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THE GRAVES AT KILMORNA

[Title-page facing]

By Canon Sheehan, D.D.
Luke Delmege: A Novel.
Lisheen: or the Test of the Spirits. A Novel.
Glenanaar: A Novel of Irish Life.
The Blindness of Dr. Gray: A Novel of Irish Life.
The Graves at Kilmorna: A Story of '67
Parerga: A Companion Volume to "Under the Cedars and the Stars."
Lost Angel of a Ruined Paradise: A Drama of Modern Life.
The Intellectuals: An Experiment in Irish Club-life.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

[t.p.]

THE GRAVES AT KILMORNA: A STORY OF '67

BY

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Author of

"My New Curate"; "Luke Delmege"

etc., etc. New Impression

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THE GRAVES AT KILMORNA

BOOK I

I

On a certain summer evening in the year 1866, a number of schoolboys, of different ages, were playing cricket along a smooth crease that was worn out of the rough ground behind the market-place in a certain Midland town. The sun was setting, and it threw the high walls of the market-place in long shadows across the ground, whilst it lit up the magnificent foliage of the trees that filled and crowned the glen beyond the river. In these shadows, a young man was walking up

and down, now reading closely from a book which he held near to his eyes, now glancing away from the book to the boys at play, and seeming to look at them with eyes of pity, whilst he enjoyed their shrill shouts, and all the exuberance and glory of their untamed animal spirits. From the town that was hidden in a hollow beneath them, came shouts and cheers from time to time, at which the boys paused from their play, as if doubting whether they were not losing some fun; and then went on, batting and bowling, as if their games were a more serious attraction.

Suddenly, two or three great, hulking fellows, somewhat the worse for drink, came around the corner of the market-place, and lurched forward to where [4] the boys were playing. One of them shouted: "Come here!" and a young pale-faced lad, the beads of perspiration starting on his forehead from the exercise, came hesitatingly towards him. The latter took out a dirty piece of paper and the stump of a pencil, and said in a hoarse, menacing voice:

"Write an ordher!"

"For how much?" said the boy, putting the pencil to his lips.

"Twelve gallons of porther!" said the man, "an' you needn't put no name to it!"

The boy wrote the order, and handed it back. Then he went forward to his wicket. The men departed. The boys shouted with laughter.

Then the young man came out of the shadow of the wall, and approached the boys. There was an instant hush. He was young; but he was the assistant teacher in their school, and he was a grave, kind man. He called the boys together.

"Philip," he said to the young lad, who had written the order, "what are you after doing?"

The boy looked ashamed and troubled, and rubbed his moist hands along his pants.

"Tim Doolan asked me to write an order. Sir," he said, "and I did it. We do it every day."

"An order for what?" said the teacher, looking at the boy with calm, grave eyes.

"For porter, Sir! For twelve gallons of porter."

"These men were almost drunk?"

"They were. Sir!"

"And altogether degraded?"

The boy was silent.

"Yes! Altogether degraded," said the young man, sternly. "They are hired to shout for that place-hunter [5] and Castle-hack, who is fighting this election just to leap from the backs of purchased slaves to the Bench; and they are paid for shouting with drink. Hark!"

The sounds of hoarse yells and cheers came up again from the town.

"Do you know what that is?"

"They're cheering for Serjeant Holloway, Sir!"

"Of course! And Serjeant Holloway will be prosecuting in a few months, and sending to the gallows or penal servitude every brave young heart that beats for Ireland."

There was a pause. The boys looked ashamed. The teacher seemed to hesitate for a moment. Then he said:

"Pull up your stumps for the evening and come with me!"

He led them over to the ditch that bounded the glen; crossed through the stile, and sitting down on the deep dry grass, he bade them be seated around him. Deep down in the valley, the little stream pushed its way with difficulty through the sedges and rushes that choked it. Across the valley the steep declivity was clothed with verdure to the summit. A clump of four enormous fir trees stood apart, where the green field showed. To the left the valley was buried in shadow, the little chalet in an orchard casting its black reflection up against the opposite hill. The teacher looked on at the lovely scene in silence for a while. The boys were mute.

"It is a beautiful view," he said at length, "and ours is the most lovely country on the face of the earth. We ought to love every blade of grass in its fields, every stone in its hollows, every leaf on its trees, [6] every stream that runs, every hill that begets the streams —"

He lowered his voice.

"Every man that has shed his blood for Ireland."

The boys looked up in amazement. They had only known this teacher as a quiet, plodding, bookish pedant, who lived in a garret on about forty pounds a year,

"You heard me say a few minutes ago" he went on, that these wretched porter-drinkers and shouters were degraded. They are! There are always two classes in Ireland — the noble and the degraded. You have seen the latter. Perhaps, before we go hence, I may show you some types of the former. Meanwhile listen!"

He opened the book which he had been reading, and read, or rather recited, a certain poem. The boys hung on his words. He closed the book.

"Now, that's a poem; and every poem is a picture. Would you like to see the picture?"

"We would," said the boys eagerly, expecting that their teacher would pull a diorama from his pocket.

"Now, look," he said.

He pointed to the long slopes of the valley at the other side of the river, and said:

"There are the Dutch troops all along that hill at the other side. There are their batteries; there are the infantry camps; there, the cavalry. There, in the centre, just above the quarry, is the tent of the Dutch and English generals. The red flag of England is floating above it! Here, along the plateau, is the French army. It stretches along up there beyond the summer-house and around the Convent for over a mile. Its heavy guns are masked here in the market [7] place; and just here behind us, occupying the van and the post of danger, are the watch-fires and tents of the Irish Brigade. They have stolen away from Ireland, shipped as cargo. They have been beaten — beaten before the walls of Limerick, beaten at the Boyne, beaten everywhere; but — conquered? Never! And now here they are to break a lance once more with their hereditary foes. The watch-fires are blazing all around, and the men, their arms piled near them, are sleeping around the watch-fires. But the Captains are awake. They are seated, young and old, around the table in the mess-tent. The canvas is flapping above their heads, and underneath it is tugging away at the pegs. Their tunics are open. Their helmets are hung around the sides of the tent, their swords hanging beneath them. The President rises, and proposes the first toast. He is grey and grizzled, but the glass is steady in his iron fingers.

> '"Comrades! A health to the monarch of France!'

They are in the French camp. They have cast in their lot with France. France has sheltered them; and therefore,

> '"With cheers and with bumpers they've done as he bade,
> For King Louis is loved by the Irish Brigade!'

Now comes the second toast: "'Here's a health to King James; and they bent as they quaffed!*

Mark that! No cheering now. For that was Shemus the Coward, who fled from the field of the Boyne, when the Irish soldiers shouted: 'Change Kings, and we'll fight you again.' But they bent as they quaffed. There's the Irish always. Too loyal! And they [8] always kept a soft corner in their hearts for those miserable Stuarts. "The third toast:

> "'Here's to George the Elector! And fiercely they laughed!'

Yes! They only hope that they shall meet and cross swords tomorrow with the deadly enemy of their country and their Creed. "The fourth toast:

> 'Good luck to the girls, whom we loved long ago!
> Where the Shannon, and Barrow, and Blackwater flow!'

"What are they doing now? Nothing! These Wild Geese have something else, besides girls, to think of tonight! But mark the fifth toast:

> "'GOD PROSPER OLD IRELAND!'

What are they doing now? Ah, boys, mark this! See how finely and dramatically Davis draws the picture. They set down their glasses in silence; and became as white as a girl who has seen a ghost:

> "'You'd think them afraid,
> So pale grew the chiefs of the Irish Brigade!'

Yes! There's the finest touch in all ballad literature. The thought of the old motherland has paralysed them. They remember all — her mountains, her lakes, her valleys, her seas! They recall her long night of suffering, redressed only by her indomitable Constancy. And they remember, how near they were to victory. Oh! If they only had hearkened to the voice of their Bishop and that Franciscan friar who told them to hold out to the last! But it is of no use. They were misled and deceived; and their only hope is now, to flash their sabres tomorrow in the breasts of the Dutchmen! Poor fellows! poor fellows!" [9]

> "'For on far foreign fields from Dunkirk to Belgrade,
> Lie the soldiers and chiefs of the Irish Brigade!'

No matter! It is the field of honour — but hark! —"

The sounds of shouting and yelling came up again from the town. Clearly, some one now was addressing the mob that filled the streets in the twilight.

"Yes! There are the descendants of the Wild Geese," said the schoolmaster bitterly. "There's what we have come to now! A drunken mob, shouting for their country's enemies. O my God!"

The man was so much in earnest, that the boys felt for him; and in the eyes of one or two, strange fires began to kindle. The night stole down, and the scent of the white clover and the wild hyacinths that filled the lower meadows crept up on the night air. Far down along the white road, little detachments of men, two or three in a group, were filing along. Suddenly, the whole tone of the young teacher changed, as he said:

"Where are these boys going, I wonder? For a game of bowls, I suppose, or pitch-and-toss?"

The boys looked at one another, and then at the teacher. One of them said shyly, and in a rather cautious tone:

"They're the Fenians, Sir, going up to drill in Dempsey's grove!"

“Oh, indeed,” said the young master, unconcernedly. “Then the soldiers and chiefs of the Irish Brigade have come to life again! Good-night, boys, ‘tis getting late, and you have your lessons for tomorrow to learn!”

They clambered over the ditch, and ran across to the market-house and down the street to the election meeting. Half-way down there was a crowd, and [10] they were curious to know what it meant. In the midst of a dozen men a doctor was on his knees, and in his shirt-sleeves, pumping whiskey from the stomach of a poor labourer, who seemed on the point of death. When the boys had disappeared, the teacher went slowly down the declivity, and joined his comrades in the grove beyond the river.

[11]

II

At the end of that street, and facing upwards towards it was the principal hotel in the town. The glimmering twilight showed a vast mass of people wedged together, and listening to the eloquence of a short, dapper little man, whose voice, now somewhat hoarse from exertion, scarcely penetrated to the edges of the crowd. He had dropped all his fine sentiments about patriotism, and the advancement of the country, etc., and was now amusing his audience with local allusions, nicknames, etc., which evoked tremendous laughter and applause. A certain bank manager, who was opposed to him in the Conservative interest, he had dubbed Modhereen Ruadh, referring to the man’s red hair. A certain opponent in the crowd he shut up by asking the people:

“ Wouldn’t any of ye, boys, put a sop in that calf’s mouth?” which effectually stifled that opponent. He quoted from sundry ballads, which he had composed, and which the ballad-singers were chanting around the street-corners everywhere. Then, under a parting salvo of cheers, he bade them be ready for the morning, and come to the aid of their country by voting for one of its most eminent and successful sons.

When he retired, a strange figure appeared at another window of the hotel. He belonged to the local gentry; but he was a dummy. Yet for an hour he kept the people in a roar of laughter by pantomimic [12] gestures and contortoins [sic], which they interpreted as clearly as if he spoke articulately. Meanwhile, a band, consisting of flute, triangle, concertina, and dulcimer, was playing at a furious rate on the leads of a neighbouring shop. And then, when the night fell, there was a sudden hush, as the street far down near the town clock was illuminated suddenly by a red glow, and a hostile crowd, with blazing torches and tar-barrels, and headed by a brass band, came triumphantly along. In an instant, the crowds got intermingled in a furious fight. Shouts were raised — party-cries of little meaning. The torches of the hostile party were extinguished, their drums and instruments broken, their blazing tar-barrels flung on the ground, and the victors came back, drunk and exulting.

The candidate, Serjeant Holloway, had come downstairs, and was standing, napkin in hand, on the steps of the hotel. Some few lawyers and other guests were with him.

“Any casualties on our side, constable?”

“Not many, your honour. Some scalp-wounds, merely. But I fear that one poor fellow has had his eye burned out by a torch; and the doctor is attending a woman over at Callaghan’s.”

“What’s the matter?”

“One of the barrels fell near her, and the paraffin set fire to her clothes. Her face is badly burnt, I fear!”

“Ah, well, chances of war, I suppose. Here, give the poor woman this silver — for medical help only. Remember, it is only to secure proper assistance for her wounds.”

He gave the officer a handful of silver. [13]

“I understand, yer honour,” said the oflBcer, with a grin.

Some of the crowd brought over a fool, a man of gigantic stature, clad in long, cast-off cloth habiliments, a battered silk hat on his head, and immense, but broken boots on his feet.

“Bill Leham will jump over a straw for a sixpence, yer ‘anner!” said one of the crowd.

“Done!” said the Serjeant gaily.

The straw was placed on the flags where the gentlemen stood, and the fool went up the steps. He spat on his hands several times, and several times essayed to jump the straw, but failed; spat on his hands again, and cried out in agony at the thought of losing the sixpence:

“Sand [1] now! sand now!”

But it was in vain. But he got the sixpence and the gentlemen had their amusement.

Another fool was brought up, who offered to swallow a live mouse for sixpence. But the gentlemen declined to witness that exhibition. They had dined too well; and there were some fragments remaining.

During all this time, a certain young fellow, who seemed to be little more than eighteen years of age, was leaning up against the shop-door of a baker, and at the corner of a lane that led up from the main street. Although young-looking there were curious lines — crescent shaped — around the mouth that gave him a more responsible appearance. They were lines that might deepen into smiles, or smooth themselves out in fierce and uncontrollable anger. His hands were sunk deep in his pockets, and his hat was pulled down over his eyes, which gleamed beneath it with anger and contempt

1. Stand.

[14] at what they witnessed. He was chatting with the proprietor, a thin man, with light sandy hair, and a beard, now tending to greyness, and cut in the shape of an American goatee. The two men were talking in suppressed tones, and the vast crowd never seemed to notice them; but, when the furious charge of the opposing faction was made in the street, a big carter lurched up against the young man, and nearly threw him. But, by a skilful push of his shoulder, the young fellow sent the carter sprawling on the street. Yet it was no assault, but merely a defensive act; but the young fellow was so savage he never held out a hand to raise the man, and the street was now strewn with fallen heroes like him.

“Begor, that was a hard push. Master Mylie,” said the carter rising. ‘‘You’re the only man in the town tonight that could do that, and not pay well for it.”

“I did nothing to you, Jem,” said the young man coolly. “You fell against me, and I stood aside. That was all.”

“Serving me right to be here at all,” said the labourer, brushing his coat and trousers. “What do the likes of us want here?”

“What, indeed,” said the young man angrily, “except to swallow the porter of that man, who has already sent our best and bravest men into the hells of English prisons?”

The man slunk away muttering: “But, after all, sure he’s wan of ourselves; and he’s good to the poor.”

“There’s the damnable expression that paralyses all these fools,” said the young man to his companion. “Let a scoundrel be base, corrupt, vicious, a traitor or a sneak, it is all right with this race of mendicants, if he’s good to the poor. The poor, the poor, the poor! [15] What an epitome of our history is there, — hat in hand for ever before a world that laughs at us, and benefactors who think, because they fling a penny into our caubeens, they have a right to rob us of all we possess. But, look at this! That woman will be burned to death.”

He ran over to where a poor creature, half stupid from drink, had fallen in the scuffle. A few torches were extinguished near her; but a paraffin barrel had burst, and its staves, lined and saturated with oil and tar, had set fire to the woman’s clothes. She shrieked, and then became insensible. The half-drunken crowd drew back in fear. The police rushed in; but before they could reach her, the young man had flung his coat around her blazing hair and garments, and extinguished the flames. But she was horribly burnt about the neck and face. He raised, her up tenderly, and, with some help, got her over to the baker’s shop, where she lay insensible, whilst the whole place was filled with the horrible odour of burning flesh and scorched clothes, and tar and paraffin.

For several minutes she did not recover consciousness. Then, she opened her eyes, and looked up full into the face of her preserver. She was a poor apple-woman, fond of drink, and kept from the workhouse by charity.

“Do you know me, Bess?” said the young man tenderly.

“Is that you. Master Mylie?” she said, in a dazed, stupid manner. “Oh! Holy Mother!” she continued, as she became conscious of her terrible agony, “some divil threw me under that barrel, and it is burning me like Hell. No matter! Give us another half -wan; and three cheers for Serjeant Holloway!” [16]

The young man muttered a curse, then he laid back the head of the injured woman gently, and went out, and passed up the lane. When he was out of sight, he leaned up against the wall of the bakery and wept and sobbed like a child.

Throwing the weak emotion from him, however, with a strong effort of the will, he recovered his composure rapidly, and strode up along the passage in the darkness, until he reached the wall that terminated the lane, and guarded the deep quarry beneath. Over his head, the gable of a huge grain-store loomed black against the sky. Lights gleamed in the back rooms of neighbouring streets. The sounds of tumult had died away from the thoroughfares. Night swallowed up all hideous sights and sounds in its magnificent silences.

He sat on the wall for the few moments’ reflection he permitted himself, and began to think.

“Are these people worth the sacrifice I and my comrades are making? Are they not too degraded, too drink-besodden, too bribe-corrupted, to regain the instincts of freemen? We shall perish, and they will laugh at our folly. We shall rot and fester, as our brothers are rotting in Millbank and Dartmoor, and who will care?”

It was true, absolutely true. The men who had risen in ’65, and had been tried by Special Commission, and been sentenced to twelve and fifteen years’ penal servitude, were already forgotten. That lawyer with his glib tongue had driven them into felon cells. The young patriot pictured their loneliness, their misery, their deprivation of freedom, their daily work as beasts of burden, quarrying stones in Portland, or dragging granite from the quarries of Dartmoor. He saw the [17] felon’s garb, with its barbed arrows, he realized the taunts and jibes, the lashes and whips of English gaolers; and again he asked:

“Is the game worth the cost? Am I justified in drawing these poor lads into such hells of human misery? And all for a drunken pack of mendicants, who would sell their country for a tierce of porter?”

Reason concluded that it was madness, treason, injustice, cruelty, combined.

But then, there arose before the mind of the boy all that he had ever read or heard of the history of his country; and, as he looked upwards to where the dark, sharp edge of the quarry cut across the paler sky, he thought he saw the long procession of her martyrs and confessors, her warriors and chieftains, her priests and nobles, move slowly by; and, as the words came to his lips:

> “I think of all thy dark, long thrall,
> My martyrs, brave and true.
> And dash apart the tears that start,
> We must not weep for you, dear land,
> We must not weep for you.”

He leaped from the wall, and clenching his bony fingers till the nails cut the palms he strode back and downwards along the lane again.

III

Half-way down the lane, there was a deep, wide gate, now open. It led into an immense yard, surrounded on every side by huge stores, which had been used for corn and other merchandise in more prosperous times. Myles Cogan entered, and turning to the left, he passed into the lower story of one of the buildings. Three or four men were playing cards around a table, which was dimly lighted by a tallow candle in a tin sconce. They rose as Myles entered, and gave him a military salute. He muttered “Aughrim” in a low tone, and at once climbed a rough ladder to the loft overhead. The moment he set foot on the floor above, the ladder was withdrawn underneath.

He was now in an immense loft, absolutely destitute of furniture of every kind. A smell of corn and hay filled the air. Heavy chains with strong iron hooks hung from the ceiling. They were coated with red rust. The place was full of men. It was lighted with dim paraffin lamps, suspended from these hooks. The windows were carefully filled with corn-bags, so that not a single pencil of light could pierce through. The men were variously employed — some sharpening pikes and bayonets, some studying military books, one or two were practising at a target with spring guns.

The moment Myles Cogan appeared, there was [19] silence. He called them together and drew a paper from his pocket.

“Section A, where?”

“In Hazlewood,” was the answer.

“Under whom?”

“Barry!”

“Section B?”

“Over at the Kennels!”

“Under whom?”

“Lysaght!”

“Section C?”

“In Dempsey’s grove!”

“Under whom?”

“Halpin!”

He folded the paper, and looked around.

“There is a consignment of goods from Cork by the goods train tonight, reaching the station at 2 a.m. What carrier is on?”

“Mooney, Sir. Jem Mooney!”

The young man reflected deeply for a few minutes. He then said:

“Can Mooney be thoroughly relied upon?”

“He can, Sir!” said a middle-aged man. “I’ve known Jem Mooney for years. He has been always with the brotherhood.”

“But he drinks; and we can trust no man that drinks. I saw him in the street not half an hour ago, and he was under the influence of drink. He rolled up against me, and I shouldered him, and he fell. I don’t think he liked it!”

There was a few moments’ silence.

“Is the consignment a heavy one?” asked a young man, with fierce, scowling features.

“Very! It couldn’t be more important!” [20]

“Where is it to go?”

“Into the Protestant graveyard. It is to be buried in one of the old vaults in the old church!”

“Then I propose Crowley shall take it. This is too important a matter for a man under drink!”

“I agree with you, Manus,” said the young Captain. “I want a few volunteers to take the arms from the carter, carry them through the lower lane, and deposit them in the old Norcott vault. It is at the east side of the old church. You’ll know it easily by the oval slab in the walls above the vault. Let me see! We want four! You, Manus, and you, Mike, and Paddy, and Murty. Is it all right?”

The men nodded assent. And then the young Captain said in a lower voice:

“Comrades, gather together round about me here!”

The men, about forty in number, crept close together around their young Captain. They were strong, sinewy fellows, accustomed to bend their backs to their daily toil, and go through life without pillows beneath their elbows. There were masons, carpenters, bricklayers, shoemakers — representatives of every kind of trade amongst them; and, strange to say, many of them, who had been ploughing through life in a broken-backed, weary manner, were suddenly stiffened and strengthened into some kind of unnatural vigour, when they became soldiers of the Republic. And in their eyes, gleaming with expectancy, as they stood there in the dim light shed by the smoky stable-lamp above their heads, there shone a steady light of determination, as of men who had deliberately staked all on some desperate issue, and were fully prepared to abide by the result.

The young Captain was nearly a head in height above [21] the tallest man present; and to give himself a greater leverage over the meeting, he pulled over an old soapbox, and stood on it.

“Comrades,” he said, in low level tones, “I was going to betray you and our cause less than half an hour ago.”

The men drew closer together, and murmured their unbelief.

“Listen to me. I don’t mean that I was going to give your names to the Castle, or to call upon the Solicitor-General at the King’s Arms, and arrange a little bribe with him — ”

“You couldn’t do it, Master Mylie, even if you tried,” said a voice.

“Well, we mustn’t boast,” said the young Captain with a shrug. “But what I mean is this. I was down there with John Callaghan, watching the proceedings this evening. I saw that man, who sent Kickham, Luby and O’Leary to gaol a few months ago. I heard the scoundrel cajoling and humbugging these wretched people; I heard him talking about love of country, when I knew the ruffian cared nothing about his country but to sell it. I heard him talk about commercial progress, when he knew that every one of our industries were killed by the government that pays him his handsome salary, and when he knew that the only progress he cared for, was his own progress from the bar to the bench. I heard him cracking jokes about decent old neighbours in this town. And then I saw him come down with a well-filled stomach after dinner to amuse himself with the antics of our town fools. And then — I thought of Luby, of O’Leary, of Kickham, after their dinner of skilly stretched on their felon-beds in Dartmoor and Millbank, in the midst [22] of all the criminal and social refuse of England; and I asked myself, ‘Did these men act wisely and well in giving up their homes, their wives, their little children, their human happiness for a people, who had already forgotten them, and were now cheering from their drunken throats for the man that had sent the bravest hearts in Ireland into the hells of English prisons?’”

He paused, and looked anxiously into the eyes of his followers. Sure enough, they were flaming with indignation; but there was no wavering there.

“Look you, comrades!” he continued, speaking more slowly and in a lower tone, “it was not of myself I was thinking. I have neither chick, nor child, nor wife, nor even mother. I have no ambition in life. I don’t want to be a place-hunter, nor a J.P. I have never thought of anything higher or greater than to strike one smashing blow for Ireland, and then lie down to die on some Irish hillside. But I am thinking of you; and the question that tortured me half an hour ago, when I saw these drunken helots cheering that salaried place-hunter was this: am I justified in taking these men away from their families, breaking up their little homes, and consigning them to a violent death, or what is worse than death, a lifelong imprisonment, merely to get themselves laughed at as fools by the very people they strove to emancipate? That’s the question that tortured me, and shall I admit it, drew tears from my eyes.”

He paused, and Manus, with a deeper scowl on his forehead, said, with something like a sneer:

“And what conclusion did you come to, Master Mylie?”

“I’ll tell you. As I was thinking of such things — [23] of that lawyer with his jokes and jests, of that awful crowd, of that poor fellow who had his eye burned out by a torch and of poor Bessie Rooney with her neck and face in flames, suddenly I saw a different sight. All that horror was rolled away; and I saw defiling before my eyes, and down along the ages every man from Owen Roe and Red Alastrum, who fought or suffered for Ireland. The great procession passed before me, and I thought every man in it looked at me. I saw Aughrim and Athlone and Limerick; I saw Emmet on the scaffold, and Orr, and Fitzgerald; I saw Sarsfield on the plain of Landen and Clare at Fontenoy; I saw Dwyer in the fastnesses of the Wicklow mountains, and Dwyer on the Commeragh range; I saw Meagher leading up his brigade along St. Maryes’ Heights and to certain death, and I thought whilst he was scaling those heights he was dreaming of Slievenamon; and I thought that what these men had done, it was no dishonour in us to do; and that where these heroes had led, we need never be ashamed to follow. Was I right, or wrong?”

“Right, Captain! Right, Master Mylie!” was the reply.

"And then," said Myles, lowering his voice and speaking with emotion, "I forgot those helots; and remembered that it was the motherland that called us. And I thought of that motherland, this Ireland of ours, with all her magic beauty, — beauty of mountain and lake, of brown bog, and sandy seashore, of her seas and her rivers — of all these things that grow into our lives and become a part of our being; and then I thought of her long night of sorrow, of how she has been trampled and shamed and degraded, and then held up by her iron masters as an object of derision to [24] the world, — her masters who laughed at the hunger and ignorance they caused; her masters, who held up her rags and fluttered them in the face of the nations, who never knew, or cared that it was these very masters who cut every weal into her body, and took the bread from her mouth, and snipped her garments into fragments, until I grew mad with the thought, that perhaps the one chance of my life would escape me — to wreak vengeance on her foes, or save that motherland from further humiliation,

"And then," said the young captain, "I flung every selflsh thought to the winds; and I dug the nails into the flesh of my palms, and I swore that, whoever else shall turn back from our sacred enterprise, it shall not be your Captain."

"No, nor your soldiers," said a big mason, lifting his head. "But, Master Mylie, that's all settled long and merry ago. What we want to know now is, when the dance is going to begin! Begor, we're getting the *coalád gribtin* [1] in our legs."

"Thrue for you, Dan," said another. "You see, Captain, we're Irish; and it isn't the fighting we mind, but the waiting for the fighting. 'Tis enough to knock all the nerve out of us to keep us in the ditches waiting for the first shot."

> "You won't have long to wait," said the young Captain. "Before '67 dawns upon us, we'll have measured ourselves with the enemy. But, this time there must be no failure. We've failed too often already; and this time there must be no mistake. So the C. O. writes to me. Arms are coming in with every [1.' Pronounced "Cullagrufeen," vulgarly, "pins and needles," literally, "sleep in the blood."

[25] tide into the country; and the men who are to lead us are slipping in with them.

> The French are on the say,
> Says the Shan Van Vocht.'

Thiggin thu?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" they shouted. "But oh! for the first bonfire on Slieve Ruadh!"

IV

Myles Cogan's father was a prosperous merchant in the town — so prosperous that he was able to hold also a mill, a small farm, and a pretty villa in the country. Here he lived with his son, and his only daughter, Agnes, still a convent-pupil, but just passing into womanhood. And she was tall, and precocious beyond her years; and she had one idol, her brother, Myles. The delight of her life was to make everything smooth for him; and just at this time, her voluntary services were much in requisition, because there was a growing breach between old Dan Cogan and his son. Strange, weird rumours about his boy were filtering in from the town. They seemed too absurd for belief; but they were making an impression on the old man.

The morning of the election, after breakfast, he was carefully reading the speech of the Solicitor-General of the night before, when Myles, in his everyday garb, came in, and sat down. After a few angry glances at the boy, his father said in a studiously composed manner:

"I don't see your name at the committee-meeting last night?"

“Committee-meeting?” said Myles. “,Who8e committee-meeting, Sir?”

“The Solicitor-General’s, of course. There is no other.” [27]

“And why do they want on a committee a boy like me?” said Myles, with much humility.

“You’re of age,” said his father. “You’re no longer a boy; and I want you to take your rightful place in the town and before the country.”

“And what is that, Sir?” said Myles, meekly.

“What is that? You’re trifling with me, Sir!” said his father sternly.

“I assure you. Sir,” said Myles, “that I am puzzled to know what you mean. You are the head and representative of our family; and it is to you, and not to me that people look. You know there is an ancient prejudice against callow youth like myself, and the electors would not care to see themselves represented before these strangers by a boy, like me.”

His father looked at him keenly, as if he would like to discern the meaning behind these words; but the face of the young man was unmoved.

“You’re young,” said the father, in a mollified manner, “and ‘tis all the better. But do you know, Myles, what occurred to me last night?”

Myles was silent.

“As I sat in that committee-room, and looked around at all these distinguished men, and particularly at the most distinguished of them, I mean, our candidate, I thought to myself, — well, now, all these gentlemen are sons of shopkeepers, like myself. I knew Serjeant Holloway’s father well. He kept a small leather shop just there within a stone’s throw of where his illustrious son was speaking last night. He went to College; became a Counsellor; and now — “

He stopped; and Myles said:

“He will be elected to the English House of Commons today!” [28]

“Not a doubt about it. He commands two hundred votes in this constituency. He becomes member of Parliament for his native town, then AttorneyGeneral, then Judge, then Lord Chancellor; what a career of honour and usefulness! And I said, why shouldn’t Myles Cogan follow in his footsteps? You have ability, talent, I have money to push you on. What is to stop you?”

Myles was silent for a moment; and his father went on:

“Yes, I said in my own mind, why shouldn’t my son push himself forward in life as well as Serjeant Holloway? ‘Tis a lawful ambition; and I think, nay, I’m sure I have secured influence enough already to push you on at the Bar!”

“‘Tis only one barrister out of four hundred that succeeds,” said Myles temporising. “It is not pleasant, I believe, to have to wander around the Four Courts for years, a briefless barrister; and to have to bribe, or court the favour, of every country attorney in the Circuit.”

“Don’t fear that, my boy,” said the old man, coming over and placing his hand on the broad shoulders of his son. “I’ve settled all that. A certain person — we name no names — came over to me last night after dinner, and he said: ‘Dan Cogan,’ said he, ‘you’re the oldest and staunchest friend I have here. My father and yours went to school together down at the Long Room, and many a time I heard my father speak of honest Tom Cogan. Well, we move in different spheres of life,’ says he, ‘but I know a man when I meet him; and that’s the reason, Dan,’ says he, ‘why I insisted that you should be my proposer, and no other. And now, I’ll say no more,’ says he. ‘A nod is as good as a wink [29] to a blind horse.’ That’s the pleasant way

these gentlemen have of talking. '*Thiggin — thu?*' says he. '*Thiggin go mach!*' says I. And now, all you have to do is to run up to Dublin. Money is no object with me. Spend as much as you like. Young men must sow their wild oats. We can't put old heads upon young shoulders. But when I see Q.C. to your name, I'll forgive you everything."

He gave his son a smart, confidential slap on the shoulders; and just then, Agnes put in her pretty little head, and said:

"Pap, there's a messenger from the Court-house. You're wanted up immediately!"

He gave a wink at Myles, a wink of much, though not mutual confidence, and strode pompously away.

Agnes came in; and her big brother took her up in his arms, and kissed her, saying:

"You little guardian angel, you just came in the nick of time. Do you know what father wants me to be?"

"No!" she said, with eyes wide open with curiosity.

"A d—d lawyer and Castle hack, like this Holloway!"

"Myles!" said the girl solemnly. "I'd rather see you stretched beside our dead mother!"

"And there spoke my poor mother," he said, kissing his sister again. "But you see, father's head is turned by this fellow's compliments. Good heavens! Myles Cogan — a lawyer and a Q.C. Was there ever such a somersault before!"

"That's all right, Mylie," said his sister, coming down to dull, prose fact. "But the question is now, how are you to get out of it?" [30]

"You'll do that much for me," he said confidently. "Man's wisdom is no match for woman's wit."

"Thanks awfully! as our genteel folks say," said Agnes, " and I undertake the commission. But I want to have two or three little facts cleared up first."

"All right!" said he gaily, "go ahead!"

He sank into an armchair; and his sister sat upon the arm of it, and began to play with her brother's hair.

"First, I want to know," she said, "when is the pantomime to be?"

"Pantomime? What pantomime?" he cried.

"I'm sure I don't know," she said, sarcastically. "But when I find a young gentleman hiding away a green coat, slashed with gold, and gold epaulettes, I conclude that we are going to have some private theatricals."

He had started violently at the words, but his sister's remarks gave him the clue.

"Oh, 'William Tell!'" he said, "I suppose we can't put it on the stage before Christmas!"

"Certainly not. And you are William Tell. You'll want a good deal of practice with the bow and arrow, before you can hit that apple, I think!"

"Oh! we won't mind that!" said Myles uneasily. "Bows and arrows are out of date now!"

"Yes! A couple of six-chambered revolvers, silverchased, would be more up-to-date, wouldn't they?"

He arose suddenly, and would have broken out into an angry remonstrance, but Agnes had bent down her face close to his, and he saw that her eyes were swimming with tears as she said:

“Oh, Mylie, Mylie, what is it all? What is it all? Poor father will turn against you; and everybody [31] will turn against you; and you’ll go out and be shot, or arrested, and then — then, O my God, what shall I do?”

The young man was staggered by this appeal — much more moved than he would have been by his father’s passionate anger; but, he decided, in a moment, that his only chance was to pass it off lightly.

“And so that’s how pantomimes end,” he said. “How little girls’ fancies run away with them. War, and bloodshed, and gaols and scaffolds! Would it not be well, Agnes, to wait a little, and not be inflaming those pretty blue eyes for nothing? When I am hanged, I’ll let you cry your fill, but not now, Aggie, not now!”

“It won’t do, Mylie, it won’t do,” said the girl sobbing, “there’s something awful going to happen, I know it! I know it! And ‘twill happen to you; and what shall I do? what shall 1 do?”

“There now! there now!” said her brother soothingly, drawing her head close to his own, “nothing will happen, dear, but what is best for Ireland, and us all. However,” he said gaily, “if you like, I’ll follow father’s advice, become a lawyer, get on the bench, and hang every poor chap that has a genuine love for Ireland — ”

She put her hand on his mouth.

“No! no! no!” she said, “but is there no other way? Can’t you escape some way? You know Father James was here with Pap a long time last night; and they were talking together, and they were very solemn; and whenever I went into the room, they began to talk about the election and the weather. But I heard Father James say once, as I drew open the door: ‘Every name is up at the Castle!’ and when [32] he was going away at eleven o’clock, he said, on the stairs: ‘Don’t force him! Don’t oppose him! but try and bend his thoughts in another direction?’“

“I see! That’s the secret of my promotion to silk at the bar. Heigho! How these good people do settle the affairs of us youngsters, to be sure! But, ‘every name is up at the Castle.’ Did he give any authority; for that’s generally guesswork, you know? The priests want to frighten away all the young men from allegiance to their Country.”

“He said no more!” said Agnes dubiously. “But, Mylie, it’s all very well about love of country, and patriotism, but what about our holy faith? Can we turn our backs on that?”

“I’m not a bad Catholic!” he said, and for the first time he appeared offended with his little sister; “I have never been absent from Mass; I have never touched meat on a Friday, or a Fast-day; I say my prayers every night and morning! What more?”

“Mother would say: Mylie, what about Confession? What about Holy Communion? You, who were never absent a month from Confession — ”

“Aggie, don’t! For God’s sake, leave me alone now. Little girls don’t understand these things. These things are for men! Run away’, and get the Union Jack to hang out this afternoon, when our new member will be chaired; and be sure to have your nicest little lace handkerchief to flutter over the mimber’s head. I suppose poor old Pap will be with the scoundrel; and he’ll expect to see you.”

“Yes!” said Agnes tauntingly, “and, of course, you’ll be there?”

“I guess not!” he said jauntily, “or I might be tempted to put a bullet through the fellow; I am quite [33] sure, if poor Kickham came into my mind at the time, I’d do something that would be unpleasant!”

“So you won’t come?”

“No! Not even for you, Aggie!”

“But if I bring Mary?”

“What Mary?”

“There’s only one Mary in the world just now!”

“Oh!” he said. She ran away laughing, although her heart was heavy enough. And he leaned his head back against the chair; and thought a good deal. Did he waver?

Not for an instant! But that allusion to the Sacraments, and the ban of the Church rankled in his mind. He would gladly give his life for Ireland; but to die unshriven and unanointed was a thought he could not bear. Would it not mean separation for ever from that mother he adored? The thought was maddening.

[34]

V

In the graveyard behind the Catholic Church that same evening between seven and eight o’clock, Myles Cogan sat upon his mother’s grave. The setting sun sent its level beams in between the lattice work of the giant beeches that lined the western wall, and threw its dappled shadows on the wall at the other side. A strong odour of hemlock filled the air, for the graveyard was literally white with the blossoms of the weed that grew four or five feet high in the rank soil. The black wooden belfry with its curious triangular top showed dark against the green and gold of the meadow beyond; the windows of the galleries in the old Church looked down upon the places of the dead.

Myles was buried in deep thought, as he sat there above the ashes of his beloved mother. She had died whilst he was yet a boy; but her love, discriminate and wise; her deep, heartfelt, trustful religion, and her intense devotion to her country had made a lasting impression on the boy, — an impression that never entirely faded. He sought the lonely place to be out of the way of the crowds that filled the streets; and to avoid witnessing what he considered a nation’s humiliation. His own work was to come after — the work of pulling down and destroying for ever the fabric of that hated government, of which this man was a servile tool. He had a certain amount of contempt for the man himself as a *parvenu* and an upstart, [35] who had forced himself into the front ranks of his profession; but he hated him because he thought he was making the people more servile than ever; and his hate rose into wrath, when he thought of this glib lawyer surrounded by a degraded people, and receiving their adulations, whilst Charles Kickham, the gentle poet, the accomplished scholar, the faithful and loving delineator of his country, was rotting out his life, deaf and blind, amongst the scum of the English population. This moment, he thought, Kickham is lying awake in his cell at Millbank, having been in bed since five o’clock this lovely summer evening according to one of the most hateful prison rules. What is he thinking of? Of the sun setting on Slievenamon, of the golden gorse climbing up the hills, and filling the valleys of Tipperary; of the wild flowers in the deep meadows along the banks of the stately Suir, of the peasants resting after their daily toil; of the blue smoke curling up from the thatched cottages, of the boys and girls at the evening dance in the village; of the Sainted Irish dead sleeping beneath the hawthorn and ivy in many a ruined Abbey. And hark! here is the muffled tread of the English warder, who pulls back every quarter hour the iron slip outside his cell, and peers through to see that his Irish felon is safe. And hark!

Over and through the trees, and borne on the soft evening breezes, come the tumult and noise, the frantic cheering and yelling of the streets. He knew what it meant. They are chairing the member. They have unyoked the horses from the waggonnette, and are pulling the carriage,

willing and craven hirelings, along the thoroughfares. Bands are playing discordantly in front; the masses of the people are rolling [36] wildly around; the windows are filled with girls and women, who wave their handkerchiefs and waft their smiles towards the bland and triumphant lawyer. The chief men of the town stand on the waggonnette beside the member. They are his Committee, who have worked, night and day, for his return. Chief amongst them, and conspicuous by his white shirt front and his well-cut cloth coat, is Dan Cogan, who knows that he has already the magic letters J. P. attached to his name. As they approach a certain corner house, the proprietor, a grocer, surrounded by his interesting family, opens his window, and gently, ever so gently, lets down a glass of wine at the end of a fishing-rod. The member accepts it, and the vast crowd cheer madly. The member replaces the empty glass, and smiles, oh! such a killing smile, at the grocer's wife and daughters. The crowd grow mad with enthusiasm. Dan Cogan is savage with envy and regret that he never thought of such a compliment. What a pretty picture Agnes Cogan would be under similar circumstances! The procession rounds another corner. A bonfire is blazing. The procession pauses; and a hideous effigy of the defeated candidate, saturated with petroleum, is flung into the flames. There is riotous laughter and applause. Slowly, the procession passes up the main street. Everywhere, open windows, fair ladies, sweet, young children, everywhere smiles and cheers and adulations; but lo!

In the midst of red flags and Union Jacks, an ominous sign appears. From the top windows of a large house, shuttered and with drawn blinds from base to attic, droops an enormous black flag. The breeze is too weak to lift it; and there it hangs, a dead and lifeless sign, emphasized by a white skull and crossbones, that [37] add to its ghastly significance. The cheering suddenly ceases, and there are angry growls. The member looks upward, points to the ghastly symbol, and smiles. But there is one man, on whom the outrage falls with as much terror as if the whole front of the house was about to bend forward and annihilate them; for beneath, above the shop-door, appears in gold letters, beneath glass shades, the name, D. Cogan.

[38]

VI

When the noise from the streets had ceased, and Myles Cogan could fairly conclude that the mob had dispersed, and the member and his followers were at dinner, the young man rose up, replaced in his pocket the book he was reading, clambered over the churchyard wall, thus avoiding the street, passed through the big meadow, emerged on the main street through a side lane, and made his way rapidly to where another lane broke the line of houses on the main thoroughfare. A policeman was standing near the entrance to the lane. Groups of idlers were scattered here and there. A drunken fellow detached himself from one of these groups, and staggering towards Myles, attempted to assault him.

"You d—d young puppy," he said, "how dar' you insult our member?"

The other groups broke up, and seemed disposed to follow the fellow's example; and the constable said:

"You had better make for home, Mr. Cogan. There is some ugly temper abroad tonight!"

Quite puzzled, Myles slipped quietly up along the lane; and looking around to see that he was not followed, he plunged under a narrow archway, entered a low cabin, passed through, and into an immense livery stable, that fronted another street.

Here, a young man was polishing harness. He touched his cap to Myles, who seemed to take no [39] further notice of him, but clambered up a rude ladder, and was in the midst of his comrades.

Instead of the usual formal salutations he was received this night with smiles and smothered laughter, which puzzled him not a little. But he was in a pretty savage mood, and calling the men together, after putting the usual questions about the secret drillings that were going on all round the town, etc., he uttered, in a kind of suppressed fury, his meditations in the church-yard.

Whenever he spoke in this manner, the men forgot their usual familiarity, and were stricken into silence by the furious eloquence that broke from the lips of their young leader. He was no longer their boycaptain, daring, enthusiastic, energetic; but he took on all the tones of a passionate patriotism, breathing infinite pity for all who had fallen in the glorious fight for freedom, and vengeance on all who had contributed to that fall. He broke into snatches of wild Gaelic poetry, now sinking his voice into a wail of despair, now lifting it in accents of unmeasured hope; and the men said in their hearts:

"No hand but one would hang that black flag out of his father's house tonight!"

Then suddenly repressing his enthusisam, he came down to cold particulars, and asked:

"Were those goods from Cork safely placed last night?"

"Begor, they wor," said Murty Linehan. "They won't come to life again till they're wanted."

"Who brought them from the station?"

"Jem Mooney, of course, — Mooney, the carrier."

"I understood," said Myles, sternly, "that it was Crowley, and not Mooney, who was to bring them. Were not these my orders?" [40]

"Begor, they wor, Captain; but sure Crowley was a worse case than Mooney. Mooney could talk, but he couldn't walk. But, begor, Crowley could do naither."

"Nice fellows to have the lives of men, like you, in their hands!" said Myles. "But the goods are safe!"

"Faith, they are! and no one likely to disturb them without ordhers," said Murty.

There was a suppressed laugh, that meant something, and Myles said curtly:

"What happened?"

"Wisha, not much," said Murty, "but before we buried the corp', we thought there should be no mourners, so I wint ahead laving the coffin to these bouchals. And lo and behold you; jest as I thought, I heard the sound of voices, and begor! 'twasn't keening they wor, but joking like mad; and sure enough there were two of the indepindent electors of the ould, ancient borough, sitting on a tomb-stone and counting the notes for all they were worth. Thin, they got sarious, and thin, they begin to quarrel. 'I'll settle the dispute soon, my bouchals,' ses I, and with that I slipped away, and got a good big sheet and tied and pinned it around me, and stole up behind thim. 'He said I was to get half,' said Ned Tuohy. 'Half what?' said Collar the Swag. 'Half the money?' said Ned, 'that ould Hinnessy said would be here.' I pushed a bit nearer and stood over them. 'I was promised twinty,' says Ned Tuohy, 'and I must get them.' 'He said we wor to go fair halves,' said Collar and Swag. And begor, they'd have come to blows soon if I didn't put in my arram, betune them. Pil-a-miloo! But Cole Ahern's best greyhound couldn't bate them. They let a screech out o' them that should wake the [41] dead; and Ned fell over the wall into the meadow, and Collar jumped the wall into the saw-yard, though begor in his right sinses he could no more jump a straw than Bill Lehane!"

"But the notes! Murty? Where are the notes?"

"Oh—h," said Murty, solemnly, "av coorse, they wint back to the 'mimber.' He has a lot of expinses, poor man Myles, who was always desperately in earnest, turned the conversation.

“You saw the hussars these days, marching up and down the town?”

“Begor, we did,” said Murty, who was in a very jocular mood, “and purty little fellows they’d be at an evening tay-party. It was the greatest wandher to me how they held up their swords at all, at all; but sure they couldn’t, only they laned them against their showlders.”

“Do you think our pikes would reach them before they could strike?” said Myles.

“Yerra, the head of a pike would be through their carcass, before they could lift their sabres!” said another warrior. “But I’m afraid the hatchet would be no use now, because they have put chains, instead of leather, on their bridles.”

“Don’t be talking nonsense, men,” said James Halpin, the schoolmaster, breaking in angrily on the debate. “I saw these men, too, and if they are boys, they’re pretty stalwart fellows; and they have been drilled and drilled — “

“Begor, if drilling wor any use,” said Murty, breaking in, “we have enough of it ourselves. Divil such a drill-master as yourself, Mr. Halpin, in the whole British army!” [42]

“Let us stop this nonsense, Sir,” said the teacher, addressing Myles, respectfully. “If our movement is to come to anything, we must look before us, and make our calculations. Just imagine a lot of our poor fellows with pikes and spades in their hands, facing first a battery of artillery, with its shells and grape and canister; and then, when half of our men have been swept away, imagine a troop of these dragoons, with their splendid horses swooping down on the disordered ranks, drawing their pistols from their holsters, firing right and left, into our ranks, and then sabring the rest with all the merciless fury of British soldiers! Let us face the truth, Sir,” he continued, “and don’t let us deceive ourselves fatally!”

The little speech threw a damper on their spirits, until one said:

“But supposing that half these men were on our side, and supposing they fired over our heads __ ”

“And then, you ran over and kissed them, like Frenchmen,” said Halpin. “What d—d rot! Why, we are talking like so many fools, who don’t seem to know what difference there is between a shell and an old kettle!”

“There’s a great deal in what Mr. Halpin says,” said Myles, thoughtfully, although he was always displeased when anything was said to depress these poor fellows. “Now, we must look before us, and talk the matter over, and realise what actual warfare is like. I have got some military maps of Napoleon’s battles, — Areola, Lodi, Marengo, and Austerlitz. We must study those carefully, and try and see what actual war is. It is no child’s play; but, where there is truth and courage and brotherhood, and an invincible determination to fight the thing out to victory or [43] death, all will be right! There may be disappointment and suffering, but there can be no defeat to brave men!”

Words that were welcomed with suppressed cheers, whilst some of the men scowled at Halpin, as if he were a traitor.

Myles Cogan slipped away quietly, and passing down through some obscure lanes, he found himself on the great bridge that spans the noble river which divides the town in two. The river was rather low and underfed now after the great summer heats; and he looked at it, and at every ripple on its broad bosom, with a certain kind of tenderness, when he heard a footstep behind him, and an old woman, who was passing by, said:

“They’re afther hunting the town for you, Masther Mylie. You’re wanting over at the house. Miss Agnes is looking everywhere for you!”

“For me? What’s the matter?” he said.

“Wisha! How could the likes of me know?” the old woman replied, “but I heard the people saying that Miss Agnes was looking everywhere for you.”

“All-right! Good-night, Nellie!”

“Good-night, Masther Mylie! And God keep you, and God preserve you to your counthry!”

[44]

VII

When he entered the hall, the lights still burning, and the deep silence, showed that something unusual had taken place. He went into the breakfast parlour at the left, and touched the bell. The servant appeared; and he asked if Miss Agnes had retired. He was afraid to say: “Father!” No! Miss Agnes had not retired. She would call her.

Presently, Agnes came down stairs, her eyes swollen from weeping, and without looking at her brother, she sank into a chair, saying:

“Mylie! oh, Mylie!”

He walked up and down the room, afraid to ask any questions; yet more afraid of the doubt and uncertainty that surrounded him. At last he stood over his sister, and said:

“Something has happened, Agnes! What is it? Anything wrong with father?”

She moaned helplessly for a few seconds, and then said:

“Dying!”

“Father dying! Where? How? What has happened?”

But she wouldn’t reply.

He left her, and went upstairs. The physician was there and some nurse from town. Myles shook hands with him, and instantly turned towards the bed. [45]

His father lay on his back, breathing heavily. His face was flushed. He was quite unconscious.

Myles looked down earnestly for a few moments. Then he said to the doctor:

“A fit of some kind?”

“Yes! Apoplectic seizure!”

“How did it occur? Where?”

“In the town-house. Upstairs!”

“The town-house? Why, ‘twas locked up all the evening. What could have taken him there?”

“Don’t know. Father James is in the drawing-room downstairs. He saw all: I was called here!”

“Is father’s condition serious?” said Myles, after a pause.

“Hopeless!” said the doctor. “An artery, one of the small ones, is ruptured in the brain. There is much effusion of blood. He cannot live till morning.”

“You have done everything that could be done?”

“Everything!”

“And, of course, there is no use in summoning any one else!”

“There will be no time!”

Myles shuddered, and went out. He tried to recall his last interview with his father. He recalled with pleasure the fact, that they had parted amicably, and that he had not formally disobeyed. He entered the drawing-room. Father James was walking up and down, restless and uneasy. Myles said:

"This is a terrible affair! What can have happened? I understood that Father was in the waggonnette with Serjeant Holloway!"

The priest eyed him keenly for a few seconds. He thought he was prevaricating. But Myles met his eye firmly, and the priest said: [46]

"Sit down!"And then: "You know nothing of this affair?"

"What affair? I'm completely mystified. I cannot get an explanation from anyone."

"They don't wish to hurt your feelings. Tell me briefly, what do you know of the black flag that was hung out of your windows during the procession?"

"This is the first I heard of it. Black flag? Did anyone dare to offer such a mean outrage?"

"Yes! Amidst all the bunting, absurd and servile I know, a black flag, with skull and cross-bones, was drooping down from the top windows of No. 167. It has killed your father. He got away from the waggonnette [sic], you can imagine in what a state; broke in the wicket at the rear of the garden, found the kitchen door wide open, tore madly upstairs, and there was found in a fit, his hand on the bamboo rod to which the heavy flag was nailed, and which protruded through the window."

Myles was silent with anger at the outrage, with shame for the family honour; with bitter sorrow, that, in all human probability, his father might have thought that his was the hand that offered such a gratuitous insult. Then he said, wiping the beads of shame from his forehead:

"I presume I am set down as the author of this outrage? That is human opinion, always erroneous and malignant, which I can afford to despise. But, O father, father! could you have thought that it was I?"

He broke down in a paroxysm of tears. The priest felt for him.

"Myles!" he said gently, "you have taken a mighty load off my mind. Everyone thinks it was you. And [47] yet I said to more than one — 'Myles Cogan couldn't do such a cowardly and mean act. We know his feelings; but that was a low proceeding, and he had nothing to do with it!'"

Myles stretched out his hand, and grasped the priest's.

"I swear before God and you that I had neither hand, act, or part in that affair; nor have I the slightest suspicion who is guilty of it. A deadly enemy, I'm sure!"

"*I never suspected you,* Myles!" said the priest, kindly, "but you see, my boy, into what dangers your present associations lead you. Yes, I know," he continued, as Myles made a gesture of appeal, "you don't like me to speak of the subject, but, perhaps, terrible as your poor father's loss is now to you, and Agnes, and to us all, has it not a hidden grace, — a grace of warning to you to pause, and pause again, on the road to ruin? You see now how treacherous your associates are!"

"I don't believe for a moment that it was any of our men did it. They are incapable of such a thing. Stop! I have it. They chased away last night some scoundrels who were pocketing or rather fighting for bribes in the churchyard; and this is their revenge, — just what such fellows are capable of doing. No Fenian ever did it. But leave it to me now. I shall soon know who did it, and it will be the sorriest day he ever saw!"

“There — revenge and hatred! Everything more anti-Christian than another. How in the world, Myles Cogan, did you spring from such parents?”

“It was my mother taught me to love Ireland,” said Myles. “Probably, I would be a tippler, and night-walker, but for that.” [48]

“Surely, you don’t mean,” said the priest, “that a man must be sworn in an illicit organisation, condemned by the Church, in order to avoid vice and crime?”

“You know us all, Father,” said Myles. “Can you point to a man amongst us, who is not leading a cleanly and honourable life? Yes,” he continued, forgetting himself, “whatever be our folly or our faults, believe me there is some consecrating power in patriotism that burns up all baser passions. ’Tis the holy fire that consumes all grossness and baseness in men.”

“Yes! Patriotism well-directed,” said the priest, “and sanctioned by reason and religion; not — but we are irreverent in discussing such subjects now in the presence of the dying. But — one question more to set my mind at rest, and help me to defend you.”

“I need no defence. Father James,” said the young man, proudly. “My conscience absolves me. That is enough.”

“Very well. But you can have no objection to tell me where you were when the outrage on your father was committed.”

“Not the least. I was praying and reading, alternately. I was sitting on my mother’s grave!”

“Come upstairs, now!” said the priest.

[49]

VIII

James Halpin was one of those silent enthusiasts whom Ireland produces from time to time, just to show that the breed of strong men has not altogether perished. So far as his outer life was concerned, he was, to human observation, a poor, rather weary, and tired schoolmaster, without much hope of ever reaching the summits of life. And yet, his spirit soared to higher Alps than those which the ordinary successful tourist trod, for he walked with spirits, — the spirits of the immortal dead, and the spirit-creatures of his own imagination. During his daily tasks in school, he laboured gently and perseveringly in training these young minds and helping them up the steep paths of knowledge. He was hardly popular. He was feared, not from any severity or practical discipline, but from a certain aloofness, or coldness, which never permitted him to come down to their level, or show what was human in him. Yet, if any close observer had watched him, as he cast his eyes along the rows of boys in reading classes, and thought, what splendid material is here, could it be worked! or, as he bent down over the paper, where some promising lad was working out a difficult problem, he would have seen that this grave man had not lost all interest in life; but would like to touch these young lives to finer issues than mere bread-winning, or wife-hunting, or honour-seeking, if he could. Yet, strange to say, whenever he came [50] down to their level, and talked to them familiarly, he always felt as if he had lost something, and he went away with a certain self-loathing, as of one who had descended from his own sphere.

But at night, in the humble room which he rented in a back street, he gave himself up to dreams, and such dreams. Dreams of a bygone, long-lost Ireland, when her sons were clad in coats of mail, wore burnished helmets, and shining steel armour over saffron tunics, and her ladies were clad in shimmering silk, and wore gold fillets in their hair, and sandals shining with silver clasps and pearls. Dreams of old abbeys with their vast choirs of monks, and vaster multitudes of

students who thronged here from Europe to drink at this perennial fount of learning. Dreams of ancient splendours, when Kings sat in their halls, their queens beside them; and knights and warriors felt themselves enkindled by ancient sagas sung by long-bearded bards, and the deeds of ancient prowess told by Senachies. Dreams of haunted castles by the sea; and hillsides, where fairies danced in the moonlight, and witches practised their horrid spells; and the spirits of the dead arose, and carried on their mimic battles at midnight; and mighty chieftains came out from their graves in the moonlit abbeys, and walked over battle-fields, the very names of which are forgotten. Dreams of more sombre times, when the people were harried and driven from post to post, by mail-clad warriors from over the sea; and kings had to seek shelter in mountain cabins, and beg their bread from wayfarers like themselves. Dreams of midnight masses held in lonely forests, or in the deep recesses of the mountain, with sentinels all round to watch if a speck of the dreaded "red" of trooper or yeoman could be [51] seen afar. Dreams of a land of ghosts and shadows, of strong giants, gaunt like wolves from hunger, with wolfish hunger in their eyes; of mothers, stilling their children's gnawing pain by snatches of old ditties or scraps of stories from a certain golden age; of priests bending down and kneeling in the snow to anoint the famine and fever-stricken multitudes; of a people flying from destruction to destruction; from a land of famine and terror to the rotten ships that were to cast them into the sea, or on an unfriendly land. Dreams of scaffolds and pitch-caps, of patriots flying in the hour of a nation's defeat to the hills and fastnesses of the land; of brave women, refusing enormous bribes, of base men, betraying their captains and leaders. Dreams of English prisons with all their horrors, lighted only by the heroism that shone like a halo around the cropped heads and the garments of shame which English law put upon Irish patriots. And dreams, and these recurred the oftenest, of the Ireland, for whom all this was patiently endured — that mysterious motherland, who, with all her weight of woes upon her, had yet the power to sway the mightiest minds to which she had given birth, even though they were of alien and hostile blood, and to inspire poet and orator and patriot wath such a love for her, that they walked to the scaffold as if to a bridal altar; and gave up their lives as calmly as Isaac bent beneath the sacrificial knife of his father. And what was this mysterious motherland, this veiled and cloistered queen, who commanded such devotion, such loyalty, such passionate and reverential homage from her sons? And the eyes of the solitary went out and wandered over heath-clad mountains, which the winter torrents seamed yellow with their fierce embraces; [52] over wet fields, which the skirts of the rain-clouds were ever sweeping, and leaving sodden and sunken with their deluges; over the lonely moorlands, dark even on a summer day from the reflection of the black bogs beneath on the gloomy clouds above, where the heron and the moor hen have their abodes, and the shy canabhan waves its little flag of white over peat-pits sunk in pools of stagnant water, along the white roads that seem to go everywhere and nowhere, now into deep sombre valleys, and anon climbing white and dusty over treeless hills; across the lakelands, sorrowful in their very beauty, and down to the eternal seas that chafe the cliffs, and moan for ever their lonely dirges over a land, ancient as the earth itself, and burthened with all the sorrows of a fallen and irredeemable world. And along the track of his fancies, and accompanying them with their own wild and unearthly music, went the winds of Ireland, with their burden of melancholy and sorrow, wailing out their breath where the heather dies and the red sandstone from which the cairns of kings are made, begins; or along the lonely lake shore, where some old ruin looks down, and counts the centuries since its shadow first fell in the gloomy waters beneath.

And all this the lonely watcher saw, as the smoke curled upwards through the chimney, and the red cinders fell beneath the bars.

It was the evening of the day on which Dan Cogan was buried. He had been interred with all honours. High-Mass had been sung over his remains, and an immense cavalcade had accompanied them to the local churchyard. It was not usual, but James Halpin thought it a kind of duty to call upon his chief. He will be lonely, he thought, over there in that big house; [53]

and I shall waive ceremony, and call upon him. He had a great love for Myles, — for this big strong youth, with the noble figure and the mobile face. And he felt that Myles was only his own pupil. Was it not he, a poor assistant schoolmaster, who had indoctrinated this young Celt with his own ideas, and then spurred him on to action?

He passed along the streets, still shuttered and in mourning, crossed the bridge, and passed along the suburb, beyond which Millbank, a fine square house, looked down upon the river. His hand was on the latch of the little iron gate that led into the lawn, when a sudden thought struck him: Shall I be welcome? or shall I be an intruder? For alas! he knew well that in this little town as elsewhere in Ireland, there were class-distinctions, little grades and castes, mounting up from the lowest strata to the highest, and cut away from one another by some rigid legislation, which was never named, and never questioned. The popular saying: that twopence half-penny did not know twopence! was literally true; and the young schoolmaster paused for a moment to ask would such a visit, even of condolence, be acceptable? And then, there was a j'oung ladj'', whom he had met, once or twice, in her brother's company; and she had smiled on him. It was wonderful, very wonderful to a young man who had the deep consciousness that he was only a schoolmaster.

"Nonsense!" he said at last to himself, "Myles Cogan is a man and a comrade. I know him from his hair to his heel!"

He crossed the lawn and knocked. The little servant opened the door, and looked at him questioningly.

"Is Mr. Cogan at home?" [54]

"No!" she said, holding the door half-shut. "He went out with Father James MacCarthy a half-hour ago!"

She was wondering what this schoolmaster wanted with her master.

"And he's not likely to return soon?"

"We don't expect him home before ten," she said. "He seldom comes in before ten."

"Well, then, would you kindly say that Mr. Halpin called. 'Tis not a matter of business, but just a visit of sympathy."

The maid was turning over the pretty phrase in her mind, and wondering what she was to say, when the parlour door opened, and Agnes Cogan came out. She was in deep mourning, emphasized with much crape, and her eyes were yet stained from weeping, but she held out her hand cordially, and said:

"Myles will be so sorry, Mr. Halpin. But, would you come in for a moment?"

He blushed and stammered something; but she held the door open, as if entreating him to enter; and with a beating heart he went into the hall, and laid down his hat and cane. She opened the parlour door, and ushered him in. Here, to his horror, was another young lady, who rose as he entered, and bowed rather stiffly, when Agnes said:

"Miss Carleton, Mr. Halpin!"

He bowed, looked away from the girls, and sat down. Then, by a tremendous effort, he drew himself together and said:

"I just called to pay a visit of ceremony to Mr. Cogan. I am greatly grieved by all that has happened."

Then tears burst forth afresh from the eyes of Agnes. Miss Carleton looked coldly through the window. [55]

“Myles went out with Father MacCarthy just after tea,” said Agnes. “I dare say he will remain away until bedtime. They have always a good many things to say to each other.”

“Then you will promise to come up tomorrow?” said Miss Carleton, rising, and looking very stately.

“If at all possible!” said Agnes. “But must you go, Mary?”

“Yes! Papa will be waiting dinner for me. Goodnight, dear!”

She kissed the girl’s forehead, and Halpin sprang to the door, and opened it.

“Thank — yaw!” she said.

He remained a few moments after; and then took his leave. He had too large a soul to resent; but it was a pained spirit that crossed the bridge.

[56]

IX

Mary Carleton was the only daughter of a solicitor in the town. The profession at once raised the family to the rank of gentry; and as such, they were not supposed to be on social terms with mere shopkeepers, no matter how wealthy. Of course, in business matters, old Edward Carleton was on terms not only of affability, but even of confidential friendship with all classes. He transacted their business, took their cheques, called them by their Christian names, attended committee-meetings with them; but, just outside his office, a terrible line was drawn, and there was no passing that. The best of his clients was never seen at his dining-table; and the ladies of the family knew no one below their own circle. Mrs. Carleton and her daughter did not recognize the wives and daughters of the clients who were helping them to wear those silks and jewels, which were a surprise even to wealthy aristocrats in the neighbourhood.

Hence, between Dan Cogan’s family and Edward Carleton’s there was no intimacy whatsoever. But it happened, much to the disgust of the latter, that Dan Cogan had sent his only daughter, Agnes, to the very same Convent in England where Mary Carleton was studying. It was an utter breach of propriety; but Dan was a wealthy man, and thought nothing of paying eighty pounds a year for his daughter’s education; and so Agnes Cogan and Mary Carleton were brought together; and, like good Irish girls, struck up a friendship, [57] which they knew would be discountenanced at home. But, on their holidays, and especially after they had left school, the old barriers were erected; and Mrs. Carleton had to read her daughter a severe lecture on the proprieties before the latter relinquished her secret hope of making Agnes Cogan a life-friend. Besides, Agnes, as we have seen, had an idol, and the incense she offered him was wafted sometimes towards her school-companion. In secret places on the convent grounds, Agnes read for her companion certain letters from her idol; and then little strange comments went back to Millbank; and then little scraps of poetry would return; and, altogether, Mary Carleton did conceive an interest in Myles Cogan. And when she came home finally in all the full bloom and glory of young womanhood, and with a certain lofty ideal, physical and moral, of a hero before her mind, she glanced from her prayer-book one Sunday at Mass, and realised that Myles Cogan, the handsome, soldierly young rebel, met, and more than met, all her heart’s demands. And he? Well, there also a little flame had been enkindled; but he had tried to extinguish it by saying, No hope so high! and then the whiter flame of patriotism had well nigh annihilated the sudden flame of love.

But, besides, there was no passing further on that road. One Sunday, during the holidays, Mary Carleton, whilst her mother was talking to the parish priest, did manage to exchange a few words with Agnes Cogan. The priest departed. Mrs. Carleton came up towards the girls, stared

at Agnes in a stony manner, and bade her daughter come along. Then, there was a certain lecture, and some tears; and all intercourse between the girls was broken off, until the sad event [58] of Dan Cogan's death. Then, because Dan Cogan had been noticed somewhat by the "Member," for whom Carleton was conducting agent, Mary had been allowed, as a great favour, to pay a visit of condolence to her former friend; but the acquaintance was to terminate there.

It was after ten o'clock when Myles reached his home that evening. It was always understood that his sister and the servants should not remain up for him. The lamp was lighted on the parlour table; and beside it was the glass of milk and the biscuits that made his frugal supper. He lingered as usual at the garden-gate, leaning over it, and listening to the murmur of the river, as it stole over the pebbles beneath him. He was pondering many things; and just then he was much disturbed in thought after his interview with the priest. The latter had spoken very plainly to the young idealist. He had used some expressions that rankled in memory, "profitless effusion of blood," "dragging ignorant men to doom," "playing into the hands of foreign revolutionaries," "under the ban and excommunication of the Church," etc. They made him uneasy, for he had nothing reasonable to oppose to them, — nothing but his passionate enthusiasm. He paused, reasoned, and was turning away irresolute, when a stranger crossed the road, and accosted him.

He was about to make some civil excuse when the stranger uttered a word. Then the whole attitude of Myles Cogan changed. He doffed his hat, shook the hand of the stranger warmly, and led the way to the house.

"I have to apologise. Colonel," he said. "But my servants do not remain up so late. But I can give you a cigar and a glass." [59]

"Nothing better!" said the stranger, as Myles placed the decanter on the table. "But," he pushed the decanter gently aside, "business first. You are Head Centre here?"

"Yes!" said Myles, a little troubled at the courtmartial air the stranger assumed.

"Then let me tell you that your business is d—d badly done!"

He stopped for a moment, eyeing the young man closely.

"I called in here by an evening train from Killarney; I just wanted to see how things were going so that I could report across the water. I found my way to your fellows that were drilling as easy as to the nearest public-house. I might have been a spy, or a detective. The fellows didn't seem to mind. Everything was open as daylight. I asked the name of the Captain of division. Halpin. Where's Halpin? Or who's Halpin? Or, what's Halpin? A half-blind schoolmaster, who knows no more about drill than a cowboy. I asked, where are your arms? In garrets, in graveyards, in cow-houses — everywhere, but in the hands of men. I put a few military questions, that would be promptly answered by the rawest recruit in the States. They knew nothing. And I want to ask you: Is this a specimen of the 'highly-organised and thoroughly-drilled, and efficiently-armed force,' that is to spring to action the moment the Irish-American officers land in Queenstown?"

Myles was struck dumb; and leaned his head on his hands. The charge was true and untrue. He could not deny; he could not refute. He tried a feeble excuse.

"Everyone knew the Fenians were being drilled. [60] There was little concealment. The arms were all right and ready for action; but, of course, the men, for obvious reasons, could not practise ball-firing. But they were drilled according to the latest manuals from America; and Halpin, although but a schoolmaster, was one of the keenest minds in Ireland."

"I have gone through Kerry," said the officer, as if speaking to himself, "and 'tis the same story everywhere. No artillery, little ammunition, no experience, no practice; cobblers and schoolmasters — captains and drill masters; and I am asked to bring over brave men here to

head such a disorganised mass, and put my own and their necks into English halters. By G— I'll think twice about it."

He drew over the decanter; and lit a cigar.

"But, by heavens," he said, "there's grit in the country still. Over there, whilst I was hectoring and cursing these fellows, their sentries, as they called them, haled in two little chaps, who were playing spies, they said. They were little fellows about twelve or fourteen. They were badly frightened, when I challenged them. No, they weren't spies; but they wanted to join the Irish Republican Brotherhood, as drummers or bandboys. I insisted they were spies, and that they would inform the government. 'By Jove!' the oldest little chap said promptly, 'you lie! I don't know who you are; but we're as good Irishmen as you.' I told them I could not risk the necks of so many men for the sake of two over-curious boys; and I told them they should die. The little chap blubbered a little; but the big chap rubbed his hands on his little pants, and defied me. I stepped back, and drew my revolver. The men thought I meant something; and begged me not to hurt them. I told the boys to kneel down and [61] say their prayers They knelt. 'Now, stand up,' I said, 'and prepare to die. It is the fate of spies the wide world over.' 'I tell you again,' said the little fellow, 'that you're a liar, if you were a Colonel or a General ten times over.' I advanced, holding the revolver steady between his eyes. He never blenched. I came up close, and pressed the mouth of the pistol on his left temple. He shut his eyes, the brave little beggar, but never cried, nor whimpered. I let the muzzle fall. 'What's your name, boy?' 'I won't tell you,' he said. 'You're a British spy yourself.' 'What's his name?' I said to the men. 'Philip Shea,' they said. 'Then Philip Shea, Colonel Costelloe hereby nominates you lieutenant in this detachment of the Irish Revolutionary forces.' The fellow looked a man on the instant. I suppose he'll be hanged some day. But, I have to make my report, which is this: That the Irish Revolutionary forces are no more fit to take the field against England than a lot of Down South niggers, who never handled any weapon but a hoe. 'Tis the ineffectual Celt all over again!"

[62]

X

Myles had a bad night. The words of the priest and the words of the American officer combined to make a deep impression upon him. That last word of Colonel Costelloe, "the ineffectual Celt," beat through his brain all night, and left him haggard in the morning. His sister was quick to perceive it.

''You had a late visitor?" she said, as she handed him the tea at breakfast.

"How do you know? You were fast asleep."

"But there's an odour of cigars here; and the decanter has gone down several degrees."

"You miserable little skinflint," he said. "Measuring the decanter! Who ever heard of such a thing in an Irish house?"

"But you had a visitor?"Agnes persisted. "And he wasn't a gentleman to call on you at such an hour, and after such a day."

"He knew nothing of our bereavement," said Myles. "He called on business!"

"You are not disposed to tell me anything about him," she said. "Very good! Then you shall hear nothing of my visitors. I can keep my own secrets."

"I am at least glad that someone called on you," he said. "I was saying to Father MacCarthy that you would probably feel lonely last night; and I wanted to stay at home." [63]

“And escape a lecture?”

“Well, yes! He said that young housekeepers are never lonely. They find a hundred things to do.”

“So you got the lecture, and you missed —?”

He looked up puzzled. He was pretty careless whom he had missed. Heavier thoughts were pressing upon him.

“You are not curious?”

“Not in the least!”

“Then I needn’t tell?”

“Of course not.”

“Mr. Halpin called!”

“Oh, that’s it, is it? What did he want?”

“Nothing. Just to pay you a visit of condolence,” he said. “ He was turning away from the door, when I called him in.”

“I’m very glad. He’s an excellent fellow — as true as steel.”

“They’re not always appreciated. Mary treated him rather cavalierly, if I may say so!”

“Mary? What Mary?”

“There’s only one Mary in the world now.”

“Miss Carleton?”

“Yes!”

“And she called at Millbank? What a condescension! And snubbed poor Halpin, who is worth a hundred like her!”

“Myles!”

“Well?”

“What’s come over you? I’m speaking of Miss Mary Carleton, my former friend and fellow-pupil — “

“I’m not interested,” he said. “But poor Halpin — was he badly hurt?”

“Very! When he came back from the door, which [64] he had gracefully opened, he began to talk like an insane person!”

“That’s not his way. He’s pretty level-headed.”

‘‘Of course. But, you must remember that it was probably the first time in his life that he met a beautiful girl, and that she — well, ignored him.”

“Yes, ’twas trying. But Halpin is not a man to wilt under a stroke like that! He is too much of a philosopher!”

“Indeed? That reminds me. He said, amongst other wild things — this was before Mary left, however, that three classes of persons enter politics — the fool, the rogue, and the philosopher. Let me see how he put it? The fool goes out and dies for an opinion; the rogue makes a living out of it. The philosopher ponders the mighty problem but seldom speaks, for he knows that Wisdom crieth aloud in the street, and there is no one to listen or hearken.”

“I see. Well, yes, that was slightly insane in such company. Anything worse?”

“No! But when he came back from the door, wilted, as you would say, he said to me, ‘No one is a real Celt, who would not enjoy hiding under a stone wall on the summit of some Irish mountain, and watching for a whole day the rain blown up in sheets across the heather by the wild wind from the west!”

“Yes! That’s very bad,” said Myles, rising from table. “I must see Halpin. He’ll lose his school, if he goes on like that.”

He called on the schoolmaster a few evenings later on. He was not in the habit of visiting Halpin. Here, too, the very nice class-distinctions obtained; and, alas! that it should be said, a schoolmaster was almost as much beneath a merchant, as a shopkeeper was beneath [65] a solicitor. And Myles Cogan, democrat and revolutionary as he was, had not yet soared quite above these social distinctions. But, here there was a spirit of *camaraderie* that madeexclusiveness impossible; and besides, if Halpin’s visit to Millbank was a visit of ceremony, this visit of Myles to the lonely teacher was one of business. In truth, he was gravely disquieted; and, though a thought of retreat never entered his mind, he needed a tonic to keep that mind steady toward* its great end.

Halpin, as usual, was reading and smoking. He put the book aside, and motioned his friend to a seat.

“I missed you the other night!” said Myles, simply.

“Yes! But it was of no consequence. I believe I was missed also in another place!”

“So Colonel Costelloe told me. He called late that night; and was in a fierce temper. He is about to warn the Yanks that the game is up here. He said we were undrilled, unarmed, undisciplined. He called us ‘the ineffectual Celt.’“

“Of course. But you didn’t expect help from these gentlemen, did you?”

“Why, yes! The main hope of the movement was in the military knowledge and experience of these Irish-American officers.”

“You are right. It was. But that is no longer the case. Since the escape of Stephens, and the deposition of Colonel John O’Mahony, the Yanks have thrown us up! We have to rely upon ourselves.”

Myles Cogan looked blank. He had not realised this.

“In fact,” continued Halpin, “from the very beginning it was evident that this would be the case. No nation is fit for independence that is not able to win it.” [66]

“Then, I must say, it is all up with us. You said as much the last evening we met in the livery stables, when these poor fellows were going on about croppypikes and dragoons.”

“Yes! I said all that deliberately; and it was true. There is nothing gained by telling lies to ourselves.”

“But, then, in God’s name, Halpin, if we are so helpless, so disorganised, so ineffectual, are we justified in exposing all these poor devils to certain death, or life-long imprisonment?”

Halpin was silent. Myles grew a little angry. A horrible suspicion struck him.

“Halpin,” he said, “you don’t misunderstand me?”

Halpin stretched forth his hand, and grasped his friend’s firmly.

“No!” he said. “I know you too well. But, if I were certain that our movement was to be as futile and profitless as that smoke, I would still say, Go on!”

“And sacrifice everything?”

“Sacrifice many things to save the nation. The country has become plethoric and therefore indifferent to everything but bread and cheese. It needs bloodletting a little. The country is sinking into the sleep of death; and nothing can awake it but the crack of the rifle.”

“And we have to suffer, and teach!”

“We may also have to teach from our graves!”

Myles Cogan needed all his strength of character to keep back his tears. Instead of the “pomp and circumstance of war,” the panoply and the glory and the pageantry — the ringing of bridles, the clash of sabres, the crack of musketry, he saw only the bleeding figures of a few mutilated peasants, and a long row of [67] gray-clad convicts with the hideous arrow stamped all over them.

“You depress me, Halpin,” he said. “If all our work is to end in a fiasco like Ballingarry, the sooner we quit it the better.”

“If you mean, that ours will be no Waterloo or Thermopylae, your conjecture is right. We shall rise in rebellion. We shall take out a few hundred poor fellows who couldn’t hit a haystack with their rifles; and a few hundred more, who are armed with pikes and blackthorns. At the first volley from five or six policemen, they will run and disperse, leaving half-a-dozen dead. Perhaps, in Dublin or Wicklow or Wexford, they will fling up barricades, and probably shoot a soldier or two; and then get blown to atoms by one or two well-directed shells. And the insurrection is quenched. For six months after, Crown-Prosecutors will be earning fat fees at Special Commissions; and a score or two brave men will be sent to join Kickham and O’Leary over there in Portland or Dartmoor.”

“By Heavens, Halpin, if you are right and that is all, we are nothing short of criminals to drag brave, if ignorant, poor fellows into such a mess.”

“But it is not all!” said Halpin stoically. Then a strange light came into his eyes.

“You and I will be shot. Our bodies will lie stretched out on the Irish heather; our blood will have soaked back into our mother’s breast. But, the very wretches that handled Holloway’s bribes last week and saturated themselves with filthy liquor, will take up our lacerated bodies, and weep over them, and carry them down with every honour to our graves; and the women, who shouted aloud, or waved their handkerchiefs yesterday, will snip away bits of cloth from our tattered [68] uniforms, and keep them as relics for their children. And, in after years, Irishmen will come from over the seas, and find out where Cogan and where Halpin fell, and carry away with them to Mexico or Australia a bit of the heather which our dead bodies pressed; and the political degradation of the people which we shall have preached with our gaping wounds will shame the nation into at least a paroxysm of patriotism once again!”

“That means,” said Myles Cogan after a long pause, “that we, Fenians, are not soldiers, but preachers?”

“Preachers, prophets, and martyrs!” said his friend. “You have had an example here of how low the nation has sunk. Do you think your life or mine too great a price to elevate and save them?”

“You told my sister, Agnes, so she informed me; that in politics, the fools go out and die!” said Myles, smiling at the absurdity.

“Of course, it is the fools that do all the world’s great work. Then, the world calls them heroes.”

“And you are sanguine, that if we die, a new spirit will come into the country?”

“Undoubtedly. But, if no blood is shed, the country will rot away, until it becomes a very Job upon his dunghill.”

“Yes!” said Myles, musingly. “We are sunk very low just now.”

“Yet, the vital spark is never wholly dead. Did you hear what happened at Costelloe’s visit the other night?”

“About these boys? Yes, he told me!”

“It was no farce. The fellow frightened the men first by his hectoring and blasphemy. They did not know what these furious fellows, with all their notions [69] of military discipline, might do. The little chap thought he was to die!”

“And never winked?”

“He closed his eyes, and waited for the bullet to crack through his brain. Yes! the vital spark never wholly dies!”

[70]

XI

The conversation gave Myles Cogan food for thought. It raised the question to a higher plane. It is no longer the political independence of Ireland that has to be sought; but the very salvation of the people. And this can only be effected by the shedding of blood. What a light it threw on O’Connell’s famous words! How it justified Mitchell! How it sanctioned and adopted Meagher’s Apologue to the Sword! Yes! all the eloquence of Grattan, all the philosophy of Burke, all the fire of Shiel, all the splendour of Plunkett, cannot lift this generation from the slough into which it has fallen. It needs the shedding of blood!

He felt that it would be madness to propound such a fantastic theory to the rank and file of the Fenians. They couldn’t understand it. They were enrolled and sworn to create an Irish Republic; that was their aim. Anything so transcendental as Halpin’s theory would be scouted by them as insanity, or treason. Yes! If Myles Cogan said to them:

“There is no hope; not the ghost of a chance that we shall succeed. That is a dream of madness. But a few of us must die, — it may be ten, it may be a hundred, it may be a thousand, in order that the mob should no longer shout after Castle nominees, or get drunk, or otherwise disrespect themselves,” the probability is that they would depose him, and shoot him as a traitor. [71]

Yes! He would keep the sublime idea locked up in his own mind, and exchange it only with Halpin.

But it was quite true, as he conjectured, that other thoughts were agitating the minds of the rank and file of the Fenians, and just then, and still more, later on, stinging them to madness. All this delay, this postponement of the signal of revolution from month to month, was becoming intolerable. When would the watch-fires be lighted, the heather set on fire? They were tired of all this drilling and this secrecy. Like true impatient Celts, they revolted at the idea of caution or preparation. They wanted to be led out into the mountains and the hillsides and let them see what they could do. Poor fellows! Whatever he thought of the madness, the sheer insanity of their ideas of wresting Ireland from England, one thing at least is certain, that not a man of them had an idea of self before him; not a man, who was not prepared to yield up his life gladly for the “ould dart.”

As the winter of 1866 stole in, the impatience of the rebels became too persistent to be ignored; and word went round from the Dublin Centres that ’67 should not dawn before one strong blow

had been struck for Ireland. The nation waited on the tiptoe of expectation; because there was no secrecy about the doings of the Brotherhood. Everyone knew that a revblution was in progress; and imagination filled in the picture. It was generally expected that Christmas would see the whole island in the agonies of a civil war.

Meanwhile, the government was watching the whole affair quietly, thoroughlj^ cognisant of every step taken by the revolutionaries; yet eager to wait until the whole thing should ripen into action, and be crushed [72] in such a manner that it should never be heard of again. Occasionally, some Irish-American oflScer was arrested at Queenstown, and quietly deported back to the States; and troops were silently sent over from England, until quite an army was dispersed through the barracks and cantonments of Ireland.

To all outer appearances, Myles Cogan was pursuing a quiet business career. After his father's affairs had been finally arranged, he threw himself into the milling and baking and wool-business as if he had no object in life but to make money, and settle down as a respectable citizen, whose highest ambition was to be a town councillor or a Poor Law guardian. As he went around in his white miller's coat and hat, rushing hither and thither, meeting commercial travellers, journeying to Dublin or some great wheat centre, observers found it hard to believe that he was the Arch-Revolutionist in his neighbourhood; and they would have found it still more difficult to believe that this brave, strong young man, who had such a magnificent career before him, had yet in his inner consciousness no prospect but that of being shot down near some hill or valley before many weeks were over. Not that it troubled him much. His mind was made up. It was his Fate, and he determined to meet it bravely.

At each meeting during that winter, the men were becoming painfully demonstrative. The delay was playing on nerves highly strung and irritable. They were beginning to feel that there was treason lurking somewhere; that the old, dark spectre of treachery was lowering above them again. Several times they challenged Myles; and he had to give an evasive answer. [73]

Then one evening just before Christmas, he read for them a certain document he had received from Dublin, deposing him from the oflfice of Head Centre, but allowing him to retain the name of Captain. There was a time when such a degradation would have lashed him into fury. But, now that the object of his life was changed, he took it calmly.

Not so the men. They saw in a moment that it was Costelloe's work; and their own nerves were smarting under the castigation he had given them.

"Damn them!" said Murty Linehan, "they thinks we are a parcel of children. There they are, codraulin' up there in Dublin; and pocketing the American dollars; and here are we, drilling and marchin' from mornin' till night, until we haven't shoe-leather to our feet. Write back, and tell 'em, Captain, that we refuse to obey a pack of spalpeens like them."

"If you had taken my advice, Murty," said a swarthy blacksmith, "and rowled that fellow, Costelloe, in the furze, he'd have stopped his commanding, and gone home to scratch himself."

"That won't do, men," said Myles. "We are bound by our oaths; and we have to obey the commands of our superiors. I suppose they mean something now!"

"And who's to be our Head Centre, now?" they asked.

"That I don't know!" said Myles. "They have not informed me."

Halpin was sitting back, silent as usual. He now came forward, and took a paper from his breast-pocket, and handed it to Myles.

"That came this afternoon," he said. "I am quite at a loss to understand it." [74]

Myles glanced over the paper; and a deep frown gathered on his forehead. He looked at Halpin searchingly for a moment. Then he read the document, which appointed Captain James Halpin Head Centre for that district with plenary powers; giving him jurisdiction over a large area extending from river to river, and from mountain to mountain in the Midlands.

There was a laugh; then a growl; then a strong murmur of dissent amongst the men. But Myles folded the paper, and handed it back to Halpin, saying:

‘‘You see, comrades, they mean business now. Get your knapsacks in order; for you’ll be under marchingorders soon!”

He left abruptly without another word; and Halpin coolly stepped into his place, and issued orders in a quiet, firm tone. They were too much surprised to resent it. They didn’t know what to think. Some said that Halpin had met Costelloe, and arranged for the deposition of Myles. Some remembered that Costelloe was particularly abusive of Halpin. Some thought that Myles had been getting lukewarm in the cause, and that this was known to the Executive. But over all the affair loomed the dark cloud of suspicion that haunts every secret attempt at revolution. There was treason somewhere and backsliding; but where?

[75]

XII

Myles Cogan was on trial elsewhere the following night. In the comfortable drawing-room of Mrs. Edward Carleton the blinds and curtains were drawn; the fire burned merrily; Mrs. Carleton sat in an easy chair, reading beneath the gas-lamp; Mary Carleton was running her fingers along her piano, rather through habit than from any love of the occupation.

Just as the clock struck ten, Edward Carleton and a younger gentleman entered the drawing-room; and sent a pleasant odour of cigars into the air.

“Order tea, Mary,” said Mrs. Carleton, looking up from her book, and pushing forward an armchair.

Edward Carleton looked serious, too serious for a man who had dined well.

“Rendall tells me,” he said, alluding to his guest, “that there is danger, great danger in the near future.”

“Danger of a rising? Those wretched Fenians?” said Mrs. Carleton, looking up.

“Yes! The Government are now thoroughly alarmed. They were a little supine all along; but information has now reached them that the matter may be very serious. Is that so, Rendall?”

“Quite so!” said District Inspector Rendall. “Of course these poor fools have played into our hands all along. We know every one of them, and every movement of theirs. And all along they seemed beneath our contempt. But, things are coming to a [76] crisis now; and we are under notice to expect an outbreak!”

“That means barricades, and firing, and all that?” said Mrs. Carleton, thinking of her window curtains.

“Yes! But not much, I think. These fellows are untrained. Some of them have never handled a gun. They’ll have pikes and pitchforks, and one or two old muzzle-loaders. But at the very first volley, they’ll run!”

“But, in country places, Rendall, they may do harm. The Lingens and the Staffords around here have been consulting me about sending in their plate to the bank; and I have advised them to do so.”

“And quite right. These scoundrels will probably raid a few mansions here and there, where the police can’t get at them. Of course, it is just there the mischief will be done, till our troops come up with them, and shoot or hang them.”

“It is strange that the priests can’t stop all this,” said Mrs. Carleton, peevishly. She was one of those happy Catholics who would like to throw every responsibility on the shoulders of the priests.

Rendall shrugged his shoulders. He was an official and did not like to touch so delicate a subject.

“Well, you see,” said Edward Carleton, “there was the grand mistake made by our governments from time to time, not to have captured the priests by paying them. They’d have a lot of men with much influence with them. Now, they have flung them on the people. We’re taxed beyond endurance by them; and they are muzzled by the populace.”

There was some confusion here; but Edward Carleton was not too choice in his language, especially when he was under emotion. [77]

“They bark a little through the muzzle, Papa,” said Mary Carleton, breaking silence. “At least, I have heard some pretty strong language from the altar.”

“But they ought to condemn these scoundrels, attack them, hold them up to public reprobation, annihilate them,” said Edward Carleton. He brought down a heavy book on the table as he spoke.

“For goodness’ sake. Papa, take care,” said his daughter. “These are our best set. If you broke one of these cups, we could never replace it.”

“I say these gentlemen, whom we, respectable citizens, are maintaining in luxury (I pay them two pounds a year), should come out, and denounce these flagitious ruffians and midnight marauders; I say they are guilty of dereliction of duty in not bringing public opinion to bear on these assassins and cutthroats, and dragging them out of their retreats to hold them up — to hold them up — to hold them up—”

“Perhaps, they wouldn’t be strong enough. Papa, to hold them up,” said his dutiful daughter; “Father James doesn’t look too robust.”

Edward Carleton glared at his daughter for a moment, but he thought there was no use in entering into a conflict there.

“Of course, these Fenian people are the outcasts, what may be called the riff-raff of the population?” said Mrs. Carleton, addressing the District-Inspector.

“Oh, dear, yes!” he said, “the very lowest type. Labourers and artisans, and masons, and shoemakers. But I think the tailors are the worst!”

“How strange!” said Mrs. Carleton, unloosing some threads, “one would suppose that it was a peaceful profession enough!” [78]

“So it is! so it is!” said Rendall, “in fact we can’t do without them — “

Miss Carleton laughed rather impolitely.

“But you see, these fellows, it appears, sit crosslegged, five or six on a huge board; and of course, they must talk; and what they talk about is generally high treason.”

“Ah!” said Mary Carleton, “that is what is meant by cooking a tailor’s goose!”

The District-Inspector laughed; but he somewhat felt that this demure young lady was poking fun at him.

“Well, that’s the class they are,” he said, “of course, their leaders, or Centres, as they’re called, are a little better, I mean, in better positions, although as a rule they’re more atrocious scoundrels than the rank and file!”

“My gracious! Mr. Rendall,” said Mary Carleton, “but surely they haven’t done anything so bad yet!”

“No, of course, they daren’t. But, wait till the rising takes place; and then you’ll see what irresponsible and truculent savages can do!”

“Can you tell me positively, Mr. Rendall,” said Edward Carleton, toying with his teaspoon, “I hope I’m not trespassing on professional secrets, whether a young client of mine, named Cogan, is involved?”

“He is, or rather was. Head Centre here,” said the Inspector. “We know all about the fellow, — and a dangerous customer he is; but, for some reason or other, we have information that he has been deposed. We haven’t got at the root of the matter yet!”

“I’m sorry for him!” quoth the attorney. “His father, old Dan Cogan, was a decent enough sort of [79] fellow, a little vulgar, fond of rattling silver in his trousers’ pockets, and saying Sir! every second. But, he was a good business man; and he left a pretty pile. You’re aware, of course, that it was his son hung out that black flag — ”

“Papa!” said Mary Carleton.

“Well, my dear? There’s not a doubt about the matter.”

“There’s a certainty,” said Mary Carleton, growing a little white under the eyes, “that Myles Cogan never — ”

“Mary!” cried her mother, warningly, “how can you speak of that young man so familiarly? Surely, you don’t know people of that type?”

“Perhaps,” said Miss Carleton, recovering her self-possession, “I slipped into the habit from hearing everyone calling him Myles Cogan. He appears to be a great favourite!”

“Ah, yes!” said Rendall. “There lies the danger. These half-educated fellows, who attain popularity, assume great control; and they lead these poor ignorant fellows to ruin!”

“But you’re speaking, Mr. Rendall, as if Mr. Cogan had already done something terrible. Has he?”

“I cannot say he has,” said the officer, “but just listen to this!”

He fumbled in his breast-pocket, and drew out a notebook. From this he extracted a piece of very thin paper, smoothed it out and read, whilst Mrs. Carleton laid down her work, the man of law looked at the ceiling, and Mary Carleton, leaning her fair cheek on her hand, watched the officer with intense interest: [80]

“*Comrades:*

“The hour is at hand. Slowly, but surely, the fingers on the dial are moving on to the moment when the nation shall be bidden, Arise! We have waited long, but our patience is about to be rewarded. For us, destiny is waiting — with a twofold choice, the sight of victory, for which generations of our Countrymen dreamed and died, a victory that will crown our poor dishonoured motherland queen again, or death so glorious that it seems more to be desired than

victory, because then we shall have done man's noblest work, man's highest duty, of dying for his country's freedom. Our hereditary enemies, the Sassenach and the Gall, call us rebels against authority, whereas we are but insurgents against tyranny, and vindicators of our country's rights. And these same tyrants, whilst dangling before us the rope of the malefactor for our fidelity to the noblest instinct that God has implanted in human hearts, are at the moment stirring up revolution in half the countries of Europe. They lay down their political principles; and then threaten to hang us for accepting them. Here's what the 'Times,' the London Thunderer, says:

> "'The government should be for the good of the governed; and whenever rulers wilfully and persistently postpone the good of their subjects, either to the interests of foreign states, or to abstract theories of religion or politics, the people have a right to throw off that yoke. This is a principle that can no longer be questioned.'

and again:

'"*The destiny of a nation ought to be determined not by the opinions of other nations, but by the opinion of the nation itself.*'

and again:

'"*England has not scrupled to avow her opinion that the people of the Roman States, like every other people, have a right to choose* [81] *the form of their own government, and the persons in whose hands that government may be placed.'*

"You see, then, that we are but following the counsel of the ' Times.' If the Italians are justified in wresting the Imperial Power from the Pope, surely we, after our six centuries of brutal misgovernment, are justified in casting off, once and for ever, the hated yoke of England.

"Therefore, be ye ready! 'Tis your motherland that calls. The shades of our departed great ones are watching us from eternity's stillness, — the great spirits of Emmet and Lord Edward, of William Orr and Wolfe Tone, of Smith O'Brien, and Mitchell and Meagher of the Sword. 'Tis they that speak to us from their graves and tell us that the night is passing, the day is dawning, and that the eternal prophecies are about to be fulfilled."

"There's a lot more of that rubbish," said the officer, folding the paper, "but you have seen enough to show what a firebrand this Cogan is. He'll be the first that shall be laid by the heels."

"Abominable treason!" said Edward Carleton. "Who'd ever think that that young fellow would be such a bloodthirsty ruffian?"

"But he is deposed, set aside, Mr. Rendall. Is that so?" said Mary Carleton.

"Yes! These fellows are always fighting with one another, and betraying each other. We have not got all particulars as yet, but I think a poor, half-blind schoolmaster will probably succeed him. You may have noticed him, shuffling along the streets sometimes, his head down, rather shabbily dressed, and with a very wicked little Irish terrier at his heels. These are the officers of the Irish Republican Brotherhood!" [82]

"But!" said Edward Carleton, quite indignant, "you say he is a National Teacher. Why then isn't the ruffian dismissed? Are such scoundrels as he is to be supported by government funds?"

"The Government are playing a deep game," replied Rendall. "It would show our hand to have him dismissed just now. When the time is ripe, we'll strike. Besides, to dismiss such a fellow now, would only make him a martyr; and they'd probably make up a subscription for him, and give him more than ever he had in his life."

“That is not his own opinion,” said Mary Carleton, quietly. “I heard him say that, in politics, it is the fools that go out and get killed; the rogues turn their politics into hard cash; the thinkers stop at home and are silent.”

“You — heard — him — say?” cried Mrs. Carleton, in an accent of terrified surprise. “Pray, when and where did you meet such a man? You have been reading romances, and dreaming. It was Myles Cogan a while ago; and now it is this — this — pedagogue!”

“I met him at Miss Cogan’s the evening I called there with your permission, mother,” she said. “I exchanged no words with him; but I don’t think the man is a fool. Although perhaps he is. For is he not going to die for an idea; and what greater folly can there be than that?”

“I shouldn’t have allowed you to go to that house,” said her mother, musingly. “Everything seems to be getting mixed up these times.”

“Well, young ladies must have heroes,” said Rendall, rising to go. “But I’m afraid these heroes of the stables and the workshops will hardly succeed in overthrowing the British government in this fair realm of [83] Ireland, But which is to be the Cid Campeador remains to be seen — the miller or the schoolmaster.” Mary Carleton had an angry retort on her lips; but she controlled herself. Yet, to see Myles Cogan handcuffed and driven like a sheep to the shambles by this fellow, would be hard. Would it not?

[84]

XIII

James Halpin, now Head Centre of his district, was much perturbed by his promotion. He had not desired it, much less sought it, and he knew what a burden it meant. But, he argued, matters should soon reach a crisis; and, then, his responsibility would cease. What pained him deeply was the implied censure, amounting almost to an insult, to his friend, Myles Cogan, and the possibility, but this he considered remote, that Myles might suspect him to be privy to his own deposition.

Meanwhile, he continued with quiet zeal his propaganda of nationalist sentiments amongst the boys under his charge. This was no easy task; for the principal of the school was a Whig of the bluest type, to whom Government was everything, — Country, nothing. Everything, except a geographical map, that could remind them that they were Irish boys, was carefully excluded from the schoolroom. Never a word of Irish history was taught, the names of Irish heroes were unknown. The boys sang:

> “Poor mortal man, thy lusts control,”

for the teacher had a strong leaning towards Evangelical pietism, or:

> “Soldiers in the Park,”

which was well and stirringly sung by the boys, and gave great delight to the inspectors. But, such [85] revolutionary hymns, as “Let Erin remember the days of old” were sternly forbidden; and a boy was well whipped for singing “O’Donnell Aboo!”

Nevertheless, in some quiet way, little Irish symbols began to show themselves, such as bunches of shamrocks painted on copy-books, sometimes with medallion portraits of Emmet or Lord Edward in their midst; and a popular London music-hall song of the period called the “Dark girl dressed in blue,” was promptly extinguished on the public streets by the boys shouting in chorus:

"Vive-la the new brigade!
Vive-la the old one, too!
Vive-la the rose shall fade,
And the shamrock shine for ever new!"

Philip Shea, who had looked into the mouth of Colonel Costelloe's revolver unafraid, had been soundly whipped by his father at home for his promotion to a lieutenancy in the army of the Irish Republic, and still more soundly by the old schoolmaster, who shivered for his salary. He made a speech on the occasion, in which he said that his school was becoming a nest of damnable young rebels; but that he. was determined so long as he could wield a rattan to knock that d— nonsense out of them, even if he had to draw blood. All of which, of course, made them more determined rebels than ever; and, to do him justice, James Halpin helped them cordially. Once or twice, the head teacher had spoken to the manager to have Halpin removed, for that he was demoralising the boys by teaching them Fenianism.

"That old fool!" said the manager, "a Fenian! He wouldn't know at which end to hold a gun!" [86]

A few mornings after his deposition, Myles Cogan was at breakfast; and after glancing over his letters, he handed a note to his sister, and said:

"Are you a good hand at deciphering, Agnes?"

She took the little note, and read:

"*Beware! There's a traitor in your camp. Every word you say is in the Police-Office in twenty-four hours!*"

She frowned a little, pursed her lips a little, shrugged her shoulders a little, and said:

"The hand is disguised; but it was a woman who wrote it!"

"Well-done! But that didn't strike me. Are you sure?"

"Quite! There's a peakiness about the letters that you never see in men's handwriting."

"And you have no suspicion?"

"Of the traitor?"

"No, no, no! I mean, my unknown correspondent."

"I have a suspicion of both. But these are only girls' fancies, you know! Look! Here are some specimens of mortuary cards for poor papa. Which do you like?"

He rose abruptly.

"They are all the same!" he said. "I must be off. I have to see that old humbug, Carleton, about father's affairs. What are we to do about all these letters of condolence? This is the most modern nuisance. Look at this resolution from the Board of Guardians, every man of whom fought against poor father during his lifetime."

"Well, but we must acknowledge them," said his sister. "It is the custom, I suppose!"

"Yes! Everything hollow, everything hypocritical, [87] everything cunning and mean and Pharisaical! Oh! What an age!"

"And a traitor in camp!" said his sister. "Oh, Mylie, will anything teach you not to trust these men; but to break away from them immediately? You see, you know, you cannot depend on them!"

"And, therefore, little sisters must bring their superior wisdom to bear on political questions. Never mind! And so it is a girl's handwriting."

“I said a ‘woman’s handwriting,’“ she retorted, as if nettled by his flippant manner.

“‘Tis all the same!” he said. But he looked disappointed.

But Agnes took the note upstairs; and opened her writing desk, and compared, as a professional expert would, the mysterious warning with several letters that lay nestled up in her drawers, and pursed her lips, and shook her head, and said:

“I knew I was right. It is just the same. But how could she have derived the information?”

After a long pause, she started, as if a sudden revelation had been made to her, pondered a little, wavered a little, then promptly made up her mind; and dressing hastily, she passed into the town, and, after some hesitation, feeling that the hour was decidedly unfashionable for calling, she knocked at Edward Carleton’s, and asked to see Miss Carleton.

Promptly, Mary Carleton came downstairs, just wondering a little why her old school-companion should have called so early. Then, after a few commonplace exchanges, Agnes burst out crying, and said almost hysterically:

“Oh, Mary, Mary, you alone can save him!” [88]

Mary Carleton grew a little pale at the suggestion; then looked annoyed, then interested, as she said:

“Save? Him? Save whom, and from what, Agnes?”

“Myles, my brother!” sobbed Agnes. “He showed me this note this morning; and I knew at once it came from you. He doesn’t know it, and I have not told him. But it is all so dreadful; and coming so soon after poor papa’s death!”

The tone of the bereaved girl was so sad, so pathetic, that Mary Carleton felt there was no room for dissembling.

“Yes!” she said, “I wrote it. I have information that matters are looking very dangerous for your brother. But you understand that I do not wish for the world that anyone, and he above all, should know it. But you say I can save him. How?”

The poor girl was silent for a moment, fearing to say something indelicate. Then, summoning courage, she said:

“Myles would do anything for you, Mary. You are the only living person that could influence him!”

A hot blush ran up across Miss Carleton’s features, and flushed even her forehead. She seemed annoyed for a moment. Then a gladder feeling swept the annoyance aside. But she saw the enormous difficulties of the situation.

“Let us put our foolish heads together,” she said, “and see what we can do! You are aware that your brother is no longer in command; I mean, Head Centre as they call them?”

“No! He never told me. He never tells me anything,” said Agnes. “He takes me for a child!”

“Well, he wants to spare you, I suppose. But this is a help. He is no longer in command of these mad [89] fellows; but, of course, he would be too generous to break away on that account!”

“Ah, of course. You know him better than I, Mary. No! We could not play upon his pride there!”

“And the ban of the Church has not frightened him?”

“It has. And I know he has sleepless nights over it, because he cannot go to Confession. What made it worse was, that once when he spoke of going to Confession outside the diocese, and to some sympathetic priest, Father James told him that no priest had the power, even if he had the wish, to absolve him.”

“And still he clings on?”

“Yes! That dreadful oath is weighing on him. He thinks he cannot break it. And — he has such a love for Ireland! It would break your heart to hear him sometimes — the way he talks about Ireland. You’d imagine, for all the world, he was speaking about mother.”

“Ah! that’s bad,” said Mary Carleton. “An enthusiast, a fanatic, a would-be-martyr, — what can you do with such?”

“There’s one power, and only one, stronger than patriotism, they say,” continued Agnes.

“And that is?” said Mary Carleton, heedlessly.

“The love of a woman!”

“And that means your brother loves me; and for me would throw up his allegiance?”

There was a tone of scorn in the words, that frightened Agnes a little, but she said:

“I am only conjecturing, Mary. Indeed, I never heard — I have no idea — that is, I never heard Myles speak in that manner of you. I am only a child. But, [90] Mary, Mary, I tell you that you alone can save him!”

“And if I did,” said Mary Carleton, “that is, if Myles Cogan abandoned for me a cause deemed so sacred by him that he is prepared to give his life for it, what then? Could I ever respect him again? Never!”

She spoke so strongly, her whole face transfigured, and her eyes flashing with a strange light, that Agnes Cogan trembled before her, and then rose up.

“Oh, I should never have come!” she said. “I am so foolish! See now, you despise me; and if Myles should ever hear that I came to you on such an errand, he could never forgive me!”

“Never mind!” said Mary Carleton, more calmly. “He can never hear about it. But, keep your own counsel. The times are dangerous! Good-bye!”

She kissed and parted with her young friend, who went away disconsolate; and it was only on the threshold of her own door that she just remembered that she should have asked her friend:

“Why then did you send Myles that note?”

[91]

XIV

The spring of 1867 broke fair and promising, so far as Nature was concerned. Men’s minds, too, were restful because the threatened outbreak of 1866 had not taken place. Clearly these Fenians were poor players at revolution. They made up in boasting what they lacked in courage. District-Inspector Rendall was scornful.

“I told you,” he said at the Carletons, “what these fellows were. They have bolted at the last moment — a clear case of funk. But, they are not going to escape us. We have evidence enough to hang half-adozen at least.”

“Was it the constabulary, or the troops, they were afraid of?” asked Mary Carleton, innocently.

“I should say our men,” he answered. “You see we’d have to face the first brunt of the conflict. The troops would be in reserve. And I have an idea that the rebels would get less quarter from us.”

“Why?”

“Well, because our men are Irish; and the troops are mostly English. And you know that no people on earth are so savage with each other, either in civil or political life, as our brave Irish.”

“Ah, yes!” she said sadly. “Then the whole thing is blown over?”

“Yes! It only remains now to ferret out and punish these rebels, who have been keeping the whole country in commotion.” [92]

James Halpin, Head Centre of his district in the Midlands, seemed to think differently.

“Comrades,” he said, in the vast room-loft in the lane, and addressing nearly one hundred and fifty Fenians, “the hour has come. I have to announce to you that the general rising, to which we have been anxiously looking forward, is indeed to take place on the night of the 12th of February, that is, on this night week. The time is short; but the authorities have expected that we should all be ready. Make your own domestic arrangements, therefore, in your own homes. The military arrangements are as follows:

> “‘Section A. will meet at ten ‘clock that night at Galwey’s cross, crossing the fields and river to avoid observation. A detachment of ten men will be told off to bring the rifles and bayonets from the place of concealment, which will be pointed out on the map to the officer in command.
>
> Section B. is told off to cut off the railway communications with the junction, by displacing the rails and sleepers at intervals; and to cut the telegraph wires all around the town.
>
> “‘Section C. under command of Myles Cogan, now raised to the rank of Colonel, will converge at the village of Knockbarry, attack the police-barrack there, and seize the arms and ammunition; and then proceed with all haste towards the Junction, where General Massey will be in command of fifteen hundred men.’

“Each soldier shall provision himself for three days with bread, potted meat, and cheese. All spirituous liquors are sternly prohibited. After the first successes, it will be the duty of the representatives of the Republic to see after the commissariat department, and provision the men.

“I have no more to say. The time has come to show whether we are men, or only cattle; and I am sure, our contingent shall not be the first to waver or retreat; but may be the first to advance to victory; and from [93] victory to victory, until we shall have swept every trace of foreign domination from our land.”

There was no applause, except when he spoke of Myles Cogan’s promotion, when every man looked towards the latter and said: “Good! That’s right!” The men silently dispersed. One said:

“Thank God at last! We’re going out into the open; instead of hiding like rats in a stable.”

On the 11th of February, the men were summoned again, this time to be told that the rising was postponed from want of preparation, etc.

“D—n them!” said the men. “They’re only making fools of us. Lade us out, Myles Cogan, and let us see the beginning and end of it.”

But Myles shook his head. There was great pity in his heart for these men who were to be made a holocaust for their country.

But two days later, like a thunderclap came the intelligence that the whole of Kerry was up in revolt, that the hills were swarming with armed men, that already certain skirmishes had taken place in which the rebels were victors — in fact, that the gallant little kingdom had flung down

the gauntlet at the feet of the British Empire, and, alone and unaided, was about to challenge the omnipotence of England. Not one of the circumstances of a revolution was wanting. Midnight forays on barracks, much parleying and diplomacy; a few guns seized; county families fleeing from their mansions into the towns and cities, and carrying their plate under military escort to the banks; trains carrying troops and guns, rushing through railway stations heavily guarded; officers rushing here and there, not knowing what to do in such guerrilla warfare; and then — the collapse. Kerry finds there [94] is no national, nor even a provincial, rising. The contermand [sic] had come too late. The guerrilleros disperse and hide themselves. District-Inspectors become suddenly valiant; and take detachments of men to sweep the mountains and scour the valleys, and hang all these rascally rebels as high as Haman. After a day or two, the troops disperse; and the county gentlemen come out from the hotels where they were hiding, and, in lieu of the fox-hunting of which they have been feloniously deprived, they accompany the police and the straggling soldiery just for the chance of potting a rebel.

District-Inspector Rendall had not been ordered southwards as he fondly hoped. So at least he said in Edward Carleton's drawing-room, a few days after the abortive rising had been suppressed.

"Just what I told you," he said to the family, in whom he was becoming much interested. "Just a show of opposition, and these vermin run like rats. They have raided one or two police barracks and stolen the guns. And then — on the first sign of the red-coat, always the terror of the Irish Croppy, they got away into their holes in the rocks."

"But that does not speak well for the constabulary, Mr. Rendall," said Mary Carleton, "that the Fenians take away their rifles, and only run when they see a red-coat."

"Ah, but, my dear Miss Carleton, remember, that in these isolated stations there are never more than five or six men; and they could not resist five hundred, or, perhaps, a thousand rebels, even though these had but pikes or pitchforks. But, when the red is seen gleaming through the trees — "

"But surely 'tis at night these raids take place?" said Miss Carleton. [95]

"Quite so! but the moon was shining on the night of the 12th, and 13th—"

"To be sure! And it made the red uniforms more conspicuous. To be sure!"

Mr. Rendall, a little flurried and nettled at this badinage, was not a little surprised when the young lady accompanied him to the door, and, placing her finger lightly on his arm, said:

"Mr. Rendall, do me a favour!"

"With pleasure," he said, his face beaming under the compliment.

"You said there would be arrests after these foolish attempts at insurrection?"

"Undoubtedly. The thing is now crushed; and we have only to punish the instigators."

"You have the power?"

"Yes, without warrant or information. We can arrest even suspects."

"Then you would do an excellent piece of work if you promptly arrested the ringleader here!"

"Halpin? He's Head Centre now?"

"I didn't mean him. He is only a lay-figure — a poor, half-blind schoolmaster."

"There's only one other of any importance — Cogan! Do you mean Cogan?"

"I do!"

He started back in surprise.

“You think Cogan should be arrested?”

“Yes, and promptly!”

“Then it shall be done!” he said gallantly, raising her proffered hand to his lips.

He went home, wondering at the ways of women.

“I could swear she was in love with that fellow!” he said.

[96]

XV

The last day of February, 1867, another meeting of the Fenians was convened; and this time the Head Centre announced as a final decision that on the night of March 5th there was to be a general rising in all the counties of Munster, in Wexford, Wicklow, and Dublin, and in parts of Connaught. There was some incredulity, and not a few sarcastic observations. But Halpin was positive that this time there was to be no mistake. The whole scheme had been planned and arranged by competent men, who had also had the benefit of the military experience of some American officers.

“The military programme,” he said, “will be the same as I announced at a former meeting.”

He went over all the details, one by one, and finally impressed on the men the necessity of the most absolute secrecy, if the government were to be taken by surprise.

Myles Cogan, who, since his deposition, had always attended these meetings in silence, broke that silence this evening and said:

“There’s very little use in that admonition, for every word that is spoken here is in the hands of Rendall before twenty-four hours.”

There was some commotion, and not a little anger at this. They knew that Myles spoke by the book, and was not likely to make mistakes.

“Then, by ,’* said Murty Linehan, “this should [97]

be looked into. Who is the traitor? I say the doors should be locked, and let every man be put upon his oath, until we find out the informer.”

“And do you think,” said the Head Centre, calmly, “that the man who has broken the Fenian oath, by betraying his comrades, would hesitate to perjure himself here before us to save his skin?”

There was no answer to this. But Murty said, and the remark met with universal approval:

“There should be some manes of finding out a thraitor. Blood will spake!”

“Only when ’tis shed!” said the schoolmaster, solemnly, as he looked towards Myles.

“Well, no matter,” said a good-humoured fellow. “We’ll all be out this night week; and there will be no more saycrets for police or priests, for, begor, I’m more afraid of Father James than of Rendall.”

“He has the bad tongue out an’ out,” said a comrade. “But, faith, his heart is in the right place. Of course, he has to barge us, and denounce us as limbs of the Divil; but, begor, I’m thinking his own fingers are itching for the pike.”

“Say thim words agen, Maisther Mylie, that you said the priesht composed, while he was damning and blashting us all.”

And Myles said, but not with the verve and spirit of former times:

“About old Banba, and Dathi?”

“Yes, yes; there’s life in ‘em, although a priesht wrote ‘em!”

“‘Tis not a time for poetry or sing-song,” said Myles, gravely. “We have work to do now!”

“Yes! But, begor, why shouldn’t we be singing at our work? Do, Master Mylie!” [98]

“‘Tis our last meeting, till we meet on the field,” said Halpin. “It may help us on a little. Colonel!”

“You think so?”

“I do!”

“Do you wish it?”

“I do!”

“’Tis a command,” said Myles. “The words are these:

> “Up there, up there, along the hillsides,
> Under red cairns do our heroes sleep.
> Theirs is a slumber that is long and deep!
>
> “Up there, up there, along the hillsides.
> The wild winds blow, and loud the raven croaks,
> And the black Heaven in its anger cloaks
> Heather and gorse; and the slow, biting tide
> Of Time eats into even the granite hide
> Of rocks whereon the Storm King ever rides,
> Up there, up there, along the hillsides!
>
> “Up there, up there, along the hillsides,
> One ever watches leaning on his spear;
> He cannot speak to mortal man, but bides
> A time to watch red wolf or fallow deer
> And ask them: If for ancient Banba’s sake
> The time has come, and shall we cry, Awake!
> And whitherward the ghostly courier rides?
> Up there, up there, along the hillsides.
>
> “ Up there, up there, along the hillsides.
> Dark is the night; but brilliant is one star, —
> The ruddy planet beckons us to war,
> Up there, up there, along the hillsides!
>
> “Up there, up there, along the hillsides,
> Is the day dawning; doth the morning break,
> And the cry gather; Comrades, awake?
> Up there, up there, along the hillsides!

[99]

> “Yea! the dawn doth break; and with a shiver
> The warriors ope their eyes, and grasp their spears,
> ’Tis a long sleep — this of a thousand years!
> But Banba is unchanged in hill, and lake, and river!
>
> “Up there, up there, along the hillsides.
> Old Dathi’s sword’s unsheathed; and the light

Of shields ten thousand make the mountains bright,
Comrades, respond, whatever fate betides!
Her Fate the eternal motherland abides
Up there, up there, along the hillsides!"

"The eternal motherland!" said Halpin. "Ah, yes, she is calling on her children now as for a thousand years she has called them to rally to her standard; and fight once more the battles, in which she has ever been defeated, but never conquered! What a destiny is ours! Out of millions she has called on us to rise; and raise our hand once more for her. She leaves to others to seek themselves — to drink, to take bribes, to sell themselves, body and soul, to the enemy! Us she commands to stand by her side, and defend her. We cannot fail. Some of us must fall; I shall be the first! But, when I fall, another worthier than I shall take my place. You know whom I mean. Him follow to death also, or victory!"

They walked home together, Myles and Halpin. In some strange way, the greatness of this poor, uncouth schoolmaster was stirring Myles' soul to the depths. He felt that strange shyness which comes upon one who is suddenly confronted with royalty. Where he goes, he thought, I shall follow.

They stood together for a moment at the door of Halpin's humble residence, and exchanged a few businesslike words. They then grasped hands, — it was [100] unusual with them, but they felt the occasion was solemn, — and separated.

It was after ten o'clock, as usual, when Myles reached the iron wicket that opened into the lawn before his house. He was surprised to see a covered car drawn up as if in waiting a little further along the road, still more surprised when a lantern was flashed in his face, and Rendall, surrounded by a body of police, placed his hand on his shoulder and said:

''I arrest you in the Queen's name!"

"On what charge?" said Myles, eagerly scanning the windows of the house, lest Agnes should see what was happening.

"On the charge of belonging to a treasonable society, uttering seditious language, and administering treasonable oaths!"

"On whose information is the warrant issued?"

"That cannot be divulged now. You will pardon the rudeness, Mr. Cogan; but we have a duty to perform."

And he ordered one of the men to place the handcuffs on Myles' wrists. Myles shuddered and chafed at the indignity.

"'Tis a gross insult," he said. "You have my word of honour!"

Rendall shook his head and pointed to the car. Two constables led Myles forward, and at half past ten o'clock he was lodged in the Bridewell.

As he sat on the wretched boards that served as a prison bed, his first thought was of his sister. He imagined her waking up in the morning and hearing the news of his arrest. Then he thanked God that she had not seen it. That clapping the handcuffs upon him would have killed her. [101]

His next thought was one of pride, that the Government should have selected him as the most dangerous enemy in the place, for he had ascertained from the gaoler that he was the only person arrested that night. Then, he thought, what effect will it have on the projected rising. And he had to admit that it would have none.

He was disturbed in his meditations by the appearance of the gaoler's wife, who brought in a copious supply of sheets and blankets for the night. She and her husband were old friends of the Cogans.

"You're breaking the law, Mrs. Tobin," said Myles, gaily. "I'm to have a plank bed, after the handcuffs."

"And sweet bad luck to the *boccagh* who put 'em on you," she said. "If some of the min had their way, it is on himself they'd be putting 'em. But the time will come! Here, get up out of dat, and lave me make a decent bed for Bride Cogan's son. 'Tis well she disarved it, of me, and many beside me."

So the good woman went on, whilst she arranged sheets and blankets and pillows for the prisoner. They were needed. The night was bitterly cold; and local Bridewells were not heated with hot-water pipes as in the cities. But she never ceased her outpour of vituperation and pity and anger, as she patted the sheets, and stroked the pillows, and made a decent bed for her prisoner.

"If Mr. Rendall finds out all you have done for me," he said, "you and Dick will be transported."

" Faith, an' how'll he find it?"she exclaimed. " Sure you're not going to tell him; an' if he shows his ugly mug here in the morning, he'll see nothin' but a plank bed. But how did Miss Agnes take it?" she suddenly asked. [102]

"She knows nothing about it as yet," he replied. "But she'll hear it early enough tomorrow."And the tears started to his eyes.

"Well, God give her grace to bear her trial," she said, "me poor young lady. But, wisha now, Master Myles, why did you mix yourself up with the blagards of Fenians? Sure the priests are agin 'em; and every decent man in town is agin 'em; and, faith, they're agin themselves, because they say you can't trust wan among them. But I suppose," she continued, fearing to pain his feelings, "'tis the hot blood of youth. Well, they'll lave you cool yer heels here for a while; and thin, they'll lave you go; and thin, you'll be made for ever."

He was too absorbed in his own thoughts to hear her. She saw it, and recovered herself.

"But here am I, an ould angashore, codraulin' away; and I never axed you had you a mouth on you. What will you have, Masther Mylie, before you goes to bed? It is time enough to be thinkin' of yer breckfus in the morning."

"Nothing, Mrs. Tobin, nothing," he said. "Thank you ever so much. I had tea; and I want nothing more. As you say, we'll think of breakfast, if we live till morning."

"Wisha, thin, a sup of somethin' hot wouldn't do you any harm nayther. And sure, Dick is takin' his own night cap this blessed moment."

It would not do. Myles' staunch teetotallism was not to be undermined even under such winning temptations. Yet, when he looked around the wretched cell with its white, unplastered walls, its stone floor, its narrow window, he thought of his own comfortable [103] room at home, — his fire, his lamp, his books, his soft, comfortable bed, and shuddered.

She saw it; and said coaxingly:

"Lave me bring you a small sup. 'Twouldn't hurt a child!"

But he shook his head. She departed. He lay down to sleep; but could not. The suddenness of the thing had unnerved him.

There was another, who had also a sleepless night. She had done a desperate thing; and yet she didn't repent it. But it racked her brain, and tortured her imagination, and drove all sleep away until morning.

[104]

XVI

The morning dawned; and with it the news of Myles Cogan's arrest startled the town. It was bringing the revolution home to them; and they accepted it according to their prejudices or dispositions. Some, the staid, conservative, moneyed men, said: "Quite right! It was time that this young fool should be stopped in his mad career; quite true that the insult he offered to his father and their member should be avenged!"The poor said, in accents of indignation and grief:

"May God preserve him and every defender of his country!"

The rank and file of the Fenians were furious and alarmed — furious, because they had a great love for their young hero; alarmed, because it was clear the government was now on the alert, and could not be taken by surprise.

At Edward Carleton's breakfast table the matter came' up for discussion.

"Wonders will never cease," said he, cutting his toast into little squares. "That young fellow was in my office yesterday; and milder-mannered or more gentlemanly young fellow I never spoke to. We went through all his affairs to take out administration; and his head is as clear as a Q.C.'s. And then was it last night, or the night before Rendall was here; and he never even alluded to the matter — " [105]

"There was a desperate struggle, I'm told," said Mrs. Carleton, "and Mr. Rendall had to handcuff him. I hope Mr. Rendall wasn't hurt! Poor gentleman! What they have to face! What's the matter, Mary? You're touching nothing; and you've lost all colour!"

"'Tis nothing," said Mary, although she felt very faint, and dark lines beneath her eyes were evidences of her night's unrest. "'Tis the awful cold. I never felt so cold as last night."

"So it was! We must get Mary to keep up the fire in your bedroom. When it dies out in the morning, the temperature runs down very low. But, we must send up at once and inquire after Mr. Rendall. Would you write a note, Mary?"

"Don't ask me, mother," she said. "We can send up Allen. I'm sure nothing serious has occurred."

"We cannot know. These Fenians, I'm told, are always armed. They carry their guns and revolvers everywhere with them; and I believe this young Cogan was particularly desperate. But, what a mercy he's locked up. He cannot do any harm now! Is there any further news in town, Mary," she said to the young housemaid, who just then had entered the breakfast parlour, "about the arrest of Cogan?"

"Oh, there is, Ma'am. They say 'twas awful. Myles Cogan fought the police; and only they caught his hand in time. Ma'am, he was whipping out his revolver to shoot them all dead. And some of the Fenians, Ma'am, were behind the wall; and they'd have killed the chief and all the police, Ma'am, only they had Murphy's covered car, and they drove Myles Cogan away. And they are sayin', Ma'am — "

"There! I knew it was serious," said Mrs. Carleton. [106] "Tell Allen at once, Mary, to go and make the most minute inquiries, with my compliments, about Mr. Rendall, and to express our hopes that he has sustained no serious injury."

Edward Carleton was looking towards his daughter, as if the matter was becoming jocose; but that young lady's thoughts were evidently elsewhere, because she was gazing with dilated eyes through the window. And the housemaid reported in the kitchen, that Miss Mary was so troubled about the Chief, that she never touched a bit of breakfast, and looked for all the world like a ghost. And Allen took his orders meekly to inquire after Mr. Rendall; but he cursed someone hotly between his teeth.

It is probable, however, that amongst all those, who were thunderstruck by the news of the arrest, Halpin felt the blow most keenly. His feelings towards Myles were at once of a protective nature; as of an elder towards a younger brother; and yet of a reverential nature, as of one, who, deeming himself rather commonplace, looked up to and revered a superior. If he had any hope of Ireland, it was through the instrumentality of brave young souls, like Myles Cogan, her emancipation was to be effected. Of course, he felt by some prophetic instinct that they would be both struck down in this unequal struggle with the might of England. Yet, there was a faint hope that Myles would escape, and become again an inspiring factor to a new generation.

After school-hours, during which the boys watched him with a new interest, he tried to distract himself with his books, his fiddle, and his dog. These were his never-failing resources in all periods of mental trouble. Today they failed him. The history of Ireland, which [107] had always for him a haunting and melancholy sweetness, this evening took on a dark look, as of a something that had deepened from mere sadness into mourning. He thought he saw black bands around the margins of the pages; and an Alas! at the foot of every page, as of a story that was marked everywhere by ruin and failure.

He took up the old violin, and tried to call forth from its strings some word of hope. No! It sounded only like the wailing of wind in the chimney, or up along the brown and barren mountain-sides, where lost spirits dwell. He laid it down.

"Come here, Bran!"

Bran was the name of Ossian's mighty mastiff, who was to go with the old Pagan bard into the other world whether of bliss or horror, and whose bones were to mingle with his master's in the same grave. This Bran was a tiny, wiry little terrier, very vicious towards strangers, very loving of his own. He jumped on Halpin's knee, and looked into Halpin's face with those soft brown eyes of his, as if he would, and even could, penetrate his master's thoughts.

"Bran," said the schoolmaster, slowly, rubbing the silky ear of the dog, "what a libel art thou on thy mighty namesake! In what dread moment of sarcasm did I plant that name upon thee! It means greatness, little Bran, ferocious strength and swiftness and endurance, readiness to tackle wolf or bear, or fox, readiness to die for thy master. And such as thou art, little Bran, compared with the mighty prototype, even such are we! For we, too, are degenerate. All our strength has departed, oozed away through our palsied limbs and brains, and left us as helpless towards the enemy, as thou, little Bran, wouldst be before a ravening [108] wolf. But, like thee, we can at least be faithful and loving. For I do read in thy brown eyes, little Bran, that thou lovest this poor schoolmaster, who owns thee. Nay, thou wouldst lay down thy little life for me! And what greater love can be than this?"

He paused, and then laying the dog gently back on the hearth rug, he took a sheet of paper, and wrote his will. This he folded, and put away in a drawer.

"It is informal, and unwitnessed except by God," he said. "But who would care to fight for all this rubbish?"

He then put on his overcoat and hat, and, calling Bran to follow him, he went out into the night.

It was dreadfully cold, a sharp north-easter blowing up the street, drying up roads and sideways, and drying up the moist natural heat in the veins of men. A few groups of men, weatherproof, were gathered around street corners, discussing the one all-absorbing topic of Myles Cogan's arrest. They flung out some dark hints as the schoolmaster passed, and he did not heed them.

A ballad-singer was trolling out in wavering accents a verse of John O'Hagan's song, "Dear Land":

" My father died his home beside,
They seized and hanged him there,
His only crime in evil time
Thy hallowed green to wear;
Across the main his brothers twain
Were forced to pine and rue,
But still they turned, with hearts that burned
In hopeless love to you, dear land,
In hopeless love to you!"

A policeman stepped off the sidewalk, and, rudely hustling the ballad-singer, said: [109]

"Stop that at wanst, or I'll run you in!" But Halpin went on, the words ringing a mournful threnody in his ears:

" In hopeless love to you, dear land, In hopeless love to you."

The policeman followed him along the street; and then left him.

He crossed the bridge and stopped. The river, Myles' river, that he loved so much in ebb and flood, in tawny and irresistible strength, or in sparkling and singing gladness, rolled by swollen and turbid in the darkness. Here and there, leaning against the limestone parapets, were little groups of two or three, discussing the one subject of Myles Cogan's arrest.

Halpin passed them by, unrecognised in the darkness. He went down along the sordid suburb that led towards Millbank, and paused for a long time before the house, debating with himself whether he would intrude, and how he might be received, and what he would say if Agnes came to him. At length, he made up his mind, opened the little iron gate, crossed the gravelled path, and knocked at the door. There was a light in the dining-room. The little maid opened the door, and ushered him in. Agnes Cogan was there, and the priest.

Halpin started back, but the priest said encouragingly:

"Come in, Mr. Halpin. I presume you have come to see Miss Cogan in her great trial."

The schoolmaster sat down, bewildered. He had none of the ease and composure with which men of the world are trained for such difficult situations. He murmured some commonplace, and was silent. [110]

"The whole question now is," said the priest, as if continuing a conversation with Miss Cogan, "to find out why, and on whose information, Myles has been arrested; and then to get him out on bail."

"Yes, of course," said Agnes, "we must get him out of that dreadful place at once. Think of last night! Why, I shivered all night in my own room with a blazing fire."

"If we could only find out," said the priest, "why, and on whose informations, he has been arrested, it would guide us. We are groping in the dark; and, of course, the police won't help us."

"Isn't there some way of having him brought before a magistrate and put on trial, and then let out on bail?" said the poor girl.

“Of course. But that may mean days. It may mean a week or a fortnight, and meanwhile — “

“Meanwhile, poor Myles will be starved and frozen to death,” said the weeping girl. “Oh, ’tis too dreadful!”

“It is so strange,” said the priest, looking at the silent schoolmaster, “that Myles alone should have been arrested. The government must have thought him a dangerous adversary.”

“And he was,” said Halpin, breaking silence, “not for what he could do against England, so much as for his example.”

The priest and the girl looked at him, as if for explanation.

“Mr. Cogan could do nothing,” he continued, — “if Robert Emmet rose from the dead, he could do nothing; but fail. But these men are the salt of the earth. But for such as they, this country of ours would be as putrid as the Dead Sea.” [111]

“The cost is too great!” said the priest. “The salt is more than the meat.”

“No!” said Halpin, solemnly. “What is my life, your life, Myles Cogan’s life, compared with even the temporary redemption of the race? Nothing. Myles understands. One like him, even one in each generation, can save the country from putrefaction.”

“I’m sure he is great enough to make the sacrifice,” said the priest, “but what of his friends? They, too, must suffer.”

“And they will, and gladly,” said Halpin, looking at Agnes, and putting a strange emphasis into his words. “We expect it, and we shall not be deceived.”

The priest rose up, and left. Halpin lingered behind*. He stood opposite the girl, when she returned from the door.

“I have said too much?” he said, questioningly and humbly.

“No!” she murmured, extending her hand.

[112]

XVII

“Really, Mary,” said Mrs. Carleton, a few days after the arrest, “you must see Dr. Gibson. You’re looking ghastly, and eating nothing, and moping around — will you see Dr. Gibson? He’s very clever!”

“I have no need, mother,” she said. “I assure you I’m not unwell. There’s nothing wrong. It may be the cold weather — “

“Well, then, can’t you go out and take a long brisk walk, and bring back some colour. It makes me quite uneasy looking at you.”

“Yes! But where can one go?” said the girl, pettishly. “You see I have no companions; and ‘tis really tiresome walking alone, and without an object.”

“True, and I’m too much rheumatised to accompany you now.”

Mrs. Carleton went on with her work; but meditated a good deal. She stopped, made a decision, revoked it, renewed it, and finally said:

“I don’t like you to associate with mere business people,” she said hesitatingly, “but perhaps — the circumstances are very peculiar — perhaps you might like to call on that Cogan girl. I dare say she’ll be glad to see you now; and then, you needn’t meet that rebellious young man.”

“I didn’t like to propose it, Mother,” said the young girl, “knowing it to be against your wishes; but — poor Agnes — two such trials — coming in such quick succession — oh! It must be unbearable!” [113]

And to her mother’s intense surprise, her proud daughter burst into tears.

“There, there!” said Mrs. Carleton, soothingly. “Yes, you’re right. I should have thought of this before. Get your hat and coat, and go over; and if you can persuade Miss Cogan to go out and take a long walk with you — all the better.”

But when Mary did go out, Mrs. Carleton fell into a brown study, the refrain of which was:

“Well, I never! And I thought I knew every twist and turn in her character!”

There was an affectionate greeting between the girls; and Mary Carleton, who had been steeling herself against all emotionalism, did mingle her tears with those of her young friend. But these were speedily dried. The accusing angel came back to her in the voice of her young friend.

“I shouldn’t mind so much,” Agnes said, “but they are saying it is all treachery, that every word poor Myles said at their meetings went back to the police; and that some one, who was anxious to get Myles out of the way, made informations, and compelled the police to arrest him.”

Every word was a dagger in her friend’s heart; but she went on unconsciously:

“I don’t know what to make of that Mr. Halpin — the schoolmaster. They are all saying that he is the informer, and that he was always anxious to get poor Myles out of the way.”

“They are all saying that — are they?” asked her friend.

“They are. You know servants hear everything; and Janie here, who has two or three followers amongst [114] the — the Fenians, says, that the men are swearing they’ll shoot Halpin, unless Myles is released. There is to be another rising — “

“Ha!” said Mary Carleton, startled out of her self-possession. “There is to be another rising? The fools!”

“Yes!” continued Agnes, volubly. “ But, Mary, you won’t give me away, or tell Mr. Rendall — ”

“Agnes, how can you?” said Mary Carleton, in a tone of reproof and anger.

“Pardon! But everything is so dangerous now, and you never know when you may be quoted, and there is so much talk about spies, and traitors, and informers — “

“And you’re afraid you’ll be shot some night coming home from confession?”

“No! But then Mr. Halpin was here the other night—”

“Oh! He called on you?”

“Yes! It was kind; but I didn’t expect it. And Father James was here, and we were talking about everything; and then Mr. Halpin said, the whole thing was utterly hopeless — he meant the Fenian rising — ”

“The wretch! And he Head Centre, and dragging these poor fellows into ruin. I’m glad now that your brother is in gaol!”

Agnes stared at her friend in astonishment; but Mary Carleton, feeling now that she had done a noble thing in saving Myles Cogan’s life, was buoyant.

“Oh, but,” Agnes said, “he had some queer sayings about some being sacrificed to save the country from — from — putrefaction. I think that is the word he used.” [115]

** That's all very fine. But, why doesn't he sacrifice himself?"

"But, he will, Mary. Surely, if there is a rising, Mr. Halpin will be killed!"

Mary Carleton looked closely at her young friend.

"Would you be glad to hear it?"

Agnes blushed, looked down at her hands, looked beseechingly at her friend.

"No!" she said softly.

"But he got your brother deposed from his Head Centreship, and, the people say, he has betrayed him."

Agnes looked still more bewildered. Her friend was probing too deeply.

"You don't believe it?" said Mary Carleton.

"No!" said Agnes, almost inaudibly.

"Nor I!" said Mary Carleton. "But on what grounds do you exculpate Halpin?"

Agnes looked still more shyly at her friend.

"Because," she said at last, "I think Mr. Halpin looked up to Myles, and worshipped him!" ' " Won't it be dreadful, then, if he is shot as a traitor?"

"It would be, of course. But I think Mr. Hialpin doesn't mind death. He seems to be anxious for it!"

"He said so?"

"No. He implied it. He seems to feel that we are all called upon to make sacrifices now."

"Even you?"

"Yes! He seemed to think we should all be martyrs, and confessors."

"He said so?"

"Yes! He implied that we all have to suflter, and that we should be glad to do so!"

"A strange man!" said Mary Carleton, musingly. "I'm sorry I was a little discourteous to him the [116] evening I met him here. But, it is so hard to notice a mere schoolmaster. Is it not?"

"Myles had a great regard for him!"

"And he for Myles! Damon and Pythias again. I'm afraid these patriots have no room for any love except among themselves."

She appeared hurt, and rose to go.

"Put on your hat, and your warmest jacket," she said, "and come along for a furious walk."

That evening, just after nightfall, Halpin was talking nonsense to his little dog, when a gentle tap was heard at his door. It was unusual, and it startled him a little, after Myles Cogan's arrest. The thought flashed across his mind:

"If they arrest me, what will these poor fellows do?"

But, instead of an officer and his police, a young lady, tall and closely veiled, stepped into the room. Bran barked furiously. Halpin placed a chair. But his visitor declined it. He stood still, in an attitude of waiting.

"Mr. Halpin," she said, "I must first ask your forgiveness. I was rude to you at Miss Cogan's a few nights ago!"

The schoolmaster bowed.

“Miss Carleton could not be rude,” he said. “She only kept her dignity.”

“No matter. It is no time for compliments. I have come on more serious business. I understand that you are under suspicion from your comrades.”

He grew a little pale; but said nothing.

“I even heard your life is in danger.”

He grew still paler; and grasped a chair.

“As a traitor?” he said, in a hollow voice. [117]

“Yes! Your men have now got hold of the idea that it was you hung out the black flag the day of the election; that it was you got Mr. Cogan deposed from the office of Head Centre; that it was on your information he has been arrested.”

The schoolmaster was silent, contending with new emotions.

“It is Fate,” he said. “The destiny that ever follows in the track of those who want to serve Ireland even at the sacrifice of their lives. I must submit!”

“Of course! But I want to say one word.”

She bit her lips, which were dry and pale.

“If ever the charge of Mr. Cogan’s arrest should be brought against you, say it was I, Mary Carleton, who contrived it.”

“You?” said the schoolmaster. “Impossible?”

“It is true!” she said, whilst the tears welled up in her eyes. “I was asked — I wanted — to save him; and there was no other way.”

“And you give me permission to defend myself at your expense?” he asked.

“Yes! I won’t have you suffer for me!”

“And you wish me in this way to divert the anger and suspicions of my comrades to you?”

“Yes! I have nothing to fear!”

“Nor have I!” he said. “You are right, Miss Carleton, however you have procured the information, there is to be a rising, and I shall be the first to fall. What matter to me, whether I fall by an English bullet, or at the hands of my comrades? My life shall be given for Ireland either way. Therefore your name shall never pass my lips, except to one; and then only, if necessary.”

“You mean Mr. Cogan?” [118]

“Yes! I couldn’t bear that he should think me faithless to him. And besides, he ought to know — ”

“That I betrayed him?” she said.

“That you saved him; and — forgive me! I was near saying something indelicate.”

She understood, and held out her hand.

“He will understand!” said the schoolmaster. [119]

XVIII

Snow, snow, snow, everywhere! Broad flakes, black against the sky, fall silently, but in their countless myriads on mountain and valley, on the roofs of houses, on groaning trees, on thoroughfares where they remain and form a soft woolly mass piled here and there in hillocks where man or beast may be lost; and on river and lake or bog-pond where they are noiselessly swallowed up, and only manifest themselves by the swelling of brown torrents that sweep madly to the sea. Snow is two feet high on the roads; and a certain horseman has to pick his steps, lest he should plunge into unseen hollows, and then his deed of daring should remain unaccomplished for ever; and snow is on the roofs of the prison where the said horseman pulls up hot and tired after his long ride, and thunders at the wicket, whilst his horse champs his bit and shakes the cold white flakes from his eyes and ears. And the snow comes down persistently and covers the old white head of the gaoler, who crosses the courtyard, swearing and grumbling at being called away from his hot fire and his glass of warm toddy on such a night.

He fumbles with half-frozen hands at the heavy keys, one of which he selects by lantern-light, fits it into the lock, and shoots back the bolt. The heavy iron gate swings to, and a hoarse, strong voice says in an accent of military command:

"I hold an order for the immediate release of a [120] certain Myles Cogan, who is detained here as her Majesty's prisoner."

"Maybe there are two sides to that question," said the gaoler, scrutinising the face and form of the stranger. "Who the devil are you, and where do you come from?"

The next moment he felt the cold steel of a revolver pressed against his forehead and heard:

"No palavering or nonsense, you d—d old fool. Quick, hand me those keys, and show me your prisoner; or I'll send six bullets through your old carcass."

"Maybe," said the old gaoler, thoroughly frightened, "there are them that thinks as much of Myles Cogan as you, whoever you are. But I suppose ye're a government officer and wants to take him to the County Gaol. So I'll bring him to ye! "

He shuffled away; and the stranger, holding his watch impatiently in his hands, began to count the seconds. As he did, a ghostly figure seemed to creep towards him, and a ghostly voice said:

" Up to time, Cap'n! Is all right?"

"All's right! Where's the mare?"

"Around the corner, saddled and bridled and well fed against the journey!"

"Good! After all, you d—d Irish have something in you. I only wish I had a drink and a rub down for this poor nag!"And he stroked the hot, steaming neck of his horse affectionately.

"That can be had, too," said the voice. "And a bite and a sup for yourself agin the night. We, d— d Irish, can do a bit of thinking for ourselves sometimes."

The gaoler and Myles were at his elbow.

"I deliver me pris'ner into your hands," said the [121] gaoler. "But you'll have to give me a formal receipt or a Habeas Corpus to show the government."

The men laughed, as they grasped hands.

"Good-bye, Mr. Cogan," said the old man, "and may your journey thry' [1] with you."

They passed down the narrow lane and knocking at a wicket sunk in the wall, they entered the back yard of a public house under the guidance of the man who had accosted them. From this they entered the kitchen, where a steaming hot supper was laid out on the kitchen table.

“There,” said the man, “tuck in, officers of the Irish Republic! Your horses will be ready when ye’re done; I am the Gineral commanding the whole Commissariat Department for the troops!”

The two men laughed, as they sat at supper.

“At least, if you do all your work as well as this, you may command a certificate from Captain McClure!”

“And you are McClure?” said Myles, enthusiastically, stretching out his hand and grasping the hand of the officer across the table.

“I guess I am,” said the other. “And now as our friend said, Tuck in! We have no time to lose. Look after our horses, Commissary-General, or I’ll report you at headquarters!”

For the man was staring open-mouthed at the young American officer, whose name was alreadj^ well known in Ireland as one of the most daring captains during the Civil War in America.

“And whither are we bound?” said Myles, trying to eat something through his excitement. “Are the men out?”

“My orders are sealed orders,” said McClure, cautiously. [1. Thrive.

[122] He seemed to be listening for something. But not a sound broke the stillness of the house. They could hear the champing in the stables close by.

“ But it is the duty of a soldier to look to the present. I guess you won’t get a meal like this for many a long day. So lay in stores for at least a month. You know our friend?” And he nodded towards the stables.

“Well!”

“Can he be trusted?”

“As yourself!”

“Good! And the people of the house!”

“All right. The poor old gaoler will get into trouble, though, when they find their bird has flown.”

“He has a good defence. He felt the cold steel on his forehead.”

“What, if he had resisted?”

“I’d have sent a bullet through his forehead.”

Myles shuddered, and looked inquiringly at the slight figure and pale face before him.

“Don’t shiver,” said McClure, encouragingly. “You’ll have to steel your nerves against such little incidents as that. It was not to play hide and seek we came over here!”

The men ate and drank in silence, Myles mindful of the admonition that he was commencing a soldier’s life.

Then their host came in.

“Your horses are ready, gintlemin,” he said.

“Very good,” said McClure. “One moment, please!” and he waved the publican away.

He took out a cigar and lit it, and smoked some time in silence.

“A word with you, Cogan!” he said, “before we go!” [123]

He paused, and then said:

“Let us be open and candid. Can your men be trusted?”

“I don’t understand. In what way?” said Myles.

“Will any of them sell the pass?”

“Not one! There’s not a man in the Brotherhood, who is not prepared to meet death for his country’s sake!”

“Good! But they have never been under fire. Will they run, do you think, when they hear the zip, zip! the tearing sound of the bullets?”

“Not a man. They are prepared to face anything!”

“Good!”

“They are badly-armed, badly-fed, they have no cavalry, no artillery, but strong arms and stout hearts.”

“And you expect to beat the same armies that chased the French all over the Peninsula, and smashed up Napoleon at Waterloo?”

Myles shook his head.

“The men do!” he said. “We don’t!”

“But the Republic — the Irish Republic?” queried the officer.

“That’s a dream — a phantasm!”

“Then, damn it, what are you fighting for?”

“To save Ireland!” said Myles.

“From what?”

“The men believe from England; we believe, from putrefaction!”

McClure pondered a little.

“’Tis a Quixotic idea; but there’s something in it. You think blood must be shed?”

“Yes! Nothing else can save the country but the salt of blood!”

“But is the country worth it?” [124]

“How can you ask? I would give fifty, Halpin a hundred, lives to save Ireland!”

“Halpin? Who is he?”

“Head Centre of our district and in command of all our forces!”

“But I mean in private life?”

“A schoolmaster!”

“I understand. You are going out as martyrs, not as soldiers! ’Tis absurd, but, by Heaven, it is glorious. I’m with you to the end.”

He flung the end of his cigar into the fire, and looked at his watch.

“There’s no time to lose,” he said. “Let us go!”

Their host brought out their horses, well-fed and groomed against the night-ride. They mounted, Myles imitating his comrade by slinging and then strapping a Winchester rifle across his shoulders and fastening a revolver in his belt. Then, with a “Goodnight!” and a “good luck,”

they trotted out slowly into the street. The church-clock, down in the town, was just chiming the quarters; and a second after the hour of midnight was spoken to the sky.

[125]

XIX

They had to go quietly through the streets, for the soft, velvety snow yielded too easily to their horses' hoofs, and enemies might be around. But when they left the town, and ascended the hill, they were able to move more quickly, especially on the summits where the fierce gusts of wind had swept the roads bare, even though the snow continued to fall. Four miles from the town they pulled up at a forge, and knocked. There was some demur on the part of the people inside; but the watchword "Aughrim" speedily unlocked the door.

"See after our horses' hoofs, Dan!" said Myles, when the first greetings were over. "We have many a rough mile before us!"

"Yes! and many a danger," said the man. "The dragoons passed here an hour ago; and d—d uncivil customers they were."

Myles and McClure exchanged glances. The latter took a parchment-scroll and a map from his pocket; and held it up, after breaking the seal against the forge fire.

"Slieve-Ruadh!" he read. "That's our destination; and we must be there before morning. Can we do it?"

"'Tis a good twenty miles!" said the smith. "Up hill and down valley, and as cross a country as ever ye travelled." [126]

"But surely we can do five miles an hour," said Myles, "and that will bring us there at five o'clock, if we don't miss our way."

"Faith then, Masther Myles, but that's likely enough, too."

"I know the place; but I don't know the roads," said Myles. "Let us see the map, Captain!"

They examined the ordnance map carefully. Roads seemed to branch off in every direction. Yet there were the worm-like dark lines that marked the summit of Slieve-Ruadh, there was the river flowing beneath to the Shannon. It seemed such a small span of country — such as might be ridden over at a fox-hunt.

They talked the matter over, whilst the smith was kniving and frosting the horses, and greasing the interior of their hooves lest they should pick up snowballs by the way.

"Don't make light of it, Master Myles!" he said. "It will be a straight run to hounds ontil ye mount. Knock-a-inhuic; and thin, ye have a valley before ye, where no road was ever made except by the goats since Adam; and then ye have a stiff climb up this side of Slieve-Ruadh, before ye descind into the valley."

"Well, there's no time to spare, I guess!" said McClure. "How much, my man?"

"Divil a penny to ye!" said the smith. "Don't I know what ye're bint on, as well as yereselves. Banaithlath! And may no divil of a Sassenach ever lay his hands on ye!"

They spurred again into the night; and now a faint moonlight spread across the sky, which made their journey easier, whilst the snow, still falling swiftly, concealed them from prying eyes that were sure to be watching for such as they that night. [127]

At last, they cantered through a lonely village. The lights were all out; and the snow lay in heaps on the thatched roofs. They were drawing in a little to ease their horses, when a sudden gleam of

light, which reddened the snow before them, suggested to Myles that they were just about to pass the Constabulary barracks, where every man would be on the alert.

“Spur for your life!” he whispered to McClure; and both horsemen dashed forward at a gallop. Fortunately, the heavy snow had deadened the noise of their approach; but their swift and suspicious flight athwart the windows of the barracks roused the men.

The riders heard behind them the command:

“Halt! Halt! there!” and the next moment a rifle-bullet whizzed between them. They heard its soft thud, as it struck a tree by the wayside.

“Good!” said Myles, without slackening his speed. “I can say at least that I have been under fire!”

McClure was silent. He was contrasting in his mind wild, dare-devil rides such as this across the plains of Georgia, down by Atlanta, under the walls of Richmond; but oh! how different! Then he had scores of gallant comrades beside him, whose wild laughter rang out above the jinghng of spurs, or the musical rattle of chain-bridles, or the clank of sabres; and, behind him, were massed the myriads of the North, fully-equipped, and under the command of experienced generals. There, if they carried their lives in their hands, at least they would meet an honourable death, without fear of the hangman’s noose; and, if they came out of the battle unscathed, why, there were epaulettes and gold lace and honour. But here was a solitary comrade, who had [128] never heard a shot fired in anger until two minutes ago; and there were a gang of poor, unarmed peasants, who were going to fight with pitchforks and pikes the trained armies of the Empire. He actually laughed outright at the absurdity.

“That’s the first time you have heard the whizz of a bullet?” he said to Myles.

“Yes!” said Myles. “I know the rattle of duck-shot on an autumn morning; but that seems different somehow!”

“Rather. And if you heard the scream of a shell above your head; or the rattle of grape, like hailstones on a glass roof — what then?”

“A man has only one life,” said Myles, proudly. “What matter whether he gets his skull open by a sabre cut; or is torn up by a bullet. ’Tis all the same!”

“So it is! so it is!” said McClure. “And whether a man gives up his life, fighting for the emancipation of an American nigger, or to make these poor devils of Irishmen into men — isn’t it all the same?”

“We’re too far gone to discuss the matter,” said Myles, with a little show of anger. “ We have to face what’s before us; and talk about reason and motive hereafter.”

“Well said,” answered McClure. “But I’m just thinking what hay-eating asses the military here must be to leave such a road as this unpatrolled and unambushed at such a time.”

He had scarcely uttered the word when a black figure seemed to start up out of the ground before them, and to swing his arms in a warning manner. They drew up, and, with the instinct of a soldier, McClure put his hand on his revolver. [129]

“Good-night, gintlemin!” said the apparition.

“Go to the devil, man,” said McClure, angry at being stopped.

“Begor, maybe you’d be there before me, av I didn’t stop ye!” was the reply.

“Well, well, what’s the matter?” said McClure.

“The matther is this,” said the peasant, leisurely. “There’s a crass road a mile a head o’ ye. Av ye takes the road to the right, ye’ll soon come up with a squadron of dragoons, and maybe ye’ll put ‘em to flight, or maybe they’d sind ye where you were polite enough to sind me. Av ye takes the middle road, it will take ye into —, where the red-coats have a hoult of the railway, and the peelers are waltzing up and down the shthreets. But av ye takes the road to the left, it will lade ye to the Hill of the Black Pig, and from there ye may see yere comrades. Good-night! and God be wid ye on yere journey!”

“A queer people!” said McClure. “They seem to know everything. But they’re a trifle tough and long winded!”

“They’re as true as steel!” said Myles.

“Don’t tell me that, Cogan!” said McClure. “I know them better than you.”

They were silent henceforward, until, as the morning dawned, the snowstorm thinned out into tiny flakes, then into sleet, then lifted itself up, and sped towards the mountains, and they saw a level plain before them, and the view was bounded by a slight elevation, snowcapped also, which they guessed was the Hill of the Black Pig.

They were now exposed to observation from every side; but they rode along the face of a high plateau; and from the plains beneath they could hardly be [130] seen. They slowly mounted the slight acclivity; the road suddenly ceased; and they gazed down at a long, deep valley through which a black river was cutting its way. Here and there a village arose, only visible as a huge snow-ball in the morning light. A few trees masked the homes of prosperous farmers; across the valley the ground rose up precipitously, the mountain having the appearance of having been sheared perpendicularly from the summit downward. The glen over which they now stood, sloped down at a very sharp angle. It was covered Avith rocks and heather, which now made hillocks of snow. Black spots here and there marked deep bogholes; and they judged from the ground beneath them that the surface of the glen was shifting and slippery shingle. No trace of road or passage was observable, but after some delay and close examination, they thought they had found a footpath, which was the only possible way of descent.

Slowly and carefully, their horses’ bridles hanging loosely over their arms, they moved down the hillside, wisely leaving the animals to themselves.

“What a mark for a rifle-shot we make now,” said McClure. “Black specks on a white ground. Even the English could not miss us!”

Stumbling, slipping, sliding, now knee-deep in a hidden bog-hole, which was lightly covered with unmelted snow, now knocking against a hidden boulder, they made the perilous descent; and when they emerged on the high road, the two men were bathed in perspiration, and their horses’ flanks were white with sweat.

An old woman, standing at the door of a rude and ruined cabin, stared at them, her withered hands shading her eyes from the white glare. [131]

“You’re up early, granny,” said McClure.

“I am, agragal, and so are ye,” she said. “I was just making a cup of tay agin the cowld mornin’.”

“And a good thing to do,” rejoined McClure. “What would you say if we joined you in drinking it?”

“An’ welkum — and welkum, a hundred times,” she said. “But sure ye’re the bould min intirely to be shtandin’ out there, an’ the sojers and peelers at the other side of the hill.”

“True for you,” said McClure. “But in war, we must take our chances.”

“If I were ye,” said the old woman, lowering her voice, “I’d take thim horses of yeres here behind the shelter of the ould cabin, an’ I’ll have the tay ready for ye, when ye comes in.”

They saw the wisdom of it; and pulled round the wretched building. Here they were out of observation, except from the hill from which they had descended.

A bowl of tea and a junk of home-made bread revived them. They put a coin on the rough deal table.

“No, no, no!” said the old woman, “I know ye, and where ye’re goin’ this blessed mornin’. May God be wid ye, and bring ye safe.”

But McClure persisted.

“’Tisn’t for the tea and bread I’m giving it to you,” he said; “but as a keepsake to remember two Fenians.”

She grabbed the coin, and kissed it passionately, then rubbed it in her apron.

“I’ll keep it,” she said, “I’ll keep it; an’ ‘twill be the cowld and hungry day when I part with it. But I’ll hang it round little Patsey’s neck; and tell him where it kem from.” [132]

They drew out their horses into the main road; and were about to leave, when McClure said:

“The devil! We never thought of asking how we are to climb that wall. Come here, Granny! Is there a road, or a ladder, or any way, where we can get over that hill yonder.”

“There is,” she said. “Half a mile down the road, ye’ll come to an ash-tree on the right. Turn sharp, and ye’ll shtrike on the main road that runs through Slieve Ruadh. And thin — “

“Well, what then?”

“Take care of yereselves, when ye gets out an the top. The byes heard firing down to the esht this mornin’ airly; there’s bad work goin’ on there. *Banathlath*!”

“ *Banath-lath*!” said the men, as they slowly passed down the road.

True enough, at the end of half a mile, there was a high ash-tree, and, turning sharply, they ascended the public road that led over the mountain. Vast quarries of red sandstone, whence the mountain took its name, were on their right hand, and on their left. They saw the deep scars everywhere left by pick and powder. Then, almost before they expected it, they crested the hill; and a vast, snow-covered plain, extending for miles, lay before them.

[133]

XX

The sharp crack of rifles from a plantation of fir-trees, far down on the left hand, was borne to their ears on the cold, frosty air.

“Dismount at once!” said McClure, “and keep on the right flank of your horse. And I shall go forward twenty paces or so. Go slowly, and let them think these are mountain nags out for an early airing.”

They dismounted, and led the horses slowly along the high road. Then McClure, still holding the horse’s bridle, stepped into a deep hollow, where he could not be seen; and taking out a field-glass, he scrutinised hill and valley carefully.

“The fighting is going on in that plantation,” he said. “The men on both sides are hidden from view, and the river runs between them; but a lot of fellows are scurrying away over the mountains. Can they be scouts or pickets, I wonder, or — “

He looked inquiringly at Myles, whose face showed marked signs of anxiety.

“They may be the peelers, drawing in around the wood,” he said.

“No!” said McClure. “They are in bodies of three or four men; and they are running up the mountain side, and then disappearing.”

He replaced the glass, saying:

“No matter. We must give them a look-in!”

They passed down the hill more rapidly, and turned [134] sharply to the left. A farmer’s house stood near the road. The man was calmly smoking in his doorway.

“Must be a lot of woodcock around here?” said McClure. “They’re potting away the game, like mad.”

“Yaos!” drawled the farmer. “Well for the game if they had wings to fly, I guess!”

“Yank?” said McClure.

“No! Irish!” said the man. “But, perhaps, ye’re goin’ to take a hand,” as he watched the rifles, and the caparison of the horses. “I guess that shootin’-iron of yours was never made in this country. It has a look of Waltham about it.”

“Look here!” said McClure. “You know a thing or two. I am McClure, Captain McClure of the 9th “

The man’s pipe fell from his mouth, and was broken, as he leaped forward, and grasped the officer’s hand.

“Tare-an-ages, man,” he said. “McClure! McClure! Why, we fought side by side, at Fredericksburg. And what the devil are you doin’ here?”

“Captain!” said Myles. “Our fellows are under fire yonder. Let us hurry on!”

“True!” said the Captain. “How can we reach the Fenians?”

“An’ yere goin’ to fight a regiment of infantry, and a squadron of peelers with two guns; for the fellows yonder have only spades and pikes. Well, I’m jiggered!”

“You won’t tell on them?” said Myles. “Well, don’t give us away, anyhow!”

“No, sonny, I won’t,” said the farmer. “That ain’t my way. An’ if yere so bent on throwing away yere lives, wal, there is a boreen a few hundred yards [135] further on. Get in there, and move along; and, I guess, ye’ll soon see the red tunics, and hear the ripping of the bullets. But, oh! McClure, McClure!” And he turned away.

Myles was growing impatient, and hurried on. Sure enough down the road a boreen turned off at a sharp angle from the road. They followed it for a little distance; and then, leaving their horses tethered to a fir-tree, they crept along under shelter of the high ditch, which was topped with furze and white thorn; and soon they reached an open space, where they reconnoitred. To the left was a thin plantation of fir-trees, and they could see the splinters and branches falling, as the English bullets cut them. A deep river rolled darkly in front. Across the river was a spacious upland, dotted here and there by the red coats of the infantry, whilst an occasional puff of smoke showed that the soldiers too were ambushed away in a thick wood on the other side. The firing from the soldiers was intermittent, but constant. No volleys, but single shots fired rapidly into the plantation. From the plantation, the firing had almost ceased. Now and again, a rifle rang out, and a bullet whizzed across the river. Then there was a pause.

“Few men there!” whispered McClure, “or their ammunition is giving out.”

They waited a few moments. Then, a few shots rang in rapid succession from the soldiers, and McClure cried:

“Now, one brave dash across the open.”

They crossed without accident; and found themselves in a thick plantation, mostly planted with young fir-trees, although here and there, the big boles of older [136] trees gave adequate shelter. A high ditch bounded the wood on the south; and just outside it, the swollen river, looking black against the dazzling whiteness of the snow, rolled turbidly along. Not a soul was to be seen. They proceeded cautiously, bending low, for the bullets were crashing over their heads. They then paused to listen. A sharp crack near at hand brought them in another direction; and there, lying flat against the ditch, his rifle protruding above, and just now smoking after the discharge, was Halpin. Myles advanced towards him.

“Halpin, you?” he said. “Where are the men?”

“Lie down, lie down, at once,” he replied. “Whom have you brought?”

“McClure!” said Myles. “Captain, this is our Head Centre, Mr. Halpin.”

“Let me beg of you both to lie flat against the ditch,” said Halpin. “ Ha! I see you have your rifles. There’s the objective. Keep firing whilst we talk.”

And promptly, the two men pushed forward their guns, and sent a dozen bullets across the river. It was so sudden, the troops, who were kneeling here and there, in open formation, ran for shelter to the wood; and a young officer rode out to reconnoitre.

“But, Halpin, where are the men? Where are the Fenians? Do you mean that you are fighting alone?”

“Quite alone!” said Halpin, quietly. “The fellows had only a fowling-piece or two. There was an abundance of pikes. I saw it was hopeless, and I dismissed them, just as I shall now dismiss you!”

“There are two sides to that question,” said Myles. McClure was popping away, as fast as his rifle could be loaded. He seemed to enjoy the sport of shooting at the red-coats. [137]

“No!” said Halpin. “There is only one side. Ye had no right to come here; and must leave at once!”

“We thought you had a thousand men here,” was the answer.

“So I had. But what avail were they against two hundred armed and trained? They were no use here, except to get fired at. If I took them into the open on the charge, half would have been shot down. But now, quick! You and McClure must go!”

“Yes, I see,” said Myles. “McClure must go! His life is too valuable to be thrown away. But, why haven’t the soldiers crossed over and arrested you, or shot you, as would be more likely?”

“They think the wood is full of men; and that we are trying to decoy them. If they thought there were only three here, they would be down on us in a moment.”

“But they must find it out?”

“Of course, and soon. Your rifles keep them busy now; but we can’t keep it up. And, therefore, you both must go, Captain McClure?”

“Yes!”

“You know it is the duty of a soldier not to throw away his life unnecessarily?”

“I do.”

“Well, if you remain here half an hour longer, you will be shot; or you have the scaffold before you!”

“I understand!”

“Then go back the way you came! There is time yet.”

“And if I refuse?”

“Then, I step over that ditch, and get twenty English bullets through me!”

“And Cogan?” [138]

“Let him decide for himself. But you must go.”

McClure stepped aside, and seemed to be brushing away something from his eyes.

He grasped Halpin’s hand.

“You’re right” he said. “A man mustn’t throw away his life. I can do a little harm yet. But, if ever I get back to the States, I’ll tell them there that I have seen the two Goddarnedest fools, but the two bravest men, on this old tub of the earth.”

He slid away, and got safely under shelter, where the horses were. He loosened both bridles, and let Myles Cogan’s horse free. Then he led his own carefully away.

He had already reached the end of the boreen, when he heard shouts from the plantation.

“That’s the end!” and he put spurs to his horse.

It was. In an incautious moment, Halpin exposed himself, and a bullet passed through his right lung. Myles heard the fall and the thud of the rifle on the snow. He ran to help his fallen comrade, when he found himself pinioned from behind; and with the irons on his hands and ankles he was flung violently on the snow.

[139]

XXI

The police, seeing the men fleeing over the mountain, had crept around cautiously, and surrounded the wood. Then they had closed in, stepping from tree to tree, and making no noise on the soft snow. They were within a few feet of Myles and Halpin when the bullet struck the latter. The rest was easy.

They beckoned to the soldiers across the river, who speedily crossed. The young officer rode up; and the men, grounding their arms, stood to attention. Then gazing around him, the officer said:

“Where are the rebels?”

A policeman pointed to the prostrate men.

“But the main bulk of them? There must have been a few hundred men here at least. Disperse, men, and search every inch of the wood.”

The men dispersed in every direction. The officer dismounted, and, holding his horse’s bridle, came over to where Myles and Halpin were lying. He took out a notebook and pencil.

“Your names?”

“My name is Cogan; my dying comrade is Halpin.”

“Dying?”

“Yes! He’s shot through the right lung.”

Halpin was lying back, leaning somewhat to the right side. He was spitting blood, which made rings of red on the snow.

“Where are your men?”

“I don’t know. They were dispersed an hour ago.” [140]

“Damn it! Do you mean that we have been fighting two men for the last hour?”

“One!” said Myles. “I am here only a few minutes.”

The officer looked thoroughly ashamed. Myles said:

“I beg pardon. My comrade is dying. Let me say a few words to him, before he passes away.”

The officer at once gave the order that the irons were to be taken off. The police murmured:

“A most dangerous Fenian! He was in gaol; and must have broken out.”

“No matter,” said the young officer, angrily. He was furious at the thought that one man had kept them at bay for an hour. “A half regiment of British infantry and a hundred constabulary should be able to hold him. Let him speak to his comrade!”

Myles knelt down; and bent his head low over the dying man. He heard the words:

“A priest, and at once!”

He approached the officer.

“My friend and I are Roman Catholics. He is dying. It is of supreme importance that he should have the services of a priest. Would you send for one?”

“Where? How far?”

“The town of T— is only two miles distant. One of your men could go, and say, ‘a man is dying. Come quickly!’”

The men had come back looking ashamed and crestfallen.

“The ground was well trampled,” said the sergeant, “but not a man could be found!”

“Look here, Hopkins,” said the officer, “this poor fellow wants a priest. The place is two miles distant. Who is our smartest runner?” [141]

“ Gatehead, Sir! But the snow? — “

“Quite so. Look here!” he cried, dismounting. “Take my horse, and ride as rapidly as you can. What will the Sergeant say?” he queried, turning to Myles.

“Simply say to the first man you meet, ‘A man is shot at the foot of Slieve Ruadh, and wants a priest immediately.’”

“Very good! Go ahead, Hopkins, and lose no time!”

Myles went back to Halpin, and knelt down. The dying man said feebly:

“Water!”

And at once the men ran to the river, and filled their canteens. He took a long draught of the clear, cold water. It seemed to revive him. One of the soldiers approached the officer, and said something in a low tone. The officer nodded; and four of the men, taking off their great coats, came over, and lifting the dying Fenian made a bed for him on the snow.

The tears started to his eyes.

“Thanks, comrades!” he said.

Then seeing the blood all around on the snow, he whispered to Myles:

“I’m luckier than Sarsfield. This is shed for Ireland!”

There was a long pause. Then the orderly, and a young priest on horseback, rode up, and the latter, rapidly dismounting, knelt on the snow near the dying man, and administered the last Sacraments. When he had finished, Halpin begged Myles to approach Halpin took out his beads; and then fumbling a little in his vest, he found what appeared to be a little silver cup. It was a medal of the Immaculate Conception, [142]

which a bullet had struck, and glanced off. Halpin gave both to Myles, and then added his prayer-book, which was stained with blood.

“ My relics! “ he said, smiling. “I’m growing fainter. A little more water!”

He revived again; and said to Myles:

“Do you know who got you arrested at home?”

“No!” said Myles, curiously.

“You know the men suspected me?”

“I heard so; but you know, Halpin, I never believed such a thing! It was that cad, Rendall!”

“Of course. But what induced Rendall to arrest you?”

“I don’t know!”

“It was Miss Carleton!”

“Miss— Mary Carleton?”

“Yes! I’m growing very weak. Is the priest there?”

“Yes!”

“Ask him to remain to the end!”

The priest was only too willing.

“Miss Carleton,” gasped Halpin, “knew there was to be a rising; and she wanted to save your life. There was no other way!”

“You know this for certain, Halpin?” said Myles, who was choking with emotion.

“I had it from her own lips. She called on me! Ask the priest to come here!”

The priest came over; and there was a little conference with the dying man. He beckoned Myles again to approach.

“My will is in the cupboard in my room. Tell the priest it will be found there, and to give my belongings to the person indicated. Lean down!” [143]

Myles bent down to catch the last breath of the dying man.

“Tell Agnes — your sister — ”

“Yes, yes!” said Myles.

“Tell Agnes that—”

He stopped; and Myles, gazing at him, saw the grey shadow cross his face. Halpin was dead.

After a few minutes of respectful silence, the officer ordered the men to fall in. Myles approached the priest, and, taking out the beads, and prayer-book, and medal of the dead patriot, he handed them to the latter, saying:

"These are the sacred relics of my dead comrade, which I cannot keep. His will is in the cupboard in his room. Perhaps you would write to Father James — of K— and explain all. And I'm sure I may leave his obsequies in your hands. But, he is to be buried in our grave-plot, and nowhere else."

"That you may, my poor fellow," said the priest. "Good-bye! God knows I'm sorry for you both. I'll write your wishes to Father James."

They shook hands, and parted. A few seconds after, Myles, under a strong escort of police, and with his hands manacled behind his back, was marched across the open glade, which he had crossed but half an hour before. He looked with some curiosity at the firtree, where McClure and himself had tethered their horses, and thought.

"Half an hour ago, I was a free man, able to go where I pleased. Now, my foot is on the scaffold."

The Irish-American who had accosted them was again at his own door smoking. He seemed to look on unconsciously. Myles did not notice him. A nod would have meant another arrest. The man went [144] back to his fire, and remained there a long time meditating. Then he rose up, and went out.

"Yes, darned fools," he said aloud, "but, there is a hope for a race that can beget such men." Half an hour later, as he stood again at his door, he saw that far down, where the boreen cut the road, a funeral procession was approaching. A priest was in front, reciting the prayers for the dead.

"Ha!" said the farmer. "I guessed all that shooting wasn't for nothing."

The procession stopped on the road. Four men bore on their shoulders a door, on which the dead body of the Fenian was laid. They stopped, and the priest said:

"We have to wake this poor fellow here, Mr. Lombard. Will you take him in till tomorrow?"

"Are there no more?" the man queried.

"No more. I'll send out everything this evening."

"And they were firing since five o'clock this morning. I thought they had killed a thousand at least. Come in! Come in!"

They waked the dead patriot with all solemnity; and two days after, they bore him on their shoulders from hamlet to hamlet, up hill and down hollow — a silent phalanx of five hundred men, until they placed him in the resting-place of the Cogans, where one day Myles hoped to rest, side by side, with his dead comrade.

All that day, in his native town, the escape of Myles Cogan was the one subject of conversation. The wildest reports were afloat.

"A thousand Fenians, armed to the teeth, had surrounded the gaol, and had threatened to burn it to the ground." [145]

"Old Tobin was shot dead, because he refused to give up the keys of the gaol."

"Ladders had been put up against the gaol walls; and fifty Fenians had broken in and rescued Myles."

And so on. But the daring escape and the rising had wrought popular imagination up to a high pitch of excitement in the town; and every minute seemed too long until some news should come in about what everyone felt would be the momentous events of that day.

In the afternoon, news began to filter in, exaggerated and grotesque as usual. “The Fenians had conquered, and routed the British forces, and were now marching on Limerick.” “The Fenians were beaten and scattered”; “a battle was raging all day on the slopes of Slieve Ruadh, and Myles Cogan had done wonders”; “barracks were burned down all over the country,” etc.

Late in the afternoon Father James strolled up to the police barrack to make inquiries. The Serjeant took him in to the day-room.

“It is against the regulations, Father,” he said. “But keep it quiet.”

He pointed to a pink telegram that was pinned on a green baize cloth, that hung against the wall.

It ran:

“Slight engagement at Slieve Ruadh. Rebels fled at first fire. One man, Halpin, shot dead. Another, Cogan, sent on in irons to County Gaol.”

That was all.

“How, in the name of God, am I to break it to that poor child?” the priest said.

But he did, gently and quietly, as God gave him to do. [146]

The next day, he had a letter from his confrere, telling all, and enclosing the little relics, and stating that Halpin’s funeral would reach the town at such an hour; and he was to be buried at Myles Cogan’s request in their plot.

And so, late the next evening, a torchlight procession came up the long street, the flare lighting up the fronts of shop and villa with its flickering red. Tramp, tramp, went the sound of many feet on road and pavement, whilst not a sound, not even a prayer, was whispered amongst the ranks of the mourning multitude. The little graveyard was filled; and thousands of faces were turned towards the priest, who, after reciting the prayers for the dead, folded his stole, and, whilst the tears rolled down his cheeks, said in a broken voice:

“The first act in the latest drama in Ireland is over. One brave man, with an English bullet in his breast, lies here beneath our feet. Another is in irons, with no prospect before him but the scaffold. It was by Mr. Cogan’s orders that the body of his comrade should be laid where their dust shall commingle. God pity the living, as He has had mercy on the dead.”

He turned aside, when the vast crowd had dispersed, and, after a silent prayer, he entered the Main Street, and turning sharply a corner he passed into the narrow lane, where Halpin lodged. He found that the police had been before him; and had ransacked the whole place, but found nothing. The old fiddle, and the few books they did not touch. There were no documents.

“He left at least one paper?” said the priest, interrogatively.

“He did, your reverence! and here it is,” the old woman said. “Sure I was before them there. How [147] did I know but that it might get Master Myles or someone else into throuble.”

The priest took it, looked at the superscription, and put it in his pocket.

“Take care of those few things,” he said, “until we know to whom he has left them. Hallo, who’s here?”

On the schoolmaster’s bed, his little dog. Bran, was lying. He looked up at the priest in a pitiful way, and moaned.

“There he is for the last three days,” said the old woman, “and he won’t titch bit, bite, or sup for me, but moaning and groaning. Don’t tetch him, yer reverence, for I think he’s out of his mind!”

But the priest stroked the little animal gently, rubbing his ears, scratching his neck, and forehead, and talking gently to him.

“Get me a drop of milk!” he said.

The woman brought the milk. The priest dipped his fingers in it, and then rubbed them gently across the little creature’s lips. Instinctively, the latter put out his tongue and licked the priest’s fingers. But at once he turned aside, and would touch no more, but moaned sadly.

The priest took him up in his arms.

“He wants his master!” he said.

Flinging a wing of his cloak around the dog, he went back along the street to the graveyard. The night had fallen, but there was a brilliant March moon, which shone on the white desert of snow around him. He looked around. No one was near. He crossed the graveyard to where the dark grave of the buried patriot showed black against the snow. The little animal, who up to then had shown scarcely signs [148] of life, leaped in his arms. He put him down and stood aside, leaning against a railing. The dog ran round whimpering, then lifting up his head, he barked furiously, and tore at the sods of earth that covered the grave. Then exhausted, he lay down and moaned. Again and again, he tried to tear up the earth, only to sink back worn and half-dead. The priest approached to call him away, but the poor beast would not stir, but lay with his head against the wet grass, which he sometimes licked with his tongue, but always moaning. The priest was about to go away, hoping it would follow him, when the little creature, in one last paroxysm of affection, again attempted to tear up the earth. After one or two efforts, he rolled down the slight mound and lay still at the bottom in the snow. The priest went over, and called him by his name, and rubbed down his wet coat. But it was in vain. Bran was dead upon his master’s grave.

For a long time the priest looked on at that mournful scene, and pondered. Then, looking around, he saw leaning up against the huge trunk of a beech-tree a spade and mattock, which the Sexton had left behind. Silently, he opened a few sods on the top of the Fenian’s grave, and excavated the earth so as to form a tiny hollow. There he placed poor little Bran, closed up the grave and replaced the sods.

“The people would never forgive me if they knew it,” he said.

And then he added:

“But God will!”

[149]

XXII

Myles Cogan was in the dock in Limerick Courthouse. His fine figure towered a little even above the stalwart constables who surrounded him. The court was thronged with people. The Bar on both sides was largely represented. The Solicitor-General, Serjeant Holloway, led the prosecution. Isaac Butt was the leader for the defence. The former had pressed the charge of treason-felony against the prisoner without venom, but with all the zeal of one who had got a good thing from the Government of the country, and was anxious to show how he deserved it. The fine face of Isaac Butt was bathed in tears when he sat down after a two hours’ speech marked by singular force and all the eloquence of deep feeling. But everyone felt that the case was hopeless, so far as any legal defence could be made. The facts were indisputable; and the charge of treason-felony, of having administered illegal oaths, and being taken, arms in hand, in

open rebellion against the constituted authorities of the country, could not be rebutted. The Solicitor-General wound up the case for the prosecution in a half-careless manner, as one quite sure of his verdict; and the Judge addressed the Jury in a manner that left no hope. On the three points submitted to the Jury:

"Was prisoner a sworn member of an illegal organisation, which had for its object the subversion of her Majesty's authority in this country? [150]

" Had prisoner administered illegal oaths?

"Had prisoner been found in open armed rebellion against the Crown?"

The verdict was, *Yes*!

The usual question was put to the prisoner by the Clerk of the Crown and Peace, whether he had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon him; and Myles, leaning forward a little, said in a modest tone, but in a voice that could be heard to the farthest end of the Court:

'My Lord,

"You ask why sentence of death should not be passed on me by your Lordship as representing the Government of England in this country. From a purely legal standpoint, I have no defence to make. I have deliberately broken the laws of this country called England, which claims supreme authority over this, my country. That authority, I, following the example of thousands of my fellow-countrymen, solemnly repudiate. I admit no rights of conquest, nor can I believe that a government, established through fraud, rapine, and murder, can ever righteously claim the allegiance of an unwilling people. It might happen, perhaps it has happened in the course of human history, that a conquered race has been brought, by the operation of just and kindly laws, to acknowledge the suzerainty of the power that subdued it. But six hundred years of domination are assuredly a fair trial; and I need not remind your Lordship and the Court that today the Irish people are as opposed to English power in this country as when Strongbow and Ireton brought their mailed warriors, or rather filibusterers, to dethrone our Irish kings and bring them under the heel of the Plantagenets. [151] That fact alone is a final verdict against the righteousness of English domination in Ireland. There is no appeal from the voice of a nation."

The Judge murmured something to the effect that he was travelling outside the question and talking treason. Myles continued smilingly:

"The sentiment, or rather the principle, is not mine, my Lord. At this moment some English papers are using stronger language to stir up the discontented elements in Italy against the Pope; English money is largely spent in purchasing arms and ammunition for Sicilian and Sardinian rebels; and Mazzini and Garibaldi, who stand exactly in the same position with regard to their government that I and my comrades occupy towards England, are the guests of English ministers and the petted darlings of London drawing-rooms. But where is the use of talking of consistency, when dealing with politics, where there is neither conscience nor morals, but brutal cynicism on the one hand, and facile compromise on the other? Therefore, I have no defence to make. I came face to face with a power that is as irresistible as it is unforgiving. I could appeal to honour, to patriotism, to virtue, as justifying causes for our rebellion against a power we never acknowledged; but the walls of this Court would echo back the words in vain. An Italian rebel might use them, and be applauded for them. But an Irish rebel must not utter such things; and therefore, he is left without defence in the hands of a power that is arbitrary, and an Executive that is merciless. But the Solicitor-General, in his zeal, made one remark which touches my personal honour, and with which I must be permitted to deal. In language which seemed meant to flatter, but which in reality was [152] a deadly insult, he said that my dead comrade and I, being men of better education than the rank and file of the Fenian brotherhood,

stood doubly guilty not only in the eyes of the law, but before all honourable men, in having inveigled poor, helpless, ignorant mechanics and labourers into criminal courses which we foreknew must mean absolute ruin to them. If it were true, no language, I admit, could be too strong to condemn such perfidy. But I fear the learned gentleman is deceived by his own experience; and, like so many more, he has judged the heart of the nation by the feeble and languid pulse that beats only for gold. He has felt the palms of men itching for the bribes that were to steal away their consciences. He has never seen the fingers that closed over the pike and the musket, even though the pike and the musket meant death to themselves. And so far from inveighing these brave men into dangerous courses, and playing on their ignorance, I assure this court, and through this court the country, that I and my comrade pointed out, again and again, not only the dangers, but even the hopelessness of our enterprise, only to be met by a shout of scorn, and the dark suspicion that we ourselves were traitors and cowards. No, my Lord, it was by no action of ours those thousands of labourers and artisans went out on the hillside that awful night last March, every man prepared to face death on the field and the scaffold, not for gold or silver, not for a slice of bogland or mountain, but for that glorious dream that has haunted the imagination of our race, and which will continue to haunt it so long as a fringe of foam circles her coasts, and the winds sing up along her valleys — the honour and the freedom of their country. And I tell you, that we [153] might as well have hoped to stop a prairie fire, or hurl back the surges of the Atlantic, as to induce these poor fellows to lay down their rude arms, until at least they were tested once in open field with the enemies and despots of their country — "

"I have allowed you enormous latitude," said the Judge, "because you say that you were only rebutting a charge upon your personal honour made by the Solicitor-General; but you are seizing the opportunity for making a political and inflammatory address."

"I am but defending my own honour, my Lord," said Myles, "and, what is dearer to me, the honour of the brave men who were associated with me."

There was a murmur of applause in Court, which was suppressed; and the Judge made a sign to Myles to proceed.

"I have little more to add," said the latter. "But let me meet at once the objection, that even if our attempted revolution could have been justified by moral and political reasons, it stands condemned on my own admission, by reason of the impossibility of its success. But what is success? Did we — I mean, my comrade, Halpin and I — dream of wresting Ireland from the grip of English domination, and making her one of the great powers of the earth? No! Did we hope to see her taking her place in the van of civilisation; and showing the unbelieving world what tremendous resources lay hidden here, untried and undeveloped? No. Did we dream of seeing one day Irish men of war riding at anchor in her harbours; and Irish horse and foot camped in the Curragh? Certainly not! What then? What did we hope for? What did we dream of? The Solicitor-General knows." [154]

That learned gentleman looked up in amazement; and the eyes of the Court were directed towards him.

"The learned gentleman," Myles went on, "has personal experience of how low a people, or rather a section of a people, may fall, when the vital spark of nationhood has been extinguished, and there remains but the corrupting influence of self. When that takes place, a nation sinks into a condition somewhat like unto the decomposition of a body from which the spirit has departed; and bribery, corruption, the selling of votes and the selling of souls take the place of all those stirring and vitalising influences that constitute the life of a nation. Now, when that fatal moment arrives, nothing can stop the dread process of national decomposition except the shedding of blood. I shall not trespass on the Sf .red precincts of religion to illustrate my

meaning. I shall only say that as the blood of the martyrs was the seed of saints, so the blood of the patriot is the sacred seed from which alone can spring new forces, and fresh life into a nation that is drifting into the putrescence of decay. And if I needed proof of this, I have it at hand in the example of the brave man who died in my arms. A poor, half-blind, humble schoolmaster, hardly known in the place where he taught and laboured, gave his life for his country; and behold! his remains have had royal obsequies; and the very men, who had polluted their hands with bribes and who had dragged the triumphal chariot of the Solicitor-General through their town, raised the coffin of the dead patriot on their shoulders and bore him, amidst the sobs and weeping of thousands of men and women, to his last honourable place in the very town where his name was hardly known. And in years to come, in centuries to come. Irishmen will travel [155] across the seas to see the spot where he died, to pluck a shamrock that may have sprung from his blood, to cut a relic from the tree beneath which he fell. That is his justification, if justification were needed — the verdict of his race, which has transformed a humble but noble soul into a hero; which has transformed itself under the magic of such an example from a race of time-serving, self-seeking sycophants into a nation of unselfish and self-sacrificing patriots. And the same justification I claim for myself. I have not had, although I sought it, the privilege of dying by his side, and saying with him: 'I am happier than Sarsfield, because this blood is shed for Ireland.' But no true Irishman sees a distinction between the battlefield and the scaflfold. Both are the fields of honour for our race — "

There was a mighty shout of approbation from the crowds that filled the Court, and it was not easily suppressed.

Then Myles added:

"I have no more to say. My earthly fate is in your Lordship's hands. My eternal Destiny lies with God. I leave my name and memory with confidence to my countrymen!"

There was another murmur of applause, which was succeeded by dead silence as the Judge proceeded to pronounce sentence.

" Myles Cogan, you have been convicted, on evidence that was indisputable, of the gravest crime that can be committed by a citizen against his country. All human safety, and, therefore, all human progress, depend on the stability of government. There can be no security for life or property where that stability can be shaken. The specious arguments you have [156] adduced to justify your attempt to subvert the government of this country fall dead before the main contention, that if such principles were once admitted, no government, no matter how long estabhshed, could be deemed secure; and the efforts of all honourable citizens would be paralysed before the perpetual spectre of anarchy. It would be idle for me to enter into an argument as to the attitude of the British Press towards questions of European politics. Nor can I take notice, as a reasonable and justifying cause of your rebeliion against the Sovereign of these realms, of that visionary and foolish theory of shedding blood for the purpose of purifying public life. Modern civilisation refuses to accept such theories and prefers to work along more sober and rational lines. I regret deeply to see a young man of much abihty and education, whose life might have been one of great honour to himself and utihty to society, placed in the tragical circumstances in which you now appear before your country. I can make every allowance for the hotheadedness of youth, and the tendency to rush after phantoms of a disordered imagination; but, when such folhes become a source of peril to the nation, when they unloose the bonds of society, break down that sense of security on which alone progress and prosperity are based, and threaten to fling back a peaceable country into the agonies of anarchy, then the strong arm of the law must be invoked, and the punishment meted out must be made not only commensurate with the crime committed, but also of such a nature that it shall act as a deterrent to others from embarking on such evil courses. And therefore," said the Judge, assuming the black cap, "the sentence of this Court is that you, Myles Cogan, be taken from

[157] this Court to the place wherein you have hitherto been detained; and thence, on the 23rd day of September to the place of execution; and there hanged by the neck until you are dead — and — and — ”

Here the Judge broke down, and tearing off the black cap, he rushed hastily from the bench.

In an instant a crowd of young men dashed up the stairs that led on to the witness-table, and from there and from the body of the Court a hundred eager hands were wildly stretched to grasp those of the young patriot; but the warders closed around their prisoner, and led him down the stairs to the cells. A wild shout of “Farewell,” “We’ll never forget you,” echoed dimly through the doors and passages; and the outer world closed its gates on the brave young Irishman.

[158]

XXIII

Yet the world went on as usual. The selfish wrapped themselves up in their own warm and padded safety, and when they could do so with impunity, they used strong language towards rebels and revolutionaries. People who have business in banks object to changes of every kind, as change means always insecurity; and to such, no punishment could be too great for wild, young revolutionaries, who in the heat and irresponsibihty of immature years, want to stake everything on a single chance. But, deep down in the hearts of the poor, and the toiler and the worker; in the souls of young maidens, who love the chivalrous and the ideal, and mothers, who feel for all that suffers and is lost; and in the hot breasts of the young, who adore bravery, and worship in the track of the patriot, there was many a heart-throb of sympathy for the brave young soldier, who had thrown up all the happiness and success of life, and staked all, even life, for his country.

The good priest during these days had much to do. Crowds of young fellows were in gaol awaiting trial; and no one knew whether they would be tried on the capital charge of treason-felony, or on some minor charge, which might mean but a few months’ imprisonment. But they had to be defended, and a defence meant money; and funds had to be raised to pay clever advocates, and bring up witnesses and save [159] them, if possible. And Father James was head and front of everything. He visited the poor fellows in prison, cheered them up, and found them, to his surprise, more eager to suffer than to be released.

“As we couldn’t do anything for Ireland on the field,” they said, “at least we can suffer for her.”

He explained the sufferings.

“No matter! If we are left free now, with Halpin dead, and Myles Cogan on the scaffold, we would be eternally disgraced.”

He had to leave them alone, merely securing the best legal succour in his power.

More difficult was his task in reconciling the poor bereaved sister, Agnes Cogan, to her brother’s fate. Woman sees only the beloved one. When he is in danger, the transcendental and sublime cannot console her. It is doubtful whether that saying of the Spartan mother: “Come back with your shield, or upon it,” is not legendary; and so, all the praises that were showered on the young patriots, all the prayers that were offered on their behalf, could not reconcile the poor girl to the idea of her beloved brother suffering a violent and premature death. She was too weak after weeks of long prostration to make any decided effort in his behalf; but she wrote a letter that would have touched the heart of Herod, to the Solicitor-General; he replied officially and cautiously, but, without giving a gleam of hope. And the dread morning of the execution was approaching.

As a matter of fact, the Government had no idea of proceeding to extremities. They might have had no scruples in hanging a half-dozen young rebels; but there is a saying that has sunk deep into the minds of English statesmen: [160]

"*If you want to keep nationality alive in Ireland, you must hang five or six rebels every ten or fifteen years*."

The mighty magic of the scaffold lasts just so long; and then dies away into the prose and commonplace of the eating, drinking, marrying, workaday world, until the folly of making martyrs seizes on our rulers again.

During those eventful days, the condition of Mary Carleton's health became a matter of serious concern to her parents. She appeared to droop away from the robust energies of a young and healthy girl into a condition that pointed to early decline and death. From the day in which Myles Cogan was sentenced, she seemed to sink more and more, until at last it was determined that to save her life she should go abroad. This was all the more embarrassing because Rendall was now pressing his suit with greater ardour than ever; and it was warmly seconded by the girl's parents. But she held back, refusing to give a final answer from day to day, pleading health and other causes, which were only too palpable.

On the day when the reprieve arrived from Dublin, commuting Myles Cogan's sentence to penal servitude for life, Rendall called as usual. He was annoyed and wrathful, because the young fierce rebel was spared; and he expressed his annoyance without concealment.

"This Government of ours is altogether too lenient," he said, after a few preliminaries. "They are too squeamish. I don't know what influences have been at work; but they have done a most foolish thing in reprieving Cogan — "

"Myles Cogan reprieved?" said Mary Carleton, and then fell into a dead faint. [161]

"I don't know what has come over that girl," said her mother, returning to the drawing-room; "of course 'tis her concern for the poor sister, who naturally is heartbroken. But that won't account for her constant ill-health. She must go away!"

"They asked my opinion, of course," said Rendall, as if not heeding, "and I gave it to them candidly. I told them that the insurrection was killed; but it might revive again. And nothing could revive it but the inflammatory speeches of such harebrained fools as Cogan."

Mr. Carleton came in.

"Young Cogan is reprieved," said his wife. "Mr. Rendall has just called to tell us. Mary was so upset about that poor girl that she had a slight faint."

"Cogan reprieved!" said Edward Carleton. "What do you think of it, Rendall?"

"Badly!" said Rendall. "It means a few years in gaol; then a big row about amnesty; then a weak government giving in; and those fire-brands are flung back amongst us again,"

"But, after all, he is young!" said Edward Carleton, "and his father was a decent sort of fellow. A little vulgar; but he paid his way."

"Oh, I have no prejudice against the young fool," said Rendall. "In fact, I think I hardly ever saw him. But, where the public safety is concerned, no precautions can be too great. Think of all we've gone through these last few months; and imagine it all over again!"

"But, after all, hanging is a serious matter — "

"Very — for the Culprit!" said Rendall, who was in an unamiable mood. [162]

"I know — I know!" said Carleton. "But, if a fellow is locked up for life, he cannot do harm!"

“No! If he is locked up for life!” said Rendall. “But I have seen things; and I know that in five years Cogan will be out again; and hard at work as ever at mischief-making!”

“I’ll just run to see how’s Mary!” said her father. And Rendall took the opportunity of saying:

“If we could only get Miss Carleton to say. Yes! I would get six weeks’ leave of absence; and I could take her abroad to the Riviera.”

“Ah, yes!” sighed the mother. “If we could only bring her to reason.”

“Allow me to ask you one question,” said Rendall, now very serious, and almost combative, “do you think, Mrs. Carleton, that Mary, Miss Carleton, had any secret liking for this young fellow Cogan?”

“Impossible!” said Mrs. Carleton, almost angrily. “Quite impossible! Mary would not demean herself by thinking of the son of a mere shopkeeper and miller. How could you have thought it?”

“Well, indeed, I am ashamed of having harboured the thought. In fact, I thought it was the other way. Do you know — did I ever tell you, that it was on Miss Carleton’s suggestion I arrested Cogan last winter?”

“On Mary’s suggestion?” said her mother.

“Yes! She asked me as a favour to have Cogan arrested, and put away!”

“Wonders will never cease!” said Mrs. Carleton. “And she so intimate with his sister! Are you quite sure, Mr. Rendall?”

“Quite. She saw me to the door one evening, and asked me to do her a favour. I said, of course! The favour was to have Cogan promptly arrested.” [163]

“That accounts for her emotion now!” said Mrs. Carleton after a pause. “She must have conceived some violent dislike for the fellow; probably, he might have presumed to approach her with an offer of marriage! That’s just it! And now, she fears that the same thing will recur, but — well, Edward, how is she?”

“Better, I think! But we must get her away at once. The Doctor says that those dark circles under the eyes and those blue lips foretell heart affections.”

“I had been saying to Mrs. Carleton,” said Rendall, “before you came in, that if Mary would only grant me my wish, and your wishes, I could get six weeks’ leave, and would carry her off to the Riviera. A few weeks at Cannes or Cap St. Martin, away from all this excitement, would re-establish her health, and make me,” the officer almost sobbed, “a happy man!”

“Well, look here, Rendall,” said the man of law, “you know we cannot force Mary’s consent. Young ladies nowadays have their own opinions, and are determined to act upon them — “

“I would not accept Miss Carleton’s hand, unless it was freely given,” said Rendall.

“Quite right! There’s no use in laying up a lifetime of disappointment. Well, it all comes to this. Tomorrow morning, — Mary will be herself then — I shall broach the matter to her, leaving her absolutely free. Perhaps you would call in the afternoon; and I shall let you know her decision.”

“Thanks ever so much!” said Rendall. “You cannot do any more. I await my fate with anxiety and hope!”

In the morning, Mary Carleton was much better. Was it that night’s rest, which had smoothed out [164] those lines that were gathering around her mouth; and brought a little colour to her lips and cheeks, and put a certain lustre in her eyes? And tell it not in Ascalon, Mary Carleton did eat a fairly good breakfast, and seemed eager to see the papers, and read all about that

reprieve of the young rebel. And, when her good father, approaching the subject in much fear and trembling that afternoon, and after many a roundabout sentence, did lay Rendall's proposal as an ultimatum and final appeal before her, he was thunderstruck to hear, after the long silence in which she bore his eloquence, a modest and almost whispered, Yes!

Mark how swiftly our little preliminary Acts of the Drama are progressing. Halpin dead; Agnes Cogan, a derelict, weak and helpless; Mary Carleton, the afiianced of the thrice fortunate Rendall, with a long vista of Rivieras and happy marriage years before her. And Myles Cogan, —

Yes! Just at seven o'clock, at the very moment that Rendall was first to hear of his happiness from his future father-in-law, and then from the lips of his affianced bride, Myles Cogan, in his convict-garb, grey frieze, marked all over with red arrows, and handcuffed to another convict, was standing on the North Mall Quay in Dublin, awaiting the orders to step on board a steamer, that had now been converted into a floating prison. There were ten or eleven other prisoners with him; a posse of police, fully armed, stood to attention near the wall; officers, with their hands on revolvers, walked up and down, looking anxiously around; outside the station, fifty dragoons with drawn sabres rattled their horses' bridles, and a company of infantry leaned on their rifles. Then the last whistle [165]

was sounded. The convicts were marched on board. A strong guard followed. Down the steep steps of the steamer the convicts were driven unceremoniously; deeper down they trod in darkness the iron steps, until at last they reached the hold of the vessel. Here they were invited to sleep, if they pleased, on rude bunks, lined with straw. There was not a ray of light; only the throb of the engines, and the vibration of the steamer, told them that they were leaving their native land. Some, alas! for ever.

[166]

XXIV

On a summer evening some years later, a gang of convicts were out on the moor, that stretched like a dreary and desolate sea around the village of Princetown. They had been dispersed at work for a few hours, when one of those sudden wet fogs that are so common, even in the hottest weather, in Dartmoor, gloomed down, and the sharp, stern order came from the warders to close in. As they did, one seemed to straggle a little behind; and, taking advantage of his momentary isolation, the warder said:

"Don't turn round, Cogan, nor speak."

The convict stood still for a moment, and then stooped down as if to tie his shoes.

"Why the devil do you notice that fellow?" said the warder. "He'll drive you mad!"

"I hope so," said the convict, "and then I can send him to hell."

"Close up. March forward!" said the warder. And Myles Cogan joined the rear line of the gang, and strode forward like the rest.

Yes, it was our friend, Myles, and the language shows the awful state of desperation to which he had been driven.

The discipline at Dartmoor, very stern and unbending, is not ruthless. The work was severe and such as is usually performed by beasts of burden; but the health of the prisoners was well cared for; and there was a good deal of consideration shown the men, [167]

except in cases of insubordination. There was no mercy there. The convict who embarked on a course of contumacy, created for himself a hell. Hence, clever and experienced convicts who knew how to ingratiate themselves with the officers had pleasant times. The hot-blooded, proud, and perhaps honourable men had a bad time. They could not brook insults; and it was part of the programme that insults should come. But if on the whole the discipline was merciful enough, it was not so with the many Fenian prisoners who thronged the gaols of England at this time. In some way, caused, of course, by the panic of great fear, accentuated by the flaming articles of newspapers, these poor Fenians, mostly hard-working, honest artisans and labourers, were reputed to be as sanguinary and lawless as Russian Nihilists, or the communists of [1870. And their lot was a hard one, therefore. The iron grip of the law closed mercilessly around them; and the ofiicials, regarding them as desperadoes, and full of fear of some nameless and imaginary outrages, used all the stern machinery of prison discipline to crush and subdue them.

Myles Cogan, who entered Dartmoor prison under the character of a fierce and lawless criminal, began very soon to experience this. At first, he was set to perform the most menial offices for the other convicts; and although his sense of decency and innate refinement revolted at the horrid tasks set him, he obeyed without a murmur. Then he was set to heavier, but less repulsive, work, such as being harnessed with fifteen or twenty prisoners to a cart, which was laden with several tons of granite, and which had to be dragged up the steep gradient from the quarry, and thence to where new buildings were in progress. It [168] was killing work; but his strength as yet was not undermined, and there was a certain decency about this class of labour compared with the internal work of the prison. The warders, too, were not considerate, watching him carefully as a desperate character, who might at any time blow the colossal prison to fragments with dynamite. Hence he was subjected to the gross humiliation of frequent searchings, carried out without the slightest regard to decency or reverence of his person. From these ordeals, he came back to his cell with flaming eyes and dilated nostrils. But perhaps the worst thing he had to bear during some months of his prison life was the dread association on Sunday mornings with the lowest criminals in the recreation grounds after Mass. To step out from the holy place, where he had witnessed, with profound love and reverence, the awful mysteries of his faith; to feel that glow of the heart which sweet solemn music and the explanation of Christian doctrine as enunciated from the pulpit creates; and then, in a moment to feel an arm passed through his, and to look into the face of a reprieved murderer or burglar; to have to listen, as they moved around, arm in arm, to a Cockney voice narrating, with gusto, the story of some abominable crime, or to have to hear ribald talk, and sometimes blasphemous comments on the sacred mysteries of the faith that was so dear to him, — this was the cruellest punishment of all this brave young fellow had to bear. Then his aloofness, his refinement, his badly-concealed disgust of his fellow-prisoners became known; and in the thousand and one ways whereby lower natures can torment their fellows, Myles was made to feel that there was a coalition of convicts and officers against him, which boded ill for his welfare in this prison. [169] Slowly, slowly, the dread miasma of the gaol, unrelieved by a particle of human sympathy, crept down into his soul, and after eight or nine months, his spirits sank, and he became a gloomy and morose, and therefore, in the eyes of the officials, a doubly dangerous prisoner. The very aspect of the place, too, weighed on his spirits. In Portland, there was at least a variety of scene, — the sea with its eternal and ever-changing beauty neutralising the horrid monotony of the chalk cliffs and limestone quarries. Then the fleet sometimes anchored off the Bill of Portland; and flags waved, and guns sounded a salute; and sometimes the sweet, far-off sounds of a band playing at the officers' mess, came as tokens of civilisation to men surrounded with every aspect of barbarism. But in Dartmoor none of those human and consolatory incidents took place. Nature showed herself in her worst and most barbaric aspect, — grey moorland, on which the sun never seemed to rest, but to be wafted away across bog and tor by the fierce winds that swept down from the Bristol Channel, or up from the Atlantic across the wastes of

Cornwall; grey skies, always swooping down on the low uplands and wrapping them in their own melancholy colours; and there in the midst of that most sombre and depressing landscape was England's fortress-prison, its grey granite walls, pierced by windows that perhaps gave a little light to its interior, but never allowed a human eye to penetrate beyond the massive ugliness of the exteriorMother Nature, sour and repellent; human nature, sordid and degraded, — such were the sad environments of our lonely prisoner.

Yet it was not altogether intolerable, until he was brought into contact with one of those base creatures [170] who, possessed of momentary power, seem delighted to use it for malevolent purposes.

The old prison doctor had retired on pension a few weeks before; and his place was taken by a North of Ireland man, a bigot of an advanced type. Religious and political prejudices envenomed him from the very beginning against the Fenian prisoners; and especially against Myles Cogan, on account of his prominence in the Fenian movement. He took every opportunity of withering and galling this sensitive soul by every kind of carping and allusion. But when he subjected this proud young fellow to personal humiliation in the numberless searchings which the warders carried out under pretext of discovering secret correspondence or worse, it needed all the caution and self-control of the young convict to keep from violence.

One morning, Myles with a large batch of convicts was harnessed to an immense float on which was placed an enormous block of granite. They were dragging it up from the quarry just near the prison, the warders looking on. The prisoner in front of Myles was taking the work easily, as could be seen by the slackness of the rope, and thus additional strain was flung on his fellows. The warder, purposely misunderstanding this, called out:

"Number 86, pull on there, will you."

Myles, thus addressed, strained to the utmost, and then, as a sharp pain smote him, he fell in the tracks.

They unloosed him, and bade him rise. He couldn't. The warders disbelieved him, and again ordered him to rise.

"My back is broken," he said. "I cannot stand."

They raised him rudely; and a couple of convicts were summoned to get a wheelbarrow, and take him [171] back to his cell. It was no easy task, and Myles suffered excruciating tortures. In his cell, he was stripped and examined, the doctor pressing his hand down the spine. When he touched where the muscles were torn and lacerated, Myles winched.

"Malingering!" said the doctor.

"You're a liar, you scoundrel! " said Myles. " I'm not malingering. I demand the services of another doctor."

The doctor laughed. The matter was reported to the Governor, who instantly ordered Myles the dark cells, solitary confinement, and bread and water for a week. There in the deep darkness, unbroken by a ray of light, except when the warder once a day brought him the loaf of bread and the can of water, Myles passed the lonely hours in excruciating pain, unrelieved by a moment's sleep, except when Nature now and again conquered, only to be driven back to spasms that seemed to tear open all the muscles of his body. He tried to support his courage by thinking of all he had gone through, — the excitement, the enthusiasm, the clasping of hands, the voices of the people dying away in murmurous cadences as he descended from the dock.

"How little they know," he thought, "what the horrors of penal servitude mean. And is the game worth the candle? Perhaps even now Halpin and I are forgotten."

Towards the end of the week, he became delirious, spouted snatches of national poetry, addressed Agnes and his father and Halpin; gave the word of command to troops. It was lucky. He had ceased to feel pain in the delirium. When he awoke to consciousness, he was in the prison hospital. There he lay for weeks, a prey to such physical and mental anguish as, thank God, does not fall to the lot of many.

[172]

XXV

Yet from that dreary Golgotha, he could pen such lines as these to his sister:

"Dartmoor Prison,
"Princetown, Devon,
"March 16, 187....

"Dearest Agnes:

"Again I write to assure you I am well. The winter has been very severe, as I suppose it has been in Ireland; but we are well protected from cold. The house is heated; and the chapel is almost luxurious. Sunday morning is verily a Sabbath to me. The Mass with all its tender associations, the sermon, generally good; but above all the music, send me on the wings of imagination half-ways towards heaven. The gallery is occupied by the officers and their families, many of whom have lovely voices. The harmonium is played by the daughter of the protestant Rector of the parish; but there is one voice, that of one of my comrades, a prisoner like myself, and it seems to come down from heaven. Yet it is not so touching as when at Benediction all the prisoners, myself amongst the number, join in singing the 0 Salutaris and the Litany. There I invariably break down. To hear three hundred of us, poor devils, appealing to the 'Morning Star,' the 'Health of the Weak,' 'the Refuge of Sinners,' is heart-breaking. And it is nearly always the old Litany we used sing at home, when during the May [173] evenings the candles were lighted before our Lady's statue, — and the lovely spring flowers cast a perfume around the chapel. There are no flowers here; only a desolate waste; but memory supplies all that and much more. I have applied to be allowed serve Mass, as I did of old at home; but as yet I have not had my request. Did I say memory supplies all? Yes, and it also tells me that your love for me is undying, whoever else may forget me; and that Father James is the same kind, dear old friend as ever. Give him my love; and remember in all things to be guided by him.

"Your affectionate brother,
"Myles Cogan (No. 86)."

The Governor of the Prison showed that letter to his wife, before he posted it. With a woman's swift intuition she said:

"The man that wrote that letter is not a bad man."

The Governor murmured something about the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of prisoners.

"He has been punished severely as a refractory and incorrigible prisoner," he said. "I do not know what to think."

"It might be worth while to make independent inquiries," said his wife.

"That's a grand letter," said Father James, when Agnes read it for him, seated at the hot fire in her snug little parlour. The snow was without, just as it was on that March night some years ago. "Really, those English are merciful. I have read accounts of the hardships of poor prisoners on the continent, especially in Italy, not to speak of the horrors of the salt mines of Siberia; but there is a good deal of humanity in these English prisons, compared with those." [174

“Yes!” said Agnes, sadly, “but for life, for life! I shall never see him again.”

“Now, now,” said the good priest, “you mustn’t give way to that nonsense. How often have I told you that Mjdes will be home in another year or two. You see the country is up on the matter. I never thought I’d see the people so much in earnest.”

“But the Home Secretary has refused to open the question,” she said. “And they say now that these fresh attacks of the Fenians in England have closed the doors on the prisoners for ever.”

“Well, well,” said the priest, “we won’t argue the question. But longer heads than yours or mine have settled that an amnesty Avill be proclaimed before long. The English are waking up to the fact, that, after all, Ireland has grievances when so many fine young fellows are prepared to go to death or dungeons for them.”

“God grant it!” she said meekly, her hands clasped on her knees.

“By the way, have these fellows come to terms with you as yet?”he asked, after a pause.

“Some of them, and I fear only under compulsion. Myles’ boys threatened them; and they yielded. They are working now for twenty-six shillings a week.”

“And how much did Simpson offer them?”

“Thirty!” she said. “And shorter hours!”

“The black-hearted scoundrel!” said the priest in a sudden fury. “To think of that fellow, a perfect stranger, coming down here a tatterdemalion from Sligo; and taking advantage of a defenceless girl. I’ll hunt that fellow from post to pillar, until I get him out of the town.”

“But it is the people themselves who are encouraging him,” she said. “I wouldn’t mind the gentry all around, [175] although they always dealt with us, until — until father’s death; but they have now gone over from us almost in a body. Perhaps they are not to blame.”

“If they were gentlemen, they wouldn’t do it,” said the priest. “Of course, they’re furious against the Fenians; but what have you to do with all that? I’ll engage Colonel Hutchinson has not withdrawn his custom?”

“No, nor old Miss Annesley. I believe some pressure was brought to bear on them; but they refused to leave me!”

“Then, ’tis our own people who have gone over to a perfect stranger?”

“Yes! And you know he has no difficulty in getting workmen to put up his new mill. They don’t expect to see Myles again!”

“Slaves, always slaves!” muttered the priest. “Not a particle of manliness or decency! Who’s the highest bidder? That’s all!”

“Do you still think I should continue the business?” she asked. Evidently, she had broached the subject before.

“I do. Most positively. You can easily wait for a year or two before you enter a convent; but I wont have poor Myles homeless and houseless when he comes back!”

“But if everj’thing goes to rack and ruin,” she pleaded. “Would it not be better to save something now?”

“Money is not the question,” he replied. “I want to see Myles at Millbank; and, my God, what a reception we’ll give him!”

It seemed to calm her fears. The priest turned the conversation. [176]

“By the way, when did you hear from Mary Carleton, — Mrs. Rendall, I mean?”

“Oh! Not since she returned from the Continent. She has had a little daughter, and Hugh, she says, is growing a fine fellow. He is here now with his grandmother.”

“Oh, I must go to see the prodigy. I wonder did she ever care for Myles?”

“She did, I think; but girls cannot choose and pick their husbands in our days. I think she was right in marrying Mr. Rendall.”

“Well, according to the world, I suppose. He is now County Inspector, I believe?”

“Yes! But ’tis an awful place where they’re living. Imagine twenty miles from a railway station; and a post once a week!”

“No great attraction for correspondents!” he said, as he rose to go. “By Jove, what a blizzard that was last night, just the same as in ’67, when these poor fools met their fate. No matter. In one way, they were right. There never was such a fierce national spirit in the country, as at this moment. Poor Halpin was a prophet. A little blood-letting works miracles. We’ll have a good demonstration at his grave on Wednesday; and Myles won’t be forgotten.”

All of which, could it be communicated to that sick and lonely prisoner in Dartmoor, as he lay awake at night in fierce pain, and listened alternately to the howling of the snow-storm and the clanking of their manacles beneath the prisoners’ bedclothes; and the slow tread of the armed warder up and down the aisle between the beds, might have brought a little comfort to a broken and wounded spirit. But alas! there was no communication possible there; and he was left to [177] his sombre thoughts, as he watched the snow-flakes gather and fall on the dark windows, or the bleared and smoky lamp that swung from the ceiling; and thought, I have chosen Hell for my inheritance and portion, and it shall be mine till merciful Death release me.

[178]

XXVI

Above the sunny slopes, that, dotted here and there with handsome villas, bend down towards the blue waters of the Mediterranean, is a certain hotel, much in favour with English visitors; and somewhere about the time that Myles Cogan met this serious accident in the Dartmoor quarries, and close on the opening of Parliament, a great ball was given by some distinguished visitors at the Hotel, and the residents in the crowded and neighbouring villas were invited. Amongst them were Rendall and his wife. It was their third season at this delightful place; and Mrs. Rendall was so delighted with the beauty of the locality, and the charming society she met there, that she quite determined to spend the dreary months of the early springtime in that charming place in future. It was something of an agony to part with little Hugh, but her mother was importunate in her demands to see the boy; and this left his mother free.

She was happy, as young wives and mothers are, who are surrounded by affection and care and those more material things that make the comfort of life. The loneliness of her Donegal home and the absence of society were forgotten in her maternal cares. Only that now and then, that longing for the sunny skies and the charming people that haunt the shores of the Mediterranean just when London fogs and influenza are prevalent, would come back; and then Rendall could refuse her nothing. [179]

She was at this farewell ball; and was conspicuous there. Her bright Irish type of beauty was enhanced by her tasteful dress, and some rare old family jewels, which were given to her by her mother. She was sitting out on the closed verandah in the early hours of the morning with her partner, a man of middle age, but his dark hair was mottled with white patches, as if it were not the handiwork of time, but the rude chemistry of trouble. They had been talking in the usual

vapid way about the ball, and the dancing, and the little scandals that hover around such places, when suddenly he threw his arms high over his head, yawned and sighed and said:

“Imagine! In a few days, instead of sitting out here at two in the morning with a charming companion, I shall be on the green benches of that detestable House of Commons, badgered to death and worried by those Irish wolf-dogs.”

“And are the Irish so very terrible?” she said.

“Unspeakable!” he replied.

“I thought that epithet was reserved by your leader for the Turks?” she said.

“I’d rather meet a whole battalion of the Moslems than half a dozen of your countrymen,” he replied.

“And my countrywomen?” she queried.

“One is equal to an army there,” he said. “Your fellowcountrymen can worry; but your fellowcountrywomen conquer!”

“Indeed? I thought it was the proud boast of Britons that they were unsubduable. They never know they are beaten!”

“True!” he said, with a flush of pride and an instinct of coquetry. “On the field, in the senate, on the seas, we are invincible by reason of our very stupidity. In [180] the drawing-room, in the ball-room, in the boudoir, we are beaten by reason of our inferiority.”

“In what?”

“In everything — grace, beauty, dignity — ”

She cut him short.

“I have read somewhere that England’s power consists in her genius for assimilation. It is the cause of all her colonial successes.”

“Quite so. We beat the subject races flat to the earth; then lift them up and make Englishmen of them. Look at India! We conquered Sikhs, Ghourkas, Mahrattas, Nepalese, and then incorporated them in our Indian armies, and made them our bravest and most determined allies.”

“It is an abrupt form of civilisation,” said Mary Rendall, “but it is certainly successful. And you treat these Hindoo tribes well?”

“Certainly. The moment we make them feel our power, we make them also experience our clemency.”

“Then you don’t shoot down those rebels, who are striving just to keep their own; nor put them in prison, nor manacle, nor fetter them?”

“Never. Such a thing is unheard of. We had to exercise a little severity in the mutiny; but not otherwise. The tribes of India now understand what it is to be under British protection. A revolution is now impossible!”

“Alas! for my poor countrymen,” said Mary Rendall, as her thoughts went back to Kilmorna and the rising, “they are the only race that never has known British clemency.”

“They are too dangerous!” said the minister. “And treacherous. They must be kept down with a strong hand, when they rebel!” [181]

“About as dangerous as rabbits!” said his companion, “when the sportsmen come in to the field with their breechloaders.”

“I regret to say that is not our experience,” he said. “And I feel I am more flattering to the fighting race, as they love to call themselves, than their fair countrywoman!”

“I saw the rising,” she replied. “I knew many of the Fenians — “

“Mrs. Rendall! Impossible!” said the minister.

“Quite true!” she said composedly. “They were labourers, artisans, tradesmen, unskilled in arms, and unarmed. They went out with their pikes and shovels and old muskets to fight England, with her cannon and breechloaders; and, because they went down in the unequal fight, you think they are outside the pale of clemency.”

“But our reports, my dear Mrs. Rendall, our reports come to this, that they are most sanguinary ruffians, even in prison. The authorities have to use the most severe methods to keep them in order and under discipline.”

“They provoke the lions, and then brand them with hot irons,” she said.

“But you said just now they were but rabbits.”

“The rank and file? Yes! But there were men amongst them that might challenge comparison with the bravest and most honourable in the land. And it is just these, that are first driven mad by ill-treatment, and then punished as malefactors.”

“I can forgive your generosity towards your misguided countrymen,” he replied, “but we have grave duties towards our own country and society — “

“Undoubtedly,” she interrupted. “But one of the [182] gravest should be that you should see for yourselves, and not depend too much on officials and subordinates.”

“You are interested?” he queried.

“Yes! In all. In one in particular; but there is no room for mercy there, because he was an officer and leader in the Fenian forces.”

“May I be permitted to ask why you are so interested?”

“Yes. His sister and I were schoolmates. I never met him. But I gathered from all I heard that he was a gentleman in every way — the very soul of honour.”

“So much the more dangerous to us,” murmured the official. “Yet, for your sake, I shall make enquiries. Where is he imprisoned?”

“I have no idea. I have lost all communication with the people I knew. He is in some English prison.”

Her voice broke, and, looking at her there under the verandah lights, her companion saw that there were tears in her eyes.

“You at least remember his name?” he said, taking out a notebook.

“Yes! Cogan — Myles Cogan!”

He wrote the name rapidly.

“For Agnes — his sister’s sake,” she asked, “please do something; and — and — “

She stopped.

“Please do not mention to Mr. Rendall that I spoke of such things. He is an official, you know, and prejudiced!”

“I understand!” he said.

The result of this little conference was as follows:

A few weeks later, the minister was in his place in the House; and in a leisured moment he requested his [183] friend, the Home Secretary, to make enquiries about the conduct and condition of a certain leading Fenian convict, named Myles Cogan. A few nights after, he had to undergo a terrific cross-heckling from the Opposition, above and below the gangway. Furious, yet keeping, like a good Englishman, a calm exterior, he sat down; and just then, the Home Secretary, who sat in front of him, handed him a letter over his shoulder. It ran thus:

"Dartmouth Prison,
March
21st, 18....

"Major — has the honour to inform the Home Secretary, in reply to his letter of enquiry dated the 16th instant, that the Fenian prisoner, Myles Cogan, undergoing a life-sentence in this prison, has been reported as refractory and insubordinate. He has been under punishment nearly the whole time of his imprisonment; and has developed homicidal tendencies."

"H'm," said the minister, handing back the document to the Home Secretary, "a bad case! But I wonder did the punishment precede the homicidal tendencies, or was it their sequel. I feel that I have homicidal tendencies to-night. I could wish to hang three or four of those fellows opposite."

Yet the special enquiry from the Home Office disquieted Major not a little. It showed a special interest somewhere. But he put the harassing thought aside. There were the incontrovertible reports of the chief warder and the house-surgeon. Clearly he could not interfere. These things must be.

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XXVII

Hence, the same course of studied insult was pursued; and hence Myles found himself sinking deeper and deeper in seas of desperation. Gradually, but quite consciously, his character began to undergo a process of deterioration, which alarmed him at first, and then came to be regarded by his stifled conscience as the inevitable result of his condition. And alas! he felt, and oh! how keenly, that the resources of religion, which would have upheld and sustained him, were cut away from him. Once he had asked for confession from the prison chaplain. He admitted he had belonged to the Fenian organisation, and therefore could not receive sacraments; but he added with a bitter smile:

"I no longer am a member. I am a convict."

"Then you regret very much your past history with all its follies and crimes?"

"Crimes? I never committed a crime in my life."

"It was a crime to enter an illegal society, having for its object to dethrone our Queen, and subvert her authority."

"To dethrone the Queen? Never! That never entered our minds. To subvert English Government in Ireland — yes! We would have done it, if we could!"

"But you have had leisure now to see the criminality of such courses, and to regret them?" [185]

"I cannot say so," said Myles. "My experience here has convinced me that the British Government is the incarnation of all evil."

“Then I can do nothing for you,” said the priest.

He tried to pray; and it was a consolation at first. He fell back on the sweet, solemn meditations which he had so often made with his mother on the Passion and Death of the Divine Victim of human injustice; but somehow, the despairing thought that he was cut away from communion with the Church, and had no right to her consolations, made these meditations as bitter wormwood in his mouth. An outcast from society; a branded criminal, and cast off from the company of the faithful, what right had he to pray, he asked himself. No! There was no help in Heaven or on earth. He flung up his hands, like a swimmer who has battled long against the waves, and finds the terrific powers around him too much for him, and sank down into the depths of despair.

The poor Fenians, who were imprisoned with him, and who, by reason of their inferiority, were unmolested, viewed the horrible tragedy with bleeding hearts. Every chance that offered, they eagerly seized it to say a word of warning and encouragement.

“Never mind those Saxon brutes. Master Myles! They’re moving in Ireland; and we’ll be soon home again!”

Or:

“Don’t give that Orangeman, Master Myles, the satisfaction of punishing you. Don’t you see what the ruffian is aiming at? And that your hand is in the lion’s mouth?”

“Yes! He saw it all; but he had long since concluded that flesh and blood could not bear such indignities [186] as were offered him; and he sank into a mood of savage hatred, that accompanied him all day, woke him up in the watches of the night, and, finally, made him pray that he might go mad, and wreak on his persecutor that deadly revenge which his conscience, whilst he kept his faculties, would not allow.

In the summer of the following year, a young Irish priest, lent to the diocese of Plymouth, and just then officiating at Exeter, was ordered to proceed to Dartmoor, and take up the Sunday duty in place of the prison chaplain, who had left for the holidays. He packed his valise, took the train to Tavistock, met the governor’s groom, with his pony and trap in waiting, and was driven along the broad, sheltered roads that are such a feature in Devonshire. Then, they suddenly turned to the left and commenced the ascent of a high road, bordered with oaks and elms which gradually gave place to pine and fir, until all traces of vegetation seemed to cease; and the broad spaces of the moor, broken and undulating like a stormy sea, lay bare before their eyes.

It was a melancholy spectacle even in the summer time. The sun, that beat down hotly on the lower levels, seemed veiled and pallid here; and, instead of broad spaces, glowing in his light, a kind of grey and muffled halo spread on every side, giving an additional aspect of melancholy to the scene. The driver chatted away unceremoniously with the young priest; and just as they reached the slight elevation beneath which the village of Princetown, with its monster gaol lay hidden, he pointed to a grey patch, that showed clearly against the duns and browns of the moorland, and said: [187]

“You see that grey patch, or square, Sir, right over there?”

“Yes! just there to the north!”

“That’s a batch of convicts, Sir. They have been working on the farm all day; and just now are called in for the march home.”

The young priest continued for a long time staring at that grey square across the horizon. The word “convict” fascinated him. He had never seen one. He was about to be brought in touch with a strange and mysterious life.

The pony cantered gaily up the long, broad street of the village, the priest alighted at the chaplain's door, took one hasty and alarmed look at the massive granite walls that towered up before him with their tiny windows, suggesting a huge bastion or fortification loopholed for musketry; and had a calm, cold greeting from the Englishwoman, who acted as housekeeper to the chaplain.

When he had seen his room, and made his ablutions, he came down to tea, and was surprised to find that his attendant now was one of the prisoners. He was a fine, handsome, athletic fellow, with smiles dancing all over his face; and would have been quite a pleasing picture but for the garb of navy blue, decorated with broad red arrows, and the rude muffler around the neck and the list shoes that seemed to speak of the silence and solitude of the prison.

"I'm Father G's servant, Sir," he said. "Anything I can do for you, command me."

"But," said the young priest, scanning the prison garments, "you're not exactly in the costume of an ordinary footman?"

"No!" said the convict, smiling, "I am a prisoner, Sir, [188] doing my last term. This is the prison dress for those who are doing their last six months."

"And they're not afraid you'd take French leave, and skedaddle?"

"Oh, no, Sir! Why should I? I'd be shot, or captured in twenty-four hours; and should do all my term over again."

"Ha, I see!" said the priest. "Of course, you're a Catholic?"

"Yes, sir!"

Then you just tell me what I've got to do tomorrow? At what hour does Mass begin?"

"Ten o'clock. Sir! You just go up to the Lodge, and the warder will give you the keys and all directions. Benediction at 3. Ha! There goes the last bell. Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night!" said the priest, as he was left to his own meditations.

He speedily recovered himself, asked for pen and paper, and wrote out the headings of the morning's discourse.

A few minutes before ten o'clock next morning he was at the Lodge, got a heavy bunch of keys from the porter, with strict injunctions that on no account was he to part with them even for a moment, shown how to lock and unlock the heavj^ iron gates by shooting the bolt twice each way, and again warned that the keys were not for a moment to leave his possession.

The chapel bell was pealing out its dismal notes, as he crossed two large yards and entered the prison precincts. Two convicts were just entering the chapel. They were his acolytes. One had red, tender eyes; the other was small of stature, and spoke with difficulty. He had a diseased palate. The prisoners filed [189] in, as the young priest was robing. The navy-blue men came first; then the greys, very much larger in number. The officials and their wives mounted the steps towards the gallery. Then there was a pause, and the priest, feeling the heavy keys galling his leg, took them out, and placed them on the table. He was instantly tapped on the shoulder by the warder, who stood by.

"You must not leave them off your person. Sir, even for a moment."

The priest shivered, and just then the heavy clank, clank of chains was heard; and, at a quick pace, twenty or more convicts, dressed in hideous yellow, were marched in. Each of these was fettered by long rods, ankle to wrist.

“Dangerous prisoners!” whispered the warder. And as the priest was taking up his chalice, he continued:

“You’ll see the claimant in the Tichborne case right under the gallery. You’ll know him by his enormous size.”

But the priest had no eyes for such things that morning; for as he emerged from the sacristy, and walked up the long aisle of the chapel, he saw a sight that froze him with horror. The prisoners sat on long forms, and at the end of every two of these, seated on a raised stool, back to the altar, and facing the prisoners, was a warder, his right hand on his right knee holding a revolver. It was horrible in God’s own house, and in the presence of the Prince of Peace. The young priest, however, got through the Mass as well as he could, preached his little homily from a pulpit of Portland Stone, — which had been made by the Fenian prisoners at Portland, — and escaped to the Sacristy, carrying with him the doleful image of that [190] prison scene, and yet with such music ringing in his ears as he had never heard before. For the choir, consisting mostly of the officers and their wives and children, seemed to have been highly trained; and one voice soared above all, like the voice of a seraph, sent by God to show the outcasts and the degraded what sweetness and holiness could be infused even into the sordid conditions of their existence. What was his surprise to learn that the voice was the voice of a convict — a young Bank-Clerk from Liverpool, who had changed some figures in his Ledger.

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XXVIII

At Benediction, he met the same congregation, heard the same voices again; but was startled to find the Litany of the Blessed Virgin taken up and sung in admirable time by the entire body of convicts. And, as he listened, and heard these poor outcasts, the offscouring of humanit}^, raising their voices and calling on the “Morning Star,” and “The Refuge of Sinners” to pray for them, he realised for the first time the Catholicism of that mighty Church that knows no distinction, nor makes it; but takes all, even the worst of criminals, under its maternal protection, seeing neither the trappings of Kings, nor the vesture of menials; neither the scarlet and ermine of the judge, nor the coarse serge of the criminals, — seeing only souls, souls to be gathered through communion with her, into the ranks of the immortals.

The young priest, softened and penetrated with these sentiments, was about to move homewards when a warder said:

“There’s a poor fellow, pretty bad. Sir — .In fact, we think he’s insane; and probably it would be well that you should see him.”

He led the young priest upstairs, and at the head of the stairs, he pointed to a long, low room, the ceiling of which was supported by iron pillars.

“Our Infirmary!” he said. “That,” pointing to a [192] man, who was standing near one of the pillars, and who had lost his right arm, “is one of the Fenian prisoners. The poor fellow, to whom I am bringing you, is another.”

He led him along a dim, dark corridor, with corrugated iron cells on either hand; stopped before a door, took the keys from his belt, opened the door, ushered the priest into a dark cell, locked the door, and went away.

After the first moments of alarm at being locked into a dark cell with a lunatic, the priest looked around, and as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, aided a little by one tiny pencil of light which stole down through a hole in the corner of the cell, he perceived that it was entirely devoid of furniture of any kind. There were the four walls of iron, the floor of iron, the ceiling

of iron, and no more. And not a sound showed that there was a human being there, besides himself. Then, he became conscious that there was something huddled at his feet; and gradually he saw the outline of a figure on the floor. Kneeling down, he passed his hand over the man's forehead and whispered:

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yes," said the faint voice. "I know you are a priest."

And then the whole figure of the man became convulsed with sobbing, as the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Where are your hands?" said the priest.

"I'm in a strait-jacket," said the voice, faintly. "They think me insane and dangerous; and I suppose I am."

"You don't speak like one, my poor fellow," said [193] the priest. "Now, tell me your name, and all about you."

"Myles Cogan; I was a Fenian — "

"Myles Cogan of Kilmorna!" said the priest, "who was with Halpin at Slieve Ruadh?"

"Yes!" said the prisoner, faintly.

"Good God in Heaven!" said the priest. "Myles Cogan reduced to this!"

For a few seconds he could not speak. He had read all about that abortive rising; read the speeches of the prisoners in the dock; followed them in their way to English dungeons, and then lost them. And now, Myles Cogan, the brave young Chief, the Bayard of the time, "without fear, without reproach," reduced to this. The tears of the young priest fell fast; whilst he found it hard to control the rage and indignation that consumed him at such unspeakable brutality.

"Now," he said, still kneeling, and trying to speak in a composed voice, "tell me all your history since you came here, keep back nothing, and I know you won't exaggerate."

And so, there in the darkness of that horrid dungeon, Myles poured out all his sorrows and despair into the ear of that young sympathetic Irishman, who listened with burning cheeks and dilated eyes to the horrible story.

When all was ended, Myles said:

"One thing more. Father. I want to be reconciled to God and his Church. Will you hear my confession?"

He did; and rising up, he whispered:

"Now cheer up! The darkest hour is just before the dawn. You'll hear something very soon. Meanwhile pray. Here is a tiny crucifix. Keep it always [194] with you. It will remind you of Him, who has 'borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.'"

"I hope they won't take it from me," said Myles.

The priest touched the bell. The warder came up and released him. As they passed the door of the infirmary again, the young priest said:

"May I speak to that patient?" pointing to the armless prisoner.

"I'm afraid not, Sir! He has not asked; and it is against the regulations!"

The priest managed to gulp down some kind of dinner that day; and in the refulgent glory of a beautiful summer evening, he went out for a walk along the moor. He went with one of the

warders, who was off duty, and who had offered to accompany him. They strolled along the deep canal, or leat, that brought water to the town and prison from the high levels of the moorland; and there the warder, an Irishman, an ex warrant-officer in the Navy, told him many things.

"There are the windows, Sir, where the French prisoners, after the wars of Napoleon used sit, and shout: '*Vive l'Empereur*.' And there," pointing to some rushes that seemed to grow out of a dismal swamp, "are their graves. The place is a lake in winter!"

But probably, what surprised the good priest most was the astonishing care taken of the health of the prisoners.

"If they are out on the farm, and a shower of rain comes down, they are instantly ordered home; and every man must strip off his wet clothes, and put on perfectly dried and well-aired ones. If a prisoner tries to escape, we must never fire on him until the [195] last extremity, and then we must never send a bullet after him, but only slugs to maim him."

"Pretty large number of bad characters here?" "Yes! And yet we have very little trouble. They are clever fellows; and they know they are welltreated. Why, bless you. Sir! 'tis the same old fellows always come back to us. I take a fellow down to Tavistock today, and say good-bye! Three months after, I am ordered down on escort. There is the same old chap again! 'Hallo! This you! Carter.' 'Yes, Sir! Back again to the old diggings, Sir; no place like them.' You see. Sir, the grey jacket tells on them; and everyone knows they are ticket-of-leave, and no one will employ them. They won't go to the workhouse. Anything but that. So they break their leave; or commit some petty theft; and here they come back to us again."

"Then they must be well-treated!" said the priest. "Certainly. Any prisoner will tell you he would prefer five years' penal servitude to two years' imprisonment in a county gaol."

"Ah, indeed! And what is the secret of all this humane treatment. The general impression is that the prisoners are treated with the grossest cruelty!" "Cruelty? God bless you, no. Sir! We daren't!" "How is that? No one could ever know!" "Know? Why, God bless you, Sir, everything is known. There is an inquest on every prisoner that dies here. And if there's neglect, or cruelty, won't the Press ring with it? If a prisoner that tried to escape was shot dead, we'd never hear the end of it. 'Tis the Press, Father — the Press is everything; and the Press is the Devil!"

"I see!" said the priest, drawing in his breath in a [196] whisper. "That explains many things. When does the Governor leave in the morning?"

"Half-past nine, Sir! He asked you to be at the Lodge not later. There is a tough drive across the moor."

"All right! I shall be there!" said the priest.

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XXIX

They drove across the moor together, Major-Governor and young Irish priest; but spoke not a word about prisoners or prison-discipline, although it was a subject that was uppermost in the minds of both. They parted at Tavistock station with mutual assurances that the visit was pleasant for both.

A few nights after, as the Home Secretary was passing into the House through the Lobby after dinner, he was accosted by a certain Irish Member, who thrust a paper into his hands, and said:

"Would you be good enough to read that letter before I send it to the Press?"

The Home Secretary was in excellent humour, and he said:

"Most certainly. With pleasure!"

This was a mistake, however. It was a pretty slack night, nothing of a controversial character before the House; so he sat back on the ministerial benches, and commenced to read the letter at his ease. As he proceeded, however, his face lengthened, he sat erect, and continued to read with eyes that flamed beneath frowning brows. Once or twice he looked across the floor of the House and saw the Irish Member steadily watching him. He folded the letter, unfolded it, and read it again.

He then left the House, and signalled to the Member to accompany him.

"I have read this letter," he said, as they passed [198] into the library. "I think it is a gross exaggeration. Do you know the writer?"

"Yes, well! Depend on it, every word in that letter is true."

"But it is impossible, my dear Sir; I have heard about this prisoner. He has been reported as intractable and insubordinate from the first days of his imprisonment. You know there must be prison discipline — "

"I understand all these platitudes," said the Member, hotly. "But here are facts. Here is a splendid type of young Irish manhood reduced almost to a condition of imbecility by brutal and merciless treatment. I want to know what you intend doing in the matter!"

"Nothing, I can do nothing. I cannot interfere. The case has already been brought under my notice, not in the exaggerated form of this letter. I made inquiries — "

"May I ask who brought it under your notice?" queried the Member.

"An official of the Government. I made minute inquiries, received the Governor's report, and decided there was no room for interference on the part of the Government."

"And this is still your decision?"

"Certainly. We cannot interfere with the internal discipline of our prisons. It would lead to interminable confusion."

"Very good. That is your decision. This is mine. Tonight I shall have a hundred copies of this letter struck off; and tomorrow a hundred copies will be sent to the newspapers in the British Empire, America, and the Continent. Then, we shall hear no more of Siberian horrors." [199]

"But what if the letter is refuted and contradicted? Do you think the letter of a young clergyman will weigh in the mind of the British public against the authoritative statements of officials?"

"The British public be damned!" said the Member. "It is to Ireland, and America, and France, and Germany, and Russia, it will appeal. You pose as humanitarians before the world. With all your damned hypocrisy, you compare the mild treatment of English prisons with Siberian salt-mines and the Devil's Island. Now, I have a chance of showing you up in your true colours, before the world. Here is a political prisoner, no ordinary criminal, — a gentleman by education, who, because he embarked on a foolish revolution that was crushed in a couple of hours, has been sentenced to life-long imprisonment and there reduced by brutal treatment to a condition of insanity. That is what will speed on the wings of the Press before forty-eight hours."

The Home Secretary looked disturbed.

“What do you propose?” he said, handing back the letter.

“This,” said the Member, promptly. “ Whether you like it or not, you’ll have to grant a complete amnesty to your Irish political prisoners before many months are over — ”

The Minister made a gesture of dissent.

“Time will tell,” said the Member. “Meanwhile, what I do not propose, but demand, is this. That a commission of two gentlemen, I don’t care who they are, shall proceed at once to Dartmoor prison, shall see this prisoner in his dark cell and in his strait-jacket; shall interrogate him, and then the warders separately, and let me have their report. And mark you, if [200] Myles Cogan dies in that dungeon, there are desperate men in Ireland that will take a fearful revenge — ”

“Yes! I am aware of all that,” said the Minister. “Your countrymen don’t stop at trifles.”

“Not when they are face to face with brutal despotism,” said the Member. “But your decision? Time presses.”

“I see no objection,” said the Minister. “I shall send the Commission you demand. It is unusual, but so are the circumstances.”

‘‘Very!” said the Member. “But mark you — no time is to be lost; and there are to be no officials sent. We know how these scoundrels back up each other.”

Hence, a few days after, Myles Cogan was helped by two warders to the Governor’s office. Hardened by experience and his dealings with poor, degraded humanity as he was, the Major’s heart smote him, as he looked at the wreck of the man who now stood before him. Had he been a man of weak nerves, he would not have remained a moment alone with that emaciated form, those sunken eyes that seemed to glare at him like a wild beast’s, that mass of white, dirty hair, unkempt and standing up, a crop of bristles. But he dismissed the warders, and motioned Myles to a chair. The latter sank into it wearily; and, at once, through sheer weakness, his head sank down between his knees.

The Governor watched that pathetic figure for a few minutes. Then he touched the bell. A warder appeared, to whom he whispered something. And very soon, his own maid came into the room bearing a tray with some soup and wine. He beckoned all to depart; and, taking the bowl of soup, he stood over [201] Myles for a moment. Then he touched his shoulder. Myles sat up; and the Governor placed the vessel to his lips. He drank it eagerly, ravenously, with the appetite of a famished man. Then the Governor compelled him to swallow two glasses of wine rapidly; and the human face came back, and the wild beast look departed.

When the maid returned to remove the tray, a little girl, the Major’s youngest child, crept in with her, holding fast by the girl’s apron. With dilated eyes she stared at the gaunt figure in the chair; then ran over, and nestled near her father. The moment the eyes of Myles Cogan rested on the pretty figure, he seemed to undergo a transformation. His form seemed to dilate; a light came into his eyes, and Hope stole into his heart. No wonder! Accustomed as he had been for nigh on ten years to see nothing but what was harsh and revolting and repulsive, it seemed to him that Heaven was opened now, and looked down on the bleeding earth. Bad as Nature was in that cold forbidding moorland, where never was seen tree or bush or flower, where the very winds, unlike the soft, caressing winds of Ireland, were harsh and dry and stifling, yet Nature, in the guise and form of men, was worse. Those twisted, gnarled, fiendish faces of the criminals were hardly more repulsive than the stern, rigid countenances of the officers, from which every trace of pity and humanity was eliminated. On Sundays, the voices of the choir brought back one tender feeling for the moment; and the faces of a few women, the wives or daughters of the officers, touched a human chord, and made it vibrate. But this was but a moment in the long

eternity of anguish; it was as the little bird-song to the chained prisoner down there [202] at Chillon beneath the waters of the lake. And now, he was face to face with a child — and an exceedinglybeautiful child. Her great round eyes stared at him in pity and wonderment. She tossed the curls from her eyes and forehead with all the unconscious coquetry of childhood; and Myles stared at her, stared and wondered, whilst he felt his heart, that had been a stone in his breast for ten long years, was actually becoming human again.

The Governor noted all this, and said:

"Go and shake hands, Morwenna!"

The child hesitated. Myles Cogan was not an attractive object in his prison dress.

"Go, Morwenna, and shake hands. He has been ill and weak!"

This touched the child; and she went over; and fixing her round, wondering eyes on his face, as if seeking to read his thoughts, she put out her tiny hand. He would have cheerfully gone back to his dreary cell then, if he could only take that child in his arms and kiss her. But he felt he dared not. He took the tiny fingers, and lifted them to his lips; and then, suddenly, his whole frame was convulsed in a fit of hysterical sobs, that shook him, until he lost all control, and finally wept silent tears, that were sweet and bitter unto him.

The Governor touched the bell. A warder appeared.

"Hickson," he said, "this prisoner is altogether exempt from every kind of manual work in future. You understand?"

"Yes, Sir!"

"He will attend here at my office every morning at 9.30; and I shall take it upon me to arrange his work. You may remove him!"

[203]

XXX

"Amnesty! Amnesty! Amnesty!" was the one cry that rang around Ireland these momentous years. It was uttered at public meetings; it was printed on public placards; it was the theme of all political speeches; it took precedence of tenant-right and land-purchase and every other question, even of the most pressing importance, in the resolutions that were formulated, spoken to, and passed with acclamation at every public meeting. And, at last, England yielded, took her hand off the throats of these poor labourers and artisans, and set them free. It has taken this England six hundred years to learn the lesson that it is by hanging, quartering, and imprisoning, she has kept the idea of Irish nationality intact; and that it is by indifference, or affected kindness, she can make Ireland a West Anglia.

And so, one fine morning, the other Fenian prisoners were released, and went on their way rejoicing. Myles Cogan was kept back for a week.

How did he view it? Well, there were conflicting emotions in his mind. Recent circumstances had made his lot easy, and even comfortable; and he dreaded going out into the world, and facing the battle of life again. But liberty! liberty! Ah, yes! That priceless privilege — was this to be disdained? Assuredly, no!

He stood, on a warm summer morning, outside the [204] Governor's house. The groom was at the horse's head. To the left, where the granite quarry was, he saw the convicts, harnessed to the immense float, toiling wearily up the steep ascent. He was done with that for ever. The Governor came out, and Myles said, in a bashful way:

“May I have one little favour, Major?”

“What is it?”

“Just to say. Good-bye! to your little girl!”

“Certainly; and just look here, Cogan! That grey suit is pretty well known in England at least. There is some money coming to you for clerical work; and when you get to Bristol, perhaps, an overcoat would be no harm!”

He gave Myles some notes; and called out the child. She came shyly, and bashfully; Myles took her hand, and kissed it, and said:

“Good-bye!”

They mounted the trap; and, in an hour and a half, parted at Tavistock station.

Myles, still weak and with shattered nerves, leaned up against a metal pillar, his small valise on the ground near him. The bell rang. The mighty engine, monster of steel and brass, rolled in, and made the platform vibrate. Myles felt sick, and would have lost his train, but that a porter touched his arm, and said:

“Are you travelling?”

“Yes. To Bristol!”

“No time to lose. Get aboard quick. What class?”

“Third.”

“There you are.”

He leaned back in the carriage, and thanked God it was almost empty. He looked eagerly and suspiciously at the few passengers; but they were buried in [205] their newspapers, and very soon the easy gliding motion of the train soothed his quivering nerves, and he leaned back, and watched the landscape as it flitted by. And oh! how beautiful it was! To eyes, accustomed for ten years to a barren moorland, with all its savagery of rocks, and stones and scrub, how sweet were the green meadows, and the yellowing cornfields, and the great elms that lined the road, and the summer haze shrouding it all. The signal houses, smothered in roses, that seemed to be struggling with one another in their vast profusion, were hardly less attractive than the English child-faces, so healthy and ruddy, that thronged the doors and stared unafraid at the monster thundering by; and the lazy kine, knee-deep in grass, lifted their heavy heads and stared stupidly at them; but it was peace and plenty and freedom they symbolised.

At the stations where they stopped, and took in fresh contingents of passengers, the dread of being noticed as a released convict and ticket-of-leave man came back to him and set his heart beating. But, no one seemed to notice him. They arranged for their own comfort and thought of nothing else.

At last, they rolled into the station at Bristol, Myles gripped his valise, inquired at what hour the night boat for Cork started, and made his way towards the quays. Here he secured a berth, stowed away his valise, and went back to the city. He entered a draper’s shop, and asked for a Melton overcoat.

The attendant looked him all over, noticed the coarse grey jacket, and said:

“Ours is a cash business. We give no credit!”

“And I ask none!” said Myles. “If you cannot suit me, I can go elsewhere!” [206]

“I beg pardon,” said the man, eyeing him curiously.

He selected a Melton, then a stiff felt hat, and knew he was now disguised. Yet, when he entered the street, and a policeman watched him, and even followed him a few steps, he felt faint and disheartened again.

He entered a restaurant, sat at a small table in an obscure corner, and asked for coffee, cold meat, and rolls. He was relieved to see that the guests did not uncover at the other tables. He was afraid to lift his hat and exhibit the closely-clipped hair of the convict.

As he lifted the coffee to his lips, his hand shook, and the attendant said sympathetically:

"You have been ill, sir?"

"Very," he said, grateful for the words, yet afraid the girl had understood his secret. "My nerves are quite shattered; but I shall soon be all right. I am going back to my native air."

He was hoping she would remain and continue the conversation. Her woman's voice, softly toned, and her presence, and the very swish of her garments, spoke of gracious things, and threw a glow of sympathy over a nature that had been congealed under the iron rigour of the prison.

But to his disappointment, she turned away; and said in her cold, English fashion:

"This is your account, Sir. I hope you will have a pleasant journey."

He lingered a little while; and then went down to the boat. Steam was up, and there were some signs of life. He went down to examine his berth; and found that the little cabin was right over the screw, and there were but two berths. The other had not been engaged. He bought a packet of cigarettes from the steward, and went on deck. The passengers were [207] coming in; and he got away into a corner, where he could see, without being seen. They were the usual types — paterfamilias with his little flock of careless children, single ladies closely veiled, swaggering commercial travellers, who crossed over every three months, a few soldiers, returning from furlough, etc. Then sauntered down slowly, and as if travelling was their daily occupation, half a dozen stalwart bronzed fellows, whom he easily recognised as cattle-dealers. They had brought their beasts from the rich plains of Cork and Tipperary to the English market, and were going back with English gold in their pockets.

"I wonder if I spoke to them, and told them who I was, would they recognise me?" he thought. But, he was not going to face a rebuff, and kept back in the shade.

A young waiter came up, napkin in hand, and said:

"Will you dine, Sir? Dinner on the table at seven."

"No, I have dined," said Myles. "I suppose I can have a cup of tea later on?"

"Certainly, Sir. Any time after half-past eight."

"When do we start?"

He was eager to leave that detested English shore for ever.

"Just off, Sir! You see!"

And silently, slowly, the engines were pushing out the boat from the quays; and friends waved Adieux to friends on shore.

"Thank God!" said Myles, with a sigh of relief. "Now for the hills of Ireland!"

The outgoing tide swept them slowly down the narrow channel between the high cliffs of Clifton, under the lofty suspension bridge, until the river broadened out into an estuary, the shores receding on [208] either side, and the lights beginning to twinkle faint and far and single

on the Cornish coast; but sometimes in groups, as of swarms of fire-flies, where the great towns of South Wales were massed on the right of the channel.

Myles had tea; and again got back to his little retreat on the deck, unaccosted and unnoticed, as he desired. There he gave himself up to meditations, some sweet, some bitter, some hopeful, but more despondent, as he reviewed his past, and looked forward to the future.

At ten o'clock, he sought his berth, undressed partially, and lay down. The cool, night air came in through the porthole, and played across his hair and forehead. The crunching of the screw kept him awake for a little while; and then he sank into a deep, profound slumber.

He was awakened by sounds of swabbing on deck; and he swoke in terror. They were the patter of the feet of the convicts on the stone corridor outside his cell. The cabin-door opened, and, mistaking his position through confusion of sense and habits of ten years, he said:

"I slept out. Sir; I never heard the bell!"

The steward stared a little, and then said:

"Perhaps you would like a cup of tea, Sir?"

In an instant, the situation broke on his startled senses; and alarmed and angry with himself at such a betrayal, he stammered:

"The very thing I was going to ask you. Will it take long?"

"Just a few minutes. Sir. And a biscuit, or a cut of bread and butter?"

"All right," said Myles. "Either will do." [209]

The door closed; and he lay back in his berth, wondering at his own folly, and wondering what the man would think. And then he gave himself up to a pleasant thought, that never more should he hear the horrible clangour of that morning-bell, which tore through his brain, and tortured his nerves at five o'clock every day that had dawned on him, and broken the sweet forgetfulness of sleep during all these weary years.

The steward brought in the tea and biscuits; and Myles, afraid that the man would see and notice the coarse shirt he wore, said:

"Place it on the pedestal, till it cools. Where are we?"

"Off the Wexford coast. Sir. We passed the Tuskar an hour ago."

"The night was calm?"

"Not a breeze, Sir. No one sick on board this night."

"And we get to Cork — when?"

"About ten o'clock. We have to creep our way up the river."

"Of course. At what hour is breakfast?"

"Nine sharp!"

"But a hungry fellow could have it at half-past eight, I suppose?"

"Of course. What will you have. Sir?"

"Coffee and some cold beef and ham!"

"All right, Sir!"

Myles took the tea, rose up and dressed and went on deck. Everyone knows the delightful sensation of coming on deck on a fine summer morning, watching the foam speeding by, and

drinking in draughts of cool, sweet air. Myles drew in, and filled his chest with [210] volumes of that pure, clean air, allowing its salt to sting him, and its odours of brine and seaweed to saturate every sense. Then he went to breakfast, and, as he so much desired, he was alone.

When he came on deck again, the tall cliffs of Ballycotton, red and black beneath, but glittering on the turf of the summit with a vast profusion of wild flowers, the yellow broom and the purple wild thyme conspicuous amidst their more vulgar brethren, rose right above the vessel.

"Ah, thou hapless motherland!" he said. "What a martyrdom thy lovers and thy sons have to bear! And yet, there is thy eternal magic, which brings us back, willing slaves, to thy feet again!"

In an hour, they were off Cork Harbour, the vessel swung round, and, pointing to the north, sailed in beneath the frowning ramparts of Camden and Carlisle.

As Myles watched with admiration the fine scene that lay before him, — the amphitheatre of hills surrounding the harbour, the deep long hulls of the three and four-masted wheat-ships that lay at anchor, the little tugs and tenders that seemed to be flying everywhere, a voice behind him said:

"That's a gang of convicts crossing the gangway to Haulbowline."

Myles started violently, and looked around.

It was an ordinary commercial traveller, who called his attention to the long row of prisoners, who, in the unmistakable grey jackets, and with the unmistakable shuffling step, were moving slowly across the bridge that connected Spike and Haulbowline.

It took him a few seconds to recover his composure. The horror of the convict life seemed to pursue him. [211]

Then he gazed steadily, and yet with some emotion, at the prisoners, and said:

"Indeed?"

"Yes," continued the man, "that is Spike Island. You were never round there before, Sir?"

"Never," said Myles. "I have been away for ten years and am returning to see Ireland once more,"

"You'll find a good many changes in ten years, Sir!"

"I fear so," said Myles,

"In fact everything is changing," said the man, puffing away at a huge cigar whilst he spoke. "The Government now are about to deport these convicts to Portland or Dartmoor, and fortify the place. The harbour then will be absolutely impregnable."

At the mention of "Dartmoor," Myles flushed up, and darted an angry look at the man. But evidently nothing was meant. And Myles said:

"When that takes place. Spike Island will only be remembered as the place where Mitchell spent two days before his deportation to Van Diemen's Land; and where Edward Walsh stole in in the twilight, and touched his hand, and said: 'Mitchell, you are the one man I envy in Ireland tonight.'"

"Indeed," said the traveller. "I never heard. That was a long time ago, I suppose?"

"So long it seems to be forgotten," said Myles.

"Good-morning, Sir," said the man, stiffly, and moved away.

When they arrived at Cork, Myles hastened to a hotel. He wanted a clean shave, for his white beard had grown, a good wash, and a lunch that would answer for dinner.

When he had shaved, he drew the mirror near the window, and started back at the dread change. [212]

"My own mother wouldn't know me!" he thought. "I shouldn't have shaved!"

But it was done; and his one thought then was, how would Agnes bear it.

He went to the railway station, saw a head-line on the posters:

"Last of the Fenian prisoners released!" bought a paper, and after much searching found in an obscure end of a column:

"We understand that the last of the Fenian prisoners, Cogan, was released from Dartmoor yesterday. Some will remember that Cogan was sentenced to death ten years ago, and that the capital sentence was committed to penal servitude for life."

That was all. The word "Cogan," the easy way in which all his ten long years of horror were spoken of; the insignificance of his release, and the unimportance of the whole affair, hurt him deeply.

"Yea, this is my reward," he said bitterly, as he took his seat in the railway carriage. "This is the people for whom poor Halpin said a life might be given cheerfully."

Then the loneliness of the Irish landscape smote him, and sank his spirits deeper. The long, receding fields, half-scorched by the summer sun, the tiny rivulets that crept exhausted down the cliffs, the absence of human habitations, the whole country seeming to be inhabited only by sheep and oxen, the miserable ruins of mud cabins and the more melancholy remains of crumbling abbeys and castles; and, above all, that lonely, melancholy atmosphere that seems to hang down over Ireland, even on a summer day, plunged him in a kind of stupid sorrow that was very near to tears. [213]

He was tired, weary, and disheartened when he reached the station at Kilmorna. He passed out unnoticed and unknown, flung his valise on a side-car, and said:

"Millbank!"

The driver looked at him with that glance of suspicious curiosity that is so common in Ireland; and several times as they drove along the mile of road to Millbank, Myles felt that the fellow's eyes were studying him keenly. He knew the lad well. He was one of the "byes" that went out with himself in '67. But he was too dispirited to take notice; and he was anxious to avoid recognition and to secure a little quiet at any cost.

At last they drew up at the little iron gate. It was three o'clock in the afternoon! Yes! there was the same old house, the same gravelled walk, the same shrubs on either side. He dismounted, paid the driver, whose curiosity was now excited to the utmost, and who drew his car along the road, and between some trees where he could make observations. Myles went slowly up the walk, and knocked. A strange servant opened the door, stared at him when he asked for Miss Cogan, and left him standing in the hall. In a few moments, Agnes came down stairs. Years and trouble had changed her but little. She made a little bow to the stranger; and, as he said nothing, she scrutinised him more closely. Then, with a little scream of terror and delight, she put her arms around his neck, drew down his face to hers, and kissed it passionately; and then ran away, and buried her face in a sofa pillow, unable to control her anguish.

The driver, who had been watching the little drama, now came to his own conclusion; and flinging his [214] whip on the cushions, and not caring what became of horse or car, he tore up

the gravelled walk, grasped Myles Cogan's hand, and shook it as if he would dislocate it, muttering:

"Wisha, damn your sowl, Myles Cogan — what a way you have threated us after all our waiting! Sure we thought you wor comin' around by Dublin and that a hundred thousand men would meet you! Oh! Mother of God! What a skeleton these English devils have made of you! But wait. Master Myles! Miss Agnes," he cried, raising his voice," don't let Masther Myles go to bed too early tonight. I'm goin' to rouse the five parishes round; and the divil such a sight was never seen before — "

"Now, now, Jem," said Myles, "I'm very weak; and I want rest badly."

"And you'll have plinty of it, Masther Myles, but, begor, you can't cheat us in that way. Good-bye till eight o'clock."

And surely enough at eight o'clock, a vast concourse of people did gather around the gate at Millbank. The upper classes kept aloof — professional men, rich shopkeepers, to whom the word "Fenian" was an abomination. But the people were there — all his old comrades, who turned away weeping when they saw his cadaverous features, young lads, who had heard their fathers speak of him; women with children in their arms, whom they bade to look up and see the Fenian Chief, and the man, who had "suffered for his country." The police, too, were there with their note-books, for Myles Cogan was but a ticket-of-leave man. But he was too weak and dispirited to talk treason. He said a few words of thanks, told them that he was unchanged and unchangeable, spoke [215] generously of his old comrades and the men who had gone to prison with him, and retired.

Later on, Father James came up. He grasped the hand of the lad he had known from infancy, said a few cheery words; and then, seeing the terrible change wrought in the handsome boy he had known, his voice broke, and he sank into a chair and wept.

BOOK II

XXXI

And now commenced for Myles Cogan a stiff struggle for life. His business had gone down rapidly during his imprisonment, the weak hands of a young girl being unable to control or maintain it. Most of his customers had gone over to his rival, Simpson from Sligo, who had brought in new ideas and new methods from the pushing North. It needed all the fierce threats of his old Fenians to keep the men at work at the Mill, higher wages and better terms being offered from the other side; and, whilst the country people stood valiantly by the old house, and still purchased there their flour and meal and bran and pollard, many of the townsfolk abandoned the shop, and went elsewhere. A few of the gentry, notwithstanding their aversion to Fenianism, stood gallantly by the young girl who seemed so helpless; and these few helpers alone kept the firm from bankruptcy.

Myles cordially approved of Father James' advice against selling the estate, although he was now prepared at any moment to see Agnes realising all her day-dreams by entering a convent.

He took off his coat gallantly, however, and bent himself with free valour to the task that lay before him. And, without for a moment condescending to seek custom from those who had abandoned him, he managed by careful advertisement to win back a good [220] many of his former supporters; and, after a little time, he began to see that his business could be made a

paying one again. The one thing that galled him was his monthly report at the police-office as a ticket-of-leave man; but here the Serjeant came to his relief by appointing a meeting once a month on the bridge, where Myles formally reported himself.

His inner life had undergone a complete transformation. Deprived of the consolations of religion in prison, he realised their importance now; and he threw himself into the work of personal sanctification with a zest and zeal that astonished his sister and Father James.

"He'll wind up in Melleray," said Father James, one day in his hearing.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Myles. "Every Irishman is born a soldier or a monk. I have been the former. Maybe I shall put on the cowl before I die."

He resolutely, however, refused any honours or positions in the different societies or confraternities which he joined. He preferred, he said, to serve in the ranks. Many of his old comrades, who had been imbued with the anti-clerical spirit since '67, resenting the interference of the church, and who had therefore abstained from the Sacraments, he brought back and reconciled with the Church. He helped on Young Men's Societies, Hurling Clubs, Coursing Clubs, but again, he refused all municipal offers. He had no ambition, he said.

And as all the old fierce passionate love for Ireland was undimmed and undiminished, although he knew that the dream of independence was impracticable, he watched the political movements of the time with interest, but without sympathy. [221]

All the energies of the nation seemed now concentrated in securing the land of the country for the farmers. The three F's was the political cry of the moment. No one could foresee the tremendous revolution that was impending, with all the vast train of consequences, moral and material, which it entailed. Myles had no sympathy with it. He hated tyranny in any shape or form, and would gladly break down the domination of any class; but it was a sectional and local patriotism which did not appeal to him. To his consternation he beheld one day the old flag with its watchword: "Ireland for the Irish" pulled down, and the new standard with its more selfish motto: "The Land for the people" erected for the guidance of the nation. And who had done it? Verily, his brother Fenian, and fellow-convict in Dartmoor, McDermot. And sure enough the warcry caught on. The heather was ablaze, and the conflagration spread like a prairie-fire. The appeal was made to the interests of four hundred thousand men and their families; and they flung the three F's to the wind, and demanded that all dual ownership should cease. The Gall should go, and the Gael come in to his rightful inheritance.

One Sunday morning, Myles received a brief note from McDermot, asking him to meet the latter at Kilmorna station, where he would arrive exactly at twelve o'clock, on his way to address a monster meeting at a place about six miles distant.

Myles had seen little of McDermot in Dartmoor, the discipline particularly exercised towards keeping the Fenians apart, being very strict. They could not help, however, seeing each other at work, in chapel, and in the exercise ground. McDermot, crushed to [222] pieces himself, and enduring his own crucifixion, did not know the extent of Myles Cogan's sufferings, until the released Fenians gave to the world that sad record of human brutality. But now he was eager to see him, and to enlist his influence on the side he had chosen.

Myles was at the station punctually. There was a vast crowd, with waving banners, brass bands and reed bands; and a strong body of police in their great coats, their ammunition slung around their necks, and the butts of their rifles resting on the ground.

McDermot courteously acknowledged the cheers and plaudits of the multitude; but looking around anxiously, he saw Myles and shook him by the hand, and said:

“Come in here to the refreshment-room. We shall be alone, and I have much to say. I must have something to eat against the day; and we can talk in the meantime!”

The two men went in. The meal was ordered; and without any preliminary, McDermot said:

“I want you to join us!”

“Quite impossible!” said Myles.

“Why?”

“Because it seems a departure from all our principles.”

“I cannot see that. How?”

“Our first principle always has been to band all Irishmen together, and not to set class against class.”

“True; and for what purpose?”

“To make Ireland a nation, of course!”

“You cherish that idea still?”

“Certainly, although I have abandoned the idea of separation. In fact, I never entertained it!”

“T remember,” said McDermot. “You said as much in your speech from the dock. But, how can [223] you make Ireland a nation with an English garrison in your midst, hostile to all the aims and aspirations of the people?”

“They think they are Irishmen, and have a right to live in Ireland, I suppose. If England protects them in saving their property, how can you blame them if they look to England?”

“Yes! But, if they, clinging to the old ideas of ascendancy, and not seeing, or rather refusing to see, the change in the economic conditions of the time, persist in demanding rents which the land cannot bear, and are prepared to exterminate our people if they cannot meet their unjust demands, can we regard them any longer as Irishmen, and not as wolves that must be hunted down at any cost?”

Myles was staggered. He saw he had been dreaming; and stern, daylight facts were placed under his eyes. McDermot saw it, and persisted:

“Are you prepared to see the whole Catholic Celtic population exterminated?”

“No! But neither am I prepared to sanction injustice. You are seeking to promote a just cause by ignoble means.”

“How?”

“By the breaking of contracts, the subversion of society, the possibility of crime — ”

“Cogan, were you a Fenian?” said McDermot.

“I think I was,” said Myles. “But the Fenians committed no crimes. They went out in the open field, prepared to give a life for a life. They never fired into unprotected houses, nor docked the tails of cattle, nor cut off the hair of young girls. McDermot — “

“ Well? Be brief. My time is short, and I am wasting it,” said McDermot, peevishly. [224]

“Beware! You are an honourable man; and, if I mistake not, a thoroughly conscientious man. Think — Will the material benefit accruing to the farmers of Ireland balance the moral deterioration that must follow, when you appeal only to selfish instincts?”

“Good-bye, Cogan — ”

“A moment! Have you thought it over?”

“Thought it over? Good heavens, man, whatever else was I thinking of over there in Dartmoor, night and day, for ten years? Do you think I wouldn’t have gone mad, as you did, if I had not one hope to build on, one grand project to effect? Out on the moors, in the dark cells, even at Mass, God forgive me! did that thought ever leave my mind, that I would strike England in her most vulnerable part, and, by driving out the landlords, sap the very foundations of British power in Ireland? Yes! My patient hate is bearing fruit. Do you see those men outside? They are but a handful to the thousands who will throng around me this afternoon to hear their gospel of redemption. And you won’t come? I had hoped to have you standing by my side to revenge Dartmoor. Well, your blood is tamer than mine, though you suffered more. When the last shoneen takes his ticket at Kingstown, and the people, our people, our dear Catholic people, can see the smoke, rising from their chimneys without fear that the agent can see it, then I’ll sing my Nunc Dimittis, for I shall have shewn England what convict 123 could do. Good-bye!”

He turned away; but came back.

“You were born in ease, Cogan, the son of a rich merchant, I believe. I was born in a poor farmer’s cottage; and even that was not left us. I saw my father and mother flung out on the road in the [225] snow. Do you think I have ever forgotten; can ever forget?”

Myles turned away. Pathetic though the picture was which McDermot summoned up, somehow it revealed the personal note of revenge; and McDermot fell in his esteem.

[226]

XXXII

But McDermot did himself injustice by such words; and he did himself double injustice in the opening sentence of his speech that day at the great tenant-right meeting —

“We, Irishmen, have one great fault — we are too ready to forgive and forget.”

It would seem then that the driving power behind that vast organisation which he was building up with such pains, and which eventually drove him back to Dartmoor, was hate —

> The patient hate, and vigil long
> Of him, who treasures up a wrong.

It is a Celtic characteristic; and McDermot was a Celt of the Celts. And yet, one would rather believe that it was for a higher motive than mere revenge he brooded over that tremendous plan which resulted in the emancipation of the Irish serfs. At least, it was a vigorous and comprehensive intellect that devised it, and then helped, under all manner of toil and suffering, to see it carried to its ultimate issue. Yet, there was a great deal in that last remark he addressed to Myles. It will be found that the more comprehensive idea of Irish nationhood has always been cherished by the dwellers in the towns and cities of Ireland. To them Ireland has been a whole — a homogeneous entity to be welded more and more until it took on the consistency [227] of a nation. The people of fields and herds can only conceive of patriotism, as it affects the land.

Myles went home, saddened after the brief interview. Clearly, he could take no further part in the doings of the nation. Its new ambition never reached up to his high ideals.

In another way he was convinced by a rude shock that the political arena was not for him.

Mr. Fottrel had returned from his American trip, where he had gathered some thousands of pounds for the relief of the distressed Irish. He had not quite reached that giddy summit from

which he fell so disastrously; but he had acquired sufficient popularity and power to assume all the manner of a Dictator.

The Fenians in the North of England, especially in Lancashire, had long cherished the idea of seeing a real, live convict on the floor of the House of Commons; and if he could appear in his ticket-of-leave garb, all the better.

Hence, one morning, Myles received a sealed document which he was ordered to present to Mr. Fottrel at a convention which was to be held in Athlone at an early date. Myles did not love Fottrel. He only saw in him an ambitious man, who, by a certain glamour of birth, and by the unmistakable services he rendered to the people, seemed anxious to assume supreme power, and to destroy the last vestiges of individual liberty.

"God knows," he thought bitterly, "these poor serfs have never been able to hold themselves straight, or to assume the attitude of freemen; but just now the man puts his foot on their necks, and drives them into an attitude of subjection worse than ever."

He attended the Convention, however. Everything [228] went smoothly, until the name of a person, rather obnoxious to the clergy, was proposed as Parliamentary Candidate. A little group of priests, huddled together in a corner of the platform, made a weak murmur of dissent. Fottrel raised a small white hand, and turning to the disaffected clergy he said:

"Gentlemen, let us be unanimous!" And they meekly bowed before him.

Myles saw the little incident, and drew his own conclusions. Evidently, to be unanimous was everything. Private judgment and human liberty were at an end.

He waited his opportunity. The members of the Convention had dispersed and Myles waited in the passage. Presently, Fottrel came along, arm in arm with one of his supporters. Myles stepped forth and raised his hat. Fottrel stared at him in a half-conscious manner for a moment — and passed on. Myles, stung by the supposed affront, followed, and tapping Fottrel on the shoulder he said angrily:

"You'll probably have better manners when you read this letter."

Fottrel broke the seal, but in a reluctant manner. He cast his eyes along the document and studied the names at the end. Then suddenly changing his whole tone, he shook Myles cordially by the hand, and asked him to dinner at the Shannon Hotel. Myles declined, and went home.

A few weeks later he had a communication from a leading politician in the little borough of B — town, informing him that, at the command of Mr. Fottrel, he was to be nominated for that borough on the following Tuesday, and there would be no opposition. Myles took his pen, and promptly wrote:

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"*Sir —*

"*I have received your letter, informing me that, by command of Mr. Fottrel, I am to be nominated member for your borough next Tuesday. I have no wish for Parliamentary honours, and I am doubtful if I could ever take the oath of allegiance to England. Nevertheless, if I am nominated as member for your Borough, not at the dictation of an individual, but by the unanimous, or quasi-unanimous, votes of your constituency, free from all bias and from all coercion, I shall give the matter sympathetic consideration*.

"Yours truly,

"Myles Cogan."

He heard no more of the matter. In a few weeks, an unknown man was elected member for B — town. Some few burghers murmured; but the nation had spoken, and elected its King.

What then were Myles Cogan's political principles? Clearly he had no idea of practical politics, — of that game of skill and science the wide world over where all principles of probity and truth are cast to the winds, and the whole thing resolves itself into a mimic warfare of plot and counterplot, of skilful lying and dishonest appeals to the worst, because most selfish, interests of the people; and where, eventually, the most eloquent or the most unscrupulous leader will command the admiration and suffrages of the multitude. It was all pitiful; and Myles saw how complete must be the demoralisation of any nation under such agencies. But, he could only stand aloof, and eat his heart in silence. His dream of a united Ireland, all classes agreeing to sink their differences in a cordial acknowledgment of the nation's claims; his fond hope [230]

that Ireland would keep aloof from the material degradation of other nations, and be, what she had always been, a centre of spiritual and intellectual illumination to a world living in darkness and the shadow of death, was not to be realised. He saw his great race abandoning all the splendid, if phantasmal, idealism of the past, and hungering after the fieshpots of the successful but degraded nations of the earth. And there was no help. Not a voice was raised to recall the nation to its old sense of honour; not an organ of public opinion dared express a single sentiment that would breathe of the old and sacred independence that sanctified the individual, and saved the nation from corruption. Myles felt he stood almost alone, wrapped up in the old idealism of Mitchell and Davis. He clung to a dishonoured creed; and refused to apostatise, even though the whole country ran after the gods of Baal.

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XXXIII

Once he broke silence and reserve, and launched out into a furious philippic against the Moonlighters and Rapparees of the period. Some English papers attributed the murders and moonlight outrages, which then were dishonouring the land, to a remnant of Fenians, who still clung to the old idea of separation. Myles was wroth at this. He had trust in the honour of his old comrades; and he could never bring himself to believe that the men of '67 would descend to the commission of crime, which was made still more loathsome by its very meanness. Charles Kickham had issued a mild protest to the papers in the same sense. Myles wrote a letter flaming with wrath and outraged honour.

"I can only speak with certainty,'" ran one paragraph, "of the men under my command and that of my brave comrade, Halpin, and I can testify that amongst these hundreds, who went out that night of March 5th, 1867, and left behind them home, and wives, and children, not a man thought of himself, or what he was to gain by it; not a man had an idea but of striking a blow for Ireland's independence. There was no thought of revenge or reprisals or gain. When the police-barracks at Ballynockin were set on fire, the Fenians took care that the women and children were safe; and when Father Daly came up, and asked Captain Mackay if he would save the lives of the police [232] if they surrendered, did not Mackay place his revolver in the priest's hand, and bade him shoot him, if a hair of their heads was injured? And do the public think that men of that calibre would stoop to the commission of low crimes of paltry revenge? Can anyone believe that these patriots of '67 were the men that cut out the tongues of cattle, and docked the tails of horses, and shattered the limbs of innocent men? No! They might have been mistaken in their idea of an emancipated Ireland. The world may call their action folly — or madness; but no one shall ever dare impute to them criminality, or base motives of greed and revenge. Enthusiasts, fanatics — as you please: criminals. No! They never soiled their flag with crime. The wild justice of revenge was never a Fenian virtue!"

“That’s all very well, Myles,” said Father James, after congratulating the writer on his loyalty to his fellows. “But what about Clerkenwell? and what about the Phoenix Park?”

“I’m surprised at you. Father James, not to know better,” said Myles, hotly. “Everyone knows that that Clerkenwell explosion which pulled down the Irish Church Establishment was a piece of utter stupidity. Two or three fellows, believing that their comrades were behind the prison wall, wanted to make a breach there, so that they could step out, and be free. They had no more idea of the power of the explosive they used than a child knows of dynamite. Why, if the prisoners had been in the yard at the time, they would have been blown to atoms. It was a piece of stupid folly, that entailed frightful consequences. As to the Invincibles, they were no more Fenians than you are. They couldn’t have been. They were all young men, some of them boys; and as [233] there were fifteen years between ’67 and ’82, they could never have been in our ranks. That’s conclusive enough; but I prefer to fall back on firmer ground even — that is, that no Fenian, that I ever knew, could be guilty of any participation in that awful and dastardly crime. It was the act of butchers, not of soldiers! No! Let our poor fellows stand or fall by their principles. We listen to no voice but that of the motherland.”

“She is a barren motherland,” said Father James, moodily.

“Father James,” said Myles, standing and confronting his friend, — they were walking along the high road that led towards the Shannon, “what have you said? What treason is this?”

“No treason, but truth,” the priest said bitterly. The crimes, which then were staining the country — above all, that supreme crime in the Phoenix Park — had embittered him, and depressed him, as they embittered and depressed many a brave priest throughout Ireland. “What are we producing but a crop of murders and meaner crimes? Surely, no nation marched to freedom through such means as these.”

“We agree!” said Myles, in an altered tone.

“Now, look,” said Father James. “I’m a poor, ignorant priest. I know Latin enough to say Mass, and read my breviary.”

“You are always depreciating yourself, Father James. That’s not the opinion of your brethren.”

“No matter,” said the priest, “so long as I can see things with my two eyes. We have no great men. For sixty years we have not produced a decent artist — that is, since Maclise died; nor a single sculptor, since Hogan died; nor a single architect, since Barry [234] died. We have had one historian, Lecky; not a poet, not a classical scholar, nor a great engineer. In the arts and sciences, in everything that tends to exalt and ennoble a nation, we are barren as the desert of Sahara.”

“I confess it never struck me in that light before,” said Myles, thoughtfully, “probably, because I was immersed in politics myself. How do you account for it? And never say again, you are an ignorant man.”

“Well, I am — ignorant enough, God knows!” said Father James. “But one of these travelling book-agents came around me with his soft sawder some time ago, and got me to invest in some sort of an Encyclopaedia. So I sometimes take it up, and it sets me thinking. Come in here for a moment.”

They were passing a country National School, and the burr of a hundred voices came out on the soft, still air. They entered; and after a few minutes. Father James asked the master, a young, intelligent fellow, to call up the Sixth Class. A dozen lads ranged themselves around.

“How many books of Euclid have they mastered?” said the priest.

“Three, Sir!” said the teacher.

“Now boys, get your slates!” said the priest.

They produced their slates, spat on them, rubbed them with their coat-sleeves, and stood erect.

The priest took the chalk, and marked on the blackboard a simple problem, or exercise. The teacher interposed.

“They are not in the habit of doing cuts,” he said.

“Why?”

The teacher looked abashed for the moment. Then he said: [235]

“We don’t teach cuts in Euclid. In fact, the boys could not bear such application, and we have no time.”

“But that is the only way to train the intellect,” said the priest.

“I am aware, Sir, and that was the case formerly. It can’t be done, now.”

“Why, I remember,” continued the priest, “when our heads were full of mathematical problems all day long; and we went to sleep, dreaming of the trisection of an angle.”

“So I heard,” said the teacher. “But these lads would be only fit for an idiot ward, if we put them through such discipline as that.”

“The brain-power of the nation is weakened, then?” said the priest.

“Perhaps!” said the teacher, dubiously. “But the children are smarter — ”

“And more superficial?”

“We must go with the times. Sir!” said the teacher. “With twenty-three subjects to teach, and four hours secular instruction each day, we cannot think out problems, as if we were chess-players.”

“I see,” said the priest. “Good-day!”

“You see now, Myles,” he continued, as they proceeded homewards, “the whole secret. It is the eternal law of compensation. Before the famine years, you had eight millions of stalwart people in the land. There were no banks, because there was no money. But there were giants, iron thewed, clean-skinned, with white, perfect teeth, and nerves of steel. Why? Because they nestled close to Mother Nature, took her food from *her* hands, and did *her* work. At five o’clock in the morning, they were in her fields, bending down over the sickle and the scythe. Some of the [236] old men told me that the first day of the harvest, their left arms were swollen up to the shoulders, just like bolsters. They went in at eight o’clock to a thundering breakfast of wholemeal bread, and milk; back again to the harvest fields till noon, sweating and labouring under a scorching sun; dinner of innumerable potatoes and milk at twelve o’clock; and back again to work till six, when the supper of bread and milk again was ready. ’Twas severe. Nature claimed their labour and their sweat; but she gave back generously. She made her children giants. Now, you have a gorsoon sitting above an iron cradle, and doing the work of twenty men in a day. Science and machinery have come between man and his mother. Nature; and she has cast him off. Besides yourself, God bless you, there are not ten men six feet high in the parish. And look at these poor children, with their pale, pasty faces, their rotting teeth, their poor weak brains. But — the banks of the country are bursting with accumulated wealth, human labour is lessened and done away with. Yet which was better — a population of giants and no money; or a decaying population just half in number, and with sixty millions locked up in their Banks?”

“Terribly true!” said Myles. “It shows what I did not suspect before, that our problems are more than political.”

“If we had a wise, sensible population,” said the priest, “we would have no political problems.”

“You think the whole question is social, or concerned with education?”

“Largely. But, don’t mistake me, if ever you take up the problem. And you will. I bought that encyclopaedia for you.” [237]

“For me?” said Myles.

“Yes! And, what was harder to an old fogie like me, I read it, and the Lord knows it was a penance for your sake.”

“How? I don’t understand?” said Myles, looking at the priest.

“This way,” said Father James. “All the time you were in Dartmoor, I said to myself, — this boy has elements of greatness in him. He sees now, it is not by the pike and the gun, but with the voice and the pen that Ireland’s salvation can be worked out. His education has been faulty — ”

“I have had none,” said Myles.

“Well, it is imperfect. I’ll make him read and I’ll make him think. No one else in Ireland does; and therefore, he must become once more a leader of men.”

“No one in Ireland reads?” said Myles.

“ Not one. They couldn’t?”

“But, my dear Father James, look at your colleges, your universities, your high schools, your low schools; and the thousands that pass through them.”

“Yes, yes, yes, I know all. And I stick to what I say. No one in Ireland reads, or thinks. You saw the reason with your own eyes.”

“Where?”

“Just now in that school. The brains of the nation are gone. Up to a few years ago, education, like field-work, was a slow, laborious, methodical process. There were few subjects to digest, just as there were only bread, and potatoes, and milk to eat; but these subjects produced brainy men. As you heard me say, those mathematical problems were before us, day and night; and sometimes they occupied our dreams. Now, you see, a simple cut in Euclid is impossible. [238] The brains of those boys would snap asunder, if they were forced to think. So with the nation. Its mind is fed on newspapers and novelettes. These cost no thinking. But, as the stomach of the nation would reject potatoes and home-made bread today, so the mind of the nation could not assimilate or digest such a writer as our own Edmund Burke. And here comes in the joke of the whole affair. The one subject that demands the widest reading, the deepest and most concentrated thought, is the one subject, around which these ill-formed minds are always hovering.”

“That is?” said Myles, who was wondering as much at the novelty of the idea, as at the man who spoke them.

“Political science!” said the priest. “The people are decent enough not to pretend to know anything about Art, or Science, or Literature. If you said ‘Mendelssohn,’ ‘Guercino,’ or ‘Canova’ in a drawing-room today, even in Dublin Castle, you would be met in solemn silence, and probably considered what is called ‘bad form.’ But, everybody from the bootblack to the Lord Lieutenant will talk politics; and everybody in the country from the tramp to the parish priest will talk politics, and with an air of assured infallibility. But, here we are. When will you send for that Encyclopaedia?”

“What Encyclopaedia?”

“The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that I bought for you!”

“But you are making such good use of it. Father James. It would be a sin to take it from you.”

“I am done with it,” said the priest. “I’m leaving Kilmorna.”

“No?” said Myles, in consternation. [239]

“It is a fact. My twenty years’ curacy has been rewarded.”

“But, are you going far?” said Myles, anxiously. This was his father and dearest friend on earth.

“Not far. I shall be just four miles away. Father Cassidy is promoted to a town-parish; and I am parish-priest of Lisvarda.”

“Thank God!” said Myles, fervently.

“There’s another reason for my sending you this book,” said Father James. “You’ll be lonely now.”

“Yes! that I will,” said Myles, not understanding his meaning.

“Agnes is leaving you!” said the priest, and Myles was struck dumb.

“Another item of interest,” said Father James. “Do you remember Mrs. Rendall — Mary Carleton?”

Myles started now.

“She has become a parishioner of mine. She has taken Hopkins’ Villa, right over the Cleena river, you know!”

Myles nodded. He was too full to speak. He shook the priest’s hand; and, as he turned away, the tears were in his eyes.

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XXXIV

The conversation set Myles a-thinking; and slowly, slowly, he began to realise that the problems, which he, with all the magnificent insolence of youth, had set himself to solve easily, were world-problems, revolving in their own cycles, and which the mightiest minds of every age and race had set themselves, often in vain, to solve. The absurdity of raising or emancipating a whole race by purely political methods broke on him with sudden force; and he saw that it was only equalled by the kindred absurdity of a people, with weakened intellects, seeking to solve, with ever-increasing assurance, the immense problems that lay before them. And, as he read and read, he began to see what a danger there was in conferring tremendous political power on any people, whose education was not commensurate with such responsibilities; and how the ultimate destiny of his own people was only to be worked out on the two lines of religion and intellectual culture. This idea became intensified by a short experience he had about this time.

The morning after he had heard the news of Agnes’ wish to enter religion at last, he opened the subject at the breakfast table.

“So you are leaving me, Agnes?” he said, at last.

“Father James told you?” she said.

“Yes! of course, I knew ’twas coming.”

“But, of course, you know, Mylie, that I shall not leave you, if you want me.” [241]

“You must not sacrifice yourself, for me,” he said.

“I suppose,” she went on, “you’ll be marrying soon, and settling down; and perhaps, you know, things may not be happy here —”

“No, Aggie,” he said. “I shall never marry. But you have already made sacrifices enough in delaying your entry into religion for my sake. I have heard from Father James a good many things. And to make a long story short, when are you going to enter?”

“In about a month,” she said. “And, Mylie, — ”

“Yes, go on!”

“I’m not taking all my fortune with me. I told Reverend Mother all; and she has accepted only two hundred pounds.”

“Father left you fifteen hundred,” he said. “It is safe in the Bank.”

“I know,” she replied. “Many a time I wished I had it free to give you, Mylie, when you were in trouble. But you’ll have to take it now.”

“We’ll see,” he replied. “But one little question, Aggie!”

She waited.

“Did you really care for Halpin?”

The girl blushed deeply, but she answered:

“Yes! because he adored you, Mylie!”

“Nothing more?”

“No more.”

“I think he cared more for you than that,” he said. “His last words were: ‘Tell Agnes!’ He repeated that twice; and then his life closed for ever!”

“I know,” she said. “He left me everything in his will — his fiddle, his books, even his little dog Bran! Father James brought the fiddle and books to me. [242] Bran had died. He also wrote me a letter. I shall have to destroy it now, as I am entering religion. Would you like to see it?”

“No!” said Myles. “It is my friend’s secret; and you must keep it.”

“Mylie!” said Agnes, after a pause.

“Yes!” he said.

“Do you know what I have been thinking?”

“I cannot guess,” he said.

“Well, this. The Order I’m entering is, as you know, enclosed — strict enclosure. I shall never come outside the walls, never see a train, or a steamer, or a city, like Dublin, again. I was thinking, if the expense were not too great, that we two could take a little run abroad — something to remember in after days!”

“The business, Aggie — the business,” he replied.

“But this is the dull season. Not much can be done before the harvest; and Mr. Cleary is such a confidential clerk!”

"'Twould give you pleasure?" he asked. Well he knew that it was for his own sake she proposed it.

"Yes! great pleasure! And it can never come again."

"Then it must be so," he said. "Of course. Father James told you he was leaving us?"

"He did."

"Did he tell you anything else?"

"He told me that Mary Carleton is about to be his parishioner."

"So it appears. Rendall left her well off; and she has had the home-sickness."

"Mylie," said his sister, "are you glad or sorry?"

"Neither. Absolutely indifferent."

"Mary was not indifferent towards you!" [243]

"Indeed?"

"Yes. You don't know that it was she got you arrested that awful time in '67."

"So Halpin told me."

"I went to her; and I said to her: You alone can save him. She appeared surprised and pleased; and then I knew her secret. Of course, I meant something else, besides your arrest. I hoped she would come to you, and plead with you to save yourself. She adopted another way. She got Rendall to arrest you."

"'Twas effective enough, but for Fate," he said. "But what did Rendall think?"

"He suspected all along that she had some leaning towards you. But that singular request made his mind easy. He was too stupid to understand that 'twas her love for you prompted it."

"Love? That's a big word, Agnes — too big for me to spell or understand. When shall we start for the grand tour?"

"It must be at once," she said. "I must have at least a week after we return, before I can enter."

"All right, then. Anything else?"

"There is. Do you know what I've been thinking, Mylie?"

"Something good, I presume.'"

"It is, Myles!"

"Yes!"

"Father James has been good to us. You hardly know all; and I could never find words to tell you all. Suppose we ask him to come with us?"

"Agnes," he said, as the tears started to his eyes, "you're an angel. Woman's wit against the world. My stupid brain would never have thought of it."

"And, Mylie?" [244]

"Something new again?"

"Of course, we shall bear all expenses. He has nothing."

He stooped and kissed his sister, and went out.

He found his friend amidst a horrible litter of books, and straw, and matting, and furniture, men flitting in and out, with more or less heavy articles, towards the immense van that stood in the street.

"I'm too dirty to shake hands with you," said the priest, "*In exitu Israel de Egypto*."

"I just dropped in for a moment," said Myles. "When will you be settled down?"

"In about three or four days. These are awfully clever fellows."

"Do you know what Agnes has got into her little head?"

"No!" said Father James, looking alarmed.

"Nothing less than a grand tour on the Continent before she enters. She says 'tis her last and only chance to see Europe."

"And the child is right. Let her see the world which she is leaving for ever."

"That's all right. Father James. But she can't go alone, you know."

"Of course not. Who'd ever think of such a thing, though young ladies can do wonderful things in our days, of which their mothers would have never dreamed?"

"To make it short, Father James, she wants you to go with her."

"Me?" said Father James, dropping a big folio in alarm. " Mavrone, wouldn't I be the nice spectacle, piloting a young lady over Europe? Sure I'd never hear the end of it."

"Well, she'll be disappointed," said Myles. "Can't you come?"

"Come? Come? and are you going too?" said the priest.

"Why, of course. I may be entering Melleray one of these days, too; and I don't see why I shouldn't have my fling as well as you and Agnes."

"Well, begor, 'tis tempting," said Father James. "I've got three Sundays off now, that is, four weeks, since I got my stripes; and I suppose the Bishop won't object."

"Not he. 'Tis all settled then. I'll see you at Lisvarda, when we have all arrangements made. And, Father James," said Myles, edging towards the door.

"Well. 'Tis all right now — but, look here, Mylie. Who's to do the talking? Deuce a word of French I know, but *Parlez vous Français*?"

"We'll make that all right. Agnes isn't bad at French. But I was just saying — "

"Well?"

"You needn't mind any ticket. Agnes has the three in her pocket"; and he ran away.

He came back to Millbank for dinner; and told his success to his sister, who beamed with delight. After dinner, he had to go to his office. He stood for a moment at the little iron gate to let a handsome carriage pass by. It was a Victoria. The horse was perfectly groomed; the driver in full green livery; and leaning back in the cushions was Mary Carleton. He gazed steadily at her for a moment, and she at him. Somehow their relations had been so close, and their histories so interwoven, although they had never exchanged a word, that he felt some impulse to raise his hat and seek an acknowledgment. But he restrained [246] the impulse; and, after a glance, she flushed slightly, and looked across the river.

"Not so much changed," he thought, "but for that band of silver across her forehead."

“Not much changed,” she thought, “but for that grey beard and hair.”

He had time to notice that her boy, a youth of fifteen or sixteen, sat bolt upright in the carriage, and was handsome; and that her daughter, a pretty blonde child of about twelve, leaned back in the cushions, imitating the graceful way of her mother.

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XXXV

That was a memorable journey. The priest and his two companions carried with them all the buoyancy and freedom that come from getting away from the dull, prosaic monotonous grinding of daily life into new and unaccustomed scenes, in which, because they formed no part in their own little theatre of life, they could be interested without either hope or apprehension. Father James had gone over the beaten track more than twenty years before; and he was guide and cicerone to his less experienced companions. He was on the lookout for changes, and saw many which made a certain novelty in the scenes for him. They came fresh and inexperienced, with fancies wrought up to a high pitch of wonderment and excitement at the new world into which they plunged.

Ah! Those delightful summer mornings in some vast city, when, after mass and breakfast, they sauntered out to see the wonders of the streets and the temples and the picture-galleries; the long days spent in these latter, where wonder succeeded to wonder; and whilst the experienced guide pointed out some famous picture with the coolness born of experience, his companions went into ecstasies which were only suppressed lest they should attract notice; the journey ings in train or steamboat along the banks of historic rivers, or under the shadow of purple mountains, and the strange consecration of every spot to some historic event or legend; the variety of languages heard all around them, and [248]

which, because of their very mystery, were enchanting; but, above all, these delicious summer twilights in some German town, the sweetness and cleanliness that were everywhere, the strange, national dresses, and, above all, the politeness with which they were everywhere met — all these made an impression, which hallowed all their future lives, and made memory a magnificent storehouse whence pictures of scenic or artistic beauty, and human dignity and kindness, could be summoned at will to colour the drab monotone of their daily lives.

It was curious to witness the different impressions that were made on our travellers. Agnes, in her youth, and her woman’s sense of beauty and order, was in a constant state of excitement over every new revelation made by city, or mountain, or river. She carried with her that wonderful atmosphere in which roseate dawns are everywhere, and there is no twilight or night or death, — but everything is steeped in one delightful colour, and that colour symbolises youth and beauty and immortality. Father James looked at everything placidly as became his years, with some pleasure but little enthusiasm, more anxious for the comfort of his proteges than for his own amusement. It was wonderful how the older man was able to smooth over the difficulties of that trip; how he cajoled hotel-proprietors, commanded servant-maids, bullied railway officials; and with what delicate solicitude he shielded Agnes from every little accident that could mar the pleasure of the journey. To their surprise, too, he talked fluent French and German, although with an abominable accent, to waiters and ticket-collectors, who stared at him for his grotesque accent, but always understood him perfectly; and he surprised them still more by [249] his knowledge of every historical incident that was connected with the landscapes through which they passed, and even with the objects of art or curiosity that were met everywhere in the delightful centres of European civilization.

Strange to say, Myles alone half-marred the pleasures of that delightful trip. In the beginning, the novelty of everything charmed him, and he became a furious reader. Baedeker was always in his hands; and some works of literature that were recommended to him as illustrative of the history and manners of the countries through which they were passing. But, as they advanced, and new worlds of wonder opened up to his view, and he saw what education and civilization had wrought; and how human life and its surroundings were lifted up and on to a high plane of refinement and culture; how literature and the arts sweetened toil; and how, even in countries where the drudgery of human labour seemed excessive, there were always compensations in the way of public amusements or private opportunities for self-culture, his heart sank within him, and he became moody and silent and abstracted. He was thinking of the motherland; and how far she was in the rear of all modern civilization. He could not grow enthusiastic over scener5^ Were not his own Slieve Bloom and Galtees as sublime as the "blue Alsatian mountains" about which Agnes raved? Was not the lordly Shannon as glorious as the Rhine; and had not the motherland colours on her hills, mists and fogs on her plains, winds in her forest trees, and, above all, her mystic and mysterious Ocean for ever crawling and fawning about her feet? No! He would not admit for a moment that Nature had done less for Ireland than for the favoured [250] countries of Europe; but oh! when it came to human effort and human genius, what a deplorable contrast! The picture-galleries of Belgium and Holland set him wondering and amazed. Those Cuyps and Memlings, those Vandykes, that immortal Rubens. In his delight he spoke half aloud —

"Such a plethora of wealth — such vast artistic repositories, and oh! our poor country with its four millions and a half of people, with its sixty millions of money locked up in her banks; and only one poor National Gallery, where there are but a few works of native genius lighting up its halls!"

And the Universities, standing in every city in Belgium, and raising to the level of intellectual capitals even humble villages in Germany. And Ireland, with but one, and that closed against the vast majority of young Irishmen!

And those evenings in German towns, the beer-gardens, the bands, the freedom, the perfect equality without a trace of democratic insolence; those bands of students sweeping by, singing in harmony the songs of their country; those groups of German girls, gay and laughing, yet without a trace of vulgar flirtation — everything refined, everything decorous, everything human and civilized! And Myles thought of home and its decadence, the absence of all civilizing influences, — art, music, literature, history; and, contrasting the two, he groaned in spirit. But, above all, it was the honour and reverence paid to the memories of great men that weighed upon him; because he knew that the life of one great man is a perpetual inspiration to a nation. Those poets, whose songs had sunk into the hearts of the people; those proud philosophers, builders of schools and systems, with their hundreds of [251] disciples and apostles; those great musicians, whose works were known in every hamlet and village; those classical scholars whose fame was recognized all over Europe; and, above all, the humanities and civilising and orderly influences that had flowed down from these exalted sources and permeated and influenced all human life, until there was a tenderness and a grace even in the way a child placed a flower on your plate in the morning — all this made him envious and ashamed; and he thought, it will take two centuries of progress to raise ^r country to the level of other nations.

His querulous ways would have troubled two less patient fellow-travellers; but at least they had the one merit of drawing out the secret thoughts of his good friend.

"There is no use in blaming England, my dear Myles," he used to say, after listening to one of Myles' declamations against the arch-enemy. "Many decent Englishmen rage over their own backwardness. It is quite true that their evil example — their moneygrubbing, their factory-

building, their smoke and slime and filth, from which by a chemical process peculiar to themselves they extract the red gold — is killing art and beauty, even so far as Italy. But we have ourselves to blame. We have produced great men in darker times than the present. There never were such dismal and awful surroundings to a nation, as in ’98 and ’48. But as these Germans here brought forth their mightiest men just at the time that Napoleon’s legions were stamping out all human liberty, so we brought forth strong men in storms and darkness.”

“A few,” said Myles, “very few! Always politicians and orators. Nothing else!” [252]

“But, my dear fellow, there were, and are, politicians in every clime and age. Dante was a furious politician; and our Shanavests and Caravats were tamed doves compared to the Bianchi and Neri of his time. Yet he brought out his great poem in exile and ignominy.”

“But then, where is the cause of our barrenness? If England is not to blame, who is to blame?”

“Why, ourselves, to be sure. Our fickle minds cannot bear application of any sort. You saw that in the case of these young boys — “

“Then are we the same race that made the Cross of Cong and the Brooch of Tara?”

“We are; and we are not. The same subtlety, the same artistic feeling is there; but it cannot be developed or directed.”

“Why? Isn’t that the imperfection of our educational methods; and don’t these come from England?”

“Partly. But, remember, that all the mighty men of Italy and Germany worked under patronage. State or individual. Now, there’s no such thing in Ireland. Ireland never had a government or a wealthy patrician, or a merchant Croesus, who cared one brass farthing about art, or science, or literature.”

“You make me sad,” said Myles, “to think that genius has always had to work at the beck of patrons.”

“So it has been. We can’t go to Italy this time, and I am glad of it; because, if you are so soured and morose with what you have seen, we would have to put a strait-jacket on you if you saw Italy. Yet, there is hardly an artist there who did not work under the eye of a Pope or a Prince. Artists, poets, philosophers must have bread and butter, like other mortals; and later on, stars and garters.” [253]

“I shall go back to Ireland more saddened than ever,” said Myles. “All my ideals are smashed up and pulverised.”

“If you doubt me, look at it in this way. Suppose an Englishman like Holman Hunt or Millais were to bring a picture to Dublin on exhibition, what would happen? All Dublin would run mad, and tumble over each other to pay their sixpences to see the painting, and to be able to show their taste by saying they saw it. But, suppose some young lad from the stews and slums of Dublin had produced a masterpiece and set it on exhibition, what would happen? All Dublin would turn up its nose at such an absurdity. A mere Irishman — an artist? Absurd. A great artist? Impossible. But, suppose there was a great painting there, executed by that boy, and no one could contradict the evidence of experts, what would happen? The first question would be: Is he a Catholic or a Protestant? If he were a Catholic, all the Protestants would walk down the other side of Grafton Street. A Papist to produce a work of art? Impossible. If he were a Protestant, the Catholics would not look even at the handbills. He was an Orangeman; and that was enough. When they had decided that question and taken up party-sides, the next question would be — his politics. Is he a Nationalist, or a Unionist? Is he a — and the sixpences would be fewer at every discovery, until at last his patrons would be — those of artistic tastes, who

belong to a certain sect, and who hold certain political views, and, within these views, belong to a certain party."

"We appear to have a poor opinion of ourselves," said Myles. "We are for ever hearing why haven't we a Burns, or a Shakespeare, or a Maeterlinck, or an Ibsen." [254]

"Precisely. 'Tis just that constant depreciation of everything Irish that drives so many of our best men to England or America. See here in this Germany. They have Uhland and Rückert and Korner and Arndt, not to speak of, higher names; and these men are held in high honour. Their poems are in the class-books of their schools; their effigies are everywhere, just as the statues of Burns are numerous in Scotland. Yet I doubt if any of these, or the whole of them put together, could rival the beauties of the 'Irish Melodies'; and, as you know, many Irishmen never heard of three-fourths of them."

"Heigho-ho!" said Myles. "'Tis a poor case; but what is it all? What is it all?"

"Political unrest, destructive of every attempt at civilising the people; and, added to that, the most absurd systems of education in the world!"

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XXXVI

They had held some such conversation as this at the dinner table of a monster hotel at Heidelberg one evening, taking it for granted that this English language of theirs was quite unintelligible to the other visitors. They spoke in low tones; yet in such a manner that their words reached across the table, and were heard, understood, and noted by at least one of the visitors.

After dinner, in the twilight of this early summer evening. Father James and Myles sat out on the terrace overlooking the broad stream of the Neckar, that flowed beneath the famous mediaeval castle. Agnes sat apart in a little alcove. She had a book on her lap; but she was not reading. She was thinking — that Myles was far and away the handsomest man at that table, an opinion apparently shared by many eyes that turned instinctively towards him; thinking, too, how fashionable he was with his white hair standing erect, ever since the convict clipping of ten years had refused to allow it to lie down again; thinking how his white beard, clipped and pointed under his chin was quite *à la mode*; thinking how the young girl who sat a little downwards at the opposite side of the table had managed to brush back that glossy mass from her forehead, as if she were only a school-girl, and yet succeeded in looking distinguished; thinking that life was a pleasant thing, and that it will be hard to give it up, as [256] she has determined to do, in a few weeks' time — a temptation which she promptly rejected.

A gentleman, in evening dress, with uncovered head, and yet with a fur pelisse over his shoulders, came out on the terrace, smoked for a few moments looking down the river, glanced at Agnes, as if he could not make up his mind whether he should address her; and finally came over to where the priest and Myles were sitting; and bowing to them, he said:

"I do not know, gentlemen, whether you wished your conversation at dinner to be considered of a private nature; yet it would have been impertinent on my part to have said I understood English well; still more impertinent if I had said how deeply I was interested in your conversation."

He spoke with the faintest intonation of a foreign accent.

Father James at once moved aside, and pointed to the vacant seat between himself and Myles.

"Very many thanks," said the stranger, "may I keep this cigar?"

“Undoubtedly. My friend here likes a pipe, as you see. I never learned the art; but I can admire it.”

“Ha!” said the stranger, settling down comfortably. “I think it was Art you were speaking of?”

“Yes!” said Father James, “or rather the absence of art in our country — (we are Irish); because there is no help, no patronage; and artists, as a rule, must have bread to eat, and water to drink.”

“Quite so! But, do you perceive, that the malady of unproductiveness, I think you said, barrenness, which afflicts your country, is a world-malady?”

“No!” said Myles, joining in, “that is a consolation.” [257]

“That the Arts should have perished?” said the stranger, smiling and looking curiously at Myles.

“No, no! But that my poor country does not stand alone in her poverty!”

“Ha! A patriot, I perceive. May I go further? The Arts are dead. Patriotism is also dead in every country in Europe, both killed by the same cause!”

How true it was of Ireland Myles knew, and he could not object.

“What then is the cause?” he said, “of such universal decadence? It must be something more than want of patronage?”

“You see that river?” said the stranger.

“Yes! It is very beautiful just now in the twilight, with the shadow of medievalism hanging over it.”

“It was more beautiful eighty years ago,” was the reply, “and in this *month* also, when a barge, decorated with flowers from stem to stern, sailed down along that stream. There were students from the University, professors, fair ladies, distinguished men, such as the Crown Prince of Sweden, and Prince von Waldeck on board. There was a table on deck, loaded with costly wines and viands, and a profusion of plants and flowers. The barge was followed by a multitude of boats, crammed with students, and citizens; and there was music, and light and splendour everywhere. And, what think you was all that pageant for? Well, I’ll tell you. That day, a certain poet, son of a village schoolmaster, had received his Diploma as Doctor of Philosophy, *honoris Causa*, at this University; and the fete was organised in his honour. Would that be possible in your country?”

The priest and Myles looked at each other, and smiled. [258]

“I see,” said the stranger. “You deem it impossible. And it would be impossible now even here.”

“Why?” said Myles, eagerly. He was pleased to find that his country’s indifference was shared by more favoured nations.

“Because we have no Jean Paul now; and, because if we had, no such honour could be paid him.”

“But, why, why, why?” said Myles, eagerly. He wanted to get at the root of things.

“Why? Ah, my friend, you are impatient. Good. It is well to be impatient. I will tell you why. Because, the reign of democracy set in with the French Revolution; and its elephantine hoofs have been trampling out all the beauty and sweetness of life since then.”

Father James and Myles were silent. The latter was almost resentful. Why, is it not certain that the march of progress and the march of democracy are identical?

The stranger went on:

“I am an aristocrat. I own lands down there in Thuringia. But I am not wedded to my class. I perceive its shortcomings. I should not shed tears over its abolition; but. Heavens! what is to follow? All the graces, all the sweetness, all the serenities of life, which make the world fairly tolerable, but only tolerable, wiped out; and all the intolerable vulgarities of life, which make it a hideous spectacle, brought in. Because, whatever else may happen, one thing is certain — that great things will never spring from a people who have succeeded in levelling down all things to a common plane, and, in doing so, have killed the symbols that represented the power and the greatness of humanity.” [259]

“One of our poets,” said Myles, glad to be able to show that Ireland had such children, “almost used your words:

> “*At the voice of the people, the weak symbols fall,*
> *And Humanity marches o’er purple and pall;*
> *O’er sceptre and crown with a noble disdain,*
> *For the symbols must fall, and Humanity reign*.”

“Ha! Repeat these words, my friend,” said the stranger. “They seem to sing.”

Myles repeated the words from “The Year of Revolutions”; and then added:

“I should have said it was a lady that wrote them. It was in ’48, — the year of Revolutions.”

“I should remember it,” said the stranger, in an abstracted manner. “I was in prison that year.”

“Then you are brethren in misfortune,” said Father James, breaking in. “My friend spent ten years in an English dungeon for a political offence.”

The man started violently. Then, under a sudden impulse, he turned around and, drawing down Myles’ head, he kissed his forehead.

“Mon Dieu!” he said, “but you do not bear the marks. I do.”

“Time has worn them away,” said Father James. “But you can see why he loves his people.”

“And so do I,” said the other, fiercely. “But what say you? ‘The symbols must fall; and Humanity reign.’ Is that good for Humanity? Because, after all, Humanity is a beggarly thing at best. I would not give my dachshound, Rollo, nor my horse, Rustum, for the whole of humanity put together — but for one thing, its symbols; and these are going.”

“We are a little backward, my friend and I,” said [260] Father James. “These be unintelligible things. With us, it is our religion that redeems Humanity, and nothing else.”

“Precisely. We are one. But do you not perceive that all religion is symbolic of the Divine? Have you never heard of *Mohler’s Symbolik*?”

“Oh, yes! Hundreds of times. ‘Tis one of those books which everybody talks about and nobody reads. But I don’t understand.”

“Our Goethe says that the whole Universe is but a symbol, or garment, of God; Life but a symbol of Eternity; Virtue, a symbol of eternal blessedness. And so the sceptre and the crozier and the mitre; the pencil of the artist, the chisel of the sculptor, the wand of the conductor, are symbols — of what? Of whatever is gracious, and sweet, and beautiful in life; and now they must be all swept away in the muddy torrent of Democracy.”

“Ah, yes!” said Myles, “but will not Democracy create its own symbols, pregnant too, of meanings?”

“It has had a century to prove itself,” said the stranger, “and what has it done? No, no! Democracy is a barren thing, at best.”

“The grass grows stronger and sweeter when trampled,” said Myles, drifting into the metaphorical language of the stranger. “The symbols democracy tramples under its hoofs today will surely grow more powerful and gracious tomorrow.”

“Symbols are not grass, but flowers,” said the Thuringian. “Do flowers revive, when crushed under heel? Take away the symbols — the crown, the coronet, the mitre, the sceptre, from your Shakespeare, and what have you left? Take your princesses, and knights, and kings from your Tennyson, and what [261] have you left? Take your angels and archangels from Milton, and what have you left? Take your chieftains and poets and bards from your Scott or Ossian, and what have you left? Is Walt Whitman, the rather salacious singer of democracy, equal to Shakespeare?”

“But you said patriotism was dead,” said Myles, eager to get back on surer ground.

“Quite so, and from the same cause. For what is patriotism? ’Tis a dream, but a divine dream, ’Tis a symbol, — nay, even we reduce our fatherland to a symbol, like the cock of France, the bull of England. How do you represent your fatherland?”

‘“Tis our motherland,” said Myles. “A woman beneath a round tower and ruined abbey, a harp by her side; a wolf-dog at her knee; all looking towards a sunrise or a sunset, above an illimitable ocean.”

“Which shall it be?” said the stranger, deeply interested. “The symbol is beautiful.”

“Ah! Which?” said Myles. “There is the question that is torturing us. It is easy to determine, if, as you say, the spread of democracy has killed the spirit of patriotism. That means a sunset and night, and eternal night, without hope of a dawn for us.”

“Well, what is to be, will be,” said the Thuringian. “Democracy has but one logical end — Socialism. Socialism is cosmopolitanism — no distinction of nationalities any longer; but one common race. That means anti-militarism, the abolition of all stimulus and rivalry. And who is going to work or fight, my friends, for that abstraction, called Humanity? Not I! But, thank God, we have the Past to live in. They cannot take that from us!” [262]

He rose up, threw his cigar away, and said: “ Good-night! You have yielded me a pleasant hour.” He bowed, and went back to the Hotel. “I think we may turn our footsteps towards Ireland now,” said Father James.

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XXXVII

For many a long day afterwards, the words of the stranger rang in the ears of Myles Cogan:

> Democracy and the Symbols.
> Patriotism dead.
> They cannot filch the past from us.

Just then, however, he was occupied with another idea, which accompanied these, but took precedence — namely, the revelation of his own backwardness in the matter of education; and the conviction that it was only religion and education could save the country. He thought he would probe deeper into the problem, and see how the young men of the country felt.

He had persistently refused to enter public life, or even to associate himself with any society, except those that were purely religious. Now, he would make an experiment.

Kilmorna was a small town of about two thousand people. There were two banks, a number of good shops, two churches, and half a dozen private houses, occupied by the doctor, an attorney,

a Clerk of the Union, an excise officer, and one or two gentlemen connected with the place, who had made money, but whom the *heimweh* drew hither to spend their last days where they were born. A large hotel dominated the Main Street; and a few minor streets with shabby shops stretched irregularly from it. In one of those back streets there was a rude building, formerly a store, [264] where thirty years before Myles drilled and harangued his soldiers. It was now turned into a Young Men's Society Hall, as the flaring letters over the door denoted.

One evening some weeks after his return from the Continent, and just as the October fogs were rising from the river, he asked his clerk to take him through the rooms of the Society. Mr. Cleary was VicePresident. Nothing loth, and anxious to secure his services in so good a cause, Mr. Cleary took him up the side street and into the rooms. It was eight o'clock. They passed through the reading-room. It was a spacious and well-hghted apartment. There was a long table running up the centre, upon which newspapers without number, and in a disordered state, were flung. Some dated back a week; some were in leaves scattered here and there. There was a large bookcase pretty well filled, and the books were protected from being handled by a wire netting. Myles glanced through their titles. The novels were worn to tatters; the books of adventure were in fair condition; the books of science were spotless.

"We have a splendid billiard-table in the next room," said Mr. Cleary. '"Tis our Bank, our Exchequer. Without it, we should have to close up."

It was a fine room. The table did look bright and clean in its new green cloth. The gas lights shone brilliantly. Some twenty or twenty-five young fellows were seated around, smoking in silence, and watching the game with the deepest interest.

The two men lingered a few moments, and then turned away.

"Then the billiard-table is the centre of the life and existence of your Society?" said Myles. [265]

"Yes!" said his clerk, "of course we have an occasional concert, which brings us in a few pounds. We are having one on Wednesday evening. It will be very good. Some good singers are coming from Dublin."

"Yes!" said Myles, full of his own thoughts, "but the intellectual progress of the Society — what of that?"

"We don't think of it," said Mr. Cleary. "Some time ago, one of the priests made an attempt at lecturing, but it failed. All that we can aim at now is to keep our young men off the streets, and away from the public-house."

"No one reads?" said Myles.

"No one. One or two old fogies or bookworms used come here at first; but they soon exhausted all our books, and they come no more."

"I see Manzoni's great novel neglected. Do any of the young men read History — even Irish History — say Mitchell's, or A. M. Sullivan's 'New Ireland,' or the 'Jail Journal'?"

"Oh dear, no! The history of Ireland which interests us is what is going on about us now. We have done with the past. It is a little gloomy, you admit!"

"I see. And the concert — Wednesday, you said? I shall come!"

Myles went home. The words of the Thuringian: "They cannot filch from us the Past!" and the words of the Vice-President of the Kilmorna Young Men's Society: "We have done with the Past!" were ringing, not too melodiously, in his ears.

“What a national apostasy has taken place,” he thought. “Who could have believed it? And was it for this, Halpin, you shed your blood?” [266]

He was brought back to everyday existence the following morning. There was a letter on his desk to the effect that certain bills were overdue; and that one of his creditors, partner in a certain large milling firm, would call that afternoon for explanations. There were few to make. Business had been going down steadily, owing to increased competition, new methods, political rivalries, etc. Myles opened his books, took his visitor into a private room, and left him there. After an hour, the creditor asked Myles to come in. He said:

“You see, Mr. Cogan, our people don’t want to press you. Your father and you have been our customers for over forty years. Our business dealings have been cordial. But, the times are hard. We cannot afford to lose money; and your business is going down.”

“I admit all that you say,” said Myles. “It is not my fault. I am here from morning till night. I avoid all public affairs; I eschew politics; I am not on any Board.”

“True; but you’ll excuse the expression — you are not up-to-date.”

“How? I do not understand?” said Myles.

“Your business methods are antiquated. They might have done very well in the past. But we have done with the past.”

“So I have been learning lately,” said Myles, “no later than last night.”

“Now, I have been looking over your books,” said his visitor, “and what do I find? Here is Mrs. Annesley’s account; and here is Major Harty’s; and here is Colonel Smith’s. These, I presume, are the resident gentry?”

“Yes! They never deserted me,” said Myles. [267] “Whatever custom I lost during my — well, absence, it was the custom of our own people, the farmers and the townspeople.”

“Very good. That is well. But don’t you perceive the mistake you are making? Here is the account of Patrick Flaherty — a farmer, I presume?”

“Yes! A small farmer.”

“And you charge him, a small farmer, exactly the same as you charge Colonel Smith, and the others. Now, you ought surely to know that the great rule in transacting modern business is to charge *according to your customers*.”

“I don’t understand,” said Myles, looking aghast at the suggestion. “I make my margin of profit on the wholesale prices, and charge all my customers alike.”

“Phew!” said his visitor. “That would never do. That’s not up-to-date business. If that were done in our cities, half the shops would be closed in twelve months.”

“I cannot understand,” said Myles. “Surely, you don’t mean that I must have different prices for every man that comes into my shop?”

“That is just what I mean!” said the other. “A tobacconist buys a box of cigarettes for four shillings. A seedy student comes in. He wants a whole box. He is asked to pay six shillings. He heckles and bargains, and finally gets it for five. An order comes from an hotel for the same. They are charged seven and sixpence. A swell drives up in a motor. He gets the same box for ten shillings, with the assurance that they are cutting down the price to oblige him. That’s business. That’s up-to-date. The same holds in all other kinds of goods. The same in the professions. Charge according to your customers. That’s the rule [268] of the trade, of every trade. And when you are dealing with a fool, add on.”

Myles was thunderstruck.

“It seems to me immoral,” he said.

“Perhaps so,” said the other, in the most debonair manner; “perhaps so. But morals is one thing; and business is another; and don’t you forget it. Now, here’s another matter. I perceive you never give discount to your customers!”

“Never! I cannot see why I should, when they have goods at reasonable prices.”

“Your neighbour over the way, Simpson, does so.”

“So I have heard. I cannot understand how it pays him.”

“‘Tis very simple. He puts on twopence on every shilling; and gives back a penny discount.”

“And the people tolerate that?”

“Certainly. The ordinary customer never thinks of what he is paying, only of what he is getting. And look here, Mr. Cogan! I see there are nearly a thousand pounds out from you. Can’t you get it in?”

“I have tried,” said Myles. “I have sent out accounts again and again; and the result is, that my customers leave me. They are insulted, and go elsewhere.”

“But remain on your books?”

“Yes! You see that old decency — that old spirit of pride, that used make our people blush to owe sixpence, has vanished. I meet those people on the street, or going to Mass, and they salute me as blandly as if they had never owed me sixpence.”

“Then, why not summon and decree them?”

“The decree might serve to light my pipe,” said Myles, bitterly. “What else could I do with it? If [269] I dared distrain, or take their cattle, the whole country would be up against me. You see they are quite up-to-date.”

The creditor began to bite his pen-handle. He was in deep cogitation. He turned around suddenly.

“Do you ever give a glass of whiskey to a good customer, or a servant-boy?”

“Never!” said Myles. “I’m a teetotaller myself; but I would not grudge a drink to a friend; yet that promiscuous treating of servants would be impossible.”

“You don’t give them a Christmas Box even?”

“No! Since — since my boyhood, I have a particular horror of bribery in any form.”

“Mr. Cogan?” said the creditor, after a long pause, during which he had chewed away the top of the pen-handle.

“Yes?” said Myles.

“I can only come to one conclusion. I must report to my partner that you are wholly out of date; and that you must, sooner or later, if you adhere to those principles, close up and retire. Yet, we won’t press you. What I suggest is this — that you effect a composition; and leave it to us to realize your assets and debts. This cannot be done without a little expense; but no one minds that nowadays.”

“But I mind it,” said Myles, in a sudden temper. “It is a dishonourable thing, and means dishonour to our name. Now, wait one moment please!”

He left the room, and went straight to his office. Here he opened his safe, took out his cash-box, and from this, a deposit receipt on a local bank.

Returning, he endorsed the receipt, and placed it in his creditor's hands.

"My bills are three hundred," he said in a level [270] tone, but his eyes spoke of suppressed passion. "Here is a receipt for twelve hundred. You have doubted my honourable intentions towards your firm, although you have had forty years' experience of us. This money is legally mine, altho', for certain reasons, I did not wish to touch it. You can keep it as security that you shall not suffer by me."

"Oh! really, Mr. Cogan," said the man of business, after casting a careful eye over the receipt, "you quite misunderstood me. We never had the slightest doubt of your honour or solvency. Only for your own sake, we would wish that you would conform more to modern methods of business. I couldn't think of taking such a sum in mortgage. I shall explain all to my partner, I will, indeed!"

He was taking up his hat, after donning his overcoat, when he said, as an afterthought:

"By the way, my partner made a suggestion, which may meet all our views. You won't be offended?"

"Not at all!" said Myles. "Go ahead!"

"Well, he thought that if — if you considered it advisable — the matter lies altogether in your own hands, you know — it would help you very much, and, perhaps, develop your business, if you were to take Mr. Cleary into partnership."

"My clerk?" said Myles, whilst his face darkened with sudden suspicion.

"Yes! He is an efficient man; and has capital."

Myles' face grew darker, but he said:

"Mr. Cleary has suggested this?"

"No, no, no!" said the man, anxiously. "It came altogether from my partner."

"I shall think of it," said Myles. "Good-day!"

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XXXVIII

On Wednesday, Mr. Cleary had tea with Myles at Millbank, and, after tea, they strolled quietly across the bridge towards the town hall, where the concert was to he held. The evening was very beautiful; and just half-way across the bridge, Myles paused, and seemed to be watching the waters that swirled beneath. Suddenly he turned and said to his clerk:

"Had you any conversation with Franlin the day he was here?"

"None whatever," was the reply, "except to bid him good-day!"

"He made me a sudden proposal," said Myles. "He lectured me first on business methods, and new ways of doing business, which I considered dishonest and immoral, which he said were practised universally. He then proposed a composition. I showed him that I could easily pay him four times the amount of our overdue bills. He then proposed that I should take you as a partner."

The old clerk flushed up beneath his white beard.

“And what did you say, Sir?” he replied.

“I said I’d think of it,” said Myles. “Now, give me your opinion!”

“If the offer came from you, Sir,” he said, “I would esteem it a great honour and gladly accept it. It would look badly now, as coming from them.”

“Why?” [272]

“Because it would appear that they distrusted you and your business methods.”

“Well, so they do. The question is, can you do better?”

“I cannot take a deeper interest in the business than I have taken for over thirty-five years,” was the reply.

“I know it,” said Myles. “And everyone knows it. The question is, can you introduce new business methods, that shall not be absolutely immoral, so as to make the place more successful than it has been?”

“Well, of course, you see, Sir,” said the clerk, “you have very big ideas, that don’t suit our times. Everyone is surprised that you are not in the bankruptcy court long ago. There are not fifty men in Ireland doing business on your lines to-day.”

“Then, you refuse the partnership?” said Myles.

“No, if you offer it by your own free will, and give me a free hand.”

“A free hand? I don’t know what it means,” said Myles. “I believe you to be an honourable man and a conscientious man — you go to Holy Communion once a month?”

“Yes, as a member of the Confraternity!”

Myles paused a moment.

“It appears,” he said at length, “that my shortcomings are reducible to three heads — I don’t charge according to my customers; I don’t give false discount, and steal it from my customers in another way; I don’t give drink or bribes, even in the shape of Christmas Boxes. Now, if I give you a free hand, do you mean to do these things?”

“They are the recognised practices of our trade,” said the clerk. “They are not essential.” [273]

“That is, you can conduct our business without them?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“And make it pay?”

“Yes!”

“Now, understand me, Mr. Cleary,” said Myles. “I am an oldish man. I shall not marry. I don’t care for money; and if I had money, I have no one to whom I would care to leave it. My household expenses do not reach a hundred a year. Can you make such profits on the business as to secure that for me?”

“If you mean to make me your partner on such terms, I cannot accept it,” said the clerk. “The mill and shop can be made to yield a greater profit.”

“Well, I’m content.”

“But I am not. You want to reverse our positions; make me owner, and you, my paid clerk; and put up ‘Cleary’ for ‘Cogan.’ No, no, that would never do. I shall do all in my power to meet your wishes, as you wish to pay me this honour; but the name ‘Cogan’ must not be taken down.”

Myles pressed the man's hand; and they crossed the bridge, and entered the town together.

"There is one good omen," said the clerk, as they passed into the Town Hall. "Mrs. Rendall has opened her account with us; and it is to be ours exclusively."

"Ha!" said Myles.

The concert was much the same as is held during the winter months in every village in Ireland. The audience was mixed. Near the door, the "boys" congregated in large numbers, quite ready to applaud or lend a voice at a chorus. Further up, were seated small shopkeepers, servants, people from the country, and a few from neighbouring villages. Nearer to the [274] platform, the gentlemen sported flowers in buttonholes, and the ladies' heads were uncovered. In the front row were the *elite* of the village. Two gentlemen were in evening dress; and their ladies were *decolletées*. Myles and his partner sat rather far back in the hall. One of the organisers requested them to come on to the reserved seats; but they declined.

The programme was the usual one — a chorus by the Convent-school children, a comic song, a duet: "Home to our Mountains"; a four-hand reel, a solo — "Way down Bermondsey"; a recitation, etc. The audience was attentive, but not enthusiastic. There were no encores.

In the second part, after a ten minutes' interval, the audience seemed to wake up. They bore with exemplary patience the opening chorus, "There's moonlight on the wave," seemed to chafe a little when a fine young Irish fellow sang an Irish song: "Maureen"; and then settled themselves comfortably in their seats for the event of the evening: A comic song by Mr. Grant, Dublin.

"This will be very good, I believe!" whispered Cleary to Myles. It was.

A young gentleman in evening dress came forward, made a bow, was received with enthusiastic applause, and commenced to sing with a pronounced English accent:

Yip-i-addy-i-aye.

After the first chorus, he invited the ladies alone to accompany him in repeating the chorus; then the gentlemen only; then all together. It was clearly familiar to them, because they took up the words with great energy, and from . the *decolletée* in the reserved seats down to the virago of the lanes; and from the [275] professional man in spotless front down to the news-boy, who brought his paper in the morning, all responded:

Yip-i-addy-i-aye.

Then all burst into a simultaneous fit of laughter.

When the noise of the chorus and the laughing had subsided, the applause was thunderous, the encores imperious. The popular hero came out again, bowed low, and retired. It was a little disappointing; but it was soon explained that he was a professional artist, who had only stipulated with the committee for one song. He was not a common fellow who thirsted for encores.

"Is there much more of this kind of thing?" said Myles.

"Only one other comic song," said his partner; "there's a grand chorus, too. That's what the people like. They can join in."

So there was. It was about a shipwrecked mariner, presumably an Irishman who fell into the hands of cannibals on some Polynesian island, and was saved by a young lady savage, daughter of a chieftain, who wished to marry him, in order to have the feast altogether to herself. The chorus was supposed to be in the usual vernacular of the natives. It was taken up by the entire audience, who also stamped their feet, as if dancing an accompaniment.

Myles Cogan looked around. It was a well-dressed, well-conducted, orderly audience, brimming over with merriment and fun, and bent on carrying out the old Roman principle of enjoying the day, whilst they had it. But there was not an indication that they were Irish, except a broad accent here and there betrayed it. Instead of the old sweet songs, so full of tenderness and sorrow for lost causes; or the later war songs and [276] love songs that were laid lovingly at the feet of "dark Rosaleen" by her worshippers, you had the empty and vulgar nonsense of a London music-hall; no blending of the "smile and tear of Erin," but the loud laughter and the vacant mind.

It plunged Myles into a melancholy mood, whilst to everyone else it seemed but a happy indication of what "New Ireland" was to be. To them it was a "good-bye!" to the past with all its gloom and melancholy, and a cheerful bright outlook on a golden future. They were a happy, gay, rollicking crowd, bent on amusement, and determined to make the most of life. To Myles it was an apostasy — an open abandonment of all that had hitherto been cherished as the traditional glories of the race. Once or twice the thought flashed upon him that possibly he might be wrong in allowing himself to be haunted by the gloom and glory of the past, instead of joining the Corybantes with their Cymbals, and dancing down the long avenue of gaiety which the prophets were opening up before the eyes of a disenchanted race. For the dreams of Nationality had now disappeared. As the Thuringian said: *Patriotism was dead*. Then again the words which Father James had once in the kindest spirit addressed to him:

"Myles Cogan, you are in imminent danger of becoming a prig, a pendant, or a pessimist," came back to him, and threw him, there in that crowded hall, into a long reverie of painful introspection. But, habit was too strong. He shook the traitorous thought aside. It was the old National ideals that were right, — the unselfish love, the spirit of sacrifice, the melancholy tinged with hope! The nation had apostatised; but his thoughts should ever hover above the mount [277] of his country's Calvary. The final chorus was "Auld Lang Syne" in Irish, of which not one understood a word.

Then the Chairman spoke, and thanked the performers, particularly the professional artists from Dublin, for that delightful and intellectual entertainment; and thanked the audience for their enthusiastic appreciation of the efforts of the local Committee to bring a little sweetness and light into the dull, dreary round of an Irish village. There were great hopes that the country, moving ahead in so many matters, was also progressing intellectually; and if there were need of a proof of this, he could only point to the acute and intelligent manner in which that large and distinguished audience, quite up-to-date in other matters, were also up-to-date in their appreciation of classical music. The Committee hoped to repeat these entertainments from time to time, and thus contribute to the intellectual advancement, as well as to the relaxation and amusement of their historic town.

Then the audience dispersed, many saying it was the greatest treat they had ever had in Kilmorna.

"I hope you are pleased that you came," said Mr. Cleary, when they were free from the crowd.

"Very much, indeed. It was a revelation."

"You see. Sir, just Hke our business methods, of which we were speaking a while ago, the country is moving ahead. Everything now must be up-to-date."

"Of course," said Myles.

"I believe it was suggested by some of our Committee to introduce some National songs, such as the 'Melodies,' or the '48 songs; but they decided it would not do."

"Why?" said Myles. [278]

“Well, you see they are old-fashioned, and the people want something new. Then they are melancholy; and what the people want is something amusing — the race, the ball, the dance, the comic song. And then I am told the children will not learn them.”

“Why?” said Myles.

“They’re difficult; and, you see, there is not a single rollicking air, which the people could take up. You see, everything is changed; and we cannot go back.”

“I suppose not,” said Myles. “Yes, we cannot go back. Good-night, Mr. Cleary. I shall see about that deed of partnership as soon as possible.”

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XXXIX

Clearly then Myles Cogan was out of touch with his generation. He saw the utter futility of attempting to raise such a people to any high level of thought or action. All dignity seemed to have passed out of life; class distinctions were being levelled; reserve and reticence, the hall marks of noble spirits, w ere no more. It was a singular revolution; and its very suddenness made it more singular. Myles began to puzzle himself about its remote and proximate causes. Then the words of the Thuringian came back: “The elephantine hoofs of democracy.”

He was now thrown back upon himself; and this became so much the easier, as now he could leave his quondam clerk and present partner the greater part of the burden of business. He had been steadily reading a complete course of the world’s literature for some time. He threw himself into the work of self-culture more assiduously than ever. The cheap reproduction of the great works of every age and clime enabled him to put together a fairly respectable library; and, it was an intense enjoyment to him, during the long winter’s evenings, or during the summer twilights, to take up, and dwell upon the large and comprehensive manner in which great intellects have always treated the supreme problems of human life. How narrow and parochial now seemed the petty party-politics of Irish life! How the problems that were agonising the nation [280] seemed dwarfed into insignificance when compared with the great political upheavals that make European history; and how even these sank into nothingness before the tremendous revelation that it was all, all but the trouble of ants in the light of a million, million suns!

From time to time, he was stung with remorse at the thought that his life was passing uselessly by; and that he would probably sink into his grave, without having done a single thing for his country. But, he asked himself, what could he do? He was debarred from taking any part in the intellectual advancement of Ireland. It was in the hands of officials, who were tied to systems that were already condemned by their want of ordinary success; and there was the fatal apathy of the people themselves. And as to political life, oh, no! That was not to be thought of. To go down and enter that arena was impossible.

“One thing I thank God for,” he said one evening, sitting on the long green garden seat outside Father James’ house at Lisvarda, and looking down on the valley where Kilmorna nestled a few miles away, “that I have kept my hand out of the wasps’ nest of pofitics.”

“Look here, Myles!” said Father James, “this won’t do! You are suffering from a kind of intellectual fever. There is a fine kind of delirium which comes from books, just as surely as from opium. They make you ‘dream dreams, and see visions,’ but these are no more real than the ravings of a drunkard.”

“How? I can’t see!” said Myles.

“Nothing simpler. Men, whose fives were fived on low levels can yet write subfime things. These few [281] are generally partially insane. The average man in the street is wholly sane. He sees things as they areJ^

“Precisely. But things as they are, are very bad. Are we to sit down, and contemplate them with complacency?”

“No! But, que voulez-vous? The man of letters is a useless dreamer; the man of action is generally immoral. The combination of the two results in a fool and a failure.”

“Then I shall keep to my dreams!” said Myles.

“ Do. I’m afraid that old scoundrel of a gamekeeper, who wouldn’t let me have a run of a hare, has demoralised you.”

“His company is more wholesome than that of the Shanavests and Caravats down there,” said Myles. “Anything, anything, but the degradation of pohtics.”

“So you have made Cleary a partner?” said Father James, changing the subject.

“Yes! I was going downhill. The people were not paying their debts. Rich customers ran up bills of forty or fifty pounds, paid ten pounds on account, and then ran up to sixty. The poor were more decent; but the fact is there is no such thing as regular payments now; and, as you know, we have but three months’ credit.”

“Franklin came down on you?”

“Yes. He found I was hopelessly out of date. I wasn’t going with the times. I wasn’t doing business according to modern methods. Tell me, Father James, when were the Ten Commandments aboliShed? No one keeps them now.”

“The country was never better, man!” said Father James. “Look at your Confraternities and Sodalities.” [282]

“I was speaking about the Ten Commandments, Father James!”

“Look at the increased number of communicants; look at the beautiful churches — ”

“I was speaking of the Ten Commandments, Father James!”

“The convents, the orphanages, the schools, the hospitals, the asylums — ”

“I was speaking of the Ten Commandments, Father James!”

“Nonsense, man! Be practical! The country was never so free from crime. Look at your quarter sessions. The County Court Judges don’t know what to do with their dozens of white gloves — ”

“I was speaking of the Ten Commandments, Father James.”

“And so am I. The judges at the Assizes confess, and I’m sure reluctantly enough, that the country is almost crimeless.”

“All that may be true. Father James, and yet vice may predominate. Crime and vice are two very different things. A crime may be committed under a sudden impulse, and may be no indication of a bad nature. Vice corrodes and eats away under the surface; and a man may be practising it in every form, commercial and otherwise, and yet the policeman’s hand may never rest upon his shoulder. That is what modern education has helped the nation to accompliSh. Who can say it is a failure?”

“You take gloomy views of things,” said Father James. “I am afraid old Hallissey has bewitched you with Columbkille’s prophecies. But remember, the best way to make people good, is to tell them they’re good. And ‘tis the spirit of Christianity to be always [283] cheerful. ‘*Gaudeamus*!’ said St. Paul. ‘*Gaudete, iterum dico, gaudete*!’ The fact is, Myles, you must get married. Between those books and Owen Hallissey, you’ll become a melancholic patient. Do you know who was asking particularly about you lately?”

“No! some creditor, I suppose!”

“No! But your old friend, Mrs. Rendall — Mary Carleton!”

“Friend? Why, I never spoke to the lady in my life.”

“Nevertheless, she is a friend of yours. Of course you know why she got Rendall long ago to arrest you?”

“Yes! Poor Halpin told me; and quite lately Agnes confirmed it.”

“You can guess why!”

“Because Agnes, the little goose, went to her and asked her to save me from the rising.”

“Quite true. But you think she had no personal interest in the matter.”

“Hardly. Besides that is ancient history. Father James.”

“Of course. She is an excellent woman, however, and is bringing up her children well. She is doing all in her power to make that young lad of hers a Nationalist, or, I should say, a patriot.”

“That is surprising in these days, when every young lad is taught he has no country. And — his father was a police officer!”

“That’s the most surprising thing about, it,” said Father James. “I wonder where she got those ideas?”

“I cannot surmise. Has she West Anglia on her notepaper? The Scotch have N.B., and surely it is time for us to acknowledge ourselves Britons.” [284]

“ We shall never come to that,” said the priest. “By the way, Agnes is to be professed very soon?”

“I believe so.”

“I hope she will invite Mrs. Rendall and her daughter. They were very old friends.”

“I believe the Superiors do all that!” said Myles. He was anxious to get away from the conversation.

“But they always consult the friends!”

“If I am consulted I shall say, No!” said Myles, rather sullenly.

“I must give you up, and leave you to your dreams and Owen Hallissey,” said Father James.

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XL

Who was Owen Hallissey? He was a character, and a famous one. He belonged to a type, which has almost vanished from Ireland, — a caretaker and a fierce Nationalist serving under an uncompromising evictor and tyrant; an almost illiterate man, who could, however, quote the Old

Testament and Ossian; a servant, absolutely faithful to a man whom he detested; an unconscious wit, and yet a simple, guileless man — just the one after Myles Cogan's own heart.

Myles had known him from boyhood. Many a day he spent in that humble cabin there in the deep valleys of Glenmorna, dying to get a shot at a hare, yet always afraid of the stern gamekeeper. And then, when there was no chance of fun, Myles would turn to the old senachie, and listen for hours to tales of Milesian heroes, old prophecies, wild, strange legends of saint or hero, until the evening fell, and he had to hurry home to meet his father at the evening meal.

After the rising, and the long imprisonment in Dartmoor, Myles became a hero to the lonely man; and it was a ray of sunshine across the floor of his mountain cabin, when Myles crossed its threshold.

Hardly a Sunday passed, in which the latter, after the midday meal, did not walk up the steep mountain road that leads to the summit of the hill, facing south, and from which deep glens and ravines ran in all directions. In summer, he would fling himself on the purple heather, and looking out leisurely with intense affection [286] at the landscape spread before him, listen to the old man talking of the old times, and the people that were gone, and recalling many an incident that was then of enthralling interest, but to which modern Ireland is utterly indifferent. On all these visits Myles brought with him a welcome present in the share of three ounces of very black tobacco, and a package of snuff. The Sunday Myles failed to come was a lonesome prelude to a lonesome week for the old man.

The Sunday after his last conversation with Father James, Myles clambered up the lonely mountain side, and descended into the valley where Owen Hallissey had his cabin. It was one of the old cabins, of which hardly a trace is left in Ireland. The walls of mud were hardened into a kind of concrete, which not only excluded the least damp, but was proof against the fierce hurricanes that frequently in the winter time sweep up along the valleys. There was one tiny window about a foot square, a half-door, flanked by a full door of strong red pine, a heavy and comfortable coat of thatch through which projected the chimney, also of mud, but bound around with sugans, or ropes of twisted straw, as if to secure it against the storms. Inside, was one room, which served as kitchen and bedroom for the old man. His bed was in a corner near the fire, which lay upon an open hearth, and poured its smoke through the great wide chimney that was such a feature in Irish homesteads. Near the fire was always stretched, except when on duty with his master, his faithful sheepdog. Tiger.

When Myles entered unceremoniously, the dog gave a short bark, and then whined ^\'ith joy at recognising a friend. It woke up the old man, who was slumbering near the fire. [287]

"Good-day, Owen!" said Myles, cheerfully. "Taking a little snooze?"

"Begor, I suppose I was asleep, Master Myles," said the old man. "The ould age is comin' on me."

"Never mind. You have many a good year before you yet, Owen," said Myles. "You are not like the poor little spalpeens of the present day, who are old men at thirty. Come out, and let us have a breath of fresh air. 'Tis a grand day, glory be to God!"

They sat on the rich clump of heather that crested a little hill some distance away from the house. Or rather, Myles, after lighting his briarwood pipe lay at full length on the heather, and the old man sat near him. He was a hale old fellow, over six feet high. His face and neck were deeply wrinkled; but there was not a sign of decrepitude about him. His corduroy knee-breeches were open at the knees, the strings hanging loose. His legs were cased in thick grey woollen stockings; and on his feet were brogues that defied wet heather ami reeking grass, and even the snows that lay feet deep on the ground in the winter time.

“That word you said, Master Myles,” said the old man, when he had filled and lighted the old black clay pipe, “makes me think.”

“What word?” said Myles.

“Shpalpeens!” said Owen, chuckling a little to himself. “That’s just what they are — a parcel of shpalpeens.”

“Now, honestly, Owen,” said Myles, “do you believe that the men and women of today are not the equals of them that you knew.”

“Aiquals in what way?” said the old man. [288]

“Every way,” said Myles. “Are they as big and strong and courageous and ‘dacent’ as the old people?”

“Wisha, faix, then, they aren’t,” was the reply. “As to strinth, they’re no more to the ould people, than a hare is to my hound; as to dacency, the less said the better.”

“I wonder Columbkille did not prophesy that!” said Myles, roguishly.

“Yerra, sure he did. Sure everyone heard of the prophecy: ‘When the min grow down, hke a cow’s tail, and the people are atin’ one another’s flesh, the ind of the wurruld is at hand.’“

“I never heard that before,” said Myles.

“Yerra, sure you’ve only to look at the priests. Master Myles,” said Owen. “Instid of the fine, grauver, big men we knew, they’re like little *caushtheens*. Of course, I’m saying nothing against the clergy, God forbid! but that they’re not so *current* as the ould men.”

“I believe they’re great friends of yours?” said Myles. “Was it true what they tell, that you allowed Dr. C — to shoot on the mountain but you wouldn’t let him fire until you told him, and then the hare was a mile away.”

The old man chuckled and coughed. The smoke had gone the wrong way.

“The young prieshts do be telling them shtories at the Stations,” he said, after recovering himself. “They’re purty jokers sometimes. Sure, I never intrudes on them; but the ould prieshts would never sit down to brekfus, unless I was forninst thim. But I never goes in now, unless I’m axed. But, sure that’s nearly always. The man of the house is sometimes sly, and he sez, ‘Come in, Owen, and discoorse the clergy’; [289] and the byes push me in, and say: ‘Give them the Jebusites, Owen!’ but I’m not as much at me aise, as in the ould times. Why, av wan of these young min sees a speck of soot or dust in a cup as small as the pint of a pin, he blows his breath at it; and if the ould woman takes it and gives it a rub wit’ her apron, he’ll hardly take his tay out of it. Ah, God be wit’ the ould min. Begor, they’d drink out of the same cup with meself.”

Myles smoked placidly. The old man’s conversation soothed him.

“You aften hard me tell of poor Father Maurice,” continued the old man.

Myles nodded.

“Ah! He was the grand man intirely. I never saw his aiqual here or there. He was a big man, and he always rode a fine horse. Gor-an-ages,” cried the old man, enthusiastically, “to see him take a six-foot ditch, his silk hat left behind him, and his coat tails trailing in the wind, ’twould make the dead dance in their graves. Well, we had a station down at the Pike wan morning. ’Twas at the widow Quilty’s house — a dacent good ’uman she was, God be merciful to her, and to all the sowls of the faithful departed.”

He lifted his old hat reverently; and Myles, taking the pipe from his mouth, followed his example.

There was a pause, as there always is in Ireland, when their dead are mentioned. It sets them thinking of many things.

"Well, sure they're wid God," continued the old man, "and we may lave them rest. But, as I was saying, before the Station kem round, and when it was published for Widda Quilty, wan of the nabors, who thought a dale about herself, being some kind of [290] cousin to a parish priest, kem up to the Widda, and sez she to her: 'I'm tould ye're going to have a station nex' Tuesday, Mrs. Quilty?' 'So we are, ma'am,' sez the widda. 'I suppose Father Maurice will be comin',' sez she. 'I hope so, ma'am,' sez the widda. 'I suppose you know he's fond of griddle-cake/ sez the woman. 'So they sez, ma'am,' sez Mrs. Quilty. 'Now,' sez the 'uman — Mrs. Morarty was her name — 'I know what he likes better nor any one else; and I'll make that cake for him and have it up here on Monday night, an' 'twill spare you a lot of trouble.' 'Wisha, thin, Mrs. Morarty,' sez Mrs. Quilty, 'not making little of you, me own little girl, Ellie, can make a cake as well as any wan in the parish.' 'I know, I know,' sez Mrs. Morarty, soothering her, 'but I know Father Maurice's tastes betther. Now, lave it in my hands; and you won't be sore nor sorry.' 'Whatever you like, ma'am,' sez Widda Quilty, 'sure you were always the good nabor.' Well, the Station morning came; and while the ould parish priest was calling the list. Father Maurice shtrolled into the little parlour, where the breakfus' was laid out. There were the cups and saucers, and the grand butther, and the crame an inch thick; and there were the cakes likewise — Mrs. Morarty's and Ellie Quilty's. Poor Father Maurice took up Mrs. Morarty's first; and weighed it in the palm of his hand. Begobs, 'twas as heavy as lead with currans and raisins, and some yalla things, I forget — "

"Lemon-peel!" suggested Myles.

"The very thing," continued Owen. "Well, he weighed it, and weighed it; and then he pushed it over to where the ould parish priest would be settin'; and he took up the little squares of griddle cake that Ellie [291] Quilty had made. Yerra, they were as light as the *noneens*, or the things the childre' do be telling what o'clock it is by in the meadows; and faix, he put it down on his plate, an' drew over the dish with the rest of the squares upon it, and put it near himself — "

"I hope he cleared it all away!" said Myles.

"Divil a crumb he left av it!" said Owen. "Sure 'twas the joke of half the country after. But I am only showing what fine min the ould prieshts was; the young prieshts nowadays wouldn't tetch a piece of cake or home-made bread if you paid 'em for it."

"But are you able to discourse them, Owen?" said Myles, "the same as in the old times?"

"I am, and I aren't," said Owen. "They try to take a rise out of me sometimes; but, begor, I inds by taking the rise out of thim. Wan of thim sez wan day to me up there at Mulcahy's along the Bog road, 'do you believe, Owen, that Tobias' dog wagged his tail?' 'And sure, why wouldn't I believe it, yer reverence,' sez I, 'an' it is in the Scriptures?' 'But 'twas such a small thing,' sez he, 'sure what differ do it make to us whether he wagged his tail, or didn't? 'The man," sez I, 'that would tell me a lie in a small thing, I wouldn't believe him in a big wan.' 'Good man, Owen,' sez the parish priesht, 'that's worth all the commentatories have sed on the matther.' 'And now 'tis your turn, Owen,' sez he.' 'Give it to 'em hot and heavy!' 'Did you ever hear tell of Aroer,' sez I, to the young curate, 'samesby [sic] he had a B — a, Ba, or an A-b, Ab, to his name.' 'No,' sez he, 'what was it?' 'That's what I'm axin' yer reverence,' sez I. 'A roarer?' sez he. 'Why every wan knows what a roarer is — a broken-winded ould garron.' 'Consult,' sez I, 'the Book of Numbers, chapter thirty-two, and you'll find your [292] mistake.' 'Wan for you, Owen,' sez the ould parish priest, winking at me. 'What were the two rivers,' sez I, 'that wathered the plain of Damascus?' He was floored agen. 'Two for you, Owen,' sez the ould man, laughing. 'There's only wan more to win the rubber.' 'In what book of the ould Testament,' sez I, 'are salts and Senna follying wan another?' The poor bye looked at me, his eyes starting out

of his head. But he hadn't a word in him. ' Three for you, Owen,' sez the ould man; and begobs, he shpoke so loud, that the byes heard him down in the kitchen; and they wor laughin' theirselves sick. But the wimmin were as mad as blazes; the wimmin are always on the priests' side, you know; and they said I was an ould hambug, and that I'd betther be minding ould Colonel Ivors' hares than attimptin' to bate these learned gintlemen."

"Why didn't you fling Ossian at the young priest?" said Myles. "You had him there entirely."

"Av course," said Owen, "but I'd rather bate him on his own ground. An' that reminds me that I have come to the conclusion after a lot of readin' and refiectin' that the prophet Jeremiah was either an Irishman, or shpint some time here. Where else could he get thim 'Lamentations'? Now, every wan knows that the Irish had their lamantations, from ould Ossian down to the keeners, and from the keeners down to the ballad singers at the fair and the market — and sure Ossian — I mane his books — are all wan long keen!"

"Fighting and lamenting," said Myles, rising up from his bed of heather. "That's our history, I suppose."

"They were great men in these ould times," said Owen. " Even their names had a mouthful in 'em, — [293] Conlath and Cuchullin and Cuthona, Bragella and Sul-malla, Calmar and Matha and Slimorra, Erragon and Alcletha and Temora — 'tis like a grand ould song from the ould hayroic days. Ah! 'tis many an hour I shpinds, talkin' over to meself and conshthruin' thim ould legends; and many a winther's night, when the black clouds do be racin' before the blasht, and the white moon like the banshee running agen thim, and the little stars quinched now, and thin lookin' out agen with their blue eyes — ah! many a winther's night did I shpind, with the ould people, and their battles and their songs, an' their lamentations, ontil I began to think I was wan of theirsels, and that it was up here in Glenmorna they were fightin'; and thin I goes down from all the glory and the music and I finds nothin' below there but a pack of *pizawns* and *kinats*, who are watchin' me to see where I'm goin' to lave me tuppence for a pint of porther — ah, Masther Myles, will the grand ould times ever come back again?"

"I fear not, Owen," said Myles, "but, at any rate, the past is ours. They cannot rob us of that! Goodday!"

"Good-bye and good luck!" said Owen.

Myles went down from the mountain; yet he lingered long, here and there, with all his passionate love for Ireland kindled and inflamed by the magnificent scenes that lay before him. The vast plain that stretched downwards and onwards to where the cloudlike and faintly-pencilled Galtees rose into the skies, was bathed in sunshine, which glittered here and there on the surface of some stream or river. White flakes of cirrus cloud, infinitely diversified in form and colouring, filled the sky from horizon to horizon. And looking [294] back he saw the summits of Glenmorna touched more faintly by the sun, and purple shadows filling all her valleys.

"Yes! God made our land for heroes," he said. "But alas! where are they?"

[295]

XLI

The profession of Sister Ciaran was an event in itself; and a great break in the monotony of Myles Cogan's life. Agnes had begged for that Irish saint's name; and she had obtained her wish; and with all the pomp and ceremony of the Church, and all the tenderness and sublimity that surround a young novice taking her final vows, she passed through the ordeal, which was also a triumph for her. She had delayed too long her entrance into religion, chiefly for Myles'

sake; and her novitiate was, therefore, more trying, but she passed through its little difficulties quietly, her gentle, pliant spirit making it easy for her to surmount every obstacle.

There was a pretty large gathering of priests and laity. The former were invited ex officio; and although neither Agnes nor Myles had made many friends, yet somehow on occasions like these, friends will arise — old convent fellow-pupils, a few from Kilmorna, a remote relative here and there, and — Mrs. Rendall.

Myles found the scene rather embarrassing. He followed from the front bench in the little convent chapel the solemn and touching ceremony with interest and emotion. He recognised the genius of the Church in her mystic formulas; and the strain of majestic poetry that ran through all these hymns and prayers and seemed to lift the souls of men on the wings of inspiration towards heaven. [296]

It was a little shock to him, as it is to all Irish souls, to come out from such an atmosphere of holiness and dignity, filled as it was with the perfume of prayer and sacred music, and to have to descend to the commonplaces of life.

Then he felt what a lonely and solitary man he was. The one great human tie in life was broken; and, with the exception of Father James, he felt he was absolutely friendless and companionless.

There was some whispering between Father James and the priests who thronged the corridor outside the nun's refectory, and some curious glances directed towards himself. Then, a few of the older priests came towards him, and ground his fingers in the palms of their hands, murmuring something about his martyrdom, which was to them a thing of yesterday; and one old man, with tears in his eyes, said:

"I'll die easy now that I have seen you!"

The Bishop shook Myles cordially by the hand; and taking him affectionately by the arm led him up to the table, and placed him at his right hand. Mrs. Rendall was placed at the Bishop's left.

All was so far smooth and delightful; but now Myles was tortured by the fear that the Bishop would formally introduce him to Mrs. Rendall. Most fortunately, Agnes came in, in all the glory of her black veil, knelt for the Bishop's blessing, shook hands with Myles, then went the round of the table to receive the felicitations of the priests and guests, and finally settled down at Myles' side for a good long chat, leaving the Bishop to entertain his guest on the left.

"Are you happy?" said Myles, affectionately, to his sister.

"Supremely. Nothing could equal the kindness of [297] the Sisters and Reverend Mother. They didn't know what to do for me!"

"That's very good," said Myles. "Who in the world are all these grand people?"

And Agnes, without looking, was able to tell him all and everything about everybody. And then, she whispered:

"Mrs. Rendall — Mary Carleton, you know, is next to the Bishop. Did he introduce you?"

"No, thank God!" said Myles, fervently. "I was in mortal dread all along!"

"But why, Myles? She is my oldest friend; and I'm sure she would like to speak to you!"

'Twould be embarrassing to both of us," he replied. "Better leave well alone!"

After a little time, the Bishop rose, put on his white stole and blessed the Profession Cake; and shortly afterwards, he shook hands with Mrs. Rendall and Myles, and retired.

Myles whispered to his sister:

“You mustn’t leave Mrs. Rendall alone. Go and speak with her. I’ll meet you later on, on the grounds.”

Then he rose up, and moved, with downcast eyes, along the row of tables, and passed into the corridor. He was eager to escape into the garden, where he could be alone with his own thoughts; but he was instantly surrounded by a little crowd of the Sisters, who gallantly introduced one another to him; and then he had to stand a cross-fire of questions — about Slieve Ruadh, the death of Halpin, his trial, his imprisonment, the deadly ten years in Dartmoor.

“It’s all ancient history. Sisters,” he said. “These things occurred so many years ago, and are forgotten.” [298]

“Are they?” said a nun, whose face bore marks of great beauty, although she was middle-aged.

She put in his hands a slip, or cutting from a newspaper. He glanced at it. It was frayed and yellow. It was his speech from the dock.

“Don’t think, Mr. Cogan, that we are all lost,” she said. “With all this trumpeting about modern politicians, some of us think more of our martyrs than of their mimics.”

He looked steadily into the Sister’s eyes. They were calm, yet there was a gleam of enthusiasm also there. He said calmly:

“Yes! That too is a symptom and a symbol. I was told a few weeks ago by a Thuringian gentleman far down in Germany that the march of democracy had crushed every symbol under foot. But, behold! I have been face to face with them all this morning; and they seem eternal. And now, just think! That one soul should have treasured for so many years these words of mine!”

“My father gave them to me on his death bed,” said the nun, “ and bade me never part with them. He, too, was out in ’67.”

“Ah!” said Myles, “everything then is not lost. I thought all was dead and gone.”

“No, no,” said the Sister, “but, Mr. Cogan, we don’t understand why men like you should shut yourselves up in a hermitage, like a Carthusian monk, when your country calls you.”

“Alas! my country has not called me,” he said, “I have been told in all forms of expression that I am out of date, and I have accepted that verdict.”

“A true patriot is never out of date,” she said.

“Sometimes, and then he is stoned or crucified,” [299] said Myles; and his brave interlocutor could not say nay. “Would you tell my sister I shall be on the topwalk in the garden.”

He went up into the garden, that rose, terrace on terrace, behind the convent. He was dying for a smoke; but his reverence for the place forbade it. He gave himself up to a reverie, a favourite luxury of his. The fact that this nun, who never expected to see him, should have treasured as a precious legacy that slip of paper, touched him deeply.

“When we cast the seed, we never know where it will fall,” he said. “Perhaps — ”

He meant that he was about to examine the prudence of his abstention from public life. Would it not be manlier and better to face the horrid *mêlée* of modern politics in the hope that the presentation of truth might be accepted even by a few? And, suppose, a man went down in the fight, beaten and dishonoured, would it not be better than a career of ignoble idleness? Then, he opened the morning paper; and, after a few minutes, he chanced on a certain scene that had taken place the day before at an important Council meeting. It was appalling. He crushed the paper in his hands, and said aloud:

“No! no! Better the solitude of Sahara than that!”

Father James was looking down at him.

“So you have come up here, Myles,” he said, “to soliloquise about politics. I thought you had made up your mind about the Shanavests and Caravats years ago?”

“And so I have. Father James,” said Myles. “Sit down! I expect Agnes every moment. It was a remark made by one of the Sisters that set me athinking!” [300]

“Ah, yes! That is poor Doheny’s daughter. How the thing runs in the blood. We can’t expel it, although, as our Thuringian friend expressed it, Patriotism is dead!”

“The ceremony passed off well,” said Myles, anxious to get away from the subject.

“Beautiful!” said Father James. He didn’t understand tame adjectives. “And Agnes went through her part well.”

“Yes! And the Bishop was kind. But, Father James, although it was flattering to be remembered by that good Sister, if I were Bishop, I wouldn’t allow a thought of anything but religion and God to enter within these walls.”

“Begor, then, you’d have to build them a good deal higher,” said the priest. “These nuns have Irish hearts; and you cannot sever them altogether from their country.”

“When I listened to that ‘Ave Maria’ during Mass,” said Myles, “I thought what a grand thing it would be to die then and there, and never come back to this old clod of earth again.”

“Ah, yes!” said the practical Father James, “but you see things are mixed up on this old planet. If we were to be listening always to nuns singing in choir, how would the world go on? Yes, the Lord has made a judicious mixture of life — prose and poetry, night and day, pain and pleasure. If you want more than your share of these good things, you lose all. Here is Agnes!”

Myles looked, and flushed scarlet and grew pale, when he saw his sister on the terrace beneath him. Mrs. Rendall appeared to be speaking earnestly to her, and remonstrating with her. Then, to his infinite [301] relief, Mrs. Rendall stooped, kissed Agnes, and passed down along the steep walks.

“Thank God!” murmured Myles.

Father James smiled, and said:

“Now, you and Agnes have a lot to say to each other. But there is a limit. We have to catch the four o’clock train; and there are four miles to the Junction from here. Shall I say three o’clock?”

“All right!” said Myles.

“Mind, Agnes, not a moment later than three. Good-bye, little woman, and pray for us — out in the howling wilderness of the world.”

[302]

XLII

There are no secrets in the world today, except those of the Confessional; and the States of the world will soon endeavour to penetrate even these. And, of all places on earth, an Irish village is just the last spot where anything can be said or done, or even thought of, without its being known within twentyfour hours to the entire community. Hence the twofold fact that Mr. Franklin, a well-known mill-owner and wheat-importer, had been closeted with Myles Cogan

for several hours; and that Myles Cogan had taken his clerk into partnership, was talked about in every drawing-room and taproom in the village with one unanimous and simultaneous conclusion, that Myles Cogan was a bankrupt.

Yet Myles, quite conscious of his own solvency, was kept unaware of the general verdict upon him. His very aloofness made it an impertinence for anyone to speak to him about his private affairs. But there are certain persons who never know what an impertinence is; and when they are kicked for the impertinence, they wonder why some people are born thin-skinned and sensitive.

One of these, named Supple, had heard of Myles Cogan's supposed embarrassments, and made up his mind to administer a little friendly advice. To Myles, this man, now past middle life, was particularly obnoxious. He was one of those who, in the old evil days, [303] when Kilmorna was a borough, was reputed to have amassed money by accepting and delivering bribes *ad libitum*. At any rate, he was now in easy circumstances; lived in a quiet, cosy private house in the centre of the village, had no occupation whatsoever except the giving and receiving of "news." Every morning after breakfast and the newspaper, he lit his pipe, put his hands in the pockets of his pea-jacket, and, after gazing at the sky for some minutes, and calculating the signs of the weather, he turned to the left, and walked down the street towards the Bridge, nodding right and left to corner-boys and more select acquaintances, for, as he often said, he had no pride. Although he had read the morning paper from the title-page down to the printer's name, he paused at the news-vendor's, and studied the bills outside the door, even though sometimes they were a week old. He paused at the barber's shop, where there was always a little Parliament sitting, listened for a moment to the debate, and passed on. It was a red-letter day for him, when he met one of the local curates, button-holed him, and held him for a quarter of an hour at the corner of a street. He generally stopped at Miss McDonnell's, a little millinery shop, where all local scandals were sifted and strained. He passed by the Catholic Church, lifted his hat, but never went in. When he got to the Bridge, he relighted his pipe, leaned over the parapet, and watched the river meditatively, all the time keeping an eye open for some chance passenger, who would stop, and exchange a little gossip. Then, he would stroll home in calm equipoise of mind and body to his midday meal, after which he emerged again, turned now to the right, and made his rounds of the upper part of the little town. He had had municipal honours, had been [304] P.L.G. and D.C. for his district. One coveted honour he had never attained, although he had made frantic efforts towards it. He had never been asked to sit on the bench at the monthly Petty Sessions' Court. This was all the more strange, inasmuch, as he often declared, he had helped many a judge on to the King's Bench, and had made one Lord Chancellor. But he was spoken of in the County papers as the best-known and most distinguished citizen at Kilmorna.

Myles Cogan had a nodding acquaintance with him; and did not seek for more. He was very much surprised, therefore, when, the morning after his sister's profession, as he was busily engaged with some farmers at his little mill, he saw the distinguished citizen enter the mill-yard, pipe in mouth, hands deep in the pockets of his jacket, and with his usual air of absolute nonchalance. The visitor watched for a while with a critical eye the counting and heaving in of bags of wheat and oats, the sweating labourers, the shrewd farmers; and then, he sidled over to where Myles was superintending, his hat and coat covered with fine flour or bran, and said, with all the airs of an old and valued acquaintance:

"Pretty busy, I see!"

"Yes!" said Myles, without looking at him.

"It is the best feature in our country at present," said Supple, "that our local industries are so patronised."

Myles was silent.

“Now, Mr. Cogan,” said the fellow, “if you would only combine a little public spirit with your industrial zeal, it would serve you and the country.”

“I am quite at a loss to know what you mean,” said Myles, turning around and studying the man. “And [305] besides, I am extremely busy this morning, having been absent from home yesterday.”

The visitor declined taking the hint, and went on:

“It is not for me to intrude or pry into your private affairs, Mr. Cogan; but I knew your father well — Dan Cogan, as honourable a man as ever lived; and I am damned sorry you haven’t walked in his footsteps.”

That expletive denoted a certain amount of honest indignation.

“I don’t understand,” said Myles, coldly, yet he was nettled by the allusion.

“He was a business man, and you are not,” continued Supple. “He was up-to-date, and you are behind the times; he was interested in public affairs, he sought public honours and obtained them; and you — “

“Well?” said Myles, with a little relaxation and a smile that gave him away.

“Well, you choose to despise the people, to live apart from them, and they hate you. Not a man in Kilmorna but was delighted to hear you were in trouble.”

“In trouble with whom?” said Myles, flushing angrily.

“With your creditors, of course.”

“And who was so kind and truthful as to inform them of that?” said Myles, with difficulty suppressing the desire to put the fellow outside the gate.

“They put two and two together,” said Supple, coolly, “and it generally makes four. Here is a business man, whose customers are leaving him; here is a rival, who is beating him hollow; here is a creditor, who remains for hours in his shop; and here is a clerk, suddenly advanced to partnership — what does all that spell?” [306]

“What?” said Myles.

“Composition,” said Supple, laconically. “Now, if you had entered public life, and accommodated yourself to the people around you, how different all that would be.”

“Explain. I don’t understand,” said Myles. He was anxious to know what was in this fellow’s mind, which was also the mind of the public.

“Good heavens! you are hopelessly backward,” said Supple. “Tell me, how many contracts have you got since you opened business?”

“Contracts? Not one!” said Myles.

“I know it. But you tendered?”

“Yes!” said Myles.

“And you were always beaten?”

“Always, till I gave it up!”

“Did it occur to you why you were beaten?”

“My prices were too high, I suppose.”

“Not higher than those whose tenders were accepted,” said Supple.

“Oh, yes! I was always told my tenders were too high. They were bound to accept the lowest!”

Supple chuckled to himself and breathed out a column of tobacco smoke.

“Blessed are the innocent,” he said, looking curiously around. “Then you never mixed a little chopped straw in the flour?”

“Never!” said Myles.

“And you never put a couple of grains of shot in the bran or pollard?”

“Never,” said Myles. “I heard that such things were done; but I didn’t, and do not believe it.”

“And you never kept a bottle of whiskey in the back parlour?” [307]

“Look here, Mr. Supple, this is a painful conversation for me,” said Myles. “I know my own shortcomings; I know I am not up-to-date; but I cannot bring myself to believe that public life in Ireland is so corrupt as you suggest. I believe in the old days, when Kilmorna was a borough, strange things happened and large fortunes were rapidly made. But to ask me to believe that commercial immorality is everywhere, is too much. Good-day!”

Supple nodded, and was walking out the gate, when Myles called after him.

“And, as I believe, Mr. Supple,” he said, in cold, sarcastic tones, that would have raised the skin on an ordinary man, “in the absence of a local newspaper, you are herald and general news scavenger in Kilmorna, please tell your good inquisitive neighbours, who, as you say, can put two and two together, that, so far from being bankrupt, I can pay my creditors fourfold, and have a handsome balance in the bargain.”

Supple whispered softly to himself, so that Myles could not hear him:

“Tell that to the Marines!”

He crossed the Bridge in excellent temper. That terrible allusion to the rapid fortunes that were made in the good old times, did not disconcert him in the least. He simply made up his mind that Myles Cogan was an ass; and he told everybody so. He told Miss McDonnell. She snipped a thread with her teeth, and said:

“He should have married years ago!”

“He’s too sullen a fellow,” said Supple. “No girl would look at him!”

“Hundreds!” said the milliner. “He could have his pick and choice of the parish.” [308]

“I admire the Kilmorna tastes!” said Supple.

“Isn’t he handsome?” said the little milliner, who suspected, as she afterwards explained, “that Supple had got his lay.” “Isn’t he the *beau ideal* of a man? And hasn’t he got means? What more does a girl require?”

“Means? And he makes that old craw-thumper, Cleary, a partner? My dear Mary, don’t try to be too innocent!” said Supple.

“I know it looked suspicious,” said the milliner. “Old Dan Cogan would never do it. But where could old Mark Cleary make all the money, Mr. Supple?”

“Mary, too much innocence sits badly on you. Good-day!” And Mr. Supple went to dinner.

[309]

One morning, a few years later, Myles Cogan, after breakfast and a glance at the morning paper, happened to look up at a certain date card, or time-table in the dining-room. He saw that it was April the 10th, and he started.

"My birthday!" he said. "How many?"

He made a brief calculation; and to his astonishment realised the momentous fact that this was his sixtieth birthday. He was sixty years old. Yes! He had passed the sixth great decadal milestone; and now life, instead of moving up an inclined plane, would mean a facile descent.

"Sixty years!" he said. "I must soon be making my soul. Let me see! When was I in Melleray last?"

He consulted a diary; and found it was five years back. A good many things had happened since then.

His business had prospered. He left the entire management of the shop in town to his partner. He limited his own duties to a supervision of the mill work. From that he could not tear himself away. The old mill-wheel, with its dripping diamonds, made a music which he had listened to since childhood, when he grasped his father's coat tails, and watched with dread and curiosity the mighty wheel rolling on softly and steadily, drinking up the water from the mill-stream, and softly pouring it out from the valves again. The rumbling of the machinery within; the atmosphere of [310] the place, white with dust of flour, the aspects of the workers — their faces also drenched with flour, the mill-leat [sic], so deep and silent and smooth, with the long green sedges and leaves swept on by the silent tide, and waving with each breath of wind or ripple of surface, the trout hiding beneath the soft mud bank, the poplar trees, the great draught horses so strong, so meek, so patient, the sturdy farmers eager to bargain, but eager also to please — all these things, little in themselves, made a picture, which could not be torn from his book of life. It was its chief illustration.

Then, too, he had here with him the surviving members of the "old guard." Many of the '67 men had passed to their rest; but many remained. Not one had abandoned him in his moments of trial; and he had stipulated with his new partner, that not one of them should be dismissed, but should be honourably supported when unable through age or infirmity to continue his work.

The mill-business, dependent a good deal on the shop business, had gone steadily forward. Things were fairly prosperous. There was no risk now of complications; and Myles, when the day's work was over, and the mill-bell rang out at six o'clock, could go home, wash up, have his evening meal, and sit out in his garden reading, or watching the sunset playing on the old castle walls without apprehension, or a sense of neglect of his daily duties. Yea, the evening of his life seemed to be closing softly and peaceably around him, after the morning's stormy and tumultuous scenes.

He seemed to be drifting further and further from public life. He read the morning paper; watched with languid interest the course of that wretched gamble, called politics; then went back to his poets and philosophers, [311] and grew absorbed in the serenity of their ideas and their lives.

Yes! Nothing remained now but to glide down the declivity of life as smoothly as possible and to secure a happy end.

That same morning of April the 10th, Mrs. Rendall sat at her drawing-room window after breakfast. It was a pretty room, daintily furnished. Wild spring flowers were in vases everywhere; and a few late hyacinths filled the air with their pungent fragrance. The bay window looked out on a pretty lawn, still covered with daffodils. It sloped down to the little

river, which a few miles farther down formed the mill-leat that turned the mill-wheel at Myles Cogan's. Mrs. Rendall was busy, sorting and reading her morning's post. One letter she barely opened and then laid aside for a more careful perusal. It was from her son at Cambridge.

When she had time to read it carefully, she learned that Hugh Rendall had been president of the Debating Club, that they had had a fierce discussion on Home Rule; that the Home Rulers had won hands down; that he was eager to go home, and enter public life, but that he would not be the bidden slave of any party, but would face the world as an independent.

There was a little boyish self-consciousness in the letter (although Hugh was now twenty-four years old), which made his mother smile. But then it threw her into a reverie, where she dreamed of her boy in Parliament, making great speeches, doing surprising things in general, and finally becoming master-debater and paramount Lord to all the nation. Who is there that cannot reverence a mother's dreams, however wild? [312]

After a long reverie, she took up the letter again, and read that Hugh was coming home for the Whitsun holidays, that it was almost certain Parliament would be dissolved in July, and a General Election would be held in August. This startled the mother's fears. So long as her boy's possible advancement was a thing of the future, it was pleasant to picture it to the imagination. But the prospect of its being an immediate reality filled her with a kind of dismay.

Her daughter Genevieve came in. She was a tall, handsome girl, very like her mother in appearance and with that prompt matter-of-fact manner that distinguished Mary Carleton.

"There are two letters for you, Vevey," said her mother. "I suppose about this golf business."

Vevey opened her letters with a frown of suspicion.

"Just as I thought," she said, with a little air of contempt. "Mr. Halloran writes to say the links are quite unsuitable; and that it would be impossible to get a club together. Unless, he says, we take in undesirable persons. I wonder what are his notions of 'undesirable persons'?"

"Anybody under a lord, I suppose!" said her mother, who had not lost her old faculty of saying sarcastic things. "I believe he was introduced to Lord Kiliatty some time ago!"

"Yes! But it is very annoying. And I suppose we cannot form a tennis-club, either, this year. What is to be done?"

"But there's the Rector and his two daughters; Mrs. Smith and her niece; some of the bankers from the Kilmorna — "

"Ye-es!" said Vevey, doubtfully, "but in all these things you need an organiser — someone, who will [313] take trouble; and I depended so much on Mr. Halloran."

"Well, don't quarrel with Mr. Halloran," said her mother. "He is a useful kind of man; and we may want him soon."

"Want him, mother? I should hope not," said her daughter. "Of all things in this world that are most detestable, 'wanting' people is the worst. You place yourself under obligations; and then — "

She looked through the window in a kind of despair. Life was hardly worth living.

Then a thought struck her.

"Want Mr. Halloran?" she said, turning round. "How should we want him, mother?"

"Hugh is coming home for the Whitsun holidays."

“That’s delightful, although I hope he won’t make a fool of himself with that Miss Fortescue again. They certainly got themselves talked about. But Hugh coming home! That’s a fresh idea about the golf and tennis!”

She turned to the window again. She was easily abstracted. Then she recollected, and gathered up her train of thought.

“But what has all that to do with Mr. Halloran, mother?”

“Well, Hugh has a notion of public life — in fact, of entering Parliament — “

“Entering Parliament?” exclaimed Vevey. “He might as well think of entering the Kingdom of Heaven!”

“I hope that may come, too,” said her mother, gravely. “ But why shouldn’t Hugh enter Parliament?”

“Why? Because he does not belong to that set at all. They wouldn’t have him at any cost.” [314]

“He is President of the Cambridge Debating Union, and he is an ardent Home Ruler. What more is wanting?”

“I’m sure I don’t know!” said Vevey. “But ‘Hugh Rendall, M.P.’ It sounds well. Won’t Miss Fortescue set her cap now in earnest!”

“Vevey, you are becoming most uncharitable,” said her mother, in a tone of remonstrance. “Do you ever accuse yourself of that, when you go to Confession?”

“Never! Why, it is only legitimate criticism,” said Vevey. “If we don’t talk about one another, what in the world is there to talk about? And now — no golf, no tennis, no — nothing! Oh, dear! What a tiresome thing living is!”

“Well, if Hugh goes on, you’ll have something to do. He says the general election will be in August; and you will have to use all your attractions to secure votes for him.”

“Really, that’s quite jolly,” said Vevey, who saw that life was become attractive again. “ Going around, like a suffragette, making speeches from platforms, talking to grocers’ wives, admiring babies — yes, that won’t be bad for two or three weeks. But, mother, where does Mr. Halloran come in? I had almost forgotten him.”

“He probably would be Hugh’s agent — conducting-agent, they call it, I think.”

“Oh, then, I shall be civil to him, although I think he’s a muff. And that awful woman, his wife — oh!”

There was silence in the room for a few minutes. Then Vevey exclaimed:

“Hallo! There’s Nicker, dying for a run; and so am I.” [315]

A fox-terrier had bounded out on the lawn; and, spying his young mistress, had been barking, and leaping, and pirouetting even amongst the daffodils to the dismay of Mrs. Rendall.

Vevey raised the window a little, stood on the sill, and leaped down on the lawn; and soon, the white dress of the young lady was a vision amongst the young foliage of the trees, and Nicker was scampering before her, trying frantically to do impossible gymnastics for the pleasure of his young mistress.

[316]

Myles Cogan had an invitation from Father James a few weeks later to dine with him on a certain Sunday at five o'clock. This was one of the delights of his existence — a Sunday dinner at the presbytery at Lisvarda; and the subsequent chat out on the lawn with his old friend.

Just at this time, too, the latter end of May, the country was in its gala dress; and Myles, who, like every good Celt, loved the winds and the rains and the storms of Ireland, so emblematic of her history, had also a soft corner for the motherland when she put on her holiday dress and arrayed herself for a brief period in her sunshine and flowers. It was a lovely run — that from Kilmorna to Lisvarda; and Myles was not sorry that the little hills that sloped upwards to the plateau where the priest's house was built, compelled him from time to time to dismount from his bicycle, and walk slowly, thus giving him time to feast his eyes on all the glories of a summer evening in Ireland. There was one stretch of road for two miles, that was almost bewildering in its beauty, for he had to pass through an open arcade of hawthorn-blossoms and crab-apple blossoms, which sprang from banks literally covered with primroses, wild violets and hyacinths, whilst festoons of woodbine hung from the bushes, and the limes flung out their fragrance, and were made musical with the hum of bees. [317]

As a rule, Father James had no other guest. They had so much of each other's confidence, that a third person would be out of place. But this Sunday, Myles was surprised, and not too agreeably, to find a young gentleman before him, and to be introduced to him as Mr. Hugh Rendall. He had known there was such a person, of course; but he had formed no other idea of him, but as a young gentleman who had been studying in an English University, and who probably would follow in the beaten track towards some position of dignity and emolument. Myles was not conscious of any hostility towards the young man. Only, he would have preferred one of his customary tete-d-tetes with his old friend.

Hence, he was quite silent during the greater part of dinner; and only woke up with some interest, when the young man said modestly:

"Yes! It was that slum work in London, that made me first realise that I had a country."

"It was a strange feeling," he said, "but when Wigham and I had done our piece of slumming, according to Toynbee rules, and I had a bit of leisure to myself, I used get in amongst the Irish at Whitechapel or at the Dials; and the first thought was, what brings those people here? It seemed to me that the Jew, the Italian, the German, the Scandinavian, were quite at home there in the heart of London; but the sight of an Irishwoman cooking a steak at a range, and a stalwart Paddy sitting in a spring-bottom chair, seemed to me the height of incongruity."

"But why shouldn't the Irish have good comfortable chairs and a beef-steak for dinner?" said Father James.

"To be sure," said the young man. " Why shouldn't they? But I couldn't get over the idea, that the whole [318] thing was incongruous, because I had never seen an Irish woman cooking anything but bacon and potatoes and cabbage, or an Irishman smoking except on a sugan chair, or the flagged seat near the open hearth. And then to see those foreigners come in with their queer dresses and accents, and to know that instead of his mountain-cabin, Paddy had but one room in a vast tenement house, without air, or hght, or water, made me always inclined to open our acquaintance by asking: 'What the devil are you doing here?'"

"And what used they say?" asked Father James.

"The old answer! 'We're better off. I have got my two pounds a week; my boys are earning thirty shillings each. Would we have that in Ireland?'"

"Of course not,"I used to say. "But you had a home to yourself on an Irish hillside, with the four winds of heaven playing around, and the sun dancing on the floor of your cabin; and you had

plenty of potatoes and cabbage and a bit of bacon sometimes; and you had your rick of black turf well saved from the bog, with the creels lying on it ready for use; and you had the drop of potheen sometimes and no ganger to smell it; and you had the ould nabors dropping in of an evening for a seanchus; and you had your own priests — but I never went much beyond that, because I used to see the old woman's tears dropping and hissing on the pan, whilst the young chaps with their halfEnglish faces used look crossly at me for spoiling their dinner."

During this monologue, Myles began to watch the boy with curious interest. He saw a handsome ruddy face, where the blood ran free and pure and even; a mass of black curls were matted round his head, except above the temples, where there appeared to be premature [319] baldness. His grey eyes were softened at the remembrance of his exiled people, far away from their native soil in that reeking London atmosphere; and Myles began to wonder where the lad had imbibed such a personal and wholesome feeling towards his motherland.

"You seemed to have known the ways of our people very well," he said at length. "It is not usual for our gentry to know so much about the interior of an Irish cabin."

"I used to live half my time amongst the people in Donegal," Hugh Rendall said, "when father was County Inspector there. You see you go out on these lonely mountains — and they are lonely — why, this place is a kind of Riviera compared with Donegal — and you don't know when you may return. So I used to say to mother: 'If I am not back, don't wait dinner for me. I'll take pot-luck wherever I can get it'; and I used. The most tremendous meal I ever ate was off potatoes and salt in a cabin in the mountains. But the love of the poor people; the way the girls laughed at me, when they saw me stowing away the lumpers, was worth an alderman's dinner. Ah me! How gladly would I go back amongst them again. This place stifles me. I want to throw out my arms and drink in the air of the Donegal hills."

"And do you think, Mr. Rendall," said Myles, softly, "that you ever induced any of these exiles to return home?"

"No!" said the boy, and his face fell. "And it would be of no use. Once an exile, an exile for ever. The people that go are never the same again. Some change takes place — I don't know what it is — but they are never the same. Some do come back, when

the times are hard in Babylon; but they cannot settle down. The glamour of London follows them, — the streets, the lights, the shops, the coffee-stalls, the tripeshop, and — the wild mad rush of millions of people! You see, so long as they stay at home, the very silence and solitude of the hills has a charm for them. But let them once hear the roar of London, and it will be evermore in their ears."

"That is the reason," he added, after a pause, "why I think our people should never leave their country. They are never the same again."

"But then," said Myles, "how have you escaped, Mr. Rendall? Were not you in the vortex of London life, as well as they?"

"Yes! But as a traveller, as a spectator," said Hugh Rendall. "No more. They lived there. I merely walked through."

"Let us come out," said Father James, "and enjoy the evening outside. And you can retort on Mr. Cogan, for he lived ten long years in England, and you see how he is spoiled for evermore."

"I didn't know," the young man said, putting aside his napkin, and looking curiously at Myles. "In what part of England did you live, Mr. Cogan?"

“Father James shouldn’t have alluded to it,” said Myles, taking out and filling his pipe. “‘Let the dead past bury the dead.’ I was in gaol.”

The young man started back, and looked frightfully embarrassed. Father James had gone into the house to order “materials.” There was a painful silence between the two men. Myles smoked his briarwood pipe calmly enough; but Hugh Rendall smoked cigarette after cigarette violently, flinging them away when they were half consumed. At last, and it seemed an [321] interminable time to the younger man, the priest came out; a table was laid, and hot water and sugar, and whiskey and coffee were produced.

After an interval, Myles said:

“Mr, Rendall was curious to know where I spent my ten years in England; and I have told him that I was in gaol.”

“Aye, so you were,” said the priest, “and you’re not likely to forget it. But it had not the effect of London life on you. You came back a more egregious Irishman than ever.”

Still puzzled and silent, Hugh Rendall poured out some coffee. He didn’t know what to think. He felt that it was a delicate subject. And he also felt a little humiliation, and resentment at being asked to dine with a felon. He was pondering over some excuse to get away, when Father James said:

“It is a coincidence that it was your father, Mr. Rendall, that arrested Mr. Cogan.”

This made the matter more embarrassing, and Rendall said:

“Indeed?”

“And, stranger still, it was your good mother who suggested the arrest.”

The young man now became not only embarrassed, but angry. Was this an ugly plot to throw in his face some personal disagreement of long ago? He turned his face away.

“But it was a friendly act,” continued the priest. “Mr. Cogan was arrested at your mother’s suggestion to save him from taking part in the Fenian rising.”

“Then Mr. Cogan was a Fenian?” said the young man, who was suddenly changed from a sceptic to an admirer. [322]

‘‘Yes! He was Head Centre at Kilmorna. He was with James Halpin, when he was killed at Slieve-Ruadh. He was arrested, sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered; and spent ten of the best years of his life in Dartmoor.”

It was Hugh Rendall’s turn now to be heartily ashamed of himself. Two minutes ago, he shuddered at the thought of being in the company of a convicted felon; now, he felt he was in the presence of a hero. He did not know what to do. His first impulse was to stand up and make a humble confession of the unworthy suspicions he had harboured. Then, he hated scenes; and he felt that neither the priest nor Myles would relish a scene. He contented himself by saying simply:

“I heard Father and Mother discussing that troubled period a few times. Father was bitter enough against the Fenians. Mother stood up for them. From her I learned to envy and admire them. But I never heard Mr. Cogan’s name mentioned as a rebel till now. What a ten years to look back upon!”

Little the boy understood what those ten years meant.

“Strange,” he said, “you never hear of anyone going to gaol now — I mean for Ireland!”

"'Tis gone out of fashion," said the priest. "It does not pay. It is not up-to-date. And our rulers are at last wise enough to understand, that when the gaols are empty, and the scaffold taken down and sold for firewood, Ireland is contented and subdued."

"You think patriotism is dead?" said the young man, eagerly.

"Dead as Julius Caesar!" said the priest. "We are all now citizens of the world. Ireland is only a little piece of rock and wood thrown by chance into the Atlantic Ocean; and every man's duty is, on the principle [323] of natural selection, to get on to the goal, and push the feeble against the wall."

"And the National Anthem," said Myles, "is a song you must have heard in the London slums — 'Yip-i-addy-i-aye!'"

"I can't believe it; I can't believe it!" said the young man, passionately. "You are joking, Father James; and Mr. Cogan is embittered. But it is not true; it is not true that the nation has apostatised."

"A nation *has* apostatised," said Father James, gravely, "when it surrenders its liberties; when it goes begging, hat in hand, for favours; when it says to the man who spares it the trouble of thinking, 'Thou art our Master; and we shall have no gods but thee!'"

"Has it come to that?" said the boy, passionately. "Is there no one to raise his voice and call back the nation to a sense of self-respect?"

"That would mean martyrdom," said Father James.

"And," added Myles, "no one now sings:

> 'If Death should come, that martyrdom
> Were sweet endured for you,
> Dear Land! Were sweet endured for you.'"

He little knew how prophetic were his words!

XLV

"You had a pleasant evening?" said Mrs. Randall to her son at tea that night.

"Yes! Quite jolly. Father James is a brick."

"You were alone?"

"No! There was a gentleman there of whom you, mother, must have heard; though you never mentioned his name, — Mr. Cogan."

"Yes!" said his mother, whilst a faint blush seemed to run up her forehead, and be lost in her white hair. "He was a Fenian leader, and spent some years in gaol."

"So he told me; and by Jove, I was never so near making an ass of myself before."

"Oh, yes, Hugh!" said his good sister. "You forget that you proposed to Miss Fortescue!"

"Now, now, Vevey," said her mother. "That's unkind. But what happened?" she said, turning to her son.

"Why, we were talking about England and how a residence there alienates the Irish from their native land. Then I was thrown on my own defence; and then Father James blurts out, 'And Mr. Cogan spent ten years in England; and he came home a better Irishman than ever.' I was stupid enough to ask Mr. Cogan when we were together, 'Where he spent those ten years?' He said simply, 'In gaol!' By Jove, I was struck dumb. I could not imagine a fellow ten years in gaol,

except for forgery, or embezzlement, or something [325] worse; and I felt very ill at ease at the notion of having dined cheek by jowl with a common felon — ”

“You said nothing? I hope,” said his mother, anxiously.

“ Fortunately, no; but I was about to get away abruptly, which would be as bad, when it came out that Mr. Cogan was a Fenian; and had borne a good deal for his country.”

“A good deal?” said his mother, meaningly.

“Yes! I presume it wasn’t all cakes and ale there!” said Hugh.

“No!” said his mother. “It was so bad that the country has managed to forget it. Somehow, Irishmen have a wonderful faculty of bearing easily the trials and martyrdoms of their patriots.”

“But I think Father James said you were somehow mixed up in the matter,” said her son. “You had him arrested?”

“Yes! Before the rising. His sister, who is now a nun, — she was an old school-companion — came to me to save him. I could think of nothing that would save him, except to have him locked up; and your father was obliging enough to do it for me.”

“But how then was he at the shooting with the other poor fellow, that was killed?”

“An American officer rode up, and broke the prison-gate, or the gaoler’s head, I don’t know which — and they rode on to the field of battle. There they found Halpin firing away at the English troops across the river. The officer was ordered away; Halpin, who was in love with Mr. Cogan’s sister, Agnes, was shot through the lung; Mr. Cogan was arrested and tried and sentenced to be hanged. That was commuted to imprisonment for life. You know the rest.” [326]

“But, mother dear,” said Hugh, “when you knew Mr. Cogan so well all that time, you never mentioned his name; and he has never called here. Has he?”

“No!” said his mother, with some show of embarrassment, “Mr. Cogan and I are not acquainted. I knew his sister well. I have never spoken to himself.”

A statement which made her children stare.

“Well, I’m glad I have known him,” said the boy, with enthusiasm. “It is something to touch the hand of a man who has suffered for Ireland. You don’t object, mother, do you?”

“No!” she said hesitatingly. “We are in different grades in life; and, I dare say, Mr. Cogan would not be complimented if we sought his acquaintance. But it is fortunate for you that you met him. He is a good man!”

“Somehow, the people say, he is very stiff and stand offish,” said Vevey. “I’ll take some more tea, mother, please! and the people, down there at Kilmorna don’t like him.”

“I suppose he feels he’s somewhat above them,” said her mother. “You may be sure when he’s Father James’ friend, he must be a little above the multitude.”

“They both seemed to think,” said Hugh, “that there’s not much patriotism left in Ireland, or, indeed, anywhere. The old fiery spirit has gone; and the people have become — well, calculating machines. They weren’t so in Donegal, do you remember? Why, the people there did not know what to make of us.”

“Ah, yes!” said his mother. “But they weren’t civilised, you know. They never saw a newspaper, nor a train, nor an electric tram; and so they clung to old delusions — religion and patriotism and the like. We have changed all that.” [327]

“Well, it is worth while trying to bring back the old spirit,” said Hugh. “I wonder would Mr. Cogan lend us a hand?”

“Wait till we women get votes,” said the good sister. “Then, public life will be purified; and then, Ellen Fortescue and I will stump the country for you.”

“For you?” said her mother. “Why not go into Parliament yourselves?”

“I cannot wait for that,” said Hugh, taking the matter solemnly. “It is now or never with me.”

“Hugh,” said his sister, gravely, “are you quite serious in thinking of contesting this division?”

“Quite,” he said. “Why not?”

“Do you know what ’twill cost mother?”

“Half your fortune!” he said.

“There now, you are going to quarrel again,” said Mrs. Rendall, rising from the table. “But do nothing, Hugh, without consulting Father James. He knows this place so much better than we.”

A few days later, Father James called at Millbank.

“How did you like that young chap, Rendall?” he said brusquely to Myles.

“Pretty well. There’s something genuine about him, although he was going to run home when he heard I had been a convict.”

“That’s just what makes me think well of him,” said the priest. “The moment he heard you were a ‘felon’ for Ireland, you saw how he changed. That’s not usual with his class, nor, indeed, with any class in these days.”

“Yes! It is all ancient history now,” said Myles, in a melancholy tone. “But what a revolution! and how sudden it has come on. Everything that was [328] held in abhorrence in ’67 is held in honour now. Everything that was honoured then, is dishonoured now. No nation made such a somersault ever before!”

“And no hope of going back?”

“Absolutely none. You know the Catechism says there is no redemption for apostates.”

“Do you know, Myles,” said Father James, after a pause, “I had rather listen to young Rendall than to you? Of course it is youth that speaks through him, and hope. He sees hope everywhere. He thinks if a few strong men could be got together, to raise the standard of independence, they could undo the mischief of the last thirty years — ”

“They could get their heads well broken,” said Myles. “The case is hopeless — utterly hopeless, I tell you!”

“Nevertheless, Rendall will go on — ”

“Where?” said Myles, in amazement.

“Here! He’ll contest this division at the next general election as an ‘Independent.’”

“I hope you didn’t encourage that, Father James?” said Myles, seriously.

“I didn’t oppose it,” said the priest. “I put before him all the dangers, all the difficulties, and the probable, nay certain, loss of much money; but he has all the magnificent *élan* of youth on his side, and there’s no stopping him.”

“He won’t get even one to nominate him,” said Myles.

“Oh, he will. That’s all right. And he says, if you would only stand by his side, he’d beat any opponent.”

“I hope you didn’t encourage that idea,” said Myles, with great gravity. ‘“You know that no power on [329] earth could make me go down into such a Donnybrook fair.”

“I suppose ’tis the more prudent course,” said Father James, with unconscious irony. “But what would Halpin say?”

This appeal to the memory of his old comrade seemed to stagger the resolution which Myles had formed. Yes! It was quite true that is not the way Halpin would have acted.

“You remember his great principle,” said the priest; “it was you yourself often mentioned it to me — that he died to lift up the people? It was not for Irish independence he gave his life — that, he knew, was an impossible dream; it was not for Home Rule even — that was not spoken of in his time. It was to purify Irish life; and to keep the Irish from running after idols, like the Israelites of old.”

“Yes!” said Myles, bitterly, “and how far did he succeed?”

“No matter!” said the priest. “As old Longinus used to say, ‘To fail in great attempts is yet a noble failure!’ I like the heroes of lost causes!”

“It seems to be quixotic, impossible, absurd. Perhaps it is old age that is creeping down on my faculties. I was always convinced that if we had three hundred Spartans here in Ireland in the days of Parnell, or even one independent organ in the Press, that awful *débâcle* would never have taken place.”

“I don’t know,” said Father James, dubiously. “The sentiment of our people is always stronger than their reason. Do you know my own blood boiled within me, when I heard that despairing cry of his:

> ‘Don’t throw me to the English wolves!’” [330]

“ Quite so. I can understand. I will go further and say that his last years were some of the most tragic in all human history; and their events can never be read by Irishmen without shame. All the greater reason why weaklings like myself should shirk the contest.”

“Yet, if Halpin were alive, he’d have thrown himself into the breach,” said the priest.

“Possibly,” said Myles, “In fact, he used to say: ‘It was all the same, whether you fall by an English bullet, or at the hands of an assassin.’ Poor fellow, I wish he were alive — although I don’t. The affairs of the present day would kill him.”

“His mantle has fallen upon you!” said the priest.

“No! No!” said Myles. “I am not worthy. He was a great spirit. By the way, I’m running down to Melleray tomorrow for a day or two. Any message to the Fathers? I haven’t been there for five years. I suppose they’ll turn me away!”

[331]

XLVI

Since his last visit to the Cistercian Abbey at Mount Melleray the imagination of Myles Cogan had been haunted by a vision, which was commonplace enough in itself, but which, in some curious fashion, had fastened on his memory as a picture that could not be covered over by the ordinary events of life.

Just after supper, and when the last bells were ringing for Compline, he had formed one of the group of men who passed from the sunshine of the hall into the sudden gloom of the cloister on their way to the Church. The contrast between the very brilliant light of the setting sun, which flooded the hall and the dim twilight of the corridor, was startling enough; but what caught Myles' imagination was the figure of a monk in choir dress standing, with his back turned towards the visitors, still and silent, and looking out into the quadrangle, where a few shrubs were almost hidden in the tall grass. He was apparently of middle age. His greyish hair was cut close; he wore a light fair beard, and a moustache fringed his lips. His cheeks were sunken and pale; and there was a hectic flush on the cheek bones. His hands were folded in his scapular, and he was motionless as a statue. He never looked at the group of men that thronged the cloister; but when the last had turned the corner that led to the church, he slowly followed. The pale, ascetic face and the flush were not signs of delicacy, Myles thought, so much as of mortification and inward suffering. [332]

Such was the picture that was ever before the fancy of Myles these five years, and he was not startled nor alarmed, but somewhat faintly impressed as by a kind of superstitious feeling, when this evening just at the close of May, and the day after his interview with Father James, the very same experience occurred. There was the brilliant sunshine flooding the hall; there was a group of men, different of course from those of five years ago; there was the same, dim, green twilight in the cloister; and there was the selfsame monk in exactly the same attitude as five years ago. This time, Myles stared at him; but he could see no change. The face seemed a little thinner. That was all. Myles, though shy enough in strange places, watched him narrowly, as he emerged from the chapter-room. He noticed that he was not far from the Abbot. Otherwise, he appeared, made his profound bow, and passed to his stall like the rest, never raising his eyes.

The following day, the genial lay brother, who was in attendance on the guests, said to Myles:

"I suppose you'll be going to Confession?"

"Of course," said Myles.

"Well, which of them will you have?"

"I think it was Father Alphonsus I went to Confession to the last time," said Myles.

"Ah! the poor man died soon after," said the brother.

"I hope you don't mean to insinuate," said Myles, "that it was my Confession killed him?"

Whereupon, the brother had a fit of laughter that nearly extinguished him. When he had wiped the tears from his eyes, he said:

"No, no! The poor man died of a long, lingering sickness. Ah, he was a saint." [333]

"Well, but now," said Myles, "who are the confessors for poor lay sinners now?"

"Let me see," said the brother. "There's Father Aidan, and Father Polycarp, and Father Ciaran, and Father Hilary."

"They are all nice and easy with poor sinners?" said Myles.

"Wisha, faith they are," said the brother. "Some like Father Hilary, and some Father Polycarp, because, they say, you needn't confess to him at all. He knows all about you already."

"That's convenient!" said Myles. "But who is the Father who stands in the cloister just outside the big door? He's always there at Compline, and he's always looking out on the quadrangle."

"Oh! That's Father Cyril," said the brother. "He's home from Rome for some years, where he was Consultor to the General. He's a great theologian."

“I see. But why does he be always there? He was there five years ago, too, when I was here before, and looking out at the quadrangle just in the same way.”

“Ask me something easy,” said the brother. “Some say he sees a vision there every night; some say he’s watching his grave, as if he won’t have time enough to do that when he’s dead.”

“I wonder would he hear my Confession?” said Myles. The mystery of the man enthralled him.

“Of course,” said the brother. “But, as he is not one of the four, he must ask the Abbot. What time would you like?”

“Say ten o’clock tomorrow,” said Myles. “There’s nothing — no service going on then?”

“No! All right! He’ll be at your cell door at ten,” said the monk. [334]

And at ten o’clock next morning a slight tap was heard at Myles’ door; and his monk entered. Myles was kneeling at the little round table, a crucifix before him, and a little pile of devotional books under his hands. He was facing the window which opened out into the lawn. The monk, without a word, and without looking at his penitent, took a chair, and also faced the window, Myles kneeling behind his right shoulder.

Not a word did the confessor say, whilst his penitent made a review of his life for the past five years.

Then, without turning his head, he said in a low voice:

“You are quite satisfied now with your confession, just the same as if you were on your death bed?”

The words struck Myles as somewhat ominous; but he simply said, “Yes!”

Then, without another word, his Confessor pronounced the form of Absolution, after ordering some slight penance; and, without another word, the monk arose.

“If I may delay you a few moments,” said Myles, still on his knees, “there are one or two things, which interest me, and about which I should like to have an unbiassed opinion.”

“They have no reference to your confession?” said the monk.

“No! They are quite extraneous.”

“Then I shall have to obtain further permission to speak to you,” said the monk. “Can you meet me on the Upper Walk in the garden at — what is the dinner-hour?”

“Two o’clock!” said Myles.

“Very good. Shall we say one o’clock, then? You are leaving, I understand, tonight?” [335]

“Yes! One o’clock will suit me admirably”; and the monk passed noiselessly from the room.

Myles was somewhat displeased. There was a brusqueness, a coldness, a want of human sympathy in the monk’s manner, which repelled him. But, he had made his choice; and the matter could not be reopened.

Precisely at one o’clock he was standing on the long walk at the northern side of the garden, watching with some curiosity some of the Fathers, who, with habits carefully tucked up, were weeding and hoeing in the garden in absolute silence. There was a hot sun beating down; but an occasional breeze from the south stirred the fringes of the pine-trees that projected over the garden wall.

He had not a moment to wait. His monk came at a brisk pace out from the lawn and shrubbery; and, coming up to where Myles stood, he placed himself at his side, commenced a smart walk, put his hands in his leathern belt, and said shortly:

“Well?”

Myles was dreadfully embarrassed, but he managed to stammer out:

“I was a Fenian in ’67; I put in ten years in Dartmoor Prison. I am as deeply interested in the country now as then, more deeply, more passionately than ever. What I want to know is, are the people hopelessly changed? Under the new materialism, is there hope they will keep the old characteristics of their race?”

The monk slowed down in his walk, his eyes still fixed on the ground.

“I have been away from Ireland,” he said, “many years. I have seen but little of it since I returned. How have the people changed?” [336]

“Every way,” said Myles. The monk’s indifference seemed to exasperate him. “The old spirit is gone — the old, free, open-hearted spirit that made the people so lovable is gone; and, in its place has come in a hard, grinding, material spirit. It is best described by the new gospel: Every man for himself, and God for us all!”

“But perhaps that old spirit had its faults, too,” said the monk. “Were not the people too generous, too free-hearted, too extravagant?”

“No, no, no!” said Myles, passionately. “The spirit of our race — the spirit of our religion was sacrifice — the giving up something for our neighbour, our country, our God. Now, ‘tis self, self, self, eating into and corroding everything.”

“Yes! that is bad,” said the monk, yet without much interest or emotion. “ But is it a national misfortune?”

“Undoubtedly!” said Myles. “It is as a national misfortune I deplore it. I am not responsible for the souls of the people. Let them look to it who are! But I have always believed, I might have been wrong, that we are a race apart; that so surely as Jehovah of old selected the Jews as his people — the chosen nation — so we, by God’s design or destiny, stand aloof from the nations around us. Their ways are not our ways; their God is not our God. But we are forgetting ourselves, just as the Israelites forgot themselves under the thunders and lightnings of Sinai. We are going after strange gods. The Philistines are upon us, not to fight us, would to God it were so! but to show us their reeking abominations.”

It was the monk’s turn now to be surprised. He stopped in his walk, and, turning around, he looked Myles steadily in the face. [337]

“Are you exaggerating, Mr. Cogan?” he said. “ When men speak rhetorically, I always distrust them.”

Myles grew red under the reproach; but he rallied.

“You wish me to speak plainer, Father?” he said. “I will. I say, the commercial immorality that we supposed belonged to clever Yankees or perfidious Englishmen is universal in Ireland today; I say the natural affections are extinguished. Every will is now contested; and the dead, with all their sins upon them, are dragged from their graves to show how legally incapable they were. Instead of the old grave dignity and seriousness of the dear old people, I see nothing but vulgarity everywhere. As to patriotism in the old sense, — the love of Ireland, because she is Ireland, and our motherland, — that is as dead as Julius Caesar. The fact is, to use a slang word that has been flung at me lately, we are up-to-date — that is, we have gone after strange gods!”

The monk walked silently on, but more slowly now. Myles was excited and emotional.

At last, at a turn in the walk, the former said:

“The whole thing is novel to me. No one has ever spoken thus before. Perhaps the other Fathers may have heard these things; but I am, just what you say Ireland ought to be, aloof and apart! It may not be well. We belong to this world as well as to the next!”

“Ha! That’s just what I want to know,” said Myles, anxiously. “It is here the personal question touches me. If all I say is true, and of course I don’t say I am infallible — am I justified in keeping aloof from public life; or am I bound to go down at any cost to my feelings, and help to purify that public life?”

“Well,” said the monk, smiling, “we must establish our premises first. You heard of Don Quixote?” [338]

“Yes!” said Myles. “That’s just it. I don’t want to be tilting at windmills.”

“Then you must be careful, my dear Mr. Cogan,” said the monk, gently, “not to generalise too much. Probably, you have certain ideals before your mind—do you read much?”

“Yes! Of recent years, I have read a great deal.”

“And great books?”

“Yes! The world’s greatest.”

“And you haven’t mixed much amongst men?”

“No! I avoid them as much as I can,” said Myles.

“Ah! There is the seat of the malady,” said the monk.

“But,” said Myles, obstinately, “facts are facts, Father. I tell you the country is turned topsy-turvy. What was right thirty years ago is wrong today; and public life is wholly corrupted. Then, all — everyone,” Myles flung out his arms — “is preaching materialism. The idea of Ireland as a great missionary country is scoffed at; the idea of Ireland as a centre of learning and sanctity, our old heritage, is not even named; the whole mind of the country is directed in one way, to be a little England or America — factories, industries, workshops, our harbours filled with ships, our rivers polluted with slime, the atmosphere reeking with soot—”

“Look! Mr. Cogan! You have been reading Ruskin?”

“Yes!” said Myles, ashamed of being caught quoting second hand. “He was the most truthful man of his generation.”

“But — the windmills?” said the monk. “Is England less materialistic today for all his preaching — for all Carlyle’s scolding? Are not rivers polluted, skies [339]

darkened, children playing on banks of slags and cinders, far more than when he thundered against such things? Where’s the use in useless preaching and prophesying?”

It seemed the final word to Myles. The two men sauntered on in silence.

“It is at least a comfort to know,” said Myles at length, “that Saul needn’t be amongst the prophets. My work is done.”

“Yes, possibly! “ said Father Cyril. “ Nations follow their destiny. But it may comfort you to know that your country can never live long in the sty of materialism. It is with nations as with individuals. Sometimes, an old man comes up here, just at the end of his life to tell us, or rather tell God, that his whole life has been a huge mistake. He set out, just as you say Ireland is setting out, on the grand race for gold. He would be a successful man, that is, he would die worth sixty thousand pounds. He never lost sight of that, night or day. It haunted him at his meals, at his prayers, at Mass, on his journeys. It was the grand objective of existence. He heard sermons denouncing this evil, but they were not for him. It was the priests’ business to say such

things on money from time to time, and that was all right. They were ordained for that. But it was his business to make sixty thousand pounds, and to have the newspapers speak of him as a most wealthy and respectable citizen. That too was all right. It was for that he was created. Then, suddenly, he finds the prize in his grasp; but, like the old fairy legend, the gold is but rusty leaves. He is disgusted with his success. He loathes himself. He remembers something about a camel passing through the eye of a needle; and something about Dives and [340] Lazarus, and a great gulf between. Then he comes up here and resolves to disgorge the whole wretched thing, and turn to better things. Now, that is just what I conjecture, from your statements, will happen in Ireland. The nation will go on from prosperity to prosperity. Moral degeneracy must accompany material progress. The nation will grow swollen and inflated — and then, when the climax is reached, and all the dreams of its patriots are realised, it will grow disgusted with itself, for there is one idea that can never leave it. It has haunted the race from St. Patrick downward; it has gone with them in exile; it was their comfort and anchor of hope in persecution — can you guess what it is?"

Myles was silent, afraid to guess.

"Tell me," said the monk, after a pause, "what brought you up here?"

"To make a short retreat, and a long confession," said Myles.

"But, why didn't you go to Dublin, to Cork, to Limerick?" said the monk. "There are Houses of Retreat in these places; and wiser and better confessors than you will find here."

"It was the Mountain," said Myles, "and the solitude, and that spire, and the chanting of the monks, and their austere lives."

"Precisely. That is — the monastic idea — the idea of Bruno and Bernard, and all our saints. But do you know, that our modern silence and austerities are but child's play, compared with those of the old Irish monks?"

"So I have heard," said Myles. "It is hard to believe it."

"You may believe it then," said the monk. "And [341] do you think that that monastic idea, which is haunting yourself, although you don't perceive it, is going to be quenched by a few years' prosperity? Never. The nation will go on; grow fat, like Jeshurun, and kick. And then, it will grow supremely disgusted with itself; it will take its wealth, and build a monastery on every hilltop in Ireland. The island will become another Thebaid — and that will be its final destiny!"

"God grant it!" said Myles, raising his hat. "But it seems so far away!"

"A thousand years are but a day in the sight of the Eternal," said the monk. "Be of good hope. There is an Angel watching over Ireland. Farewell!"

The monk stretched out his hand, which Myles grasped. He seemed to wish to detain the monk further; but the latter glided away silently, and Myles felt very much alone.

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XLVII

During the next few weeks, Myles Cogan had material enough for meditation in the monk's last words. He turned them over, again and again, in his mind, contradicted them, refuted them, but always ended in admitting their consolatory truth. The monastic idea! The expression interpreted his own thoughts and feelings during life; for even as a Fenian, was it not the monastic idea, the idea of sacrificing oneself to a great cause, of doing hard things, of giving up

life to infuse new life into the people — was not this the animating principle that haunted poor Halpin, and that had lain so long dormant in his own mind?

But the fatalism of the monk perturbed him somewhat. Granted that all things were revolving in a huge cycle under the control of Divine providence, were men to sit down and remain quiescent until the cycle was completed? Somewhere he had read of the sublime duty of "helping God." Some people he had read about as "coadjutores Altissimi," — a sublime expression! Yes! God needs to be helped. He clamours for human assistance. And is it better to stand aloof, and busy oneself in the arid Sahara of books, than to go down and mingle in the conflict, even though defeat were assured? There was but one reply to that query; yet, when Myles reflected on all that it meant — he shrank back into himself, saying: ** These things are not for me." [343]

He had no opportunity of consulting his friend, Father James, on the matter; for the latter had chosen the early summer months to depart on his holidays. And then, suddenly, the Ministry resigned; and the country was face to face with a General Election.

Promptly, and first in the field, Hugh Rendall issued his appeal to the independent electors of that division of the country. It was a modest, manly document, setting forth the principle that it was not Acts of Parliament, even though they should establish Home Rule, that can ever build up a nation; that a nation is great or little according to the genius and character of its people; that, if the people are sordid and base, and have sacrificed that first essential of freedom, individual independence, no merely material success can compensate for such national apostasy; and that, therefore, he came forward as an advocate of human liberty, untrammelled by any obligations to party, and owing allegiance only to those who would confer upon him the charter to represent them by their unanimous suffrage.

The address was a little academical; and wanted the fire and energy that comes from more popular and idiomatic language. Nevertheless, it was a manly document, and when Myles put down the paper, he said:

"Poor fellow! And he little knows that he is addressing a nation of slaves in the language of freemen; and how can they understand him?"

He went about his ordinary daily avocations; but read the papers diligently. In the beginning, young Rendall seemed to be making some headway. His reception every Sunday at different places of meeting was respectful, if not cordial. Then suddenly a change [344] took place, as the day of polling came nearer. And one Monday morning, Myles was horrified to read that on the previous day, Hugh Rendall and his committee had to face not only precious abuse from the opposing party, but had been driven away by threats of violence, and even some actual assaults. Halloran had been struck and badly hurt; and Hugh Rendall had been pelted ignominiously, until the police advised him to retire for fear of more dangerous consequences.

Myles Cogan's blood boiled up at such intolerance, but he shrugged his shoulders. It was nothing to him. The dream of the monk, Cyril, seemed farther away than ever.

All this time. Father James, who had openly espoused young Rendall's cause, did not approach Myles. He knew his horror of such things; and he shrank from interfering with his decision.

The last Sunday was approaching, previous to the nomination of the candidate; and it was understood that several meetings were to be held on that day by both sides in the struggle. Party feeling, too, had run pretty high. A good deal of drink had been distributed; and it was understood that some rough work was to be anticipated. The authorities were drafting in police and troops to Kilmorna, from which, as from a depot, they would be scattered amongst the neighbouring villages. And Myles heard, as he had heard forty years ago, the cavalry bugle-calls from beyond the bridge, and he saw, and what various thoughts it brought to his mind, the

young hussars with their blue or red tunics slashed with yellow braid, parading the streets with heavy martial tread and clank of spurs. Tho police were billeted here and there on unwilling householders; and the atmosphere was thick with [345] conjectures of what Sunday's meeting might bring forth. A few admired young Rendall's pluck; but that feeling was soon swallowed up in political animosity.

A few days before that memorable Sunday, Myles Cogan was in his office at the Mill. It was early in the day. The season had not yet come in, and business was dull. Myles was reading some account of meetings held in different parts of the constituency; and, as all the speakers seemed to repeat themselves in almost the same words, his reading was listless enough, until his eye caught one sentence, which instantly arrested him. It ran thus:

"I understand that our young opponent, as callow as an unhatched chicken, has now enlisted on his side a more mature person, whose only claim to consideration is, that sometime in the remote past, he took the field against the British Empire. (*Derisive laughter*.) I do not wish to speak disrespectfully of the Fenians. They had their day; and, I dare say, many of them were honourable men. But their methods are out of date. The age of tin-piking and hill-siding is gone; and if anyone thinks that, because forty or fifty years ago he took part in an abortive revolution, he can now command the votes of enlightened constituents who have adopted more modern and up-to-date methods of benefiting their country, then I tell him, and I want you to tell him, that he must stand aside, and not obstruct the nation in its path towards independence (great cheering, and shouts of "*The ould miller*," "*Better for him incrase the size of his pinny loaf*," etc.). Yes! the Fenians had their day and their honours, and we don't grudge them; but the nation has forged ahead since then. If this gentleman cares to join the majority [346] of his fellow-countrymen, and stand in the ranks, we will welcome him (shouts of "*Will he bring his tinpike with him, Sor?*"); but if he means to come down to the hustings, side by side with a beardless boy, whose father sent our bravest and best into English dungeons and to the scaffold, then we shall, or rather you will, give him the reception he deserves."

Myles let the paper fall; and just then, a servant came over from the house to tell him that a lady had called, and would wish to see him.

He was in no mood to receive visitors; he wanted time to reflect and collect his burning thoughts. Then he looked at his white flour-dusted coat and smiled grimly. He took up the newspaper and went over to the house. He placed his hat on the hall-rack, but still retained the newspaper; and entered the drawing-room to find himself, face to face, with Mary Carleton. The two lives, which had been converging towards each other for over forty years, had met at last.

She rose from the easy chair where she had been sitting, and frankly put out her hand.

"I presume there is no need for an introduction," she said. "I came to you on behalf of my boy."

Instantly the suspicion crossed his mind, that there was a plot on foot to drag him into this political struggle in spite of all his resolutions, and he hardened his mind accordingly.

"I can hardly imagine, Mrs. Rendall," he said, not looking at her, but through the window, and across the river, at the old castle, "how I can be of service to Mr. Rendall."

"He is a candidate for this constituency," she said. "The contest is becoming severe. He needs every [347] help. He thinks — we think — that you can help him."

"I have most carefully avoided politics for over forty years," said Myles, speaking very slowly and deliberately. "They never had any attraction for me — now less than ever. I wish Mr. Rendall success; but I cannot soil my own hands."

“He is contending for a great principle,” said Mrs. Rendall. “He is young and ambitious, of course; but he has a great love for his country. He thinks she is passing through a period of much political degradation, and he is anxious to bring the public mind to better things.”

“It is a pretty hopeless task,” said Myles. “I am informed that Mr. Rendall has not the ghost of a chance.”

“He is not over-sanguine,” said Mrs. Rendall. “That is why he wants you. You command great influence in certain places — ”

Myles shook his head.

“None, absolutely none,” he said. “My old comrades have died out everywhere. A new generation has come along. They have no sympathy with our ideas.”

“You spent ten years in Dartmoor,” she said. “Do you mean that that is forgotten?”

“Absolutely!” he replied. “To this generation, we were fools — no more!”

“Then the people are sunken deeper than I thought,” said Mrs. Rendall. “Is not this all the more reason for trying to lift them?”

He shook his head. After a pause, he said:

“Has Mr. Rendall or his agents stated that I am on his side?” [348]

She flushed up.

“Certainly not!” she said. “That would be too dishonourable. In fact, Father James has told us, again and again, that you could never be induced to take part in an election. Indeed, my son never had a hope that you would take his part. It was I, with a mother’s foolishness, suggested that I should come to you.”

The words “take his part,” and “a mother’s foolishness” seemed to touch Myles; but he folded the newspaper, and, pointing to the speech that had already agitated him, he said:

“I am quite at a loss to account for this, if it did not come from some imprudent follower of Mr. Rendall’s who wanted to spur me to his side.”

She read it carefully, but with some emotion.

“I cannot understand it,” she said. “All that I can assure you, Mr. Cogan, is this, that no one on our side even thought of you as likely to help us, until I myself proposed it.”

“Then it is a challenge?” he said. “Very well! You wish me to help your son’s candidature, Mrs. Rendall. In what way?”

She saw she had conquered, or rather that Myles was conquered by that speech, and she said:

“Next Sunday, there are to be some critical meetings. Hugh will speak at Meenus and also at Loughmir. Will you stand on the platform, or the waggonette, with him?”

“I hate all speech-making,” said Myles. “It is positively disgusting to have to face an unlettered mob, and try to talk sense to them.”

“Well, then, don’t speak!” she said. “Hugh will be satisfied if you stand by his side.” [349]

It was a critical moment. Was he going to cast all his resolutions aside, and face the ignominy of a contested election? If the question were one of obliging or disobliging Mrs. Rendall, he would not have a moment’s hesitation, although he was touched by their faith and hope in him. But that speech was stinging him by its insolent challenge. He could not understand it. There was no doubt it was meant for him. So the mob understood it. He was at a loss to know how his name could have been introduced. His abstention from politics was everywhere understood. The old

Fenians were supposed to look down upon and despise all parliamentary methods of helping Ireland. And he had been consistent. How, then, could it be supposed that he had suddenly departed from his life-habit, and that for the sake of a boy whom he hardly knew?

Again, the suspicion crossed his mind that he was about to be inveigled into the election by some secret wire-pullers. He said at length:

"This speech is a challenge; and a gratuitous one. I have given no one the least reason to think that I would depart from the habit of my life. You assure me it has not come from your side. Then, it is an insolent challenge from the other side. Very well, I accept it. I shall be with Mr. Rendall on Sunday!"

"Thanks ever so much, Mr. Cogan." she said, rising. "It will give new hope to Hugh. May we put your name on the posters?"

"By all means," he said. "But not as an orator, only as a supporter of an independent policy, such as Mr. Rendall stands for!"

She asked sundry questions about Agnes, and other things, as he accompanied her, with bared head, to [350] the carriage. He answered in a mechanical way. His mind was already far away, pondering the importance of the step he had taken. More self-possessed, Mrs. Rendall entered her carriage and put out her hand, saying again:

"Thank you ever so much!" and her carriage rolled away.

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XLVIII

The next few days were the most anxious Myles Cogan had ever spent. He felt he had taken a most serious step, and one from which every faculty and feeling revolted. He had no thought of consequences. He only pictured himself to himself as face to face with a wild, half-drunken, insensate mass of humanity, tossed and swayed by that worst of all passions, political animosity. And nothing could come of it. It was perfectly idle to hope that his presence could stay human passion; or that the record of his life would be accepted as a kind of credential for the honesty of his motives.

His mind was not made much easier by his visitors. On Thursday morning, the placards appeared all over the dead walls of Kilmorna, informing the people that Hugh Rendall, Esq., B.A., would address meetings at Meenus and Loughmir the following Sunday; and that Myles Cogan, Esq., Millbank, Kilmorna, and several others had promised to be present.

In the afternoon of that day. Supple, pipe in mouth, and hands stuck deep in his pea-jacket, strolled into the Millyard. He was just the last person Myles wished to see. Yet he thought perhaps the fellow could throw some light on the situation.

"Well, Mr. Cogan," the latter said, "so you are coming out at last? You should have done this thirty years ago." [352]

"There was no call for my intervention hitherto," said Myles. "And I was never challenged before."

"I suppose they got some inkling of your intention," said Supple. "They have friends everywhere."

"Friends, or paid spies?" said Myles.

“We don’t quarrel with words, or make fine distinctions,” said Supple. “But everyone is wondering what the devil brought out Myles Cogan to second this young cub.”

“I suppose that is your Parliamentary language,” said Myles; “and as Mr. Rendall is only a mere acquaintance of mine, I have no right to resent it. But, I think that young cub will grow teeth and claws yet.”

“But now, Mr. Cogan,” said Supple, with an air of confidence, “the public would like to know, you know, what are your political principles, and why you take up this new fad!”

“I cannot see what right the public have to make an inquisition into my motives. But you may tell the public that Mr. Rendall stands for independent thought and speech; and so do I.”

“I dare say,” said Supple, coolly. He did not understand such things. “If he gets in, and he has about as much chance as my grandmother, he will probably become an Under Secretary to somebody or other and command some patronage.”

“Possibly. Has he lost much on the score of bribery or drink as yet?” said Myles, whose temper was getting somewhat ruffled.

“I don’t know,” said Supple, blowing out a cloud of tobacco smoke. “They say the old lady is prepared to spend five hundred on him — ”

“That’s not much,” said Myles. “I suppose his opponent can spend a thousand.”

“He’ll get an awful beating,” said Supple, not heeding the allusion. “Every priest in the district will oppose him; nine-tenths of the people will oppose him; even the old Fenians will oppose him.”

“ Don’t be too sure of all that,” said Myles. “Father James and a few more are on his side; and he commands some influence. As to the old Guard, why should they oppose Mr. Rendall?”

“Because he’s half English, because he is an unweaned cub, and because his father was particularly hard on the Fenians. You have a short memory, Myles Cogan!”

“No!” said Myles. “I have a recollection that my name was mentioned in a most blackguardly manner last Sunday by a paid hireling, probably half-drunk; that his remarks were punctuated and endorsed by a brutal mob; that it was a challenge, and that I have accepted it. Good-day!”

And Supple went home, calling on the little milliner by the way.

“Well, did you discover the secret?” said Miss McDonnell.

“Yes, easily. I never have to fish long, before I land my salmon. Mrs. Rendall was an old flame of Cogan’s — wonder you never heard that; and as the Latin poet says, *Love conquers everything*. She was at Millbank on Tuesday.”

“No-o-o?” said Miss McDonnell, meaning: “What glorious news? Well, well, wonders will never cease.”

“It is a compliment to your sex that nothing else could have dragged Myles Cogan into public life. But he has not counted the cost!”

“But no true lover counts the cost!” said the milliner. “It is quite clear you were never in love, Mr. Supple!” [354]

She added in her own mind — “except with money.” He thought: “This may be the beginning of a breach of promise case”; so he gallantly said Good-evening! and spread the news of Myles Cogan’s Platonic worship through the town.

To his surprise the news enlisted the sympathies of the entire female population, to whom a romance of this kind was more interesting than mere politics. Myles Cogan suddenly sprang into popularity.

‘Move serious, however, was the visit which his partner, Cleary, paid him.

He was a grave man, seldom smiled, took a serious view of everything, was somewhat pessimistic in his forecasts of events, and sometimes got on the nerves of ^lyles Cogan. This day he was unusually serious.

“You called about the posters for Sundaj-’s meeting?” said Myles, abruptly.

“Yes!” he said slowly and hesitatingly. “It has taken us all by surprise to see your name at all, and in such a connection!”

“Then you all supposed,” said Myles, “that I should have called a public meeting, and consulted the people of Kilmorna before I took any steps in public life?”

“Hardly that!” said his partner. “But of course you have been leading a secluded life and the people are dy’ing to know why you have departed from it.”

“Let them read last Sunday’s speeches, and they will find the reason there,” said Myles. “That blackguard and hireling sent me a challenge; and I accepted it!”

“I should have passed it by,” said Cleary. “In election times wild things are said on both sides, which no one heeds. They are forgotten next day. Your [355] part in the proceedings will not be forgiven or forgotten.”

“Why?”

“Because political partisans never forgive,” said his partner. “They make a virtue of revenge; and they will now revenge themselves on us.”

“Their very worst cannot hurt us,” said Myles, who was, however, somewhat uneasy. “ We have weathered worse storms before.”

“Then you will attend these meetings, Mr. Cogan?” said the old man, who appeared to regard the matter as still doubtful.

“If I am spared,” said Myles. “I don’t like the business. It is against my wishes. But I have given my word. I shall attend; but no more. Wild horses won’t get a speech from me.”

“I am sorry,” said the old man, turning away. “Our business was prospering; and we should soon have the lead again. Now — ”

He turned away, and Myles felt for him. He began to see how much our little actions control the destinies of others.

Father James called. He was glad and sorry. He was delighted that Myles should have come out of his hermitage, even on such an occasion. He will become a leading man now, the good priest thought. He has twenty years before him yet; and he can do grand work for Ireland in that time. But his heart sank, when he thought of the fierce opposition that awaited him. How will a thin-skinned fellow, like that, he thought, face the furies of the market-place and hustings? He will either run away, or make such a speech that will electrify the whole country.

“Well, so you’ve changed your mind,” he said to [366]

Myles a day or two before the meeting. “I am right glad of it. The stones would cry out, if some man did not come forward to protest.”

“But I am not going to protest, Father James, except by my presence. I have no notion of making a speech. I should have nothing to say. As you are aware, I’m quite out of touch with this generation.”

“Yes, I know, I know,” said the priest. “But at least your presence will help. Mrs. Rendall is in great hope now.”

“I cannot imagine it,” Myles said. “I cannot for the life of me see how I can influence an election. The public have long since agreed to forget Slieve-Ruadh and Dartmoor; and, to tell you the truth, I am afraid my presence will injure Rendall’s cause. But I can’t help it. They wish me to go forward; and I go. But it was only when the glove was flung into my face, I took it up.”

“No matter, no matter!” said Father James. “I only wish you could conquer your shyness, or contempt; and say a few words that would wake up the people to a sense of their degradation.”

“I’d as soon think of talking high morality to a lot of cattle from the top of a ditch,” said Myles. “But one thing puzzles me. How did that scoundrel, who attacked me last Sunday, come to know that young Rendall had my sympathies? Mrs. Rendall assures me it did not come from them. Where did this fellow learn it, or could it be a political manoeuvre to get me out, and show the ‘Old Guard’ how I had apostatised? Supple tells me I shall find them dead against me at Meenus and Loughmir.”

“Well, well,” said Father James, rubbing his hands, “no one knows what is going to happen at election [357] times. There are wheels within wheels; and Supple is an old Parliamentary hand.”

“Well, I suppose what is to be, will be,” said Myles, philosophically. “You’re coming. Father James?”

“I am,” said the priest. “But think again, Myles, before you decide not to speak. We haven’t many platform orators on our side. A few burning words about old times, about Davis and Mitchell and Kickham, will rouse them. And if you cannot convert the old sinners, you might put new ideas into the hearts of the young.”

But Myles shook his head. Or that point, his mind was made up.

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XLIX

On Sunday morning, Myles Cogan went to First Mass at Kilmorna; and received Holy Communion. At twelve o’clock, he left Millbank, and went back into the town to join the cavalcade who were to escort Hugh Rendall to the places of meeting. As he crossed the bridge, he met one of the “Old Guard,” who said to him:

“You’re goin’ to the meetings. Master Myles?”

“I am,” said Myles. “Are you coming?”

“No!” said the old rebel. “I wouldn’t give a thraneen for ayther side. They are all sack and sample alike, — looking out for theirselves.”

“Well, good-day, Mike!” said Myles, turning away.

“One word. Master Myles,” said the man, detaining him. “We’re sorry you’re mixing yourself with these election blackguards. But maybe, you have your raisons. You needn’t mind Meenus much; but take care of yourself at Loughmir. They’re an ugly crowd there!”

“All right! Never fear, Mike! Good-day!” said Myles.

A waggonette well filled, and a few side cars, formed the little procession that left Kilmorna just as the bell was ringing for last Mass. There was a crowd. A few cheers were raised. There would have been a more hostile demonstration but for the hour; and the fact that Father James, the former beloved curate of [359] Kilmorna was there. As they left the town, the Kilmoma fife and drum band, to which Myles had subscribed regularly for over twenty years, left the town by another road. They were now in the employment of the enemy; and were going to Loughmir.

The little troupe reached Meenus, just as the people were coming from Mass; and drew up in an open space. The village was a wretched one — a few tumbled-down thatched houses, one or two hucksters' shops, the police-barracks, the chapel — that was all. One solitary public-house seemed to have absorbed all the wealth of the place, if one could judge by the exterior.

As Hugh Rendall's party waited in their cars for a crowd to gather, they noticed that the well-to-do farmers and their families hurried on to their traps, and gigs, and made haste from the village. A few loungers put their backs against a wall, and waited. A solitary constable came down the street. Several small boys gathered round the waggonette; and began to cheer and mock alternately.

"A blue look-out!" said Father James to Myles Cogan.

*'A few gallons of porter would have got up a splendid meeting," said a disgusted follower.

Hugh Rendall rose, took off his hat, and addressed the independent electors of Meenus. He told them in modest language why he was there. It was to put a new spirit into the country. He had nothing to gain. He sought no personal advantage. But he was convinced that the country was passing through a crisis of political degradation; and he and his friends were anxious to purify public life and bring back the old spirit of patriotism again — the spirit that animated [360] Emmet and Wolfe Tone; Mitchell and Davis; and the men of '67, the most conspicuous of whom had thrown in their lot with him.

He spoke for half an hour. Not a cheer was raised. The young gamins laughed. The policeman caught himself smiling a felonious smile.

"Let us get away!" said Father James. And they went.

Things were far different in Loughmir. It was a fairly-sized town with some excellent shops and public buildings, a handsome Church, and well-kept streets. In the centre, a smaller street branched off from the main street, and formed a kind of square. In the distance, but plainly observable by Hugh Rendall's party, as they drove into the town, the Lough lay shimmering under the summer sun. Myles Cogan was well-known here. He had been doing business with the principal shop-keepers for over forty years; he had boated, fished, and shot wild fowl on that lough; but he knew that political strife can wipe out all decent recollections; and he was glad he had made up his mind that he should be only a listener in the crowd.

As they entered the town, the opposite party had gathered an immense crowd around a platform erected in the square. There were three bands, whose drums rolled out their salvoes as the people cheered point after point in some speech. But, by a police arrangement, the two meetings could not be held simultaneously. And a cordon of constables was stationed just at the outskirts of the village to keep back the Rendall party, until their opponents' meeting should be at an end. They had not long to wait. The three bands struck up three different tunes in exquisite discord; there was an outburst of tumultuous cheering; and [361] although the crowd had not dispersed, the police opened up their ranks, and allowed the Rendall party to enter the town. They closed up behind them, and marched two deep behind the waggonette. The Inspector looked very grave; and a Serjeant, approaching Father James, said:

"Make your meeting as brief as possible. Father. There is an ugly temper in that crowd."

They pushed their way, however, amidst some cheering, but much hooting and shouting, to the square. The police drew around the waggonette, keeping back some ugly fellows with heavy sticks in their hands, and young Rendall, with bared head, stood up in the waggonette to speak.

Instantly, the drums began to beat to stifle his voice; and a volley of derisive cheering greeted him. A few potatoes were thrown; and the crowd began to undulate, as the people behind crowded forward.

Hugh Rendall spoke in a clear voice that rang around the square; and for a few moments, he got a hearing; but then an organised clique began to shout; and the big drums began to beat dow^n the voice of the young orator. He persevered, however, under a fire of criticism and pretty foul language; and then an egg struck him right on the forehead and blinded him with its contents. He put up his handkerchief to wipe away the loathsome thing; and a young girl in the crowd shouted out:

"Kiss me, Baby!"

This sally was met with uproarious laughter; which soon changed, as is the wont with an Irish crowd, into a paroxysm of fury when Rendall said, with some contempt:

"My only experience of Irish women, hitherto, has [362] been of the clean and virtuous women of Donegal. You seem to belong to a different race — "

A yell of maddened pride broke from the crowd; and a gang of half-drunken rowdies tried to force their way through the circle of police.

All this time, Myles Cogan was studying the faces around him with some interest. It was forty years since he had seen an election mob, such as was now before him. Was there a change? Had education and religion, the civilising agents of mankind, hand in hand, raised this people from the fearful degradation of Holloway's election, when he, after raising the burned woman from the ground, and carrying her to a place of safety, leaned his head against the wall of the bakery, and wept? Alas, no! Time had made no change. There were the same distorted and inflamed and furious faces he had known; there was the same foul language that had so often made him shudder; there were the same intolerance, the same bigotry, the same senseless and animal rage that made him weep for Ireland forty years ago. Hot, furious words leaped to his lips; wild storms of contemptuous rage swept his soul; yet in a moment subsided. He murmured mentally:

"Ah, mother Ireland, mother Ireland, is this what forty years have wrought in thy children? What hope? What hope?"

The dream of the monk, Cyril, seemed farther away than ever. How could a nation of contemplative cenobites spring from such material as this?

Meanwhile, the mob surged and undulated around the platform and the cars: and again the Serjeant said:

"The horses are fortunately harnessed. Father; and we can cut a way for you through the crowd." [363]

And Father James said, after a brief consultation: "Yes. It is better. Driver, move on!" Just then, Myles Cogan arose, and laying his hat on the cushions of the waggonette, he said, in very gentle tones:

"I should like to say a few words!"The priest was thunderstruck; but had to give way; and Myles, speaking from the side of the waggonette, with half the raging mob behind him, shook them into sudden silence. A great wave of human pity — pity for these poor people, pity for himself, pity for the dear old land, swept over his soul, and broke down all the barriers of a resolute silence. Myles Cogan was as well known in Loughmir, as in Kilmorna; and the

personal respect in which he was held as a man of the highest integrity helped him now in securing a few minutes, at least, of silence. There were some derisive cheers from a portion of the crowd behind him, where the worst elements predominated; and "Three Cheers for the ould Feenean," "Hurrah for the ould hillsider," "Did you bring your tinpike, Mylie? You'll want it today!" were heard here and there in the crowd. But the novelty of the situation, the magnificent face and figure of the speaker, the white hair standing up like stubble, and the calm bearing of the man overcame for the moment the organised hostility of portions of the crowd; and cries of "Whisht! Whisht!" "Let us hear what he has to say for himself!" were echoed out to the very edges of the meeting. He spoke in a calm, melancholy manner, but he was heard distinctly, and understood, except when he became transcendental.

"If anyone," he said, "had told me a week ago that I should be standing on a political platform today; if anyone had told me ten minutes ago that I would make a speech here today, I would have reputed him a madman. The idea of my mixing in latter-day politics is utterly foreign to my instincts, to my feelings, to my principles. I do not belong to this generation [365] of Irishmen. I was born amidst the gloom of '47 and '48; and in my childhood I drank in all the inspiration that came from the music and the eloquence of that latter year. In my youth, I joined the revolutionary party; but let that chapter of my life be now unopened as it is forgotten. But I fly back in imagination from the tumult and the rioting, from the palpable dishonesty and political profligacy of this age to the valour and probity, the disinterestedness and honour, of the olden time, just as a visitor would fly from the mephitic atmosphere of the fever ward in a country workhouse to the clean, sweet air, and the wild, wholesome winds that sweep around the summits of Glenmorna. You will ask me then why I am here today. (Cries of: "*Because you are d—d well paid for it, Mylie! Sure everywan knows you want the graft*!")

"No! my friends," he continued, speaking in the same level tones, "your charitable conjectures are not well-founded. I came to advocate a great principle — the right of every individual Irishman to think as he pleases on political subjects — a right which, under specious pretences, has been denied to Irishmen for the last thirty years. And if you ask me why I have broken silence today, I answer, because, however futile the attempt may be, I feel I should be a coward not to stand forward, especially when the glove has been flung in my face, and to say that in my opinion we shall sink deeper and deeper in political turpitude, unless that priceless gift of individual freedom shall be won back for the nation again. (Cries of: "*Bravo, Mylie! But spake plain, man, and don't be using thim big words*!") There is much talk now about nationbuilding; and I heard a number of galley-slaves, their [366] pockets turned inside out, and the whip curving over their heads, trying to sing: 'A Nation once again!' But I tell you, that in building up a Nation, it is not to Acts of Parliament you must look, but to yourselves, because no material gain can compensate for moral degeneracy, and I doubt if Ireland ever sank lower in the sty of materialism than in this present age. (Cries of: 'Cut it short, Mylie! Don't be insulting the people," etc.) I speak in sorrow, not in anger, — in sorrow, to see a great race, with all the elements of moral and intellectual progress, failing to rise to the level of its opportunities, because it will not see that it is from itself, and not from foreign influences, its redemption must come. Let us cease from being a nation of slaves, begetting dictators and tyrants: (Cries of "*We are not, d — n you*!" ''*Parnell was worth a million of tin-pikers and hillsiders like you.*" The tumult became frightful; and missiles of every kind were flung from behind at the speaker.) Well, I have done. I have said more than I intended to say" — ("*You've said too much!" "Sit down, you bankrupt, or clear out of this at wance*")

Just then, the same young girl, who had shouted: "Kiss me, Baby," to young Rendall, elbowed her way through the crowd and, standing beneath the waggonette, she said:

"Tell us honestly, now, Mylie, if we put in Baby Rendall, will you marry the widda?"

The words were caught up with a shout of laughter, and were repeated from mouth to mouth out to the farthest edge of the crowd. The sudden anger of the people was instantly changed into a chorus of merriment, interspersed with all kinds of sarcastic and even brutal remarks; but the missiles were showering around [367] the speaker's head, and across the faces of the occupants of the waggonette, as if to emphasize with a kind of savage scorn the coarse merriment that echoed along the square.

Myles, unable to divine her meaning, was looking down at the girl, whose red hair was gleaming in the sunshine, whilst her handsome face was lit up with smiles at the success of her sally. Father James gently pulled at Myles' coat. The latter turned round; and just then a sharp shock seemed to lift his head off his shoulders; he was conscious that warm blood was running down his neck beneath his shirt-collar; he stumbled forward, but recovered his balance; tried to speak, but failed; then the faces of the crowd seemed to fade away into a haze, and to melt into each other; the houses in front seemed moving back in a kind of cloud; and then a great darkness came down; and Myles Cogan, the intrepid Fenian, the brave, honourable man, the unsullied patriot, was lying on the floor of the waggonette, and men were bending over him in sorrow and in shame.

A shout "He's killed!" went over the crowd; and some said: "The divil mind him!"

Horrified, disgusted, angry, and ashamed. Father James took the reins from the driver's hands, saying angrily:

"If you had done what you were told five minutes ago, this wouldn't have occurred."

The man made some apology; and the priest, whipping up the horses, drove recklessly through the crowd, and pulled up sharply at the Presbytery. A young priest came out at his command, and was ordered at once to anoint the dying man. This he did; and then someone suggested a doctor. [368]

"We'll have no more of Loughmir blackguardism," said Father James, still holding the reins. "Place Myles gently on the floor, get your handkerchiefs and staunch the bleeding, if you can, and put a cushion or two under his shoulders, and let us leave this accursed place at once."

They did as he had ordered; and slowly, very slowly, so as not to promote the hemorrhage, the waggonette moved forwards. And that night Myles Cogan lay with shattered brain on the same bed where his father had lain in apoplexy forty years before.

The family doctor was at once summoned. He made a brief examination, and shook his head.

"Was it a stick or a stone?" he said,

"A stone," was the reply.

"It was well aimed," he said. "It has crushed in the skull; and the fragments have pierced the tissues of the brain."

"Is there no hope?" said Father James.

"Absolutely none!" was the reply.

Father James was beside himself with grief and remorse. He blamed himself for having enticed his life-long friend away from the peaceful seclusion of his home, from the peace and serenity of a quiet, studious life, and brought him into that terrible arena, where neither reason nor judgment nor human kindliness prevail, but all is noise and tumult, the clashing of brands, and the fierce passions of men loosened from the usual restrictions of decent life, and transformed into wild beasts.

He went up and down stairs twenty times, asked the little maid for a cup of tea, and forgot to drink it. Finally, took his hat, and, crossing the Bridge, went [369] straight to the doctor's house. The doctor was at dinner; but he came into the hall.

"Is there not some operation, called trephining or trepanning that relieves the brain-pressure?" the priest said abruptly.

"Yes!" said the doctor.

"Could we not wire to Dublin, and get down some leading surgeon tomorrow?"

"Of course. But it will be useless."

"How?"

"He could not be here before three o'clock tomorrow, and—"

He seemed to hesitate. Then he said gently:

"Mr. Cogan cannot survive the night!"

The priest went back, and took up his station by the bedside of the dying man. There was another mourner there — Mary Carleton. She too was agitated by conflicting thoughts — remorse again predominating. It was she who had persuaded Myles Cogan to come forward as her son's champion. It was she who was responsible for that tragic death. It was her maternal selfishness that brought that quiet, retiring man from his mill and his books, and exposed him to the passions of a drunken and howling mob. Her eyes were dry; but they were sunken under dark streaks, as she looked speechless through the window.

The night wore on. There was no more to be done for the dying man. He could not receive the Viaticum. He had been anointed and conditionally absolved. Human skill was powerless to stay the hand of death.

They sat, priest and woman, at either side of the couch. They spoke little; and prayed much. There was silence all night in that dark room, broken only [370] by the stertorous breathing of the dying man. When the faint pencils of the dawn of that summer morning stole through the blinds, and made an aureole of roseate light on the curtains above his bed, the soul of Myles Cogan departed.

[371]

LI.

The funeral took place at five o'clock on Wednesday evening. There was an immense crowd. Nothing attracts in Ireland, like a funeral. The carriages of the gentry with closed blinds stretched along the high road. A phalanx of grim, old men, the remnants of '67, was drawn up near the mill wall. The coffin was brought down at five o'clock sharp. The two attendant curates put on their scarves. Just then, the Kilmorna Fife and Drum Band marched up, drums and fifes craped in black.

There was a movement amongst the old Fenians. Then one stepped out — a grim and grizzled old fellow, and accosting the Captain of the band, he said fiercely:

"Are you the leader here?"

"Yes," said the boy. "We came to play the 'Dead March in Saul' for Mr. Cogan."

"Do you see these men over there?" said the old Fenian, pointing to his comrades.

"I do."

“Well. They’ll give you just five minutes to clear out of this, you dirty scuts. If you don’t, they’ll smash your drums and fifes; and then they’ll smash your heads into the bargain.”

Shamefaced and frightened, they lowered their drums, hid their fifes in their pockets, and slunk away.

A hearse, drawn by two horses, rolled up, its white plumes waving in the wind. It was not needed. The [372] Old Guard had resolved to shoulder the coffin of their dead chief to his grave. At a signal, the two priests went forward, the remains were lifted up reverently by four of the Old Guards, the remainder walking, two and two, behind to relieve their comrades. Father James was immediately behind the coffin, his head stooped, and his eyes fixed upon the ground.

The funeral procession passed down along the road; then turned sharply to the left, and crossed the Bridge, beneath which the river, every ripple of which the dead man loved, was murmuring its little dirge for him. The grey old Geraldine Keep, ivy-clad to the summit, looked down, and seemed to say: “Pass, mortals! I, immortal, remain!”

On through the silent streets, where every shop was shuttered, and every blind was drawn, the procession passed; then turned into the graveyard, which was soon filled. There, when the burial service had been read, the hands of his old comrades lowered the coffin of Myles Cogan into his grave, within one foot of the place where the remains of his old friend, Halpin, had already crumbled away. The grave was speedily filled. The priests took off their scarves, folded their stoles, and departed. The crowd melted away. The little mound was raised, and the green sods pressed down and beaten into the brown earth.

Then the little phalanx drew together, and made a circle around the grave of their Chieftain. Father James knelt down, and said the De Profundis and five Our Fathers and Hail Marys for the deceased. And one of the old men said:

“Forty years ago. Father James, you said a few words to us the night we buried Colonel Halpin. Have you nothing to say to us now?” [373]

And the priest, whilst the tears streamed down his face, said:

“Nothing, boys, nothing! We stand above the dust of the two bravest souls that ever lived and suffered for Ireland. Whether future generations will come here, and make the ‘Graves at Kilmorna’ a place of pilgrimage, or whether these, too, shall be forgotten, I know not. What we know is, that there lie two Irish martyrs — one, pierced by an English bullet on the field of battle; the other, after spending the best ten years of his life in English dungeons, done to death by his own countrymen. There they lie; and with them is buried the Ireland of our dreams, our hopes, our ambitions, our love. There is no more to be said. Let us go hence!”