "And pray, how does my public conduct concern *you*?"

"You owe a duty to me as your wife," began Lady Kingsborough.

"At present," said her husband, with a laugh, "my duty, as a soldier, is to my superiors."

"I cannot stand by," pursued Lady Kingsborough, firmly "and see my husband disgrace his name without making a protest."

Again his only resource was bluster.

"Disgrace? What do you mean, madam? What do *you* know of the exigencies of military duty?"

"You are not here in the execution of any ordinary military duty. You are here to harry and drive to madness an innocent people."

Kingsborough flung himself into his chair with a loud laugh. A mirthless one, however; for at bottom he feared the stern grandeur of his wife's character, and felt that sneaking respect that the petty nature cannot avoid feeling towards the stronger. He still put a bold face on his position.

"Innocent, egad! Since when, madam, have you been a Papist, eh?"

"I am as true a Protestant as you, my Lord," she retorted hotly, "and perhaps as good a Christian." She hissed out the last words with a vehemence of scorn, beneath which he involuntarily quailed. His forced laugh continued, but he averted his eye from her fixed gaze.

"A difference of religion," she went on, turning her majestic gaze upon the other officers, who sat dumb and cowed before her, "does not entitle us to treat these unfortunate creatures with inhumanity. Besides, you well know that many of their leaders are Protestants."

"Protestant or Papist," burst out Kingsborough,

impatiently, "they are all rebels. The rats must be driven out of the country, or killed in their holes."

"Kill them if you must," returned the lady, "that is war, I suppose; but do not slay unarmed men, do not use torture; above all, do not harm defenceless women and children."

Her voice quivered with the indignation of a fully aroused, generous nature. Another scoff was her husband's only resource, couched in the coarse phraseology which came most naturally to his lips.

"Nits will be lice, madam, if one lets them live. Do you know what sort of scoundrelly rebels you are pleading for?"

"I only know that they are human beings," said Lady Kingsborough. She would have said more, but she was interrupted by the entrance of the two soldiers who were dragging in the unfortunate Eileen. A pitiful picture was the wretched girl, her clothes sullied with the dust of the road, her sweet face swollen beyond recognition from blows and tears, her bedraggled hair hanging in wild streamers around her neck—as still bitterly weeping, she was ushered into the room. The two who held her tried in vain to keep her at rest by ferociously twisting her arms; heedless of the pain, she exerted all her puny strength in the despairing effort to escape from their clutches. If only her arms were free! then, perhaps, she might be able to snatch at some friendly bayonet to end her misery, no other hope was left to her.

Kingsborough would gladly have hidden his captive from his wife's scrutiny, and tried to sign

to the men to remove Eileen, but it was too late. Lady Kingsborough's queenly eye took in the whole scene in an instant. Turning on her wretched husband with an enhanced scorn and anger, she demanded,

"Who is this maiden, and what would you with her?"

"Some girl the soldiers picked up on their march," returned Kingsborough, assuming an indifferent air.

Lady Kingsborough turned again to Eileen, inquiringly. The captive on whose ears the sound of any womanly voice would have fallen sweetly at that dread moment, had marked with fresh hope the sympathetic tone of this stately stranger.

"Oh, madam," she wailed, fixing her streaming eyes on Lady Kingsborough's face, and vainly straining towards her, "oh, madam, if you have a woman's heart, save me from the worst outrage a woman can undergo! Kill me, madam, I beseech you! All I love are gone. Kill me!" she repeated, almost shrieking in the intensity of her anguish. "It will save me from what I most dread."

The appeal to the woman's heart of the English lady was not made in vain. Like a tornado she let loose her wrath upon her husband, who met it with a sullen indifference.

"You have carried off this innocent girl by force, my Lord Kingsborough, for a plaything of your vile ruffians—perhaps for your own amusement as well. This must not be, let her free, Lord Kingsborough."

"Gad, madam," said the Colonel, doggedly. "I cannot interfere with my men."

"You can give an order; it will be obeyed."

Kingsborough found in this insistence an unexpected opportunity of wounding his wife. By continuing to assert that the soldiers were responsible for the capture of Eileen, and by refusing to interfere he could punish her effectively for her public denunciation of his cruelties.

"If my men fight as I would have them," he said, in the same sulky tone, "and carry out all my orders, I cannot forbid them to amuse themselves in their leisure hours."

Lady Kingsborough stepped closer to him, with heightened colour and flashing eyes. She stretched her hand in the direction of Eileen.

"You would gratify their villainy at the expense of a woman's suffering? Look at her!"

Kingsborough laughed uproariously, and was joined in his merriment by his two friends, who were now thoroughly enjoying the scene. To them it was merely a piquant matrimonial squabble.

"Suffering?" said the gallant Colonel of the North Corks. "Pooh, madam, what nonsense! A few tears and supplications cost a wench nothing, and mean nothing. She will soon be very glad to ——"

"Silence, sir!" cried the lady, in commanding tones that for the moment abashed Kingsborough's insolence. "You refuse?" she went on. "You will not set her free?"

"No, I'm damned if I do!" said Kingsborough roughly, striking the table with his fist.

"Then I will!" She turned to the grinning wretches who held the prisoner. "Hands off this girl, soldiers!"

This was a line of action that Kingsborough had not counted on. He remained silent and irresolute. The soldiers, looking to him for instructions, began to stammer out some hesitating excuse. But the imperious Lady Kingsborough would not listen to them.

"Hands off, I say!" she repeated, and advanced towards the two bravoes with a threatening gesture. Somewhat astounded at this attitude on the part of a woman, and involuntarily influenced by the respect due to their Colonel's lady, the soldiers drew back, and one put up his hand as though to thrust Lady Kingsborough back. At the same time, Eileen, who had been awaiting in tremulous silence the result of the friendly intervention, gave a sudden twist, taking by surprise the soldiers, who were disarmed by her quiescence; and, extricating herself from their grip, flung herself into the arms of Lady Kingsborough, who at once placed her behind herself.

Infuriated at this open defiance of his wishes, Kingsborough started up and laid his hand on his sword.

"Unhand that girl, madam! How dare you interfere with my men in the discharge of their duties?"

"Stand back!" commanded Lady Kingsborough, in ringing tones. "I defy you to touch me, Lord Kingsborough! If you do, you shall pay dearly for it, I warn you!"

Her husband knew that this determined woman would keep her word. But he was not to be so easily balked of his prey. In calmer accents he said,

"No one wishes to touch you, Lady Kingsborough, as my wife, you are safe from all insult. But that girl belongs to the regiment; you cannot and you must not protect her—I say you shall not."

"And I say," she retorted, "that you shall not lay a finger on her until you have disposed of me."

"If you will not stand aside," went on Kingsborough, "I shall be under the regrettable necessity of using compulsion."

"Do your worst," she replied, fearlessly. "I have yet influence enough, I trust, to make you repent any insolence to me."

The threat thus made in the presence of four people, only enraged Kingsborough beyond control. He turned to his men to give the order to seize Eileen and drag her from Lady Kingsborough's protection.

But before he had time to utter the words that were on his lips, a cry of alarm was heard outside; and a soldier rushed in, breathless and panic-stricken.

"Fly, fly!" he cried, "the croppies are on us again!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Kingsborough, while the other officers started to their feet. "The cowardly wretches will never dare to follow us into the streets."

"They are here! they are in the town!" persisted the affrighted soldier, "and that fellow we burned, or his ghost, is at their head!"

Sounds of tumult from without left no doubt as to the truth of his statement. Unmistakably, a conflict was going on in the outlying streets.

"Come!" shouted Kingsborough, "we must make a stand against them! Form here in the square! Corporal, place musketeers in this house; the windows command the street. Fill the houses lining the square. Colonel Tomkins—Wilson—help me to dress the ranks."

All was bustle in a moment; officers and soldiers hurried out together; Eileen and Lady Kingsborough were forgotten. Profiting by the confusion, Lady Kingsborough seized the young girl's hand and led her out of the house by a side door. No one paid any heed or tried to impede their passage. For the moment they were free.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLE IN THE STREETS

WHEN Lady Kingsborough and Eileen emerged into the street, their position did not seem much more secure than before. They were in a *cul-de-sac* opening only on the square, which was already full of soldiers. Soldiers, too, lined the sides of the square and the streets; it was hard to find a place where one could escape the cross-firing. Yet there was no time to fly far; the insurgents could already be seen dashing up the street, driving before them the broken remnants of the company they had encountered on entering the town. Only one place of refuge presented itself; the ruined chapel. Thither Lady Kingsborough hurried Eileen, who yielded herself to the direction of her new-found friend without questioning. Even here some soldiers had taken up their position, as a suitable ambush from which to fire into the square. Farther back, however, the two women found a niche in an angle of the wall which was still standing. Here they ensconced themselves, quite close to the scene of the fight, but sheltered on three sides by the projecting walls; through crevices in which, however, they could see what was going on in the square.

The soldiers were now in position, and awaited the attack. Now that Kingsborough's band had been

reinforced by those of their comrades whom they had found in Enniscorthy, they were much more numerous than the little band which advanced to attack them. They had, too, all the advantages of position; as the insurgents swept up the street, they were subject to a steady fire not only from the front, but on both flanks, detachments having been stationed in the houses for the purposes. The insurgents, moreover, were poorly armed in comparison with the regulars; they had few firearms, and had to rely almost entirely on the pike. But the deadly effect of that weapon in the hands of men fighting the fight of desperation, for their country and their homes, displayed itself in a striking fashion.

On came the patriot army, charging at the double up the street. Eileen, in spite of the danger of her position, could not resist the temptation to peep out from her hiding-place at her friends—at their leaders in particular. Foremost among them, with a beating heart, she recognized Dermot Fitzgerald; and by his side—could it be possible?—the brother whom she had never hoped to see again. The significance of the soldier's remark as to the "ghost" had escaped her; but now it came back to her, and she realized with a thrill of joy that her brother was indeed alive; of her loved ones, he still was left to her. With a little cry, she made an involuntary movement towards him; but Lady Kingsborough held her back, and she quickly perceived that it would be madness to rush into the tumult. With a fervent prayer on her lips for the success of her friends, she watched, breathlessly, nervelessly, the progress of the fray. She had

regained her brother, but was it only to lose him again? It seemed so, for Esmond's furious dash plunged him at once into the thick of the soldiers. He was in their midst, laying about him with his pike, surrounded, almost stricken down, before the fight had joined across the street. One trooper, raising his empty musket, aimed the butt of it at Esmond's head with terrific force; but Michael Delaney, the smith, had marked the act; his pike entered the soldier's arm in time to make him miss his aim, and the blow, though it fell heavily on Esmond's shoulder, only staggered him for a moment. Nor could the attack be repeated, for Dan Murphy, keenly on the watch to guard his master, ran his assailant through the body; he fell with a ghastly groan.

Hand-to-hand fighting was now general; as in all street fights, it was impossible to preserve any semblance of discipline or ordered defence among the soldiers. This was to the advantage of the Wexfordmen, as it enabled them to derive the full benefit of their superior muscle and *élan*, which might have been defeated by careful military tactics, had these been possible. The soldiers in the square had no chance to reload; their firing ceased, and, inextricably mixed up with the attacking party, they could only fight in little groups with musket butt or bayonet as their weapons. From the houses, the firing still continued; but it was only in a desultory way, for the first wild charge of the Wexfordmen had carried them right into the midst of the soldiers, and the snipers in the windows could hardly fire without running the risk of

hitting their comrades. Besides, the townspeople, seeing that the insurgent charge was proving very effective, took heart to assist them. The soldiers in the house-windows were attacked in the rear and disarmed. Soon whatever shots came from this direction were directed against the troops; they were supplemented by showers of stones; and the very slates were pulled off the roofs and hurled down amid the combatants, the uniform of the military making them an easier mark than the patriots. Thus assailed on all sides, the soldiers speedily broke and gave way.

Esmond and Dermot, almost at the same moment, spied Kingsborough, directing the operations of his men from the rear, on the steps of the house in which the surprise had found him. Simultaneously they dashed towards him, clearing their way frantically through the press. Eileen held her breath as she watched them; it seemed impossible that they could escape death, almost alone as they were in the very heart of the North Corks. Dan Murphy, Delaney, and the others who tried to follow them, were separated from them, and had much ado to defend themselves. Particularly perilous was the situation of Esmond, who displayed an utter recklessness of danger, and seemed to fling himself on the bayonets of his opponents. As often happens, however, the very carelessness of his fury dismayed the enemy; he hardly received a scratch before he had made his way through the intervening mass of struggling humanity, marking his passage by a line of dead and dying, and stood before Kingsborough. With the hoarse roar of

a wild animal at bay, Esmond Kyan sprang at the man whose hellish cruelty had deprived him at one fell stroke of all he held most dear on earth. No parrying was possible against the overwhelming rush; had Kingsborough waited to receive the pike, the North Corks would have needed another Colonel. The sudden resurrection of the man who he believed to be burnt to a cinder appalled Kingsborough and struck terror to his heart. He turned and fled before the apparition—Esmond after him, with burning thirst for vengeance. Dan Murphy and a few others joined in the pursuit. Dermot Fitzgerald, however, led two or three trusty followers into the house in front of which Kingsborough had been standing, and proceeded to search it thoroughly for traces of Eileen—clearing out, at the same time, the soldiers who still occupied it.

The flight of their commander completed the wreck of the English troops. At no time that day had they felt any spirit for fight; only because they knew the attackers to be less numerous than themselves had they stood up to them at all. Now, altogether overcome by the vigour of the assault, they fled uncompromisingly, hurriedly, in all directions. Victory lent fresh strength to the arms of the patriot army; fiercely they followed up their advantage, driving the broken troops before them towards the Slaney. In a few minutes more, the square was empty. The tumult of the fight could still be heard from the neighbouring streets; but on the place itself were none save those who had fallen to rise no more. In little heaps they lay, scattered here and there;

significantly grouped, often—one brawny peasant lying in the midst of some half-dozen soldiers, whom he had laid low before their combined attack had brought him, too, to the dust, and stilled the heart that beat so high with love for mother Ireland!

Eileen shuddered at the ghastly sight, and turned away her eyes. A more pleasing object met her view—Dermot, her own Dermot—alive and unhurt, emerging from the house where he had been vainly searching for her. There was no danger now; none were near save a few of Dermot's own friends. Eileen could restrain herself no longer. With a cry of "Dermot, Dermot!" she rushed from her hiding-place and ran to his arms.

"Eileen! Praised be God, I have you again!" He clasped her to his breast with a fervent ejaculation of thanksgiving; scarcely could he find words to inquire as to her safety. She began to tell him of the fate of her parents; but he stopped her hastily, not wishing her to re-open that sad wound.

"Darling, I know; Esmond is with us now. But come," he added, not allowing her to speak, or giving her time to mention Lady Kingsborough's help, "we must not delay here. I will leave you with some trusty friends, in safety, then I must go to continue the fight, till these dogs are beaten."

He led her away; the few followers who had accompanied him were gone to join the battle; the square was empty once more. Lady Kingsborough deemed it high time to leave her precarious refuge. She decided to make for the house of a friend on the outskirts of the town—a Protestant loyalist gentle-

man, whose moderation kept him aloof from the excesses of his co-religionists, and whose wife was an old friend of hers. With this intent, she partly emerged from the ruins; looking fearfully around she caught sight of a man, bearing a sword and the shaft of a broken pike, hurrying towards her. He came from the direction where the sound of fighting was still audible; his dress showed him to be one of the insurgents; indeed, as he came closer, she recognized him as one of the leaders of the attack. Fearing to be seen by him, she shrank back again into the recess in the wall.

The man was Esmond Kyan. In the press he had lost Kingsborough; he had cut down many of the enemy in the endeavour to reach this most hated foe; Kingsborough, however, had constantly managed to keep a barrier of men between himself and his pursuer, and had ultimately managed to elude him completely. The battle was practically over; what was left of the soldiers were in full flight; and Enniscorthy was in the hands of the patriot army. His vengeance baffled for the time, Esmond Kyan left the ranks to search for his sister, whom he had half-forgotten in his furious hate to avenge Dora's tragic death. Hastily entering the square, his eyes caught sight of a female garment as Lady Kingsborough retreated. He followed, calling out "Eileen!" in half-whispered tones; he had a terrible dread lest Kingsborough might have managed to get Eileen carried off again.

"Eileen!" he repeated; and then he came upon the tall lady trying to conceal herself in the corner.

"Ah! who are you?" he said, sharply, seizing her by the arm and dragging her out into the light.

There was a fierceness in his tone that made Lady Kingsborough shudder. Yet she controlled herself, and answered simply,

"A woman."

"A woman! aye, and an Englishwoman! your dress, your face, your tongue, all proclaim it!" Esmond Kyan's voice vibrated with a terrible, a gruesome joy. "Is it not so?" he said, roughly crushing her arm with his muscular hand.

"Yes. I am Lady Kingsborough," responded his prisoner.

Esmond Kyan gave a great start, but held his captive tighter yet. His voice rose almost to a scream.

"Lady Kingsborough! The wife of Lord Kingsborough—the wretch who commands the North Cork Militia?"

"I am the wife of Colonel Lord Kingsborough," said the lady.

Esmond Kyan raised his eyes to Heaven. In a strange, deep, far-away voice he murmured:

"I thank Thee, God! for this sweet, sweet revenge!" Then, in a sterner tone—"Lady Kingsborough! prepare to die!"

His sword, all the time in his hand, was pointed at her heart. With the indifference of one for whom unhappiness has made life valueless, she said quietly,

"I am ready," and stood, unresisting, waiting for the blow.

Why did it not fall? What held back the arm of this embittered man, who had sworn to spare neither age nor sex in his vengeance, now that chance had thrown in his way the wife of his deadliest enemy? So hard it is to root out from the Irish heart its generous native chivalry!

Esmond paused; he felt stifled; he felt the need of further speech.

"Do you not ask," he said, "why you are to die?"

"Because I am English, I suppose."

"Aye!" His rage blazed out. "Heaven knows that would be reason enough! The very name of England, the very accent of an English voice, might well suffice to call forth all the most murderous passions in an Irishman's heart! Yes," he went on, working up his fury to a greater heat as he proceeded, "you must die because you are English; because you belong to that vile race that knows no law but despotism, no tenderness but torture, no justice but slavery!"

"Again he paused, and seemed about to carry out his threat. Again he stayed his hand, and spoke further.

"But there is another reason, my Lady Kingsborough, why you must die."

"And that is?——"

"It is because you are—Lady Kingsborough."

"Ah!" Lady Kingsborough drew a long breath. She understood well why it was that her doom was pronounced. This was one of the men her husband had so cruelly wronged. That she should suffer for

his faults—when she had tried her best to stop him in his career of infamy. But it was useless, she thought, to explain. Far better suffer in silence, and let an end be put to her miserable life—miserable since first, as a young girl, she had been captivated by the military swagger and gallant air of the wretch who married her.

Esmond saw some tokens of an inward struggle; but his absorption in his own wrongs made him pay no heed. He went on talking at once—from an instinctive repugnance to the slaughter of a woman, and from a desire to brace up his nerves for the sacred act of revenge.

"Ah! you understand, perhaps? Look at me, Lady Kingsborough! This morning, I was a peaceful and a happy man; I had lands and property. I had venerable parents—a beloved sister—a fond betrothed." (His frame shook with the intensity of his emotion). "I was guilty of no crime, or thought of crime, except that I was an Irishman and a Catholic. Your husband—you hear me? *Your husband,* Lady Kingsborough!—came; and now, after a few hours, I am a homeless outcast; my aged father, my pious mother, have been massacred; my sister has been carried off, I know not where; my betrothed—oh, God!—is dead by my own hand!"

Accustomed as she was to hear of the horrors due to the evil work of her husband and his troops, Lady Kingsborough could not repress a startled movement, and an exclamation escaped her lips.

"Does that startle you, Lady Kingsborough?" went on Esmond, relentlessly. "Does it surprise

you that a man should prefer to see the woman of his love dead, rather than dishonoured?—that a mere Irish Papist should have such a feeling?"

"No; it does not surprise me," she replied in a low voice.

"Well, now you know, my Lady Kingsborough what I have suffered at your husband's hands, and why my vengeance can only be satiated by the extermination of all who bear his accursed name. So, I have parleyed with you too long. You must die!"

Once more he held the sword-point to her breast.

"Be it so," she rejoined submissively. "I have nothing to say. The wife of Lord Kingsborough can claim no mercy at your hands."

A moment—a long, breathless moment—prisoner and captor gazed into each other's eyes. Then, Esmond Kyan let his sword fall, and released Lady Kingsborough's arm.

"Go!" he said sternly, pointing away. Lady Kingsborough hesitated. She could not believe that a respite was given her. But the struggle was over. The mad thirst for vengeance had been conquered; the innate nobility of the man had reasserted itself.

"Go!" he repeated, as the lady still lingered. "An Irishman cannot slay a woman—not even the wife of his worst enemy."

The strain, and the removal of the strain, was too great, even for this heroic woman. Lady Kingsborough burst into tears.

Esmond Kyan turned from her and walked aside, murmuring—"Yes, my mad oath, to spare neither

man, woman, or child, I cannot keep! Oh, Dora! your beloved memory makes me respect all women for your sake!"

He stood absorbed in painful thought for an instant, then a noise aroused him. The sounds of conflict had died away for some time; but now came a revival of shouting and cheering. It seemed as if the battle had been renewed. Esmond turned hastily to depart. Seeing Lady Kingsborough still in the same place, weeping, he hesitated; finally he went over and spoke to her again.

"There is fighting still going on," he said, hurriedly, as if he could hardly trust himself to say the words, "and you may be in some danger. Our men do not harm women; but you might be exposed to the caprice of some drunken straggler. Come; I will bring you where you will be safe."

Faintly she thanked him, and indicated where she wished to go. They set out together—Esmond Kyan escorting and protecting the wife of his deadliest foe.

CHAPTER XIV.

A LASTING BOND.

THE increased tumult afar off was not, as Esmond had surmised, due to renewed conflict between the patriot army and the royal troops. The rout of the latter was complete; the disorganized remnants, Kingsborough at their head, were in full flight towards Ross. It was at this moment, however, that the victorious insurgents were joined, outside the town, by a fresh party, led by Father John Murphy himself. The sight of the patriot priest and his gallant band, even though they came too late to affect the fortunes of the fight, was greeted with loud and enthusiastic acclamations; and these were the sounds which disturbed Esmond Kyan's meditations, and induced him to hurry Lady Kingsborough away from the perilous spot on which she stood.

The combined forces of the insurgents, now nearly a thousand strong, marched back into the centre of the town in triumph, cheering wildly, and singing old Irish war-songs with lusty voice. The terrible weight of oppression, which had lain so heavily on their souls and well-nigh crushed the vital spark within, seemed gone; action gave free vent to their pent-up passion, and victory, even the slightest, revived the buoyant vigour of their temperament. Life again seemed worth the living, when smashing

blows like this could be dealt at the tyrants of Wexford and of Ireland. What wonder if, here and there among the insurgents, one saw fiercely bended brows, and heard vehement oaths and vows of bloody vengeance on every Saxon that crossed their path! Father John marked the temper of his men, and, true-hearted, unflinching patriot as he was, he feared lest excesses might be committed which would soil the fair fame of the patriot army.

As they marched back into the square, and saw, scattered along the streets, the bodies of comrades and kinsmen who had fallen in the fray, with here and there a sorely-wounded man feebly endeavouring to drag his mutilated limbs from the scene of carnage, hotter and fiercer grew the torrent of passion in their blood. Before they had had to endure passively; now, having once tasted the joys of active retaliation, they burned to wreak for each dastard deed a swift and crowning revenge.

Shouting and singing, waving aloft their blood-stained pikes and tattered flags, they entered the square, Father John still at their head; for to him, by common consent, was accorded the leadership due to his self-sacrificing devotion to the cause. Halfway across the square, he paused. Wheeling half-round to confront his followers, who halted in his rear, he pointed solemnly to the ruined church. He spoke no word; but the gesture, the look, the air of grim determination, were enough. They understood, in a flash of magnetic sympathy, that it was of his own chapel Father John was thinking. He was recalling to them the sacrilegious outrage which had

brought him there, and had turned him from a man of peace to a man of war. A deep murmur ran through the crowd telling him that he was not misunderstood; flashing eyes and uplifted hands bore testimony to their eagerness to exact a stern retribution from the spoilers of religion's sacred shrine.

The warrior priest, perceiving their intense excitement, feared lest he might stir these warm hearts too violently, and might involuntarily urge them to retaliation in kind on their oppressors. Desirous above all things of waging this righteous war as befitted the justice of their cause, and of restraining his flock (it was thus he thought of them, though not all were parishioners of his) from imitating the barbarous methods of the loyalist troops, his conscience smote him at the thought. There and then he must undo the error. Signing to his men to remain still, he crossed to the church, and mounting on a broken mass of masonry that stood where once the steps had been, he prepared to address the people. Ringing cheers and acclamations greeted him; and, what were dearer still to his heart, the blessings of men who looked up to him as their saviour, as him who was to lead them from the bondage of the stranger into the promised land.

"God bless Father John!" cried Dan Murphy. "It's a comfort to a man to have his priest with him in a fight like this."

Dan's voice was but one of many that rang out in benison on the patriot priest, and for some time drowned his efforts to say a word. At last, amid

comparative silence, he was able to make himself heard.

"Men of Wexford!" he began, his deep rich voice rolling out clear and full to the extreme verges of the crowded square. "Men of Wexford! To-day you have fought nobly for your Faith and your Fatherland. Blessed be God, that your efforts have been crowned with success! Continue as bravely as you began, and not Wexford alone, but all Ireland, will honour your names to the end of the ages, remembering, as she will remember, that she owes her freedom to the stoutness of your hearts and the strength of your arms."

He paused, and one great Irish cheer burst from the exultant lips of his hearers. But he made a sign to them to check their exuberance, and proceeded to say what lay yet nearer to his heart.

"Continue, too, as patiently, as justly, as forbearingly, as you have begun. Wage all your warfare" (there was a deep solemnity in his tone as he spoke these words that was not lost upon the quick ears of his followers) "wage all your warfare in the thought that you stand in the sight of God, and to Him must answer for what you do. Slay no man, injure no man, save in fair fight; be ever merciful to prisoners, to the unarmed, above all, to women and to children."

Not with unmixed assent, this time, did the maddened Wexfordmen listen to the priest's words. They had seen how the war was waged on the other side; how neither sex, nor age, nor defenceless infirmity was spared. They had lost, many of them, their all, as Esmond Kyan had lost his; and upper-

most came the thirst for justice, that primitive justice of the Old Testament, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Should not the Orange wretches too be made feel—if they were capable of feeling—what it meant to be tortured in their own persons, and deadlier anguish still, in the persons of the helpless ones of their families. Were the insurgents to show mercy, where none was given to them? It was a hard lesson for men who had gone through the agonies of the last few weeks; and from many a wild-eyed, homeless man burst forth, at the priest's pacifying words, furious imprecations that involved all the accursed race of their enemies in one common doom, savage threats, akin to that which Esmond Kyan had uttered in the first moments of his despair, in which the notion of mercy had no place.

Father John heard and understood. A sterner man might have been led to denounce his interrupters; but this was a priest who was one with his people, and felt with them. Reason and religion alike taught him that this excessive passion of vengeance must be checked in the breasts of his flock; but the burning heart of the man could feel, even though he could not approve, the same human longing to witness the descent of a thorough Nemesis upon the heads of all responsible, directly or indirectly, for turning the peaceful fields of Wexford into a devilish shambles.

"Do not think, my children," he said, addressing himself to some of the most prominent interrupters, "that I am unmindful of what you have suffered. Well I know that you have wrongs to avenge which might

well turn your hearts into devouring flames, raging to destroy utterly your enemies, and leave no vestige of their execrable race. But is it for us, Catholic Irishmen, to imitate the conduct of these demons? to forget every precept of justice and of mercy that is taught us by our holy faith, and by the traditions of our sainted forefathers? No, we must not adopt the barbaric methods of our oppressors."

"They must be beaten down, Father John," passionately cried one of the most vehement.

"They must," assented the priest; and a resounding cheer answered his words. "They must be beaten down—conquered—crushed." Cheer after cheer greeted his every word. "But we will conquer them, not alone by the strength of our arms in the field, but also by the greatness of our mercy and pity. We will show them that not even the last and cruellest wrongs can pervert the Irish mind from its nobility, its magnanimity, its simple grandeur. They wish to make us devils like themselves; but we will defeat their ends by remaining ever true to the sublime generosity of the true Irish heart."

The right note was struck; the appeal to the pride of race, that never fails to touch an Irish assembly, was not made in vain. As Father John's words were cheered to the echo, those who had at first dissented shrank into shamed silence: or some of them joined in the cheering as vehemently as they had previously protested.

Father John's eye lit up with a new radiance; his countenance glowed with the exultation of the orator who has swayed the passions of an assembly and

bent them to his will. He continued, emphasizing still more unmistakably the difference between the methods of warfare which he urged on them and those which they had to encounter.

"The King's troops," he said, his rich voice sinking to an awe-stricken semi-whisper that was yet heard distinctly throughout the hushed crowd, "the King's troops torture and violate our women; we will protect and shelter theirs. They burn and sack our churches; we will lay no hand on theirs. They grant no quarter to the helpless wounded—to their unfortunate prisoners; let no such stigma sully our exploits. Fight bravely, men of Wexford! but above all, fight honourably! wage this war in a holy spirit, remembering that you fight in a holy cause—the cause of religion, of justice, and of liberty!"

Gradually the priest's voice had risen as he went on, and when he concluded it was again at its highest pitch, as, with uplifted arm, he leant forward with forcible gesture to impress his exhortations on his hearers. All were assenters now. Mingled with the tears and acclaiming shouts came cries of "We will, Father John, we will!" "God love our priests, who stand for the rights of the people!" "Heaven's blessing be on you, Father John!" As he descended from his improvised rostrum, those nearest him would have hoisted him on their shoulders; but he restrained their eagerness, and, moving about among them, conversed individually with many of them as to the best means of furthering the auspiciously-commenced revolution.

While he was thus engaged, he was suddenly con-

fronted by Dermot Fitzgerald, who threaded the press towards him, leading Eileen Kyan by the hand. Dermot had found it needless to place Eileen in shelter, the complete victory and triumphant re-entry of the patriot army removing all further fear. Returning hastily to the square, he and Eileen, ensconced in a friendly doorway, had witnessed the re-entry, and had heard the speech of Father John. Not all of it, however; for some interchanges of their own occupied a considerable portion of their attention.

At moments of crisis, when every instant brings forth something new, of weighty bearing on human destiny, the brain travels rapidly under the unwonted stimulus, evolving more new conceptions in a few minutes than would occupy, in quieter times, as many days. During the few minutes that had elapsed since Eileen had been restored to him, Dermot Fitzgerald's thoughts had been thus actively engaged in devising measures for insuring the security of his sweetheart in all the future course of the war. At first it seemed very difficult, almost hopeless, to keep her where he might himself watch over her safety—for this alone could satisfy the perpetual solicitude of love—but, in a flash of inspiration, the needed idea came to him. Without delay he communicated it to Eileen; in a few brief, impassioned sentences he expounded his plan, and with breathless impetuosity overbore her half-hearted reluctance. The accomplishment of his design depended upon Father John; towards whom Dermot hastened, holding as aforesaid, his sweetheart by his side.

"Father John," said Dermot, as he approached the priest, "a word with you."

Father John at once turned aside, and accompanied Dermot to a comparatively quiet corner where they could speak at ease, hardly noticing Eileen's presence. Dermot he knew well, having had much to do with him in the last few days of excited preparation.

When they had withdrawn a little from the tumult, in response to Father John's "Well, my friend?" Dermot spoke, and without circumlocution divulged his plan.

"Father John," he said, "will you marry me to this maiden, here and now?"

This was the device by which he hoped to secure Eileen's safety, by keeping her under his own watchful care. He feared that Esmond, in the rash temper he had diplayed since his terrible calamity, might prove an uncertain protector for his sister—might not, indeed, long survive to care for her, as in his recklessness he exposed himself hourly to every possible danger. And though he did not say this to Eileen, he had easily won her consent to a speedy marriage, if such could be arranged.

Father John Murphy was somewhat startled by the proposition.

"Why this haste, Dermot?" he said. "Who is the girl?" Then, recognizing her, he exclaimed, "Little Eileen Kyan!" in a tender and sympathetic tone; for Eileen he had known in her earliest childhood, and he knew the awful fate which had that day overwhelmed her household—though he had heard it

but in fragments, amid the hurry and toils of his position as commander of the patriot army.

Dermot went on to explain.

"Her father and mother have been killed, Father John," he said in a low voice, not caring to inflict once more on Eileen's ears the tragic tale; "her home is burnt down; she is homeless and all but friendless. Within the last hour, she was in the hands of the infamous Kingsborough; and God knows what perils she may yet be exposed to!"

Eileen heard, in spite of Dermot's purposely lowered tone. A shudder ran through her frame as she thought of the anguish she had endured while a helpless prisoner, and of what might yet be in store for her should aught befall Dermot or Esmond. Father John noticed her tremor, and gently laid his hand upon her head.

"Do not fear, my child," he said, tenderly; "every Irish soldier of liberty is also the soldier of purity and innocence."

Eileen's shadowy smile gratefully acknowledged the priest's kindness.

"She plighted her troth to me long since," Dermot proceeded, "and now she is ready to fulfil her pledge. I want to have the right to protect her always, to keep her by my side through all this struggle, to watch constantly over her welfare in my own person. Marry us, Father John, and give me this right."

Dermot Fitzgerald spoke with all the earnestness of his strong, passionate nature, and Father John's heart, overflowing with human sympathy, could not be unmoved by his words. Yet he hesitated,

deeming it his duty not to assent too hastily to the performance of the most momentous of human ceremonials.

"Her brother must be consulted," said he at length. "Where is he?"

Where was Esmond Kyan? Neither of them knew. No one had seen him leading off Lady Kingsborough, nor had he made his appearance since the re-entry of the insurgents into the town. But, almost before Dermot could declare his ignorance of Esmond's whereabouts, Eileen gave a little cry of joy, for Esmond himself stood before them.

"I am here," he said, emerging from the ruined church, where he had again betaken himself after leaving Lady Kingsborough safe at the house of her friend. He had listened, in silence, to the concluding portions of Father John's address to his men; had then placed himself where he could overhear the colloquy between the priest and the lovers; but had abstained from showing himself until he heard his name mentioned. The sight of Dermot and Eileen, hand in hand, still linked together by mutual love and trust, still happy in each other's affection in spite of all dangers, struck home to Esmond's heart a colder chill yet of despair and desolation, in the contrast they presented to his own forlorn condition. Not till it was absolutely necessary could he find heart to reveal his presence. But when he did advance, he spoke in no uncertain tone.

"I am here," he said, "and I consent heartily to this marriage."

Eileen flew to his arms, and sobbed tremulously on

his shoulder. It was the first meeting of brother and sister since the dread moment that had orphaned them and made them homeless outcasts; and Eileen's tears flowed fast as she clasped her arms around her brother's neck, and breathlessly murmured meaningless things in the fulness of her heart—the old endearments of happy childhood coming back to her tongue. Esmond held her close pressed to his heart, but he shed no tear and said no word. The sister he had regained could not for one moment obliterate from his recollection the sad memory of her whom he had loved more dearly than sister, mother, or father—more dearly than life or happiness—whom he had, nevertheless, sent to her doom through his own blind obstinacy and fatuous indifference to the many warnings he had received.

Something of this Eileen understood, but not all; and she thought Esmond's tearless silence might be due to anger with her for thinking of marriage at such a time of desolation. She raised her head, and timidly murmured:

"Esmond! you are sure—you don't think—you won't be vexed with me, dear brother?"

Esmond kissed her uplifted forehead—lovingly, but still gravely; and said, in a calm voice whose composure was like unto the coldness of death:

"Eileen darling, do not cry; you have happiness in store yet, with Dermot to love you. Father John," he continued, addressing the priest, "I am now my sister's sole remaining relative; and I, too, have not long to live."

"Esmond!" cried Eileen affrightedly, twining her

arms yet more closely around him, as if to hold him back from some desperate act.

"I seek death everywhere," went on Esmond, without altering his even tones. "I only wish to live till I have wreaked vengeance upon Kingsborough and his assassins; then welcome the bullet or the bayonet!" He paused, but went on again before anyone could speak, "And then—little Eileen would be without a protector. If I saw her wedded to Dermot Fitzgerald, I could die happy. Marry them, Father John."

He stretched out his hand to Dermot as he finished. Dermot clasped it warmly, and then Esmond joined the hand of Eileen, which he still held, to Dermot's. He stood for a moment, and seemed about to speak; but something choked his utterance, and he turned away.

Father John Murphy no longer hesitated.

"Come with me," he said, leading the way towards the interior of the ruin beside which they stood. "Here, where the altar of God stood before sacrilegious hands despoiled it—here is the most fitting place for the sacred ceremony. Stand forward, Dermot Fitzgerald and Eileen Kyan."

Dermot and Eileen advanced, and knelt down before Father John hand in hand. A few who knew them, and who had watched from a respectful distance while the discussion went on, gathered around to witness the ceremony. Dan Murphy was there; and Delaney the smith; and Eileen's old suitor, Furlong, in whom the heat of warfare, and admiration for Dermot, had almost driven out the passion of love

and jealousy. But Esmond did not join the little group. He stood apart, and watched his sister's wedding from afar, like one whose life henceforward lay outside the current of human joys and sorrows, whose whole being was absorbed by the single passion of revenge.

Dora, Dora, Dora! Her voice was ever in his ears; her image ever in his thoughts. This marriage to him—it recalled only the girl who was to have been his—the marriage that might have been, and now could never be. When they spoke of it last—that bright spring evening, as they strolled together—what was it she said? "I wonder if we shall ever be married?" He recalled the low, sweet tones, the grave, downcast eyes, the strange despondency which had then seemed so meaningless to him; and every recollection was an added pang.

The marriage ceremony proceeded—that solemn blending of two lives in one—for better, for worse—till death, and beyond. But all its significance for the two who were wedded was lost on Esmond, whose thoughts still ran in other channels. When Eileen's tremulous voice quivered out the momentous "I will," he reflected that so Dora might one day have said to him; and in the agony of the bitter thought, he well-nigh grudged his sister the happiness of wedding the man of her love.

The ceremony was over. Dermot Fitzgerald and his wife, both in tears, arose to their feet with a deep sigh—a sigh, not of grief, but of solemn mutual responsibility. But for reflection there was little time. Father John Murphy had pocketed his book,

and was once more the warrior, the leader and guide of a just rebellion in arms.

The evening was closing in. The insurgents, who had dispersed to refresh their wearied bodies, were forming anew in the square. Father John sprang to the elevated position from which he had before addressed them. His voice rang out in command—

"March, brave soldiers of liberty! To our camp on Vinegar Hill!"

CHAPTER XV

BEFORE ARKLOW

WITHIN a week after the capture of Enniscorthy, practically the whole of Co. Wexford was in the possession of the insurgents, and their army, in three divisions, commanded the north, central, and south-eastern portions of the county. Successive victories had thrown into their hands sufficient artillery to render the contest not altogether a hopeless one, had their efforts but been supported by simultaneous risings in other parts of the country. This artillery was placed, by the advice of Dermot Fitzgerald, under the command of Esmond Kyan. Dermot's motive in this suggestion was twofold. He judged—and, as the event showed, judged rightly—that Esmond's capacities were of such a nature as to fit him in a special manner for the adequate fulfilment of the duties of such a command; and furthermore, he was anxious to place his friend in a position where he might be less exposed to the dangers which he troubled not to avoid. Unwilling at first to undertake the duties of this post, because he feared lest Kingsborough might escape his vengeance, Esmond was prevailed upon by Dermot to accept, for the sake of the best interests of the cause.

When, on the thirtieth of May, General Fawcett's attempt to relieve Wexford was foiled, and the loyal-

ists repulsed with heavy loss, Esmond Kyan directed the fire of the rebel artillery from the top of Three Rock Mountain, and contributed powerfully to the rout which the desperate charge of the pikemen might not have been able to effect unaided. Calm and strong he remained throughout this action; his eye glowed with the joy of battle, but, knowing that Kingsborough's regiment was not among those opposed to him, he was free from the fierce passion which at other times absorbed all his faculties.

So it was with him in subsequent encounters; whenever he knew that the leader of the North Corks was not on the battlefield, he directed all his energies to the work of the movement, remaining unswervingly at his post throughout the progress of the fight, and ever proving a tower of strength to the patriot cause. When, however, Kingsborough and his men were present in the battle Esmond could scarce contain himself within the limits of his allotted task. At the earliest possible moment that was consistent with the safety of his party, he would leave the guns in charge of a subordinate, and swoop fiercely, resistlessly, down upon that quarter of the fight where the most hated uniform met his eye. Thus he behaved in the Pass of Tubberneering, when, indeed, owing to the character of the defile, the artillery was less effective in securing the victory than the terrible pike-charge whose impetuosity swept all before it. At this battle, which resulted in the capture of Gorey by the peasant army, Esmond Kyan's wild dash, with a few followers, into the heart of the enemy, already confused, and disordered by the

carefully-planned ambuscade, completed their disorganization and converted defeat into ignominious rout. He captured the guns and promptly turned them on the retreating English troops; then, once more committing the direction of these pieces to another, he made fresh endeavours to pierce the seething throng in Kingsborough's wake. Again his efforts were in vain; but hardly could he be induced to abandon the pursuit, not, indeed, until he had several times shaken hands with Death.

Rapid was the march of events, in the historic three weeks that was destined to end with the fatal Battle of Vinegar Hill. Esmond Kyan, with Father John Murphy and Father Michael Murphy, headed the northern division, which encamped first at Carrigrua, and subsequently, after the victory of Tubberneering, at Gorey. Dermot Fitzgerald, who was ever an organizer, rather than a military leader, passed from camp to camp, bearing news and instructions, giving salutary advice, and communicating with the Council that guided the insurgents from Wexford town. Thus he was constantly in communication with Eileen, whom he had placed in Wexford after the capture of that town, as the best place both for security and for possible escape by sea in the event of ultimate defeat. In the attack on Newtownbarry, which was made from the camp on Vinegar Hill, Dermot distinguished himself both by his strategic acumen in planning the details of the fight, and by his personal bravery in the encounter. And when the wearied victors fell to refreshing themselves, careless of the watchful enemy, his was

the voice that spent itself in exhortations to them to be more wary, and not to allow the fruits of their exertions to be lost—exhortations that were, alas! unable to prevent Newtownbarry from becoming a fore-runner of the disaster at Ross.

At Ross, too, Dermot Fitzgerald was prominent among the officers who led the assault, and who vainly endeavoured to restrain the insurgents from those potations that were to prove more fatal to them than even the English troops. But all these combats, momentous as they are in the history of our country, have little to do with the tale we are now unfolding. We must hasten on to the Battle of Arklow.

It was on the ninth of June, early in the morning, that Father Michael Murphy and Esmond Kyan led out their force from Gorey for the attack on Arklow, which was strongly garrisoned by General Needham. The plan was to divide into two sections, one of which, led by Father Michael Murphy, was to proceed by the inland road to the attack, while Esmond Kyan led his division along the shore road, to approach the town from the other side. The design was good, but delay in execution of it had given the enemy time to prepare. Had they been two days earlier, Arklow might have fallen into the hands of the rebel army without striking a blow; but now it was well defended, and in a position to offer a desperate resistance.

On a little eminence not far from Arklow, which stood nearly midway between the two roads along which the two columns of the insurgents were

marching, Father Michael Murphy and Esmond Kyan met about noon. By preconcerted arrangement, they had ridden there, each with a few followers, to hold a final consultation as to the order of the assault. They had an uninterrupted view of the town, which was their objective, and also of both the sections of their army, which were not, however, visible to each other, owing to the intervention of this elevated ground between the lines of road. As the two leaders reached the top of the hill from opposite sides, and then, after mutual greeting, turned their eyes in the direction of Arklow, their countenances grew grave with apprehension.

"I fear, Esmond," said Father Michael, "that this battle will try us sorely before we can take the town."

"Probably," returned Kyan, "but our men are full of spirit; they will simply sweep away all those barricades like so much brushwood."

"Let us hope so," said the priest. "But the fellow has taken his measures well. See yonder, how his cavalry are awaiting you on the strand, where they have open space to caracole."

"Esmond nodded carelessly, and pointed to the wall which faced the other road.

"You have a greater danger to face, Father; yon barrack is lined with musketeers. They will rake your force terribly as you pass down the slope into the town."

"We shall swarm it, I trust," said Father Murphy; "or, if not, our men will press into the town by other ways, and take the borough in the rear. At the main

entrance, I see, there are not many troops to face; only a few of the remnants of the North Corks."

Father Michael had hardly uttered the words, when he regretted having done so; for he knew how powerfully the baleful memory of the North Corks had impressed itself on Esmond Kyan's mind.

Esmond started, and looked fixedly in the direction indicated by the priest. The North Corks were indeed there; and, although it was too far off to distinguish persons with any accuracy, Esmond's heated fancy persuaded him that he discerned Kingsborough himself marshalling them in rank.

"Father Michael," he said, in eager, hurried tones, "can we change the order of the battle? Will you lead the party on the shore road, while I——"

"No, Esmond," said his colleague, decisively. "We cannot alter our plans now without gravely increasing the odds against us. The Shelmaliers, there on the shore road, are waiting for your lead; they could never be equally responsive to mine. And I believe that if you tried to lead my column, the result would be much the same."

Esmond again attempted to protest, but Father Murphy would not listen.

"Think first of the cause, Esmond," he said earnestly, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Defeated at Newtownbarry and at Ross, we have lost much valuable time, and have been disappointed of much help that should have been ours. Another repulse might well be fatal; but if Arklow is once ours, then we may look forward to an easy triumphal march on Dublin. Think of that, and put what is

best calculated to give us victory to-day before the gratification of your personal vengeance. Leave the North Corks and their infamous leader to find their fate; God cannot long suffer them to cumber the earth."

Silent, unresponsive, Esmond Kyan stood, still gazing at the spot where he fancied he could see his mortal enemy, where he longed to encounter him and wreak final, supreme, vengeance for his lost love and his ruined home. Hardly he heard the voice of the priest at his side.

Father Michael Murphy changed his line of argument. This unreasoning thirst for revenge was overmastering Kyan; yet he could not be directly thwarted without risk of arousing in him a fury that might disregard everything but the accomplishment of what he considered his first duty.

"Besides," said Father Michael, carelessly, "if you succeed in entering the town from the shore side, you will take those troops in the rear; the North Corks will be hemmed in between your forces and mine, and their Colonel cannot possibly escape you."

The suggestion fell in with Esmond's mood; his eye gleamed with delight at the prospect, and, without further pressing his desire to fight from the land side, he plunged into the consideration of some final details with Father Murphy.

They agreed to make the hill, on which they were standing, a kind of signal station. They posted there a small reserve body, under the command of one Hugh Kelly, a young friend and neighbour of

Esmond Kyan's, a hot-headed youth, whose strong personality made him, nevertheless, valuable as a leader of a small party. Keen to grasp an emergency, he could be relied on to execute satisfactorily the duty entrusted to him. This was, to keep a careful watch on the progress of the attack; and, as his elevated position would enable him to observe how both columns were progressing, while they were shut off from the view of each other, he was instructed to send down, from time to time, or whenever he deemed it necessary, messengers to communicate to each column tidings as to the state of the engagement on the other side. It was further left in his discretion, in case he perceived that one column was specially in need of help, to leave his position and bring his small party to the relief of that column, provided, of course, there was any reasonable chance that the fresh troops, few as they were in number, would turn the scale as desired.

"Then," said Father Michael, in giving his final instructions to Kelly, "in case the battle lasts any time, which it may, we may have to send our prisoners up here for safe-keeping. See to it that no harm befalls them, else the fair fame of our patriot army is sullied for ever."

He spoke sternly, in memory of the outrage at Scullabogue a few days before; and Hugh Kelly bowed in acquiescence with the priest's warning words.

The preparations were complete; the reserve guard was stationed in position, with look-outs on the protruding rocks, where the best view might be ob-

tained; the two main columns, both halted within sight of the town, were awaiting the advent of their respective leaders.

"That is all," said Father Michael. "To our posts, Esmond! God be with you."

"God be with you and preserve you, Father Michael," said Esmond.

They clasped hands warmly; looked each other full in the eyes for a moment, and parted, never to meet again.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BATTLE.

IT was a stubbornly contested battle that Hugh Kelly and his men watched from the hill-top. Hour after hour they strained their eyes for some sign of its termination; but hour after hour the bitter struggle still raged, nor seemed nearer to a definite issue in favour of either side. The insurgents, superior in number and in valour, could not, nevertheless, make any impression upon the disciplined and well-armed garrison which opposed them. Again and again the leaders brought them up to the attack; again and again they hurled themselves, with dauntless bravery, against the opposing forces; but only to be mowed down by the steady hail of bullets that fell all around and among them. Heavy ordnance, guarding the shore road, decimated Esmond Kyan's troops; the other column suffered even more severely from the continuous musketry-fire which poured into it from a specially erected stage along the barrack wall. It was galling to the burning hearts on the hill-top to be compelled thus to watch from afar the struggle in which each ardently longed to take part. But their duty held them there. Not yet the time to move; for neither column wavered, neither seemed specially in need of help. Nor could that small body, even had they descended to the scene of action, have effected much. Yet this

knowledge did not prevent each man from groaning in spirit, aye, and aloud, at his enforced inaction.

There were many reasons why that inaction should still be maintained; but one in particular seemed irksome to the hill-top guard. Early in the battle, Father Murphy's column had taken a batch of prisoners—some thirty in all, officers and privates—and had sent them up, under sure guard, to the reserve under Kelly's command. These captives all belonged to the North Corks; which regiment, getting isolated by a rash advance early in the day, had sustained heavy loss in killed, wounded and prisoners. The thirty prisoners now sat in a group on the grass, each with his hands securely tied behind his back with a strong strap. Their feet were free; but this meant nothing, for four of the insurgents sat watching them, musket in hand, ready to shoot down the first who attempted to escape. The duty of guarding these prisoners, apart from any other reason, would keep Kelly and his party tied to the spot; and, even although there was no immediate need of their presence in the field, many a resentful glance and bitter word was flung at the captives who were, in any event, an irremovable clog upon the freedom of action of their keepers.

The murmurs grew and gathered strength as time went on, and still the besiegers seemed as far as ever from the capture of Arklow.

"Look at that for a dash!" cried Hugh Kelly, excitedly to his men, with whom he was on terms of loyal comradeship rather than command. "Father Michael is right in the middle of them!"

"Aye, but they rally!" cried another observer. "Father Michael is set on all round."

Confusedly they spoke together, each man of what he saw, or could observe through the slowly melting cloud of smoke.

"He is out, he is leading them in again!"

"The King's troops are falling back! The town is ours, sure!"

"'Tis but a feint, man! They will take Father Michael in the flank."

"See," exclaimed a man on the other side of the hill, "Esmond Kyan's men have crossed the bridge!"

"He has the cavalry to meet yet!"

"Oh, if a few of us were down there, to take that cavalry charge on our pikes!"

"God!" groaned one, "that we should stand idle here, while they need us there so sorely!"

"Well struck, Delaney!" cried another, not heeding him in his absorption in the warlike spectacle. "Michael knows how to pick the officers."

"Why should we wait here?" said yet another reverting to what was in the minds of all.

"Well," said another pikeman, pointing to the prisoners, "we can't lave them here. Lord knows what mischief they'd be up to."

"I'd put them out of harm's way before I left them," grimly replied his comrade.

Hugh Kelly heard, but spoke no word. His whole soul was intent on the struggle around the figure of Father Michael Murphy, prominent on his horse above the throng of men on foot. Another made the remark that should have come from their captain.

"We can't do that," he said, significantly, "after what Father Michael said."

Kelly glanced at him, but still was silent. Then again his eyes turned to the field of combat; and a loud groan burst from his lips as he saw the inner column driven back once more, this time with such force as to make it seem like a final defeat, though in reality the action was to endure for several hours more.

The prisoners saw it too, and one of them, a tall bloated-looking individual whose officer's uniform was defaced almost beyond recognition, cried out, with exultation, and in his hoarse voice,

"The rebels are beaten, damn me!"

The exultant tone of this wretch was the last straw that broke down Hugh Kelly's self-restraint. He flung to the winds all thought of his duty, of the commands of his superior officers, of the dictates of humanity and pity. He saw only the battle, where blows were being struck against the enemies of Ireland, and where it was a man's part to be.

"Boys," he exclaimed, "I can't stand this any longer! We must go down; every single man is needed there; we are all too few, at the best, to resist these drilled English dogs."

A loud burst of acclamation told him that his words were the expression of what was in the heart of all. He pointed significantly at the prisoners.

"Is it agreed?" he said, "Will we do for these murthering villains?"

There was a general shout of "Aye, aye!"

"They'll only be quiet when they're under the

sod," said the man who had previously suggested the execution of the prisoners.

Kelly calmly gave the orders for the accomplishment of this fell design.

"You," he said, addressing the four men who all the time commanded the prisoners with their muskets, "stand as you are, ready to shoot if they try to run. The rest of you, take these scoundrels to the back of that little wall yonder, and shoot them in threes."

With feverish haste, the insurgents proceeded to carry out the terrible order. Helpless, half-dazed, not understanding well at first what was to be done to them, the unfortunate wretches were hurried away, three at a time, planted against a convenient wall, and deliberately shot. Some resisted, until prodded with bayonets; others sullenly marched between their escorts, reckless of their lives, and conscious that they had many times treated prisoners in this identical fashion. The one man who showed any instinct of self-preservation, and made any calculated attempt to save his wretched life, was the tall officer whose imprudent exclamation had been the final spark that fired Kelly's smouldering wrath.

At first he gave vent to his horror and terror in explosive imprecations.

"You cursed, cowardly, croppy murderers!" he cried out, "would you shoot helpless captives?"

Some of the insurgents laughed. Hugh Kelly walked over to the cursing wretch, and looked him full in the face, recognizing him for the first time, he was more fixed than ever in his intention to put to death all his captives.

"What did you do to the Kyans, you damnable whelp?" he said, grimly, from between his clenched teeth.

The English officer started; even to his blunted conscience the words went home. For the moment he was silent.

"You should be damned glad," went on Kelly, "that you escape the torture. That is what would pay you properly for all you have done in Wexford."

So implacably stern were Kelly's tones and manner that the officer seemed inclined to abandon in despair the attempt to make an impression on him. But the sight of his comrades being steadily dragged away to the slaughter—disappearing, three by three, behind the little line of wall—then the ringing out of the shots—the heavy thud—and the reappearance of the insurgent executioners, to lead off a fresh party—all this, more trying by far than the perils of a pitched battle, struck terror to his soul and spurred him on to make one last desperate effort.

"See here, Captain," he said, in a low tone and with a manner as insinuating as his native brutality and his quaking fear could command, "I'll give you a hundred pounds to save my life."

"Not for a thousand, you infamous English dog," said Kelly; and to prevent a repetition of the offer, he moved aside, to superintend more immediately the despatch of the captives.

Pitifully the entrapped wretch looked around, seeking in vain in the countenances of each of his captors for any sign of relenting, or even of such softness as might be influenced by entreaty or

bribery. He saw only hard, set faces, impressed only with a sense of insufferable wrong and righteous vengeance. He felt that for *him*, in particular, there could be no mercy. For the fate of his soldiers he cared nothing, and indeed he knew that they were equally indifferent in his regard, but he perceived that this very callousness with regard to his men produced a bad impression on his captors. Yet he could not be other than true to his own selfish nature; he could not, even for a moment, simulate concern for the soldiers whom he had led and trained in savage barbarity. His life—his own wretched life—that was all he cared for. Like all bullies and torturers, he was utterly lacking in the grim moral courage necessary for facing a death like this. In the heat and dash of battle, his blood might grow warm, his pulse beat high, with something of the bravery of the wild beast. But to wait thus for the approach of an ignominious death, helpless to avert or to avoid it, motionless, chilled to the heart by the remembrance of his frightful crimes—all of which he now had time to see in horrid perspective, rising before his fevered imagination—this was a fate that this gallant English Colonel could not face manfully. His limbs trembled; his knees knocked together in his quivering agony; his bound hands worked convulsively, all too securely tied for any chance of escape, great beads of perspiration broke out on his distorted, evil countenance; his protruding eyes rolled frantically around, still hoping to find, somewhere, an indication of sympathy for his condition. Little wonder that he perceived none! for his aspect

seemed that of a caged demon, rather than of a human being, and was calculated to dispel any lingering trace of soft-heartedness by its repulsive ugliness.

One consolation only he had, Esmond Kyan was not there. Esmond Kyan it was that he dreaded most, and had most reason to dread. Kelly's words, recalling the terrible fate of the Kyan household, told him that this outrage, beyond all others committed by his North Corks, would seal his doom. Yet he felt glad in the midst of his agony, that the greatest sufferer, the survivor of that ill-fated family, the desperate man who lived but for revenge, was not there to inflict still greater tortures on his miserable carcass.

Esmond Kyan, down below on the shore road, was leading his men forward with dauntless bravery against fearful odds—not odds of numbers, but, what was much worse, of position and of armament. Faced by some of the steadiest of the English troops, under General Needham's personal command—harassed on the left wing by heavy fire, from the advance posted by the bridge—prevented by the enemy's cavalry from utilizing the open ground close to the sea, his task was indeed one to tax to the utmost his tactical skill, his powers of leadership, and his personal bravery. Yet, in spite of all the difficulties of the situation, Esmond's careful disposition of his men, his keen eye for the weakest points in the enemy's line, above all, the boundless enthusiasm with which his dashing leadership inspired his followers, proved marvellously effective. At the time when Father

Murphy's men, on the inner road, were so hard pressed as to stimulate the hill-top guard to speed to their assistance, the shore column was in a much more satisfactory position. Their immediate opponents had fallen back; some of the guns had been silenced; and, although the cavalry were still threatening the right flank, the rising tide seemed likely to prove an effective ally of the Irish army.

Esmond Kyan had halted his men, giving them breathing-time before summoning them to a fresh assault. He stood apart, overlooking the whole field of battle, and reviewing the disposition of both his own and the enemy's troops. He could not safely delay long, nor would his eagerness permit him to do so had it even been possible. All the day he kept before his mind Father Michael's words, and the prospect of catching in a trap, between the two attacking columns, the men of the North Corks. He was unware of the capture that had been made by Father Michael's column; had he known it, his eagerness might have carried him in an entirely different direction.

Esmond stood by his horse, and was patting the animal's mane preparatory to mounting, when a hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned, and saw Dan Murphy—his left arm bandaged on account of a slight wound, his face flushed, not alone with the heat of battle, but with a new and strange excitement.

"What is it, Dan?" said Esmond, hurriedly. "Why have you left your place? Is there any bad news?"

"Masther Esmond," said Dan, in a hoarse, breathless voice, "there's bad work goin' on at the top o' the hill!" And he turned to point to where, plainly visible, Kelly and his party could be seen, and where the uniforms of the prisoners were also discernible.

"What bad work?" exclaimed Esmond, hastily. But even before Dan could reply, he had grasped the significance of the movements above—the successive processions, one uniformed man between two in peasant dress, disappearing behind the wall; then, the insurgents re-appearing alone to lead off others.

"The last messenger that came down," said Dan, "told Mr. Perry that the lads on top were longin' to be down here, if they weren't hampered with prisoners. I'm afeard it's another Scullabogue business they're up to."

"That must not be," exclaimed Esmond. "We of the northern army have no such stain on our colours, and I must prevent it."

"I knew you'd want to stop it, Master Esmond. But what's to be done?"

Esmond's decision was taken in a moment.

"I will ride up the hill myself, Dan," he said, vaulting into the saddle. "Go you to Perry, and tell him I will be back soon, very soon; meantime he can lead them on again. The battle is as good as won."

"I will, Masther Esmond," replied Dan. "God bless you! an' those poor divils above will bless, if you can save their lives."

Esmond was gone before Dan had finished. His faithful follower watched him for a moment, then

hastily made his way back to his place in the ranks, to explain to Anthony Perry the cause of Kyan's departure.

Eager to resume his position at the head of the army, Esmond spurred his willing steed to its utmost capacity. In this matter of slaying prisoners, as in all the other wilder phases of the terrible threat he had uttered over the body of his dead love, Esmond Kyan had found it impossible to maintain his original savage mood. As he had been unable, in spite of his vow, to wreak his vengeance upon women, and had even protected the wife of his most hated enemy, so had his naturally magnanimous temper re-asserted isself on the first occasion when there was any question of massacring an unarmed enemy. The affair at Scullabogue, had inspired him with feelings of the deepest horror; and, in conjunction with the other leaders in his division, he had constantly exerted himself to prevent any repetition of it, recognizing that, even though such measures were used by the enemy, there was no moral justification for retaliatory barbarities. He blamed himself for having agreed to leave Hugh Kelly in command; he should have known, he now reflected, that Kelly's fiery temper was easily fanned to fury.

When he could clearly ascertain—what he had suspected from the first glance—that the prisoners belonged to the North Cork regiment, his anxiety to prevent a general massacre was redoubled. In that strict and scrupulous observance of the conditions of honourable warfare, which had superseded in his mind his first designs of a lawless vendetta, Esmond

was especially punctilious in using mercy where the desire for vengeance might most easily have seduced him. To the North Corks, above all, it was incumbent on him to show mercy when they were his captives—precisely because they had shown none to him, and none would show, if he were again to fall into their hands. In another way, too, the sight of the uniform of the captives affected him strangely It meant that the inland column, of which he had seen nothing since he parted with Father Murphy early in the day, had gained some success against their opponents; it might even mean that some other hand than his had laid Kingsborough low. He must hasten, finish his work with the reserve-guard, and speed back to his place in the fight.

Fast as he rode, and short though the distance was to the hill-top, the work of slaughter was well-nigh completed when he arrived. Twenty-seven corpses, piled up in ghastly heaps, lay on the far side of the wall which had served as background for the execution. The officer was one of the three survivors—partly through his own cowardice, as he carefully shrank into the rear whenever the executioners approached, and partly because the insurgents took a grim satisfaction in witnessing his increasing terror as the gruesome work went on. So absorbed were they in the discharge of this horrible task, that even the events of the battlefield, their primary reason for entering on this bloody sacrifice, had lost interest for them. If they noted the approach of the horseman at all, they thought it was some messenger, and did not trouble to stay their work to look closely

at him. Of disturbance or prevention they never dreamed.

"Only three more," remarked the leader of the firing party, as he came up to bring off the last batch. "We'll soon make short work."

"Short work—of what? What are you doing, men?" cried a commanding voice; and Esmond Kyan was in the midst of them.

The two privates of the North Corks looked up, with a fresh gleam of hope in their eyes. Not so their officer. The sound of the voice was enough; this was the man he most dreaded. Slinking back, bowing his head over his chest, he strove by every little device in his power to screen himself from the observation of the rebel chief. His pains were needless, for Esmond Kyan noted him not at all; his attention was entirely absorbed by the insubordinate followers with whom he had to deal.

Hugh Kelly, sullen in voice and face, his manner a blend between shame and anger, answered his leader's question.

"Putting these scoundrels out of harm's way," he said gruffly.

"Come along, ye devilish blackguards," said one of the band, preparing to seize the three doomed men.

Esmond Kyan strode forward and hurled the man aside. Then, with flashing eyes and thunderous brow, he confronted Hugh Kelly, addressing himself to him as the ringleader in the atrocity:

"This must not be!" he cried sternly. "Stop, I order you! Think of what you are doing—commit-

ting cold-blooded murder upon unarmed men!" Then, changing his tone, he appealed to their national pride—that appeal which had been successful so often before in similar supplications. "Think of what you are fighting for!—for Liberty, for Justice, for Religion; —for the purity of your homes and the preservation of your nationhood! So sacred a cause must not be sullied by breach of faith and by murder. It is not Christian, it is not Irish! Shame on you, if you degrade the name and fair fame of Ireland among the nations! shame on you a thousandfold, if you turn our righteous insurrection into a butcher's shambles!"

They hung their heads, shamed into silence. Even Kelly's fierce spirit was abashed before the righteous indignation of the nobler mind. All knew and respected Esmond Kyan; and each man felt that, if he could forget his wrongs and exercise magnanimity towards the authors of it, no other need rage for fuller revenge. They stood sullenly by, awaiting further speech.

Esmond proceeded to deepen and fortify the impression.

"Now, raise your hands to Heaven, soldiers of Ireland! and swear with me, as long as this strife may last, to slay no man save in fair fight, and always to spare the unarmed and the defenceless. Swear it, as you hope to receive mercy in turn from your Maker!"

His right arm thrown up, Esmond stood before the little band. Now humbled and repentant for their rash outbreak, they flung up their arms—Kelly

ever the first in good or in evil, leading—and cried out, almost with one voice, "We swear it!"

Esmond let fall his arm, and stood a moment gazing vacantly into space. Kelly felt it necessary to endeavour to put himself right with his leader and friend.

"I am ashamed of myself," he said, contritely, "for what I was doin'; but sure the sight of the persecutin' ruffians is enough to drive us crazy entirely."

"An' we wanted to be free," said the man from whom the first suggestion of slaughter had come, "to join in the fight there below."

"Aye, there we are all needed," said Esmond, gravely. "Let us not delay here. Turn loose these three wretches—after you have taken away their arms—and let them go where they will; then come back with me to engage in a work more worthy of Irish soldiers."

The order suited well with the temper of the peasant-soldiers, eager to strike a blow in the open fight, and specially anxious to retrieve, by good conduct in the field, their shattered reputation. Some went off at once down the hill, glad to escape from the scene of unjustifiable carnage, and from the reproachful eye of Esmond Kyan. Kelly and a few others remained, to disarm and turn loose the three remaining prisoners, whose safe-keeping indeed, was hardly worth wasting a man upon. They might have been still left bound upon the hill; but, after the awful revelation of how easily the vilest passions could come uppermost in the minds of his men,

Esmond judged it inadvisable to retain any prisoners when it could possibly be avoided.

These three men he had hardly glanced at, and he had not even noticed that one of them wore an officer's uniform. After the haste of his ride from the plain to the hill-top, and the agitation of his stirring appeal to the hearts of his men, a dreamy calm had come upon him. Gazing out over the blue waves, heedless of his immediate surroundings, he lost himself in amazement at his own behaviour. Was he indeed the same man, who in a moment of frantic despair had sworn to show no mercy to man, woman, or child?

He took from his breast pocket, where it lay close to his heart, a blood-stained handkerchief, and pressed it to his lips. "Ah, Dora, Dora!" he murmured, half aloud, "Your gentle spirit has taught me the nobler way. But when I meet *him*——!"

With clenched fists and set teeth he stood, thinking on the vengeance that yet he hoped might be his to wreak in person on the body of the hated Kingsborough. Then recalling himself suddenly to a consciousness of where he was and of what was yet to do, he tenderly replaced the handkerchief in his breast, and turned to see how his orders had been executed.

The two privates, dismissed first, were already disappearing over the hill-top—not, however, in the direction of the battle. The insurgents, having released them, were also gone; Esmond could see them marching down the hill, at the double, in a solid

body. Kelly alone remained, to free the hands of the officer, the last of the prisoners; and he had just completed his task when Esmond's attention became fixed on him again.

"There, you may go," said Kelly, "to your boon-companions, if you can find your way there."

He moved away; and Esmond, for the first time caught sight of the face and figure of the Colonel of the North Corks.

The two stood face to face for a moment; then Kingsborough, disarmed and distrustful, began to back cautiously away from his enemy.

Esmond Kyan gave a great cry.

"Kelly!" he shouted, in a tone of fierce exultation that no man had ever heard from him before. "Give that man back his sword!"

Hugh Kelly, who was already some yards down the hillside, turned in astonishment, and stood irresolute.

"Give him back his sword!" repeated Esmond; and, striding towards Kelly, he wrenched from him the officer's sword which he still held, and flung it at the feet of his enemy—who, fearing to be assailed even in the instant of stooping, nevertheless snatched up the weapon with feverish haste, and stood on the defensive.

"And now," said Esmond, still addressing Kelly, "be off! Leave him to me—we have met before," he added, with a sinister significance in his tone.

Kelly hesitated. He could not fully comprehend the purpose of this magnanimity towards the man whom, of all others, Esmond Kyan had most reason

to abhor from his heart. His inclination was to remain and watch eventualities.

But Esmond would brook no interference with his cherished plan of revenge. The longed-for opportunity had come. Man to man he would meet Kingsborough upon equal terms—with no other to watch their combat, or to record the fate of him who fell.

"Be off, I say!" he cried in fierce impatience. "Do you not hear the battle-roar below? Go, where you are needed, and tell them I will come—when I can."

Without attempting to argue further, Hugh Kelly turned on his heel and marched off, slowly and reluctantly, as compared with his former eagerness for the fray.

Esmond, his drawn sword in his hand, advanced slowly towards Kingsborough, who stood, as if rooted to the spot, fascinated by the terrible aspect of the man who had risen, as it were from the dead to punish him for his crimes. He had striven hard, up to the last moment, to conceal his identity from Esmond; and he had well nigh succeeded. But it was not to be; the dreaded recognition had come, and he was alone with his deadliest enemy, whose arrival had saved him from an ignominious death, and who was now prepared to join with him in mortal combat. Thus finally brought to bay, something of Kingsborough's old arrogant brutality came back to him. Sword in hand, and free from bonds, he would yet make this croppy dog tremble. So he tried to persuade himself; but, despite his efforts to

brace himself up, his hand shook with a nameless terror, and his guilty conscience told him that his criminal career was nigh its end.

Esmond was the first to speak.

"Now, my Lord Kingsborough," he said, triumphantly, "we are alone! and you shall have to answer to me for what you have done."

"What do you want with me?" returned Kingsborough, eyeing his opponent with the evil gleam of a trapped tiger in his eye.

"I want my ruined home—my murdered parents—my betrothed love, tortured even unto death! Can you restore me these?"

Esmond Kyan spoke with the solemn dignity that only a great tragedy, an overpowering sense of wrong, can confer. His enemy felt, even in his base heart, cowed by the grave grandeur of Esmond's suffering-seared soul; but, struggling against the superiority of the other, he endeavoured to turn off his chagrin into a sneering laugh.

Esmond heard him with unmoved patience. His hand gripped more tightly the hilt of his sword; otherwise, no outward sign of passion escaped him. To the last he would dominate this abominable wretch, not alone by force of arms, but by greatness of soul.

"You cannot restore them, my Lord Kingsborough! You laugh! But you can pay me for them—and you shall pay me for them—miserably inadequate as the payment will be!—with your wretched, accursed life!"

"You can hire your bravoes to kill me, no doubt,"

said Kingsborough, tauntingly. "That would be worthy of a rebel and an idolator."

"Say rather," retorted Esmond, "would be worthy of an aristocratic English officer. But we are alone here—all your friends and all mine are fighting there below—and you and I are going to fight here! Prepare, Lord Kingsborough! By my murdered love I swear you shall die!"

Kingsborough's remaining courage was fast oozing away. He made one last, desperate effort to gain time.

"'Twas you who murdered her, not I," he snarled. Esmond sprang forward with wolfish ferocity.

"Stand on you guard!" he cried, hoarsely. "If you parley longer with me, by Heaven, I will run you through the body where you stand!"

"Have at you, then!" growled Kingsborough; and, with an oath, he closed with the insurgent leader.

About the same height as Esmond, Kingsborough was his superior in weight and strength of frame; but this advantage, if it were such, was more than counterbalanced by Kyan's agility of movement and soundness of wind and limb. The chief difference between the two combatants lay, however, not in their physical, but in their mental condition. Esmond, all on fire for vengeance, rushed on his enemy with irresistable energy; Kingsborough, clogged by the terrors of his conscience and by his old ghostly dread of this man, fought doggedly enough, but without the dash, the elasticity, the ever-watchful acuteness of his enemy. From the beginning, the issue was

hardly a moment in doubt. Kept on the defensive all the time, Kingsborough never had an opportunity to strike at the virtually unguarded Esmond, whose sword seemed to rain blows upon him from all sides at once. Had Kingsborough's nerve been good, he might have maintained the defensive until Esmond's first fury had exhausted itself, and then might have struck with fatal effect. But, shaken, as he was by external and internal fears, he was incapable of the wary coolness such a course would demand. Under these circumstances, the contest could not be of long duration. Barely three minutes after the first encounter, Kingsborough swerved aside to avoid a cut at his head, stumbled, and was pierced through the lungs by Esmond's Kyan's sword.

"Damnation roast your croppy soul! howled the doomed wretch, as he fell writhing to the earth. One ghastly paroxysm—a fearful contortion of the features—gasping curses, choked by the outpouring of blood—and Colonel Lord Kingsborough, of the North Corks, had gone to another sphere to pay the penalty of his crimes.

Longer than the fight had endured, Esmond Kyan stood gazing at the corpse of the man he had killed. His vengeance was complete now—and what did it avail? This man had taken from him all he had, and would have taken his life as well—would have taken it, too, with the addition of the most inhuman tortures. He had taken Kingsborough's life—that was all. Had not his enemy the best of it, even now that he lay dead? His slayer must still live, must still carry in his throbbing brain the memory of that

lurid day. Desolate, more desolate than ever, was his estate; buoyed up hitherto by the fierce passion of revenge, he had now not even that stinging goad to stimulate his tottering reason. Black and blank seemed the world that lay before him.

"Oh God!" he moaned aloud in his anguish, "When shall I find rest in death?"

Suddenly a fiercer uproar arose from the battle-field below. All the time, the occasional booming of the guns, the shouts of slayers and the slain, had come to his ears and passed him almost unheeded. But this was something more than the shock of battle; it told of triumph and of rout. Hastily Esmond Kyan turned his gaze upon the warring columns below. With horror he saw that on both sides the Irish attack was completely broken up, and the victorious soldiers of the Arklow garrison issuing from behind their entrenchments, were pressing vigorously in pursuit of the retreating insurgents. All seemed lost!

Only for a moment did Esmond Kyan hesitate, while he considered which of the shattered columns had the first claim on his aid. The inland column seemed to be more hopelessly disorganized than the shore division; yet with the latter, as his own section, Esmond felt his first duty lay. He had neglected them too long; he must now endeavour, by manful effort, to repair the evil his absence had brought about. Besides, the other column had Father Michael Murphy; there was therefore the less need of another leader. Alas! Esmond could not know that the disorganization of the inland column was

due to the death of the patriot priest, struck down by a ball in the very moment when victory seemed likely to crown his valiant combat for Faith and Fatherland.

Down the opposite slope, however, Esmond hastened, urging his horse at headlong speed. Swiftly the sure-footed animal bore him, and but a few minutes had elapsed ere he reached the level ground; but those few minutes had worked appalling havoc in the ranks of the rebel army. Panic reigned supreme; retreat was merging in utter rout; on all sides, cries arose of "Run, run!" "Every man for himself!" "We can make no stand!" "Back to Gorey! to Gorey!"

To stem this torrent of fugitives, urged on by the long lines of redcoats, horse and foot, behind, might well seem a desperate task. But Esmond Kyan, utterly careless of life, was a thoroughly desperate man. Flinging his horse right in their path, and rising up in his stirrups to be the better seen and heard, he poured out his soul in exhortations to the panic-stricken crowd. "Stand! stand, I say!" he cried, in stentorian tones. "Where are you running? Your miserable lives are forfeited in any case. The conquerors will show no mercy to a proved rebel. We must die, men of Wexford, but better die by the sword or the bullet than by the hangman's rope. Let us die as befits soldiers of Ireland, not like craven dogs! The English may conquer our bodies; never let them boast the conquest of our spirit, too!"

As he spoke, the terrified rabble gathered in ever-greater numbers about him; the very sight of him

still fresh and vigorous and eager for fight, was as a tower of strength to their dismayed hearts; and, with a glow of delight he felt that his old influence over these people was once more asserting itself, and that yet one final stand might be made under his leadership.

"Nerve yourselves, men of Wexford," he went on, "for one more effort! The royalists are broken in the pursuit, and will make but feeble stand if we turn on them and show a brave front. Should we fail, our blood, the blood of the martyrs of liberty, will fertilize the holy fields of Ireland, and raise up from our mouldering bones a spirit which shall yet shake off the murderous grip of the Saxon. Come!" he exclaimed, raising his voice to its highest pitch, as he saw his men forming around him for a renewal of the attack, "Come! To Liberty or Death!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE TWENTY-FIRST OF JUNE

THE abnormal heat of the summer of 1798 favoured the insurgent army in many respects. Their encampments for the most part being in the open air, and only the leaders and the priests being provided with tents, anything like inclement weather would have rendered it doubly difficult for them to maintain their organization in the face of so many difficulties. But, if the fighting men found the hot weather to their taste, for the sick and wounded it was altogether another matter. Terrible as it was for an ardent lover of his nation to find himself stretched on a sick bed, far from his fellows who were still struggling manfully in the cause, with the knowledge that all might be over before he could again take part in the fray, all this anguish was intensified by the close and sultry atmosphere which prevailed, and which retarded the recovery of the patients. Even in Wexford town, near as it was to the sea breezes, the heat was oppressive and intolerable; and the little hospital there, where many of the most severely wounded were brought, was unbearable in its warmth to the unfortunates who lay within tossing on beds of pain.

Amongst these were Esmond Kyan, stricken well-nigh unto death. That last desperate charge at

Arklow, when he had hurled his men with the fury of a whirl-wind against the royal troops, had almost succeeded, when a ball in the shoulder brought the fearless leader to the ground. With his fall, all chance of success for his followers disappeared; already exhausted by the long hours of combat which they had endured, only the inspiriting presence of Esmond in their midst could vivify their drooping hearts and keep them in the line of battle against the steady English attack. They broke and fled, having suffered a loss of over fifteen hundred men, and sustained a defeat hardly second to that of Ross in its damaging material and moral effects.

Many of their wounded they left on the field on that fatal day; but amongst those whom they carried with them, with as much care and tenderness as their position would permit, was Esmond Kyan. At first they placed him in Gorey, but in a few days Dermot Fitzgerald, learning of Esmond's plight, had him conveyed under his own personal supervision to Wexford, where better surgical aid was available, and where, what was almost equally important, Eileen Fitzgerald could herself watch by her brother's bed-side and nurse him back to health. But by this time Esmond's condition had become very grave; amputation of his arm was found necessary; and even when that operation had been performed, it was still for some time doubtful whether his life could be saved. A week of hopes and fears followed, a week of torture for Eileen, torn by anxiety for her brother and her husband. The rally came at length, however, and twelve days

after his fall by the shore at Arklow, Esmond Kyan was pronounced out of danger.

"Thanks be to the Lord for all His mercies!" solemnly said Dan Murphy, when Eileen, with a smile trembling through her tears, brought this gladsome news out from the sick-room. "I never thought, when we carried him away from the battle that terrible day, that he would ever speak again."

Ever faithful to his young master, Dan had managed to be pretty constantly in Wexford. Dermot Fitzgerald, knowing how eager he was to be near Esmond and Eileen, made him one of the small brigade of messengers who passed to and fro between the Council at Wexford and the army, now all concentrated in the neighbourhood of Vinegar Hill. Dan had done his share of the fighting, and had in particular distinguished himself on the day of the battle of Arklow, in rescuing the prostrate form of his wounded master from his perilous position, when Esmond lay, helpless, unconscious, at the feet of his own horse, and would in a few minutes have died by English steel. On that occasion, Dan too had received a wound; not a serious one, but yet sufficient to make it inadvisable for him to undergo the toils of battle for some time. He would, however, have scorned on that account to withdraw himself from active participation in the struggle, had it not been for his anxiety not to be separated from Esmond. When, then, Dermot pointed out to him that in this new service—the Intelligence Department, as it were, of the patriot

army—he would equally be doing the work of Ireland, and would be enabled to see Esmond and Eileen almost daily, he gladly accepted the new duties assigned to him.

Eileen was touched by Dan's deep emotion; joyfully agitated as she was at the prospect of Esmond's recovery, she felt guilty, in witnessing the devout and heartfelt gratitude of his faithful servant, of something like neglect in regard to her brother. She had tended him with sisterly care, nursing him with an unfailing devotion which had contributed enormously to his emergence from the valley of the shadow of death; yet, even now when her efforts were crowned with success, the affectionate girl's conscience reproached her for not having been sufficiently single-hearted in her attention. She was conscious that Dermot was never, even in the most critical moments of her brother's illness, far from her thoughts; and, this fact, in comparison with Dan's unlimited devotion, seemed to amount to neglect of Esmond.

She sat down beside Dan, who had been waiting in the only unoccupied room of the house that was the emergency hospital of the insurgents; and heaved a deep sigh.

"You're not lookin' well, Miss Eileen—Mrs. Fitzgerald, I mane," said Dan, glancing sharply at her worn face. "You've been wearin' yerself out, attending to Masther Esmond—an', glory be to God, you've saved him—but you must mind yourself now, you know, or it'll be as bad as if you wor wounded too."

"I'm well enough, Dan," replied Eileen, in a low, tremulous tone. "I am anxious and excited, that is all."

"Aye," said Dan, nodding his head knowingly. He well understood the cause of her fears, and how well-grounded they were.

"Everything will be settled to-day, they tell me," went on Eileen, "by this great battle that they expect around Vinegar Hill."

"Sure an' 'twill be settled all right too," answered Dan, with a cheerfulness he was far from feeling "You needn't be a bit afeard."

Eileen again sighed despondently.

"I do not know, Dan. Things are not going well with us, I fear. The rest of the country is not rising —and then, that shameful defeat at Ross—and the loss of Father Michael Murphy at Arklow ——!"

"Well, sure enough it was a great pity we couldn't keep Ross," Dan admitted, reluctantly.

"Oh, that degrading drunkenness!" exclaimed Eileen in tones of sorrow and disgust. "Had our men kept sober on that day, Ireland might be free!"

"Aisy now," said Dan, deprecatingly, "sure she'll be free yet."

But it was hard for him to carry conviction in his tone, or to utter the words with the joyous confidence that, whenever there exists a reasonable chance of its fulfilment, such a prediction must excite in the breast of a true Irishman.

Eileen shook her head, slowly and sadly.

"The troops are closing round us, Dan. There is no escape from that terrible ring."

"We'll drive them back again, the vagabonds!" cried Dan, with a touch of renewed animation.

"They are expected to attack Vinegar Hill to-day, are they not?—and to capture it, probably," said Eileen.

"No!" cried Dan, fiercely. "They'll niver see the top of Vinegar Hill alive, the blackguards!"

Eileen did not continue the discussion. She well knew that Dan was hardly more hopeful than herself, but his optimistic vein of speech was not to be changed by any argument.

"Ah, well!" she said, "I wish it was over, this terrible time!—and Dermot and Esmond safe out of it all."

She passed back again to the room where her brother lay; and Dan, heavy at heart in spite of his hopeful words, went out to seek for some chance of employing himself usefully on behalf of the cause.

He was, however, retained in Wexford all the day by the directing Council, who wished to have at hand a select body of men on whom they could rely in the event of a crushing defeat at Vinegar Hill. He would gladly have gone as a messenger to the scene of battle, in the hope of finding some opportunity for striking a blow again at the hated Saxon; but all the necessary communications with the commanding generals had been already made, and Dan's occupation was gone. He had to make up his mind, therefore, to wait as patiently as he could for the arrival of news from the battlefield—the news which would tell whether Ireland had indeed a chance of freedom, or

whether once again her hopes were to be dashed by irretrievable defeat.

A long, weary day of waiting it was for all those cooped up in Wexford. Most of them, like Eileen Kyan, had some dear one engaged in the deadly strife afar; and even those who had not this reason for anxiety hung in breathless expectation upon the issue of that day's work for Ireland.

As in a dream, Eileen Fitzgerald glided from room to room, devoting much of her time, now that her brother was out of danger, to other poor sufferers who lacked the tender care of hands they knew and loved; but returning, ever and anon, to where Esmond, now quiet in body and mind, lay tranquil, because he did not expect to recover, and wished for Death's speedy approach.

The long, hot, midsummer day wore on, and the evening shades began to close in. Then, with the growing shadows, began to appear messengers, and fugitives, and floating rumours of defeat began to run through the town. Not unprepared for these tidings, the townspeople were nonetheless driven well-nigh frantic with terror as the conviction settled in their minds that the day was indeed lost, and that the patriot army was in full retreat upon Wexford. The weak, who foresaw and dreaded the end, began already to contemplate submission to the victorious royalist troops; the staunch, and those who were too deeply compromised to hope for mercy, planned, by turns, flight and the most desperate resistance.

For Eileen Fitzgerald, the universal terror was trebly intensified. Her first dread was for Esmond.

Helpless as he was, there was little hope of his being able to escape in any direction; and if he remained, his weak and sick condition would prove, she knew, no safeguard against his murder by the savage English soldiery. Then Dermot, who would be foremost on a day like this, might be wounded—captive—dead! Her heart sickened at the thought; her step grew uncertain, and she put out a hand to support herself against the post of Esmond's bed. Then, mastering herself, lest the sick man should witness her emotion, she fled hastily from the room, and retired to her own, where she could give her overwrought feelings free vent.

If Dermot only were here, and safe! he would find a way, she was sure, to save Esmond and herself, if they could be saved. Her own fate she thought least of; for a few weeks of acquaintance with warfare had steeled the heart and braced the nerves of this frail, slight girl, and lent her something of the heroine's heart that Dora Kavanagh had owned. Yet for herself, too, the future might hold nameless horrors in store. The blood rushed hot into her cheeks as she thought of what she had endured when in the hands of Kingsborough's vile wretches; and her fingers sought in her breast the butt of the small pistol which Dermot had given her, which she was resolved to use should the worst threaten her.

Suddenly, her ear caught the sound of increased tumult in the street. Not daring to look out, hardly able, indeed, to move from her seat, she clutched the pistol tighter yet, and sat still. Surely they were

here—the brutal conquerors! here in the town—in the very house! Steps sounded on the stairs—pale, but resolute, Eileen rose to her feet to confront the intruders. The door burst open, and, with a glad cry, she saw Dermot—Dermot, her husband—alive and unharmed.

There was no need to ask any questions; one glance at Dermot's grave, set face told her, almost before he could frame the words, that the worst of the rumours were true—that Vinegar Hill was lost—that the patriot army was broken up and hopelessly disorganized—that no time was to be lost in flying, if they were to save their lives. If not that very evening, to-morrow at the latest would see the enemy's troops before Wexford, and no further stand against them was possible. Flight, instant and speedy, was their only security. All this Dermot told in a few breathless sentences, while he held Eileen in his arms.

"But Esmond, Dermot?" Eileen faltered at last.

"He must be brought with us," returned her husband. "Dan has told me that he is now no longer in danger of death from his wound; we must move him—and there is all the more reason why we should move promptly. The boat is ready—Dan has gone to see to it. Come!"

"The boat, Dermot? Why, where are we going?" said Eileen, amazedly.

"To the Saltee Islands," returned Dermot. "The caves there will hide us—there is no other place; and we needn't fear either to starve or to be betrayed. 'Twill be a rough resting-place for Esmond; but with

you to watch over him, with the fresh sea-air and his own natural strength, we shall pull him through. At any rate," he added, seeing Eileen's countenance overcast with a doubting cloud, "better a thousand times that he should run the risk of death from his wound than be left to the mercy of the soldiery. Come!"

CHAPTER XVIII

FINAL FLICKERS

OUT on the Great Saltee Island the sun shone brightly, even warmly, although it was now mid-September. The eager breeze, hastening northward, dashed the boiling spray up over the rocks, and into the little hollows and larger caves that indented them—fit and safe lurking-place for a condemned rebel. Down at the foot of the cliffs, where one could look far southward over the expanse of waters, perched on a rock that each incoming wave sprinkled with spray, sat Esmond Kyan.

The shadow of his former self, wan, worn by nigh two months' battling with disease and pain, with an empty coat-sleeve hanging by his left side, few would have recognized in Esmond the bold and dashing leader of the Gorey army, the matchless captain of artillery, the fierce avenger of his loved one's wrong. With a dull calm written upon his passive brow, he listlessly watched the waves rolling in to his feet, like one whose dreams are far away. Ever since that desperate charge at Arklow, when, having slain his enemy, he sought death more recklessly than ever before, this languid disposition had overcome him, and had proved, indeed, the most serious obstacle to his recovery from the effects of his wound and of the loss of his amputated arm.

Why, he asked himself, could he not die? Repeatedly, in the course of those few weeks of gallant fighting, he had seen fall by his side men who had not sacrificed themselves one-tenth so fearlessly as he—men who wished to live, and who had every reason to live—men who left behind a numerous kindred to bewail their loss. And he, the last male of his family, whose only living relative was cared for by a loving and worthy husband, he whose prospect of joy in life was gone for ever, whose work was done—he was spared, to be a burden to himself and his fellows. He longed to be at rest, with his dead love; and the blue waters tempted him, to be at one plunge oblivious of all the world. But the old religious instinct was too strong to permit him to carry out his vague designs of suicide; and with a sigh, he arose and paced slowly along the shore towards the cave that was his hiding-place.

Since the day of Vinegar Hill, when they had betaken themselves to the Saltees under cover of the evening greys, Esmond, Eileen, and Dermot, with Dan as their ever faithful attendant, had lived secluded here. As Dermot had foretold, although many knew their place of concealment, they had not been either discovered or starved; the loyal peasantry kept their whereabouts an inviolable secret, and supplied them with all they needed. Nay, when Esmond's illness, soon after his removal to the island, assumed an alarming aspect, medical aid was procured for them without a whimper being allowed to reach the military authorities who held Wexford. All the time that the last embers of the insurrection

were being trampled out, while the conquered county felt all the weight of the victor's pitiless hand, they lay there, exposed to no other danger than what might arise from the excessive height of the tide, and finding the cruel waves less to be dreaded than the wrath of the Saxon. So long were they undisturbed, that Eileen began to cherish hopes of being able once more to return to her childhood's home, and to live there unmolested with her brother and her husband. But Dermot was under no such delusion. He knew that never again could Ireland be a safe residence for well-known leaders of the insurrection, like Esmond and himself; and that it was only a question of time until their hiding-place should be discovered by one or other of the roving bands that were ravaging the country. He had, therefore, through a trusty friend in Wexford town, set on foot negotiations with the captain of an American trading-vessel, on board of which he hoped to procure a passage to the lands where British "justice" could not harm them. To-day he and Dan had both ventured to the mainland in pursuance of this design; and while Esmond moodily paced the shore, Eileen sat alone in the cave awaiting the return of her husband, and musing on all the vicissitudes of the last eventful three months.

A long, low whistle warned her of Dermot's approach, and presently she saw him appear along the edge of the cliff-path that led to their secluded retreat. As she went to meet him with a smile, she observed with surprise that Dan Murphy was not in

his company, and that his countenance wore a look of strange excitement.

"Eileen! is all well?" he demanded, hurriedly.

"Yes, Dermot. Is anything wrong? You look excited," returned Eileen.

"I have strange news," said Dermot. "Where is Esmond?"

"Strolling by the sea," replied Eileen. "Look, there he is below by the stretch of sand."

"Dermot stepped out to the mouth of the cave and whistled to attract Esmond's attention. The latter turned, perceived him, and proceeded to scale the cliff-path.

"He looks somewhat brighter to-day," said Dermot, watching him closely.

"Yes," said Eileen, "I think, with time, he will regain all his old strength and spirits again."

"I don't believe he will ever be the same as he was before Dora's death, Eileen. But if anything can rouse his slumbering spirit, it is the news I have to-day."

"What are they, Dermot?" eagerly queried Eileen.

"Be patient, Eileen; I want Esmond to hear them first," said Dermot; and he waved his hand to his friend, to hasten his slow approach.

Eileen waited impatiently till Esmond arrived, and clasped Dermot warmly by the hand.

"You look as fresh as ever to-day, dear Esmond," said Fitzgerald.

"What good, Dermot?" said Esmond, despondently, seating himself on the natural stone-bench that

was their only resting-place. "Ireland has gone to sleep again; no 'larum can rouse her from her torpor now. So why rejoice if I have regained my life and health?"

"Esmond," said Dermot, laying his hand on his shoulder, and speaking impressively, "you may be able to strike a blow for our mother country once more!"

Esmond Kyan sprang up with a new light in his dulled eye.

"You have news, Dermot?" he gasped.

"Aye!" returned Fitzgerald, extending one hand to Esmond and the other to Eileen, "such news as makes me think our plan of escape needless."

"Quick, Dermot," cried Eileen, breathlessly, "tell me all!"

Dermot's voice quivered with joyful emotion as he communicated his great news.

"The French have come!" he murmured, with a half-sob in his throat—a sob for the hundreds of brave fellows for whom the glad tidings must come too late.

"The French?" cried Esmond and Eileen together.

"Aye! Humbert has landed at Killala, and routed Lake's militia at Castlebar."

Esmond's despondency seemed to vanish like mists before the rising sun as he stood by and drank in the full purport of these words. They meant, for him, the cessation of this dull inaction, the resumption of an active campaign on behalf of the motherland—the chance of forgetfulness, first in

the heat of battle, after, perhaps, in the sleep of death. His single remaining arm seemed to quiver with the desire to deal once more a blow for Ireland.

"When did this happen, Dermot?" he asked eagerly.

"Nigh a month ago, I understand," replied Dermot.

"A month ago!" said Esmond, with a groan—"And we never heard it!"

"How could we, Esmond, lying hidden here?" reasoned Dermot. "But the whole of the West is doubtless in his hands by this time; soon the flame will sweep across the land, not for one moment, I am sure, could the British forces withstand the picked troops of France."

"And Wexford?" queried Eileen. "Will it rise again?"

"Wexford," responded Dermot, sadly, "is a desert. Whatever is done, must be done by others than by the beaten Wexfordmen."

"No matter," said Esmond, cheerily. "Whether in Wexford or elsewhere, it would gladden me to strike yet another blow for liberty before I die. Can we not learn more news of these great happenings?"

"I thought of stealing into the town myself," said Dermot, "but Dan reminded me that I am too well known, and might easily be betrayed. He, however, has gone secretly to get more news, and at the same time, to change our arrangements with the American shipmaster."

'So you have abandoned that plan of escape, Dermot?" asked Eileen, anxiously.

"I have," said Dermot, firmly. "So long as there is anything to be won for our country at home, an Irishman's place is here."

The glad light that shone in Esmond's eye told more eloquently than any words he could use, how his spirit rose again at the prospect of renewed warfare against the English enemy. Changed indeed was he from the Esmond who, when Dermot Fitzgerald first urged him to join the National organization, placed all his trust in peace and goodwill towards the English garrison—changed by the irresistible force of circumstances into a man whose one idea was to punish the oppressor for the wrongs done to his countrymen and himself, and whose sole regret was that the opportunity for doing so seemed to have passed away.

Dermot was not a whit behind him in enthusiasm for the anticipated renewal of the struggle for liberty; and Eileen, too, whose heart was bound up with the scenes of her childhood, viewed with joy the prospect of a contest which might enable her yet to live her life happily, as Dermot had long ago forecast, in a free Ireland. To all three, the moment was one of resurrection—of the re-kindling of a flame which all had believed for ever extinct. And as Hope requires ever but scanty fuel to make it blaze brightly and swiftly, they soon found themselves regarding the whole situation with ever-growing cheer, while its darker, more doubtful features seemed to recede and be forgotten.

Already Dermot and Esmond were plunged into a discussion of all sorts of wild plans for joining Humbert's forces and cutting themselves free from those tireless enemies even now scouring the country-side for their traces. Already they longed for the fierce activity of war, and chafed against delay, straining their eyes over the blue waters for the first sight of Dan's boat, although they reminded themselves that by no possibility could he arrive so soon from his errand.

Eileen paced the beach, keeping a sharp look-out, while Esmond and Dermot sat and talked of many things in an eager, happy way, not, however, unblent with sad reflections and weary backward glances over the past. Ireland's freedom, if indeed it were at hand, would be a boon dearly bought, at the cost of the life-blood of her noblest sons!

"A boat!" cried Eileen, hastening towards them. "Yes, 'tis Dan; I see him now!" and she waved her hand joyfully towards the boat that was rapidly approaching.

Dermot and Esmond were startled at first and inclined to retreat to the safer hiding-place which the cave afforded, for it seemed impossible that Dan should return so soon. However, they perceived in a few moments that it was indeed Dan. As the boat drew nearer, they could see that he looked excited. He bent eagerly over the oars and seemed to be straining every muscle to gain speed.

The watchers, to end the suspense, hastened to the little creek where the boat was to put in. But Dan had already reached the spot and when he saw them,

he flung himself hastily out of the boat and dashed towards them through the shallow water. He was trembling and very pale.

"For the love of Heaven, hurry! The soldiers will be here in half an hour!"

"The soldiers!" echoed Dermot, stunned.

"Aye, aye!" cried Dan, breathless. "The redcoats! They've found us, and are going to smoke us out. We must get aboard the ship as fast as we can!"

"This is terrible!" cried Dermot. "Where can we hide till the French come across the country? Tell me, Dan, did you hear anything of them?"

"Ah, sure enough, I did, an' the latest thing, too. The French are beaten and have been sent home." Dan tried to speak steadily and in a matter-of-fact tone, but his voice shook and his words came hoarsely from his throat. He too, had been cherishing a great hope, and it was bitterer than all previous defeats, for it was the end—the final crushing blow. He dared not look on the faces of that sad trio, for he knew the cruelty of the news he had just imparted.

Esmond's head fell on his breast.

"Beaten!" he repeated in a low tone, as if to kill by the utterance the hope of his heart.

"Aye—Master Esmond. There's no mistakin' it's true," answered Dan, with a sorrowful shake of the head. "For General Lake is back in these parts after destroyin' them."

"The last hope, then, is gone," said Dermot, folding his arms upon his breast. Henceforth, his

thought must dwell no longer on the fond hope of delivering Ireland with his sword from the yoke of the oppressor. That work might be for others, in a happier time.

"What shall we do, Dermot?" asked Eileen, and her voice strengthened him. All was not lost for him, while she was left.

"We must carry out our original plan. Did you arrange with the American captain, Dan?" he asked.

"I did, an' he's waiting for us a bit to the south of the island. We'll only just have time, for the redcoats may land by the north creek at any moment," answered Dan, eager to be gone.

"Then we are safe yet," said Dermot, with a sigh of relief. "Once on board an American vessel, we can laugh at Lake and his redcoats."

Eileen came forward eagerly, declaring that everything was in readiness for their departure. Now that the soldiers were so near, she was possessed only by a fierce desire to be away—away from all the horrors that their presence threatened.

"There is no time to lose, Eileen. Go to the boat with Dan while I remove whatever we take with us from the cave," said Dermot.

"I go with you, Dermot," said Esmond, rising from a rock where he had been sitting, seemingly absorbed in thought.

"Don't delay long, Esmond," said Eileen, putting her hand on his shoulder gently.

Then she turned away and went quickly with Dan to the boat. Esmond took a few paces silently

beside Dermot, then stopped abruptly and turned round towards the spot where Eileen sat waiting. Long and wistfully he looked, then stretched out his hands, murmuring tenderly,

"Little sister! Farewell!"

CHAPTER XIX

FAREWELL

DERMOT, hastening on, had not heard Esmond's strange words. When he reached the cave, Dermot entered quickly, leaving Esmond standing outside, looking out over the sea. As he emerged after a few moments, bearing the small baggage which they had prepared to take with them, Esmond was still standing, motionless and mute, his eyes upon the waters. Dermot approached him and touched him on the shoulder to arouse his attention. Turning, Esmond laid his hand solemnly on his friend's shoulder, and said slowly:

"You will be kind to Eileen, Dermot, and make her always happy. She needs a long lifetime of happiness to make up for all she has suffered, and I could not wish to see her in truer hands than yours, Dermot Fitzgerald!"

"Why all this, Esmond? This is not the time for such parleying," said Dermot, anxious to depart.

"This *is* the time—the only time, Dermot."

"Why, you will be with us! You yourself will help me to protect her and gladden her life, Esmond," said Dermot, cheerfully.

"No, Dermot, I will not be with you," answered Esmond, with conviction.

"What does this mean?" asked Dermot, flinging on the ground his baggage and facing Esmond steadily.

"I could not tell you before her," answered Esmond wearily, with the air of a man going over arguments already long since met and laid aside. "It would but agonize her needlessly. I am not going, Dermot. I will stay in Ireland. That is all. I am resolved."

"But it will be your death!" exclaimed Dermot.

"I know it. I wish it," Esmond answered serenely.

"But this is madness, Esmond! You can do nothing if you remain. If Humbert had succeeded, if but a spark of rebellion remained anywhere that we could kindle into flame . . . Esmond, brother!" cried Dermot with passionate earnestness.

"Well—my brother?"

"Esmond," he continued. "You know me, and you know that I would not leave our country if any slightest chance remained of working for her."

"I know it well," said Esmond heartily. "I know that you leave only because all is over—because no puny struggles of ours can now avert the utter ruin of our nationhood."

"Then, why do you remain, Esmond?"

"I was born here, Dermot, and here I die. I will wait here for the soldiers and fall fighting. It is better to die in Ireland, for Ireland, than to live elsewhere." Esmond's eyes blazed with a fierce fire of enthusiasm, a desperate self-annihilating fire.

"If your death could do good—yes. But now——"

"My nation is dead. Well, I will die with it."

Dermot flushed hotly. "Then, you think I am a coward, to leave the country thus?" he asked proudly.

"No, no, Dermot. God knows I do not mean to reproach you. I understand too well your nobility and your patriotism. But I am different—mayhap it is the courage to go that is lacking in me."

"Esmond, listen to me. If you would serve Ireland, you can best do so by leaving her, and raising up, in the free lands beyond the sea, a race which shall hate the Saxon and revere Ireland as their wronged mother, and shall live but to avenge these wrongs! Our children shall one day return to accomplish all that we have left undone——"

He paused, for Esmond's impassive face became convulsed in terrible anguish, and a wild moan broke from his pale lips.

"*Your* children may, Dermot," he cried, brokenly. "Yours and Eileen's, God bless you both, and grant you to raise up such a race of Irish-Americans. But for me—the girl who might have been the mother of my children—ah, Dermot! . . . Do you know what day this is?"

"No, why?" asked Dermot.

"It is the 15th of September—the day my Dora and I were to have been married . . . I have been thinking of it all day, and something seemed to whisper to me: You shall be united to-day, after all! Now I know how that can be. Through death I shall rejoin her in the eternal life. My wife!"

"Mr. Dermot, Mr. Esmond, hurry! Miss Eileen is getting anxious, an' what's more, I see a big boat

coming, an' I think by the glint it is the redcoats is in her," cried Dan, hurrying up.

"Go, Dermot, I am not going with you. Good-bye, my brother," said Esmond, putting out his hand and eager to see Dermot depart.

"Not goin', Master Esmond?" cried Dan.

"He wants to stay here to die, Dan. We must not let him," Dermot explained hurriedly, glad to have Dan's support to influence Esmond.

"Stay here to die! Sure 'twould break the young mistress's heart, entirely!"

"No, Dan. She has Dermot. He will be all to her. Besides, she must not be told of my fate yet. You must tell her I have a plan, a hope—that I will come out afterwards—anything," said Esmond resolutely.

"You cannot possibly persist in this mad resolve," pleaded Dermot.

"I am quite fixed, Dermot. You cannot shake me by arguments. Failing to win Ireland's liberty, I wish to perish in the effort. Perhaps my death may stimulate others. It is my one hope. Perhaps in that future day when a new generation takes up arms to free our fatherland, the memory of my death may help to call Wexford to the field. Dear God, grant it may be so! There is no preacher of patriotism so eloquent as those who die for liberty! And now good-bye—God bless you all!"

"Esmond, Esmond! You tear my heart! We cannot, *must* not leave you like this! Think of Eileen! Listen!" And Dermot held up his hand for silence.

"Dermot, Dermot! The soldiers are coming!" It was Eileen who called from the boat below.

"Go to her, Dermot. It is you she calls. Do not prolong the parting, or all may be lost."

"My God!" cried Dermot, in wild indecision.

"Go both of you. Do not risk your lives to save mine, for I am adamant and *will not* be saved," said Esmond imperatively.

"Faith then, nayther will I, Mr. Esmond," exclaimed Dan, suddenly. "Go on to the young mistress, Mr. Dermot. I'll stay here with Master Esmond."

"Dan! You, too! What does it mean?" asked Dermot.

"Dan! This is folly!" urged Esmond.

"I've served your family all my life, Mr. Esmond, an' I'm not going to leave you now. I've worked with the Kyans, an' fought with the Kyans, an' lived and suffered with the Kyans—and now—I'm goin' to die with the last of the Kyans."

"Dan—listen to me," said Esmond, touched to the heart by the words of his faithful follower and all the more eager to save him.

Dan put out his hand: "Don't say one word, Mr. Esmond. I'm with ye till the last."

"My God! Was ever such a plight," exclaimed Dermot, frantically.

"Your first duty, Dermot, is to your wife. Remember—I trust her to you. Save her. Farewell, my brother—it is best so."

Dermot burst into tears as he wrung Esmond's hand and Dan's. Then, without a word, he turned

away and hastened to the boat, where he assumed a forced calm to cheer Eileen with a pious falsehood as they two rowed out to the friendly shelter of the American vessel. It was well that the ship was not far off and that Eileen could take an oar, for Dermot's hand was weary and his heart sore for the brother he was leaving behind to die.

After Dermot had left them, Esmond was silent for a few moments. Then, turning to Dan, he said with a sad smile.

"I would ask you to follow him, Dan, but I know too well your obstinate spirit."

"You do, Master Esmond, thank God for that same," answered Dan imperturbably.

"But, Dan, my life is over; not so yours. You are not an old man, nor yet a worn-out young man like me. You could start afresh in the new world and——"

"Arrah, what life have I left?" interrupted Dan. "All the good that's in me is gone; an' I may as well make a virtue of dying, an' die for my country."

Esmond would have replied, but the discussion was broken rudely by the sound of tramping feet. The soldiers had landed on the north side of the island and were making their way to the caves which they had heard of as the place of concealment of the rebels. Fortunately, however, for Dermot and Eileen, the soldiers had not seen the little boat containing the two fugitives, proceeding as it did in the opposite direction.

General Lake headed the party, for he was very keen on such captures With him came Lady

Kingsborough, ostensibly for a row to the famous Saltee caves, really, however, prompted by the humane desire of alleviating in some way the lot of the captured. Since her husband's death she had striven to effect some good in this way, hoping to efface some of the horror and odium which justly clung to the name she bore. Yet she chafed to think how little she had been able to do, how slight her influence when weighed against the barbarity of soldiers and commanders alike.

"Mark time! Halt!" came the voice of the commander.

"They are here," cried Esmond, and his voice betokened rather joy and relief than sorrow.

Then he remembered his faithful Dan and shook him by the hand, saying:

"Let us meet death together bravely, Dan, since you will have it so!"

They drew their pistols and Esmond felt a proud thrill of thankfulness at the thought that, though his left arm was gone, he still had his right with which to strike the enemy of his country. He would die—yes, but he would sell his life dearly. He drew himself up proudly and stood motionless, facing the entrance of the cave.

But General Lake was not without experience in matters of rebel-capture. He knew well that he must effect his purpose by strategy, or lose the best of his picked corps. One rebel at bay could face ten men—he had known as many mutilated or laid low by a desperate man before the final, inevitable surrender—what then might not a nest of these

Irish traitors do? For he knew that there were many hiding, though he did not guess their names. Moreover he had heard that a woman was hiding there with her husband, and a woman's presence always made the fighters well nigh resistless.

While, therefore, seeming to make the attack from the front, he had ordered some of his best men to creep up from behind, hidden by the rocks and brushwood that grew near the mouth of the large cave. General Lake, meanwhile, remained behind with the rest of his men in order to attract the attention of the rebels to his line. Lady Kingsborough remained near the General. She, too, had heard that a woman was in hiding on the island, and she hoped by her presence to protect a fellow-woman from the vile brutality of the soldiers.

The soldiers, coming from behind, were upon Esmond and Dan before they knew it, waiting as they were for the advance of the redcoats whom they saw coming up the path towards them. They were pinioned swiftly from behind, by deft, strong hands, and, struggle though they would, they were powerless. Esmond's right hand was firmly bound behind his back, while Dan was also strongly secured. His struggle was fiercer than that of Esmond, who had been already weakened by his long illness, and the loss of whose arm made him a comparatively easy capture. The cave was next searched, and great was the vexation of the soldiers to find that it was empty.

General Lake had now come up with the rest of the soldiers. He scrutinized the cave carefully in his

turn. Then, seating himself on the stone bench outside, he ordered the prisoners to be brought forward.

His face lit up when he saw Esmond.

"I know you, Esmond Kyan," he said, grimly. "'Twas at Arklow you lost that arm. Who is the other fellow?"

"I'm Dan Murphy," replied the latter, defiantly. "I'm an' oul' servant of the Kyans, an' I'm here to die with my master, as I lived with him."

"Very creditable, indeed," said Lake, scoffingly. "Shows remarkably fine feelings in a croppy. You are both acknowledged rebels, are you not?"

"If you mean by a rebel one who has taken up arms against the iniquitous, infamous rule of England, I, for one, glory in that name," replied Esmond proudly.

"And I," echoed Dan, sturdily.

General Lake laughed sneeringly.

"And if you still hesitate," Esmond continued, "to wreak your vengeance on me, I will tell you one thing more. *I killed Lord Kingsborough!*"

General Lake looked at Esmond sharply, an evil light in his eyes.

"You did, eh? This is very curious. You'll be pleased to hear that Lady Kingsborough, the lamented Colonel's widow, is at present with our company, having come for a row for change of air. Corporal, stand aside that Lady Kingsborough may see this person. She may be interested in the case."

Lady Kingsborough, who had retired a little into the shadow of the cave, came forward.

The General bowed to her: "You anticipated me, Lady Kingsborough. I find here a notorious rebel . . . one Esmond Kyan, who avows that he murdered your late husband, and boasts of it."

Lady Kingsborough started and grew paler.

"This man!" she said, pointing to Esmond.

"Beg pardon, General, and my lady; not murdered, killed," interposed a soldier standing by.

"What do you know about it, Watkins?" questioned Lake, annoyed at the interruption of his dramatic disclosure.

"I saw it, sir," said Watkins. "Me and Colonel Kingsborough and nearly thirty others was captured by the croppies at Arklow. They were going to shoot us, and had shot all but three of us, when this here fellow, Kyan, came up. He made the croppies swear not to touch the rest of us, and he turned me and my mate free, taking our arms from us. But he left Lord Kingsborough his sword, and kept him behind and fought him. I saw the whole thing from behind a tree, and Lord Kingsborough was killed in fair fight, with no treachery or murder in it."

"And you say he saved your life?" interposed Lady Kingsborough eagerly. "He made the rebels stop ill-using you?"

"He did, my lady. I'm glad to say it, an' to do him a good turn when I have the chance."

Lady Kingsborough looked gratefully at Watkins, then turned to General Lake, a deep flush rising to her face, as she spoke:

"Nor was that the only time, General Lake, when this man proved his magnanimity. At the taking of

Enniscorthy by the rebels, I myself fell into his hands Although he knew who I was and although he had suffered grievous wrongs at the hands of my husband, he spared my life and guided me through the tumult of the town to the house of a friend where I found shelter and safety. I would not have this forgotten now. I beseech you, General Lake, to show him mercy and to let his noble generosity compensate for his disloyalty—if indeed, disloyalty be a crime when the Government itself makes the rebellious."

She paused, much moved, her words provoking an approving murmur from a few of even that hardened soldiery.

General Lake bowed suavely, as he replied, " You need not plead so earnestly, Lady Kingsborough. The circumstances you mention shall certainly be taken into account in deciding the prisoner's fate."

" You promise that ? " Lady Kingsborough said briefly, a light of relief in her eyes.

" I do. And now, may I beg of you to withdraw while I arrange some pressing matter of detail."

" I leave Mr. Kyan in your hands, General, with confidence that you will show a generosity equal to his own," answered Lady Kingsborough. " I trust we may meet again, Mr. Kyan," she said as she passed Esmond.

" If we do not, Lady Kingsborough, let me thank you now," answered Esmond quietly.

" You may leave it all to me, Lady Kingsborough," cried General Lake, as she left him. He seemed visibly relieved now that she was gone.

"Now, sirrah!" he began, addressing Esmond. "Is all this true that the lady and the private tell me? But I am sure it is; Lady Kingsborough has always had a weakness for truth-telling. Now, this testimony shows conclusively that you are a specially obnoxious type of rebel, and deserve no mercy. For it is quite clear that you could not have been able to protect Lady Kingsborough or the captives from the fury of your friends, unless you had been in a position of command among them. You must have been one of the leaders, Esmond Kyan, and, as such, I sentence you to be shot at once!"

"Hurrah!" cried several of the soldiers, who had been afraid of being balked of their prey.

Dan glanced at Esmond, who continued impassive as before. The faithful follower had cherished the hope that Lady Kingsborough's intercession would save his beloved master.

"I welcome your sentence," answered Esmond, "and I thank you for it."

"Now, for you, Murphy. You associate yourself, I suppose, with all your leader here has done?"

"I do," cried Dan, fiercely. "An' what's more, ye can't prove, thanks be to God, that *I* showed any leniency to the English, anyway!"

"Good! That saves trouble. Let him be shot also. That wall of rock over there will do capitally," said Lake, pointing to a bare face of rock close by the cave, looking out over the ocean.

The soldiers proceeded to place Esmond and Dan in the required position, their backs set against the rock, their faces turned seawards. As they were

about placing a bandage on the eyes of both, Esmond turned to the Corporal, saying:

"Let me face death with my eyes open. It is the only favour I ask."

"Let me do the same," pleaded Dan.

Their wish was granted.

"Good-bye, Dan, old friend," murmured Esmond in Dan's ear as the soldiers prepared to fire. "We shall meet again in a better world."

"Good-bye, Mr. Esmond, darlin'," answered Dan. "Sure it's grand to be dyin' for the sake of the oul' sod!"

"Present arms! Take aim!" rang Lake's clear command.

"For Ireland! for love and Ireland! Dora, I come!" cried Esmond, in a loud, strong voice.

"Fire!" rang out the order again.

A loud report of muskets, followed by a dull thud as two lifeless bodies fell prone to earth.

"So perish all the enemies of England!" cried Lake, in tones of exultation, waving his hands aloft. "God save the King!"

. . . . .

The great American vessel is under way, bearing Dermot and Eileen to a new world. Together they stand at the stern, straining their eyes to catch the last glimpse of the beloved land, receding visibly on the far horizon. The shadows are falling, deepening; falling over Ireland and blotting her out. The tears rise in Dermot's eyes. It is the last of Ireland he has

seen. He lays his arm fondly around the weeping Eileen and she turns towards him, the light of a great love in her eyes, shining out clear and steady through all the gloom of farewell.

Dermot pointed to the American flag now unfurling gaily to catch the evening breeze:

"Eileen, we are under the flag of freedom!" he said.

But Eileen only pointed to that dim mist-veiled isle in the eastern sky, as she answered solemnly:

"Dermot, we shall never forget the Old Land in the New."

"Never, my Eileen." Dermot uncovered his head reverently. "God save Ireland!"

THE END

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