

**LEVER
CHARLES
JAMES**

CHARLES O'MALLEY, THE
IRISH DRAGOON, VOLUME
2

Charles Lever

**Charles O'Malley, The
Irish Dragoon, Volume 2**

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Charles James Lever

Charles O'Malley, The Irish Dragoon, Volume 2

CHAPTER I

THE DOCTOR'S TALE.¹

“It is now some fifteen years since – if it wasn't for O'Shaughnessy's wrinkles, I could not believe it five – we were quartered in Loughrea. There were, besides our regiment, the Fiftieth and the Seventy-third, and a troop or two of horse artillery, and the whole town was literally a barrack, and as you may suppose, the pleasantest place imaginable. All the young ladies, and indeed all those that had got their brevet some years before, came flocking into the town, not knowing but the Devil might persuade a raw ensign or so to marry some of them.

“Such dinner parties, such routs and balls, never were heard of west of Athlone. The gayeties were incessant; and if good feeding, plenty of claret, short whist, country dances, and kissing could have done the thing, there wouldn't have been a bachelor with a red coat for six miles around.

“You know the west, O'Mealey, so I needn't tell you what the Galway girls are like: fine, hearty, free-and-easy, talking, laughing devils, but as deep and 'cute as a Master in Chancery; ready for any fun or merriment, but always keeping a sly look-out for a proposal or a tender acknowledgment, which – what between the heat of a ball-room, whiskey negus, white satin shoes, and a quarrel with your guardian – it's ten to one you fall into before you're a week in the same town with them.

“As for the men, I don't admire them so much: pleasant and cheerful enough when they're handicapping the coat off your back, and your new tilbury for a spavined pony and a cotton umbrella, but regular devils if you come to cross them the least in life; nothing but ten paces, three shots apiece, to begin and end with something like Roger de Coverley, when every one has a pull at his neighbor. I'm not saying they're not agreeable, well-informed, and mild in their habits; but they lean overmuch to corduroys and coroners' inquests for one's taste farther south. However, they're a fine people, take them all in all; and if they were not interfered with, and their national customs invaded with road-making, petty-sessions, grand-jury laws, and a stray commission now and then, they are capable of great things, and would astonish the world.

“But as I was saying, we were ordered to Loughrea after being fifteen months in detachments about Birr, Tullamore, Kilbeggan, and all that country; the change was indeed a delightful one, and we soon found ourselves the centre of the most marked and determined civilities. I told you they were wise people in the west; this was their calculation: the line – ours was the Roscommon militia – are here to-day, there to-morrow; they may be flirting in Tralee this week, and fighting on the Tagus the next; not that there was any fighting there in those times, but then there was always Nova Scotia and St. John's, and a hundred other places that a Galway young lady knew nothing about, except that people never came back from them. Now, what good, what use was there in falling in love with them? Mere transitory and passing pleasure that was. But as for us: there we were; if not in Kilkenny we were in Cork. Safe out and come again; no getting away under pretence of foreign service; no excuse for not marrying by any cruel pictures of the colonies, where they make spatch-cocks of the officers'

¹ I cannot permit the reader to fall into the same blunder, with regard to the worthy "Maurice," as my friend Charles O'Malley has done. It is only fair to state that the doctor in the following tale was hoaxing the "dragoon." A braver and a better fellow than Quill never existed, equally beloved by his brother officers, as delighted in for his convivial talents. His favorite amusement was to invent some story or adventure in which, mixing up his own name with that of some friend or companion, the veracity of the whole was never questioned. Of this nature was the pedigree he devised in the last chapter of Vol. I. to impose upon O'Malley, who believed implicitly all he told him.

wives and scrape their infant families to death with a small tooth-comb. In a word, my dear O'Mealey, we were at a high premium; and even O'Shaughnessy, with his red head and the legs you see, had his admirers. There now, don't be angry, Dan; the men, at least, were mighty partial to you.

"Loughrea, if it was a pleasant, was a very expensive place. White gloves and car hire, – there wasn't a chaise in the town, – short whist, too (God forgive me if I wrong them, but I wonder were they honest), cost money; and as our popularity rose, our purses fell; till at length, when the one was at the flood, the other was something very like low water.

"Now, the Roscommon was a beautiful corps; no petty jealousies, no little squabbling among the officers, no small spleen between the major's wife and the paymaster's sister, – all was amiable, kind, brotherly, and affectionate. To proceed, I need only mention one fine trait of them, – no man ever refused to indorse a brother officer's bill. To think of asking the amount or even the date would be taken personally; and thus we went on mutually aiding and assisting each other, – the colonel drawing on me, I on the major, the senior captain on the surgeon, and so on, a regular cross-fire of 'promises to pay,' all stamped and regular.

"Not but the system had its inconveniences; for sometimes an obstinate tailor or bootmaker would make a row for his money, and then we'd be obliged to get up a little quarrel between the drawer and the acceptor of the bill; they couldn't speak for some days, and a mutual friend to both would tell the creditor that the slightest imprudence on his part would lead to bloodshed; 'and the Lord help him! if there was a duel, he'd be proved the whole cause of it.' This and twenty other plans were employed; and finally, the matter would be left to arbitration among our brother officers, and I need not say, they behaved like trumps. But notwithstanding all this, we were frequently hard pressed for cash; as the colonel said, 'It's a mighty expensive corps.' Our dress was costly; not that it had much lace and gold on it, but that, what between falling on the road at night, shindies at mess, and other devilment, a coat lasted no time. Wine, too, was heavy on us; for though we often changed our wine merchant, and rarely paid him, there was an awful consumption at the mess!

"Now, what I have mentioned may prepare you for the fact that before we were eight weeks in garrison, Shaugh and myself, upon an accurate calculation of our conjoint finances, discovered that except some vague promises of discounting here and there through the town, and seven and fourpence in specie, we were innocent of any pecuniary treasures. This was embarrassing; we had both embarked in several small schemes of pleasurable amusement, had a couple of hunters each, a tandem, and a running account – I think it *galloped* – at every shop in the town.

"Let me pause for a moment here, O'Mealey, while I moralize a little in a strain I hope may benefit you. Have you ever considered – of course you have not, you're too young and unreflecting – how beautifully every climate and every soil possesses some one antidote or another to its own noxious influences? The tropics have their succulent and juicy fruits, cooling and refreshing; the northern latitudes have their beasts with fur and warm skin to keep out the frost-bites; and so it is in Ireland. Nowhere on the face of the habitable globe does a man contract such habits of small debt, and nowhere, I'll be sworn, can he so easily get out of any scrape concerning them. They have their tigers in the east, their antelopes in the south, their white bears in Norway, their buffaloes in America; but we have an animal in Ireland that beats them all hollow, – a country attorney!

"Now, let me introduce you to Mr. Matthew Donevan. Mat, as he was familiarly called by his numerous acquaintances, was a short, florid, rosy little gentleman of some four or five-and-forty, with a well-curled wig of the fairest imaginable auburn, the gentle wave of the front locks, which played in infantine loveliness upon his little bullet forehead, contrasting strongly enough with a cunning leer of his eye, and a certain *nisi prius* laugh that however it might please a client, rarely brought pleasurable feelings to his opponent in a cause.

"Mat was a character in his way; deep, double, and tricky in everything that concerned his profession, he affected the gay fellow, – liked a jolly dinner at Brown's Hotel, would go twenty miles to see a steeple-chase and a coursing match, bet with any one when the odds were strong in his favor,

with an easy indifference about money that made him seem, when winning, rather the victim of good luck than anything else. As he kept a rather pleasant bachelor's house, and liked the military much, we soon became acquainted. Upon him, therefore, for reasons I can't explain, both our hopes reposed; and Shaugh and myself at once agreed that if Mat could not assist us in our distresses, the case was a bad one.

"A pretty little epistle was accordingly concocted, inviting the worthy attorney to a small dinner at five o'clock the next day, intimating that we were to be perfectly alone, and had a little business to discuss. True to the hour, Mat was there; and as if instantly guessing that ours was no regular party of pleasure, his look, dress, and manner were all in keeping with the occasion, – quiet, subdued, and searching.

"When the claret had been superseded by the whiskey, and the confidential hours were approaching, by an adroit allusion to some heavy wager then pending, we brought our finances upon the *tapis*. The thing was done beautifully, – an easy *adagio* movement, no violent transition; but hang me if old Mat didn't catch the matter at once.

"Oh, it's there ye are, Captain!" said he, with his peculiar grin. "Two-and-sixpence in the pound, and no assets."

"The last is nearer the mark, my old boy," said Shaugh, blurting out the whole truth at once. The wily attorney finished his tumbler slowly, as if giving himself time for reflection, and then, smacking his lips in a preparatory manner, took a quick survey of the room with his piercing green eye.

"A very sweet mare of yours that little mouse-colored one is, with the dip in the back; and she has a trifling curb – may be it's a spavin, indeed – in the near hind-leg. You gave five-and-twenty for her, now, I'll be bound?"

"Sixty guineas, as sure as my name's Dan," said Shaugh, not at all pleased at the value put upon his hackney; "and as to spavin and curb, I'll wager double the sum she has neither the slightest trace of one nor the other."

"I'll not take the bet," said Mat, dryly. "Money's scarce in these parts."

"This hit silenced us both; and our friend continued, —

"Then there's the bay horse, – a great strapping, leggy beast he is for a tilbury; and the hunters, worth nothing here; they don't know this country. Them's neat pistols; and the tilbury is not bad –"

"Confound you!" said I, losing all patience; "we didn't ask you here to appraise our movables. We want to raise the wind without that."

"I see, I perceive," said Mat, taking a pinch of snuff very leisurely as he spoke, – "I see. Well, that is difficult, very difficult just now. I've mortgaged every acre of ground in the two counties near us, and a sixpence more is not to be had that way. Are you lucky at the races?"

"Never win a sixpence."

"What can you do at whist?"

"Revoke, and get cursed by my partner; devil a more!"

"That's mighty bad, for otherwise, we might arrange something for you. Well, I only see one thing for it; you must marry. A wife with some money will get you out of your present difficulties; and we'll manage that easily enough."

"Come, Dan," said I, for Shaugh was dropping asleep; "cheer up, old fellow. Donevan has found the way to pull us through our misfortunes. A girl with forty thousand pounds, the best cock shooting in Ireland, an old family, a capital cellar, all await ye, – rouse up, there!"

"I'm convanient," said Shaugh, with a look intended to be knowing, but really very tipsy.

"I didn't say much for her personal attractions, Captain," said Mat; "nor, indeed, did I specify the exact sum; but Mrs. Rogers Dooley, of Clonakilty, might be a princess –"

"And so she shall be, Mat; the O'Shaughnessys were Kings of Ennis in the time of Nero and I'm only waiting for a trifle of money to revive the title. What's her name?"

"Mrs. Rogers Dooley."

“Here’s her health, and long life to her, —

‘And may the Devil cut the toes
Of all her foes,
That we may know them by their limping.’

“This benevolent wish uttered, Dan fell flat upon the hearth-rug, and was soon sound asleep. I must hasten on; so need only say that, before we parted that night, Mat and myself had finished the half-gallon bottle of Loughrea whiskey, and concluded a treaty for the hand and fortune of Mrs. Rogers Dooley. He being guaranteed a very handsome percentage on the property, and the lady being reserved for choice between Dan and myself, which, however, I was determined should fall upon my more fortunate friend.

“The first object which presented itself to my aching senses the following morning was a very spacious card of invitation from Mr. Jonas Malone, requesting me to favor him with the seductions of my society the next evening to a ball; at the bottom of which, in Mr. Donevan’s hand, I read, —

“Don’t fail; you know who is to be there. I’ve not been idle since I saw you. Would the captain take twenty-five for the mare?”

“‘So far so good,’ thought I, as entering O’Shaughnessy’s quarters, I discovered him endeavoring to spell out his card, which, however, had no postscript. We soon agreed that Mat should have his price; so sending a polite answer to the invitation, we despatched a still more civil note to the attorney, and begged of him, as a weak mark of esteem, to accept the mouse-colored mare as a present.”

Here O’Shaughnessy sighed deeply, and even seemed affected by the souvenir.

“Come, Dan, we did it all for the best. Oh, O’Mealey, he was a cunning fellow; but no matter. We went to the ball, and to be sure, it was a great sight. Two hundred and fifty souls, where there was not good room for the odd fifty; such laughing, such squeezing, such pressing of hands and waists in the staircase, and then such a row and riot at the top, — four fiddles, a key bugle, and a bagpipe, playing ‘Haste to the wedding,’ amidst the crash of refreshment-trays, the tramp of feet, and the sounds of merriment on all sides!

“It’s only in Ireland, after all, people have fun. Old and young, merry and morose, the gay and cross-grained, are crammed into a lively country-dance; and ill-matched, ill-suited, go jigging away together to the blast of a bad band, till their heads, half turned by the noise, the heat, the novelty, and the hubbub, they all get as tipsy as if they were really deep in liquor.

“Then there is that particularly free-and-easy tone in every one about. Here go a couple capering daintily out of the ball-room to take a little fresh air on the stairs, where every step has its own separate flirtation party; there, a riotous old gentleman, with a boarding-school girl for his partner, has plunged smack into a party at loo, upsetting cards and counters, and drawing down curses innumerable. Here are a merry knot round the refreshments, and well they may be; for the negus is strong punch, and the biscuit is tipsy cake, — and all this with a running fire of good stories, jokes, and witticisms on all sides, in the laughter for which even the droll-looking servants join as heartily as the rest.

“We were not long in finding out Mrs. Rogers, who sat in the middle of a very high sofa, with her feet just touching the floor. She was short, fat, wore her hair in a crop, had a species of shining yellow skin, and a turned-up nose, all of which were by no means prepossessing. Shaugh and myself were too hard-up to be particular, and so we invited her to dance alternately for two consecutive hours, plying her assiduously with negus during the lulls in the music.

“Supper was at last announced, and enabled us to recruit for new efforts; and so after an awful consumption of fowl, pigeon-pie, ham, and brandy cherries, Mrs. Rogers brightened up considerably, and professed her willingness to join the dancers. As for us, partly from exhaustion, partly to stimulate our energies, and in some degree to drown reflection, we drank deep, and when we reached the drawing-room, not only the agreeable guests themselves, but even the furniture, the venerable chairs,

and the stiff old sofa seemed performing 'Sir Roger de Coverley.' How we conducted ourselves till five in the morning, let our cramps confess; for we were both bed-ridden for ten days after. However, at last Mrs. Rogers gave in, and reclining gracefully upon a window-seat, pronounced it a most elegant party, and asked me to look for her shawl. While I perambulated the staircase with her bonnet on my head, and more wearing apparel than would stock a magazine, Shaugh was roaring himself hoarse in the street, calling Mrs. Rogers' coach.

"Sure, Captain,' said the lady, with a tender leer, 'it's only a chair.'

"And here it is,' said I, surveying a very portly-looking old sedan, newly painted and varnished, that blocked up half the hall.

"You'll catch cold, my angel,' said Shaugh, in a whisper, for he was coming it very strong by this; 'get into the chair. Maurice, can't you find those fellows?' said he to me, for the chairmen had gone down-stairs, and were making very merry among the servants.

"She's fast now,' said I, shutting the door to. 'Let us do the gallant thing, and carry her home ourselves.' Shaugh thought this a great notion; and in a minute we mounted the poles and sallied forth, amidst a great chorus of laughing from all the footmen, maids, and teaboys that filled the passage.

"The big house, with the bow-window and the pillars, Captain,' said a fellow, as we issued upon our journey. "I know it,' said I. 'Turn to the left after you pass the square.'

"Isn't she heavy?" said Shaugh, as he meandered across the narrow streets with a sidelong motion that must have suggested to our fair inside passenger some notions of a sea voyage. In truth, I must confess our progress was rather a devious one, – now zig-zagging from side to side, now getting into a sharp trot, and then suddenly pulling up at a dead stop, or running the machine chuck against a wall, to enable us to stand still and gain breath.

"Which way now?" cried he, as we swung round the angle of a street and entered the large market-place; 'I'm getting terribly tired.'

"Never give in, Dan. Think of Clonakilty and the old lady herself.' Here I gave the chair a hoist that evidently astonished our fair friend, for a very imploring cry issued forth immediately after.

"To the right, quick-step, forward, charge!" cried I; and we set off at a brisk trot down a steep narrow lane.

"Here it is now, – the light in the window. Cheer up.'

"As I said this we came short up to a fine, portly-looking doorway, with great stone pillars and cornice.

"Make yourself at home, Maurice,' said he; 'bring her in.' So saying, we pushed forward – for the door was open – and passed boldly into a great flagged hall, silent and cold, and dark as the night itself.

"Are you sure we're right?" said he.

"All right,' said I; 'go ahead.'

"And so we did, till we came in sight of a small candle that burned dimly at a distance from us.

"Make for the light,' said I; but just as I said so Shaugh slipped and fell flat on the flagway. The noise of his fall sent up a hundred echoes in the silent building, and terrified us both dreadfully. After a minute's pause, by one consent we turned and made for the door, falling almost at every step, and frightened out of our senses, we came tumbling together into the porch, and out in the street, and never drew breath till we reached the barracks. Meanwhile let me return to Mrs. Rogers. The dear old lady, who had passed an awful time since she left the ball, had just rallied out of a fainting fit when we took to our heels; so after screaming and crying her best, she at last managed to open the top of the chair, and by dint of great exertions succeeded in forcing the door, and at length freed herself from bondage. She was leisurely groping her way round it in the dark, when her lamentations, being heard without, woke up the old sexton of the chapel, – for it was there we placed her, – who, entering cautiously with a light, no sooner caught a glimpse of the great black sedan and the figure beside it than he also took to his heels, and ran like a madman to the priest's house.

“Come, your reverence, come, for the love of marcy! Sure didn't I see him myself! Oh, wirra, wirra!”

“What is it, ye ould fool?” said M'Kenny.

“It's Father Con Doran, your reverence, that was buried last week, and there he is up now, coffin and all, saying a midnight Mass as lively as ever.”

“Poor Mrs. Rogers, God help her! It was a trying sight for her when the priest and the two coadjutors and three little boys and the sexton all came in to lay her spirit; and the shock she received that night, they say, she never got over.

“Need I say, my dear O'Mealey, that our acquaintance with Mrs. Rogers was closed? The dear woman had a hard struggle for it afterwards. Her character was assailed by all the elderly ladies in Loughrea for going off in our company, and her blue satin, piped with scarlet, utterly ruined by a deluge of holy water bestowed on her by the pious sexton. It was in vain that she originated twenty different reports to mystify the world; and even ten pounds spent in Masses for the eternal repose of Father Con Doran only increased the laughter this unfortunate affair gave rise to. As for us, we exchanged into the line, and foreign service took us out of the road of duns, debts, and devilment, and we soon reformed, and eschewed such low company.”

The day was breaking ere we separated; and amidst the rich and fragrant vapors that exhaled from the earth, the faint traces of sunlight dimly stealing told of the morning. My two friends set out for Torrijos, and I pushed boldly forward in the direction of the Alberche.

It was a strange thing that although but two days before the roads we were then travelling had been the line of retreat of the whole French army, not a vestige of their equipment nor a trace of their *matériel* had been left behind. In vain we searched each thicket by the wayside for some straggling soldier, some wounded or wearied man; nothing of the kind was to be seen. Except the deeply-rutted road, torn by the heavy wheels of the artillery, and the white ashes of a wood fire, nothing marked their progress.

Our journey was a lonely one. Not a man was to be met with. The houses stood untenanted; the doors lay open; no smoke wreathed from their deserted hearths. The peasantry had taken to the mountains; and although the plains were yellow with the ripe harvest, and the peaches hung temptingly upon the trees, all was deserted and forsaken. I had often seen the blackened walls and broken rafters, the traces of the wild revenge and reckless pillage of a retiring army. The ruined castle and the desecrated altar are sad things to look upon; but, somehow, a far heavier depression sunk into my heart as my eye ranged over the wide valleys and broad hills, all redolent of comfort, of beauty, and of happiness, and yet not one man to say, “This is my home; these are my household gods.” The birds carolled gayly in each leafy thicket; the bright stream sung merrily as it rippled through the rocks; the tall corn, gently stirred by the breeze, seemed to swell the concert of sweet sounds; but no human voice awoke the echoes there. It was as if the earth was speaking in thankfulness to its Maker, while man, – ungrateful and unworthy man, – pursuing his ruthless path of devastation and destruction, had left no being to say, “I thank Thee for all these.”

The day was closing as we drew near the Alberche, and came in sight of the watch-fires of the enemy. Far as the eye could reach their column extended, but in the dim twilight nothing could be seen with accuracy; yet from the position their artillery occupied, and the unceasing din of baggage wagons and heavy carriages towards the rear, I came to the conclusion that a still farther retreat was meditated. A picket of light cavalry was posted upon the river's bank, and seemed to watch with vigilance the approaches to the stream.

Our bivouac was a dense copse of pine-trees, exactly opposite to the French advanced posts, and there we passed the night, – fortunately a calm and starlight one; for we dared not light fires, fearful of attracting attention.

During the long hours I lay patiently watching the movements of the enemy till the dark shadows hid all from sight; and even then, as my ears caught the challenge of a sentry or the footsteps of

some officer in his round, my thoughts were riveted upon them, and a hundred vague fancies as to the future were based upon no stronger foundation than the clink of a firelock or the low-muttered song of a patrol.

Towards morning I slept; and when day broke my first glance was towards the river-side. But the French were gone, noiselessly, rapidly. Like one man that vast army had departed, and a dense column of dust towards the horizon alone marked the long line of march where the martial legions were retreating.

My mission was thus ended; and hastily partaking of the humble breakfast my friend Mike provided for me, I once more set out and took the road towards headquarters.

CHAPTER II

THE SKIRMISH

For several months after the battle of Talavera my life presented nothing which I feel worth recording. Our good fortune seemed to have deserted us when our hopes were highest; for from the day of that splendid victory we began our retrograde movement upon Portugal. Pressed hard by overwhelming masses of the enemy, we saw the fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida fall successively into their hands. The Spaniards were defeated wherever they ventured upon a battle; and our own troops, thinned by sickness and desertion, presented but a shadow of that brilliant army which only a few months previous had followed the retiring French beyond the frontiers of Portugal.

However willing I now am – and who is not – to recognize the genius and foresight of that great man who then held the destinies of the Peninsula within his hands, I confess at the time I speak of I could ill comprehend and still less feel contented with the successive retreats our forces made; and while the words Torres Vedras brought nothing to my mind but the last resting-place before embarkation, the sad fortunes of Corunna were now before me, and it was with a gloomy and desponding spirit I followed the routine of my daily duty.

During these weary months, if my life was devoid of stirring interest or adventure, it was not profitless. Constantly employed at the outposts, I became thoroughly inured to all the roughing of a soldier's life, and learned in the best of schools that tacit obedience which alone can form the subordinate or ultimately fit its possessor for command himself.

Humble and unobtrusive as such a career must ever be, it was not without its occasional rewards. From General Crawford I more than once obtained most kind mention in his despatches, and felt that I was not unknown or unnoticed by Sir Arthur Wellesley himself. At that time these testimonies, slight and passing as they were, contributed to the pride and glory of my existence; and even now – shall I confess it? – when some gray hairs are mingling with the brown, and when my old dragoon swagger is taming down into a kind of half-pay shamble, I feel my heart warm at the recollection of them.

Be it so; I care not who smiles at the avowal. I know of little better worth remembering as we grow old than what pleased us while we were young. With the memory of the kind words once spoken come back the still kinder looks of those who spoke them, and better than all, that early feeling of budding manhood, when there was neither fear nor distrust. Alas! these are the things, and not weak eyes and tottering limbs, which form the burden of old age. Oh, if we could only go on believing, go on trusting, go on hoping to the last, who would shed tears for the bygone feats of his youthful days, when the spirit that evoked them lived young and vivid as before?

But to my story. While Ciudad Rodrigo still held out against the besieging French, – its battered walls and breached ramparts sadly foretelling the fate inevitably impending, – we were ordered, together with the 16th Light Dragoons, to proceed to Gallegos, to reinforce Crawford's division, then forming a corps of observation upon Massena's movements.

The position he occupied was a most commanding one, – the crown of a long mountain ridge, studded with pine-copse and cork-trees, presenting every facility for light-infantry movements; and here and there gently sloping towards the plain, offering a field for cavalry manoeuvres. Beneath, in the vast plain, were encamped the dark legions of France, their heavy siege-artillery planted against the doomed fortress, while clouds of their cavalry caracoled proudly before us, as if in taunting sarcasm at our inactivity.

Every artifice which his natural cunning could suggest, every taunt a Frenchman's vocabulary contains, had been used by Massena to induce Sir Arthur Wellesley to come to the assistance of the

beleagued fortress: but in vain. In vain he relaxed the energy of the siege, and affected carelessness. In vain he asserted that the English were either afraid or else traitors to their allies. The mind of him he thus assailed was neither accessible to menace nor to sarcasm. Patiently abiding his time, he watched the progress of events, and provided for that future which was to crown his country's arms with success and himself with undying glory.

Of a far different mettle was the general formed under whose orders we were now placed. Hot, passionate, and impetuous, relying upon bold and headlong heroism rather than upon cool judgment and well-matured plans, Crawford felt in war all the asperity and bitterness of a personal conflict. Ill brooking the insulting tone of the wily Frenchman, he thirsted for any occasion of a battle, and his proud spirit chafed against the colder counsels of his superior.

On the very morning we joined, the pickets brought in the intelligence that the French patrols were nightly in the habit of visiting the villages at the outposts and committing every species of cruel indignity upon the wretched inhabitants. Fired at this daring insult, our general resolved to cut them off, and formed two ambuscades for the purpose.

Six squadrons of the 14th were despatched to Villa del Puerco, three of the 16th to Baguette, while some companies of the 95th, and the *caçadores*, supported by artillery, were ordered to hold themselves in reserve, for the enemy were in force at no great distance from us.

The morning was just breaking as an aide-de-camp galloped up with the intelligence that the French had been seen near the Villa del Puerco, a body of infantry and some cavalry having crossed the plain, and disappeared in that direction. While our colonel was forming us, with the intention of getting between them and their main body, the tramp of horses was heard in the wood behind, and in a few moments two officers rode up. The foremost, who was a short, stoutly-built man of about forty, with a bronzed face and eye of piercing black, shouted out as we wheeled into column: —

“Halt, there! Why, where the devil are you going? That's your ground!” So saying, and pointing straight towards the village with his hand, he would not listen to our colonel's explanation that several stone fences and enclosures would interfere with cavalry movements, but added, “Forward, I say! Proceed!”

Unfortunately, the nature of the ground separated our squadron, as the colonel anticipated; and although we came on at a topping pace, the French had time to form in square upon a hill to await us, and when we charged, they stood firmly, and firing with a low and steady aim, several of our troopers fell. As we wheeled round, we found ourselves exactly in front of their cavalry coming out of Baguilles; so dashing straight at them, we revenged ourselves for our first repulse by capturing twenty-nine prisoners, and wounding several others.

The French infantry were, however, still unbroken; and Colonel Talbot rode boldly up with five squadrons of the 14th; but the charge, pressed home with all its gallantry, failed also, and the colonel fell mortally wounded, and fourteen of his troopers around him. Twice we rode round the square, seeking for a weak point, but in vain; the gallant Frenchman who commanded, Captain Guache, stood fearlessly amidst his brave followers, and we could hear him, as he called out from time to time, —

“C'est ça mes enfans! Très bien fait, mes braves!”

And at length they made good their retreat, while we returned to the camp, leaving thirty-two troopers and our brave colonel dead upon the field in this disastrous affair.

The repulse we had met with, so contrary to all our hopes and expectations, made that a most gloomy day to all of us. The brave fellows we had left behind us, the taunting cheer of the French infantry, the unbroken ranks against which we rode time after time in vain, never left our minds; and a sense of shame of what might be thought of us at headquarters rendered the reflection still more painful.

Our bivouac, notwithstanding all our efforts, was a sad one, and when the moon rose, some drops of heavy rain falling at intervals in the still, unruffled air threatened a night of storm; gradually the sky grew darker and darker, the clouds hung nearer to the earth, and a dense, thick mass of dark

mist shrouded every object. The heavy cannonade of the siege was stilled; nothing betrayed that a vast army was encamped near us; their bivouac fires were even imperceptible; and the only sound we heard was the great bell of Ciudad Rodrigo as it struck the hour, and seemed, in the mournful cadence of its chime, like the knell of the doomed citadel.

The patrol which I commanded had to visit on its rounds the most advanced post of our position. This was a small farm-house, which, standing upon a little rising ledge of ground, was separated from the French lines by a little stream tributary to the Aguda. A party of the 14th were picketed here, and beneath them in the valley, scarce five hundred yards distant, was the detachment of cuirassiers which formed the French outpost. As we neared our picket the deep voice of the sentry challenged us; and while all else was silent as the grave, we could hear from the opposite side the merry chorus of a French *chanson à boire*, with its clattering accompaniment of glasses, as some gay companions were making merry together.

Within the little hut which contained *our* fellows, the scene was a different one. The three officers who commanded sat moodily over a wretched fire of wet wood; a solitary candle dimly lighted the dismantled room, where a table but ill-supplied with cheer stood unminded and uncared for.

"Well, O'Malley," cried Baker, as I came in, "what is the night about? And what's Crawford for next?"

"We hear," cried another, "that he means to give battle to-morrow; but surely Sir Arthur's orders are positive enough. Gordon himself told me that he was forbidden to fight beyond the Coa, but to retreat at the first advance of the enemy."

"I'm afraid," replied I, "that retreating is his last thought just now. Ammunition has just been served out, and I know the horse artillery have orders to be in readiness by daybreak."

"All right," said Hampden, with a half-bitter tone. "Nothing like going through with it. If he is to be brought to court-martial for disobedience, he'll take good care we sha'n't be there to see it."

"Why, the French are fifty thousand strong!" said Baker. "Look there, what does that mean, now? That's a signal from the town."

As he spoke a rocket of great brilliancy shot up into the sky, and bursting at length fell in millions of red lustrous sparks on every side, showing forth the tall fortress, and the encamped army around it, with all the clearness of noonday. It was a most splendid sight; and though the next moment all was dark as before, we gazed still fixedly into the gloomy distance, straining our eyes to observe what was hid from our view forever.

"That must be a signal," repeated Baker.

"Begad! if Crawford sees it he'll interpret it as a reason for fighting. I trust he's asleep by this time," said Hampden. "By-the-bye, O'Malley, did you see the fellows at work in the trenches? How beautifully clear it was towards the southward!"

"Yes, I remarked that! and what surprised me was the openness of their position in that direction. Towards the San Benito mole I could not see a man."

"Ah, they'll not attack on that side; but if we really are –"

"Stay, Hampden!" said I, interrupting him, "a thought has just struck me. At sunset, I saw, through my telescope, the French engineers marking with their white tape the line of a new entrenchment in that quarter. Would it not be a glorious thing to move the tape, and bring the fellows under the fire of San Benito?"

"By Jove, O'Malley, that is a thought worth a troop to you!"

"Far more likely to forward his promotion in the next world than in this," said Baker, smiling.

"By no means," added I. "I marked the ground this evening, and have it perfectly in my mind. If we were to follow the bend of the river, I'll be bound to come right upon the spot; by nearing the fortress we'll escape the sentries; and all this portion is open to us."

The project thus loosely thrown out was now discussed in all its bearings. Whatever difficulties it presented were combated so much to our own satisfaction, that at last its very facility damped our

ardor. Meanwhile the night wore on, and the storm of rain so long impending began to descend in very torrents; hissing along the parched ground, it rose in a mist, while overhead the heavy thunder rolled in long unbroken peals; the crazy door threatened to give way at each moment, and the whole building trembled to its foundation.

“Pass the brandy down here, Hampden, and thank your stars you’re where you are. Eh, O’Malley? You’ll defer your trip to San Benito for finer weather.”

“Well, to come to the point,” said Hampden, “I’d rather begin my engineering at a more favorable season; but if O’Malley’s for it – ”

“And O’Malley *is* for it,” said I, suddenly.

“Then faith, I’m not the man to balk his fancy; and as Crawford is so bent upon fighting to-morrow, it don’t make much difference. Is it a bargain?”

“It is; here’s my hand on it.”

“Come, come, boys, I’ll have none of this; we’ve been prettily cut up this morning already. You shall not go upon this foolish excursion.”

“Confound it, old fellow! it’s all very well for you to talk, with the majority before you, next step; but here we are, if peace came to-morrow, scarcely better than we left England. No, no; if O’Malley’s ready – and I see he is so before me – What have you got there? Oh, I see; that’s our tape line; capital fun, by George! The worst of it is, they’ll make us colonels of engineers. Now then, what’s your plan – on foot or mounted?”

“Mounted, and for this reason, the country is all open; if we are to have a run for it, our thoroughbreds ought to distance them; and as we must expect to pass some of their sentries, our only chance is on horseback.”

“My mind is relieved of a great load,” said Hampden; “I was trembling in my skin lest you should make it a walking party. I’ll do anything you like in the saddle, from robbing the mail to cutting out a frigate; but I never was much of a foot-pad.”

“Well, Mike,” said I, as I returned to the room with my trusty follower, “are the cattle to be depended on?”

“If we had a snaffle in Malachi Daly’s mouth [my brown horse], I’d be afeared of nothing, sir; but if it comes to fencing, with that cruel bit, – but sure, you’ve a light hand, and let him have his head, if it’s wall.”

“By Jove, he thinks it a fox-chase!” said Hampden.

“Isn’t it the same, sir?” said Mike, with a seriousness that made the whole party smile.

“Well, I hope we shall not be earthed, any way,” said I. “Now, the next thing is, who has a lantern? Ah! the very thing; nothing better. Look to your pistols, Hampden; and Mike, here’s a glass of grog for you; we’ll want you. And now, one bumper for good luck. Eh, Baker, won’t you pledge us?”

“And spare a little for me,” said Hampden. “How it does rain! If one didn’t expect to be water-proofed before morning, one really wouldn’t go out in such weather.”

While I busied myself in arranging my few preparations, Hampden proceeded gravely to inform Mike that we were going to the assistance of the besieged fortress, which could not possibly go on without us.

“Tare and ages!” said Mike, “that’s mighty quare; and the blue rocket was a letter of invitation, I suppose?”

“Exactly,” said Hampden; “and you see there’s no ceremony between us. We’ll just drop in, in the evening, in a friendly way.”

“Well, then, upon my conscience, I’d wait, if I was you, till the family wasn’t in confusion. They have enough on their hands just now.”

“So you’ll not be persuaded?” said Baker. “Well, I frankly tell you, that come what will of it, as your senior officer I’ll report you to-morrow. I’ll not risk myself for any such hair-brained expeditions.”

“A mighty pleasant look-out for me,” said Mike; “if I’m not shot to-night, I may be flogged in the morning.”

This speech once more threw us into a hearty fit of laughter, amidst which we took leave of our friends, and set forth upon our way.

CHAPTER III

THE LINES OF CIUDAD RODRIGO

The small, twinkling lights which shone from the ramparts of Ciudad Rodrigo were our only guide, as we issued forth upon our perilous expedition. The storm raged, if possible, even more violently than before, and gusts of wind swept along the ground with the force of a hurricane; so that at first, our horses could scarcely face the tempest. Our path lay along the little stream for a considerable way; after which, fording the rivulet, we entered upon the open plain, taking care to avoid the French outpost on the extreme left, which was marked by a bivouac fire, burning under the heavy downpour of rain, and looking larger through the dim atmosphere around it.

I rode foremost, followed closely by Hampden and Mike; not a word was spoken after we crossed the stream. Our plan was, if challenged by a patrol, to reply in French and press on; so small a party could never suggest the idea of attack, and we hoped in this manner to escape.

The violence of the storm was such that many of our precautions as to silence were quite unnecessary; and we had advanced to a considerable extent into the plain before any appearance of the encampment struck us. At length, on mounting a little rising ground, we perceived several fires stretching far away to the northward; while still to our left, there blazed one larger and brighter than the others. We now found that we had not outflanked their position as we intended, and learning from the situation of the fires, that we were still only at the outposts, we pressed sharply forward, directing our course by the twin stars that shone from the fortress.

"How heavy the ground is here!" whispered Hampden, as our horses sunk above the fetlocks. "We had better stretch away to the right; the rise of the hill will favor us."

"Hark!" said I; "did you not hear something? Pull up, – silence now. Yes, there they come. It's a patrol; I hear their tramp." As I spoke, the measured tread of infantry was heard above the storm, and soon after a lantern was seen coming along the causeway near us. The column passed within a few yards of where we stood. I could even recognize the black covering of the shakos as the light fell on them. "Let us follow them," whispered I; and the next moment we fell in upon their track, holding our cattle well in hand, and ready to start at a moment.

"*Qui va là?*" a sentry demanded.

"*La deuxième division,*" cried a hoarse voice.

"*Halte là! la consigne?*"

"*Wagram!*" repeated the same voice as before, while his party resumed their march; and the next moment the patrol was again upon his post, silent and motionless as before.

"*En avant, Messieurs!*" said I, aloud, as soon as the infantry had proceeded some distance, – "*en avant!*"

"*Qui va là?*" demanded the sentry, as we came along at a sharp trot.

"*L'état-major, Wagram!*" responded I, pressing on without drawing rein; and in a moment we had regained our former position behind the infantry. We had scarcely time to congratulate ourselves upon the success of our scheme, when a tremendous clattering noise in front, mingled with the galloping of horses and the cracking of whips, announced the approach of the artillery as they came along by a narrow road which bisected our path; and as they passed between us and the column, we could hear the muttered sentences of the drivers, cursing the unseasonable time for an attack, and swearing at their cattle in no measured tones.

“Did you hear that?” whispered Hampden; “the battery is about to be directed against the San Benito, which must be far away to the left. I heard one of the troop saying that they were to open their fire at daybreak.”

“All right, now,” said I; “look there!”

From the hill we now stood upon a range of lanterns was distinctly visible, stretching away for nearly half a mile.

“There are the trenches; they must be at work, too. See how the lights are moving from place to place! Straight now. Forward!”

So saying, I pressed my horse boldly on.

We had not proceeded many minutes when the sounds of galloping were heard coming along behind us.

“To the right, in the hollow,” cried I. “Be still.”

Scarcely had we moved off when several horsemen galloped up, and drawing their reins to breathe their horses up the hill, we could hear their voices as they conversed together.

In the few broken words we could catch, we guessed that the attack upon San Benito was only a feint to induce Crawford to hold his position, while the French, marching upon his flank and front, were to attack him with overwhelming masses and crush him.

“You hear what’s in store for us, O’Malley?” whispered Hampden. “I think we could not possibly do better than hasten back with the intelligence.”

“We must not forget what we came for, first,” said I; and the next moment we were following the horsemen, who from their helmets seemed to be horse-artillery officers.

The pace our guides rode at showed us that they knew their ground. We passed several sentries, muttering something at each time, and seeming as if only anxious to keep up with our party.

“They’ve halted,” said I. “Now to the left there; gently here, for we must be in the midst of their lines. Ha! I knew we were right. See there!”

Before us, now, at a few hundred yards, we could perceive a number of men engaged upon the field. Lights were moving from place to place rapidly, while immediately in front a strong picket of cavalry were halted.

“By Jove! there’s sharp work of it to-night,” whispered Hampden. “They do intend to surprise us to-morrow.”

“Gently now, to the left,” said I, as cautiously skirting the little hill, I kept my eye firmly fixed upon the watch-fire.

The storm, which for some time had abated considerably, was now nearly quelled, and the moon again peeped forth amidst masses of black and watery clouds.

“What good fortune for us!” thought I, at this moment, as I surveyed the plain before me.

“I say, O’Malley, what are those fellows at yonder, where the blue light is burning?”

“Ah! the very people we want; these are the sappers. Now for it; that’s our ground. We’ll soon come upon their track now.”

We pressed rapidly forward, passing an infantry party as we went. The blue light was scarcely a hundred yards off; we could even hear the shouting of the officers to their men in the trenches, when suddenly my horse came down upon his head, and rolling over, crushed me to the earth.

“Not hurt, my boy,” cried I, in a subdued tone, as Hampden jumped down beside me.

It was the angle of a trench I had fallen into; and though both my horse and myself felt stunned for the moment, we rallied the next minute.

“Here is the very spot,” said I. “Now, Mike, catch the bridles and follow us closely.”

Guiding ourselves along the edge of the trench, we crept stealthily forward; the only watch-fire near was where the engineer party was halted, and our object was to get outside of this.

“My turn this time,” said Hampden, as he tripped suddenly, and fell head foremost upon the grass.

As I assisted him to rise, something caught my ankle, and on stooping I found it was a cord pegged fast into the ground, and lying only a few inches above it.

“Now, steady! See here; this is their working line. Pass your hand along it there, and let us follow it out.”

While Hampden accordingly crept along on one side, I tracked the cord upon the other. Here I found it terminating upon a small mound, where probably some battery was to be erected. I accordingly gathered it carefully up, and was returning towards my friend, when what was my horror to hear Mike's voice, conversing, as it seemed to me, with some one in French.

I stood fixed to the spot, my very heart beating almost in my mouth as I listened.

“*Qui êtes-vous done, mon ami?*” inquired a hoarse, deep voice, a few yards off.

“*Bon cheval, non beast, sacré nom de Dieu!*” A hearty burst of laughter prevented my hearing the conclusion of Mike's French.

I now crept forward upon my hands and knees, till I could catch the dark outline of the horses, one hand fixed upon my pistol trigger, and my sword drawn in the other. Meanwhile the dialogue continued.

“*Vous êtes d'Alsace, n'est-ce-pas?*” asked the Frenchman, kindly supposing that Mike's French savored of Strasburg.

“Oh, blessed Virgin! av I might shoot him,” was the muttered reply.

Before I had time to see the effect of the last speech, I pressed forward with a bold spring, and felled the Frenchman to the earth. My hand had scarcely pressed upon his mouth, when Hampden was beside me. Snatching up the pistol I let fall, he held it to the man's chest and commanded him to be silent. To unfasten his girdle and bind the Frenchman's hands behind him, was the work of a moment; and as the sharp click of the pistol-cock seemed to calm his efforts to escape, we soon succeeded in fastening a handkerchief tight across his mouth, and the next minute he was placed behind Mike's saddle, firmly attached to this worthy individual by his sword-belt.

“Now, a clear run home for it, and a fair start,” said Hampden, as he sprang into the saddle.

“Now, then, for it,” I replied, as turning my horse's head towards our lines, I dashed madly forward.

The moon was again obscured, but still the dark outline of the hill which formed our encampment was discernible on the horizon. Riding side by side, on we hurried, – now splashing through the deep wet marshes, now plunging through small streams. Our horses were high in mettle, and we spared them not. By taking a wide *détour* we had outflanked the French pickets, and were almost out of all risk, when suddenly on coming to the verge of rather a steep hill, we perceived beneath us a strong cavalry picket standing around a watch-fire; their horses were ready saddled, the men accoutred, and quite prepared for the field. While we conversed together in whispers as to the course to follow, our deliberations were very rapidly cut short. The French prisoner, who hitherto had given neither trouble nor resistance, had managed to free his mouth from the encumbrance of the handkerchief; and as we stood quietly discussing our plans, with one tremendous effort he endeavored to hurl himself and Mike from the saddle, shouting out as he did so, —

“*A moi camarades! à moi!*”

Hampden's pistol leaped from the holster as he spoke, and levelling it with a deadly aim, he pulled the trigger; but I threw up his arm, and the ball passed high above his head. To have killed the Frenchman would have been to lose my faithful follower, who struggled manfully with his adversary, and at length by throwing himself flatly forward upon the mane of his horse, completely disabled him. Meanwhile the picket had sprung to their saddles, and looked wildly about on every side.

Not a moment was to be lost; so turning our horses' heads towards the plain, away we went. One loud cheer announced to us that we had been seen, and the next instant the clash of the pursuing cavalry was heard behind us. It was now entirely a question of speed, and little need we have feared had Mike's horse not been doubly weighted. However, as we still had considerably the start, and the

gray dawn of day enabled us to see the ground, the odds were in our favor. "Never let your horse's head go," was my often repeated direction to Mike, as he spurred with all the desperation of madness. Already the low meadow-land was in sight which flanked the stream we had crossed in the morning, but unfortunately the heavy rains had swollen it now to a considerable depth, and the muddy current, choked with branches of trees and great stones, was hurrying down like a torrent. "Take the river! never flinch it!" was my cry to my companions, as I turned my head and saw a French dragoon, followed by two others, gaining rapidly upon us. As I spoke, Mike dashed in, followed by Hampden, and the same moment the sharp ring of a carbine whizzed past me. To take off the pursuit from the others, I now wheeled my horse suddenly round, as if I feared to take the stream, and dashed along by the river's bank.

Beneath me in the foaming current the two horsemen labored, – now stemming the rush of water, now reeling almost beneath. A sharp cry burst from Mike as I looked, and I saw the poor fellow bend nearly to his saddle. I could see no more, for the chase was now hot upon myself. Behind me rode a French dragoon, his carbine pressed tightly to his side, ready to fire as he pressed on in pursuit. I had but one chance; so drawing my pistol I wheeled suddenly in my saddle, and fired straight at him. The Frenchman fell, while a regular volley from his party rung around me, one ball striking my horse, and another lodging in the pommel of my saddle. The noble animal reeled nearly to the earth, but as if rallying for a last effort, sprang forward with renewed energy, and plunged boldly into the river. For a moment, so sudden was my leap, my pursuers lost sight of me; but the bank being somewhat steep, the efforts of my horse to climb again discovered me, and before I reached the field two pistol-balls took effect upon me, – one slightly grazed my side, but my bridle-arm was broken by the other, and my hand fell motionless to my side. A cheer of defiance was, however, my reply, as I turned round in my saddle, and the next moment I was far beyond the range of their fire.

Not a man durst follow, and the last sight I had of them was the dismounted group who stood around their dead comrade. Before me rode Hampden and Mike, still at top speed, and never turning their heads backwards. I hastened after them; but my poor, wounded horse, nearly hamstrung by the shot, became dead lame, and it was past daybreak ere I reached the first outposts of our lines.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTOR

“And his wound? Is it a serious one?” said a round, full voice, as the doctor left my room at the conclusion of his visit.

“No, sir; a fractured bone is the worst of it, – the bullet grazed, but did not cut the artery, and as – ”

“Well, how soon will he be about again?”

“In a few weeks, if no fever sets in.”

“There’s no objection to my seeing him? – a few minutes only, – I’ll be cautious.” So saying, and as it seemed to me, without waiting for a reply, the door was opened by an aide-de-camp, who, announcing General Crawford, closed it again, and withdrew.

The first glance I threw upon the general enabled me to recognize the officer who, on the previous morning, had ridden up to the picket and given us the orders to charge. I essayed to rise a little as he came forward; but he motioned me with his hand to lie still, while, placing a chair close beside my bed, he sat down.

“Very sorry for your mishap, sir, but glad it is no worse. Moreton says that nothing of consequence is injured; there, you mustn’t speak except I ask you. Hampden has told me everything necessary; at least as far as he knew. Is it your opinion, also, that any movement is in contemplation; and from what circumstance?”

I immediately explained, and as briefly as I was able, the reasons for suspecting such, with which he seemed quite satisfied. I detailed the various changes in the positions of the troops that were taking place during the night, the march of the artillery, and the strong bodies of cavalry that were posted in reserve along the river.

“Very well, sir; they’ll not move; your prisoner, quartermaster of an infantry battalion, says not, also. Yours was a bold stroke, but could not possibly have been of service, and the best thing I can do for you is not to mention it, – a court-martial’s but a poor recompense for a gun-shot wound. Meanwhile, when this blows over, I’ll appoint you on my personal staff. There, not a word, I beg; and now, good-by.”

So saying, and waving me an adieu with his hand, the gallant veteran withdrew before I could express my gratitude for his kindness.

I had little time for reflecting over my past adventure, such numbers of my brother officers poured in upon me. All the doctor’s cautions respecting quietness and rest were disregarded, and a perfect levee sat the entire morning in my bed-room. I was delighted to learn that Mike’s wound, though painful at the moment, was of no consequence; and indeed Hampden, who escaped both steel and shot, was the worst off among us, – his plunge in the river having brought on an ague he had labored under years before.

“The illustrious Maurice has been twice here this morning, but they wouldn’t admit him. Your Scotch physician is afraid of his Irish *confrère*, and they had a rare set-to about Galen and Hippocrates outside,” said Baker.

“By-the-bye,” said another, “did you see how Sparks looked when Quill joined us? Egad, I never saw a fellow in such a fright; he reddened up, then grew pale, turned his back, and slunk away at the very first moment.”

“Yes, I remember it. We must find out the reason; for Maurice, depend upon it, has been hoaxing the poor fellow.”

“Well, O'Malley,” growled out the senior major, “you certainly did give Hampden a benefit. He'll not trust himself in such company again; and begad, he says, the man is as bad as the master. That fellow of yours never let go his prisoner till he reached the quartermaster-general, and they were both bathed in blood by that time.”

“Poor Mike! we must do something for him.”

“Oh, he's as happy as a king! Maurice has been in to see him, and they've had a long chat about Ireland, and all the national pastimes of whiskey drinking and smashing skulls. My very temples ache at the recollection.”

“Is Mister O'Mealey at home?” said a very rich Cork accent, as the well-known and most droll features of Dr. Maurice Quill appeared at the door.

“Come in, Maurice,” said the major; “and for Heaven's sake, behave properly. The poor fellow must not have a row about his bedside.”

“A row, a row! Upon my conscience, it is little you know about a row, and there's worse things going than a row. Which leg is it?”

“It's an arm, Doctor, I'm happy to say.”

“Not your punch hand, I hope. No; all's right. A neat fellow you have for a servant, that Mickey Free. I was asking him about a townsman of his own – one Tim Delany, – the very cut of himself, the best servant I ever had. I never could make out what became of him. Old Hobson of the 95th, gave him to me, saying, ‘There he is for you, Maurice, and a bigger thief and a greater blackguard there's not in the 60th.’

“‘Strong words,’ said I.

“‘And true’ said he; ‘he'd steal your molar tooth while you were laughing at him.’

“‘Let me have him, and try my hand on him, anyway. I've got no one just now. Anything is better than nothing.’

“Well I took Tim, and sending for him to my room I locked the door, and sitting down gravely before him explained in a few words that I was quite aware of his little propensities.

“‘Now,’ said I, ‘if you like to behave well, I'll think you as honest as the chief-justice; but if I catch you stealing, if it be only the value of a brass snuff-box, I'll have you flogged before the regiment as sure as my name's Maurice.’

“Oh, I wish you heard the volley of protestations that fell from him fast as hail. He was a calumniated man the world conspired to wrong him; he was never a thief nor a rogue in his life. He had a weakness, he confessed, for the ladies; but except that, he hoped he might die so thin that he could shave himself with his shin-bone if he ever so much as took a pinch of salt that wasn't his own.

“However this might be, nothing could be better than the way Tim and I got on together. Everything was in its place, nothing missing; and in fact, for upwards of a year, I went on wondering when he was to show out in his true colors, for hitherto he had been a phoenix.

“At last, – we were quartered in Limerick at the time, – every morning used to bring accounts of all manner of petty thefts in the barrack, – one fellow had lost his belt, another his shoes, a third had three-and-sixpence in his pocket when he went to bed and woke without a farthing, and so on. Everybody save myself was mulet of something. At length some rumors of Tim's former propensities got abroad; suspicion was excited; my friend Delany was rigidly watched, and some very dubious circumstances attached to the way he spent his evenings.

“My brother officers called upon me about the matter, and although nothing had transpired like proof, I sent for Tim, and opened my mind on the subject.

“You may talk of the look of conscious innocence, but I defy you to conceive anything finer than the stare of offended honor Tim gave me as I began.

“‘They say it's me, Doctor,’ said he, ‘do they? And you, – you believe them. You allow them to revile me that way? Well, well, the world is come to a pretty pass, anyhow! Now, let me ask your honor a few questions? How many shirts had yourself when I entered your service? Two, and one

was more like a fishing net! And how many have ye now? Eighteen; ay, eighteen bran new cambrie ones, – devil a hole in one of them! How many pair of stockings had you? Three and an odd one. You have two dozen this minute. How many pocket handkerchiefs? One, – devil a more! You could only blow your nose two days in the week, and now you may every hour of the twenty-four! And as to the trilling articles of small value, snuff-boxes, gloves, bootjacks, nightcaps, and – ’

“Stop, Tim, that’s enough – ’

“No, sir, it is not,’ said Tim, drawing himself up to his full height; ‘you have wounded my feelings in a way I can’t forget. It is impossible we can have that mutual respect our position demands. Farewell, farewell, Doctor, and forever!’

“Before I could say another word, the fellow had left the room, and closed the door after him; and from that hour to this I never set eyes on him.”

In this vein did the worthy doctor run on till some more discreet friend suggested that however well-intentioned the visit, I did not seem to be fully equal to it, – my flushed cheek and anxious eye betraying that the fever of my wound had commenced. They left me, therefore, once more alone, and to my solitary musings over the vicissitudes of my fortune.

CHAPTER V

THE COA

Within a week from the occurrence of the events just mentioned, Ciudad Rodrigo surrendered, and Crawford assumed another position beneath the walls of Almeida. The Spanish contingent having left us, we were reinforced by the arrival of two battalions, renewed orders being sent not to risk a battle, but if the French should advance, to retire beyond the Coa.

On the evening of the 21st of July a strong body of French cavalry advanced into the plain, supported by some heavy guns; upon which Crawford retired upon the Coa, intending, as we supposed, to place that river between himself and the enemy. Three days, however, passed over without any movement upon either side, and we still continued, with a force of scarcely four thousand infantry and a thousand dragoons, to stand opposite to an army of nearly fifty thousand men. Such was our position as the night of the 24th set in. I was sitting alone in my quarters. Mike, whose wound had been severer than at first was supposed, had been sent to Almeida, and I was musing in solitude upon the events of the campaign, when the noise and bustle without excited my attention, – the roll of artillery wagons, the clash of musketry, and the distant sounds of marching, all proved that the troops were effecting some new movement, and I burned with anxiety to learn what it was. My brother officers, however, came not as usual to my quarters; and although I waited with impatience while the hours rolled by, no one appeared.

Long, low moaning gusts of wind swept along the earth, carrying the leaves as they tore them from the trees, and mingling their sad sounds with the noises of the retiring troops; for I could perceive that gradually the sounds grew more and more remote, and only now and then could I trace their position as the roll of a distant drum swelled upon the breeze, or the more shrill cry of a pibroch broke upon my ear. A heavy downpour of rain followed soon after, and in its unceasing plash drowned all other sounds.

As the little building shook beneath the peals of loud thunder, the lightning flashed in broad sheets upon the rapid river, which, swollen and foaming, dashed impetuously beside my window. By the uncertain but vivid glare of the flashes, I endeavored to ascertain where our force was posted, but in vain. Never did I witness such a night of storm, – the deep booming of the thunder seeming never for a moment to cease, while the rush of the torrent grew gradually louder, till at length it swelled into one deep and sullen roar like that of distant artillery.

Weak and nervous as I felt from the effects of my wound, feverish and exhausted by days of suffering and sleepless nights, I paced my little room with tottering but impatient steps. The sense of my sad and imprisoned state impressed me deeply; and while from time to time I replenished my fire, and hoped to hear some friendly step upon the stair, my heart grew gradually heavier, and every gloomy and depressing thought suggested itself to my imagination. My most constant impression was that the troops were retiring beyond the Coa, and that, forgotten in the haste and confusion of a night march, I had been left behind to fall a prisoner to the enemy.

The sounds of the troops retiring gradually farther and farther favored the idea, in which I was still more strengthened on finding that the peasants who inhabited the little hut had departed, leaving me utterly alone. From the moment I ascertained this fact, my impatience knew no bounds; and in proportion as I began to feel some exertion necessary on my part, so much more did my nervousness increase my debility, and at last I sank exhausted upon my bed, while a cold perspiration broke out upon my temples.

I have mentioned that the Coa was immediately beneath the house; I must also add that the little building occupied the angle of a steep but narrow gorge which descended from the plain to the bridge across the stream. This, as far as I knew, was the only means we possessed of passing the river; so that, when the last retiring sounds of the troops were heard by me, I began to suspect that Crawford, in compliance with his orders, was making a backward movement, leaving the bridge open to the French, to draw them on to his line of march, while he should cross over at some more distant point.

As the night grew later, the storm seemed to increase; the waves of the foaming river dashed against the frail walls of the hut, while its roof, rent by the blast, fell in fragments upon the stream, and all threatened a speedy and perfect ruin.

How I longed for morning! The doubt and uncertainty I suffered nearly drove me distracted. Of all the casualties my career as a soldier opened, none had such terrors for me as imprisonment; the very thought of the long years of inaction and inglorious idleness was worse than any death. My wounds, and the state of fever I was in, increased the morbid dread upon me, and had the French captured me at the time, I know not that madness of which I was not capable. Day broke at last, but slowly and sullenly; the gray clouds hurried past upon the storm, pouring down the rain in torrents as they went, and the desolation and dreariness on all sides was scarcely preferable to the darkness and gloom of night. My eyes were turned ever towards the plain, across which the winter wind bore the plashing rain in vast sheets of water; the thunder crashed louder and louder; but except the sounds of the storm none others met my ear. Not a man, not a human figure could I see, as I strained my sight towards the distant horizon.

The morning crept over, but the storm abated not, and the same unchanged aspect of dreary desolation prevailed without. At times I thought I could hear, amidst the noises of the tempest, something like the roll of distant artillery; but the thunder swelled in sullen roar above all, and left me uncertain as before.

At last, in a momentary pause of the storm, a tremendous peal of heavy guns caught my ear, followed by the long rattling of small-arms. My heart bounded with ecstasy. The thoughts of the battle-field, with all its changing fortunes, was better, a thousand times better, than the despairing sense of desertion I labored under. I listened now with eagerness, but the rain bore down again in torrents, and the crumbling walls and falling timbers left no other sounds to be heard. Far as my eye could reach, nothing could still be seen save the dreary monotony of the vast plain, undulating slightly here and there, but unmarked by a sign of man.

Far away towards the horizon I had remarked for some time past that the clouds resting upon the earth grew blacker and blacker, spreading out to either side in vast masses, and not broken or wafted along like the rest. As I watched the phenomenon with an anxious eye, I perceived the dense mass suddenly appear, as it were, rent asunder, while a volume of liquid flame rushed wildly out, throwing a lurid glare on every side. One terrific clap, louder than any thunder, shook the air at this moment, while the very earth trembled beneath the shock.

As I hesitated what it might be, the heavy din of great guns again was heard, and from the midst of the black smoke rode forth a dark mass, which I soon recognized as the horse-artillery at full gallop. They were directing their course towards the bridge.

As they mounted the little rising ground, they wheeled and unlimbered with the speed of lightning, just as a strong column of cavalry showed above the ridge. One tremendous discharge again shook the field, and ere the smoke cleared away they were again far in retreat.

So much was my attention occupied with this movement that I had not perceived the long line of infantry that came from the extreme left, and were now advancing also towards the bridge at a brisk quick-step; scattered bodies of cavalry came up from different parts, while from the little valley, every now and then, a rifleman would mount the rising ground, turning to fire as he retreated. All this boded a rapid and disorderly retreat; and although as yet I could see nothing of the pursuing enemy, I knew too well the relative forces of each to have a doubt for the result.

At last the head of a French column appeared above the mist, and I could plainly distinguish the gestures of the officers as they hurried their men onwards. Meanwhile a loud hurra attracted my attention, and I turned my eye towards the road which led to the river. Here a small body of the 95th had hurriedly assembled, and formed again, were standing to cover the retreat of the broken infantry as they passed on eagerly to the bridge; in a second after the French cuirassiers appeared. Little anticipating resistance from a flying and disordered mass, they rode headlong forward, and although the firm attitude and steady bearing of the Highlanders might have appalled them, they rode heedlessly down upon the square, sabring the very men in the front rank. Till now not a trigger had been pulled, when suddenly the word "Fire!" was given, and a withering volley of balls sent the cavalry column in shivers. One hearty cheer broke from the infantry in the rear, and I could hear "Gallant Ninety-fifth!" shouted on every side along the plain.

The whole vast space before me was now one animated battle-ground. Our own troops, retiring in haste before the overwhelming forces of the French, occupied every little vantage ground with their guns and light infantry, charges of cavalry coursing hither and thither; while, as the French pressed forward, the retreating columns again formed into squares to permit stragglers to come up. The rattle of small-arms, the heavy peal of artillery, the earth-quake crash of cavalry, rose on every side, while the cheers which alternately told of the vacillating fortune of the fight rose amidst the wild pibroch of the Highlanders.

A tremendous noise now took place on the floor beneath me; and looking down, I perceived that a sergeant and party of sappers had taken possession of the little hut, and were busily engaged in piercing the walls for musketry; and before many minutes had elapsed, a company of the Rifles were thrown into the building, which, from its commanding position above the road, enfiladed the whole line of march. The officer in command briefly informed me that we had been attacked that morning by the French in force, and "devilishly well thrashed;" that we were now in retreat beyond the Coa, where we ought to have been three days previously, and desired me to cross the bridge and get myself out of the way as soon as I possibly could.

A twenty-four pounder from the French lines struck the angle of the house as he spoke, scattering the mortar and broken bricks about us on all sides. This was warning sufficient for me, wounded and disabled as I was; so taking the few things I could save in my haste, I hurried from the hut, and descending the path, now slippery by the heavy rain, I took my way across the bridge, and established myself on a little rising knoll of ground beyond, from which a clear view could be obtained of the whole field.

I had not been many minutes in my present position ere the pass which led down to the bridge became thronged with troops, wagons, ammunition carts, and hospital stores, pressing thickly forward amidst shouting and uproar; the hills on either side of the way were crowded with troops, who formed as they came up, the artillery taking up their position on every rising ground. The firing had already begun, and the heavy booming of the large guns was heard at intervals amidst the rattling crash of musketry. Except the narrow road before me, and the high bank of the stream, I could see nothing; but the tumult and din, which grew momentarily louder, told that the tide of battle raged nearer and nearer. Still the retreat continued; and at length the heavy artillery came thundering across the narrow bridge followed by stragglers of all arms, and wounded, hurrying to the rear. The sharpshooters and the Highlanders held the heights above the stream, thus covering the retiring columns; but I could plainly perceive that their fire was gradually slackening, and that the guns which flanked their position were withdrawn, and everything bespoke a speedy retreat. A tremendous discharge of musketry at this moment, accompanied by a deafening cheer, announced the advance of the French, and soon the head of the Highland brigade was seen descending towards the bridge, followed by the Rifles and the 95th; the cavalry, consisting of the 11th and 14th Light Dragoons, were now formed in column of attack, and the infantry deployed into line; and in an instant after, high above the din and crash of battle, I heard the word "Charge!" The rising crest of the hill hid them from my sight, but my

heart bounded with ecstasy as I listened to the clanging sound of the cavalry advance. Meanwhile the infantry pressed on, and forming upon the bank, took up a strong position in front of the bridge; the heavy guns were also unlimbered, riflemen scattered through the low copse-wood, and every precaution taken to defend the pass to the last. For a moment all my attention was riveted to the movements upon our own side of the stream, when suddenly the cavalry bugle sounded the recall, and the same moment the staff came galloping across the bridge. One officer I could perceive, covered with orders and trappings, his head was bare, and his horse, splashed with blood and foam, moved lamely and with difficulty; he turned in the middle of the bridge, as if irresolute whether to retreat farther. One glance at him showed me the bronzed, manly features of our leader. Whatever his resolve, the matter was soon decided for him, for the cavalry came galloping swiftly down the slope, and in an instant the bridge was blocked up by the retreating forces, while the French as suddenly appearing above the height, opened a plunging fire upon their defenceless enemies; their cheer of triumph was answered by our fellows from the opposite bank, and a heavy cannonade thundered along the rocky valley, sending up a hundred echoes as it went.

The scene now became one of overwhelming interest; the French, posting their guns upon the height, replied to our fire, while their line, breaking into skirmishers, descended the banks to the river's edge, and poured in one sheet of galling musketry. The road to the bridge, swept by our artillery, presented not a single file; and although a movement among the French announced the threat of an attack, the deadly service of the artillery seemed to pronounce it hopeless.

A strong cavalry force stood inactively spectators of the combat, on the French side, among whom I now remarked some bustle and preparation, and as I looked an officer rode boldly to the river's edge, and spurring his horse forward, plunged into the stream. The swollen and angry torrent, increased by the late rains, boiled like barm, and foamed around him as he advanced; when suddenly his horse appeared to have lost its footing, and the rapid current, circling around him, bore him along with it. He labored madly, but in vain, to retrace his steps; the rolling torrent rose above his saddle, and all that his gallant steed could do was barely sufficient to keep afloat; both man and horse were carried down between the contending armies. I could see him wave his hand to his comrades, as if in adieu. One deafening cheer of admiration rose from the French lines, and the next moment he was seen to fall from his seat, and his body, shattered with balls, floated mournfully upon the stream.

This little incident, to which both armies were witnesses, seemed to have called forth all the fiercer passions of the contending forces; a loud yell of taunting triumph rose from the Highlanders, responded to by a cry of vengeance from the French, and the same moment the head of a column was seen descending the narrow causeway to the bridge, while an officer with a whole blaze of decorations and crosses sprang from his horse and took the lead. The little drummer, a child of scarcely ten years old, tripped gayly on, beating his little *pas des charge*, seeming rather like the play of infancy than the summons to death and carnage, as the heavy guns of the French opened a volume of fire and flame to cover the attacking column. For a moment all was hid from our eyes; the moment after the grape-shot swept along the narrow causeway; and the bridge, which but a second before was crowded with the life and courage of a noble column, was now one heap of dead and dying. The gallant fellow who led them on fell among the first rank, and the little child, as if kneeling, was struck dead beside the parapet; his fair hair floated across his cold features, and seemed in its motion to lend a look of life where the heart's throb had ceased forever. The artillery again re-opened upon us; and when the smoke had cleared away, we discovered that the French had advanced to the middle of the bridge and carried off the body of their general. Twice they essayed to cross, and twice the death-dealing fire of our guns covered the narrow bridge with slain, while by the wild pibroch of the 42d, swelling madly into notes of exultation and triumph, the Highlanders could scarcely be prevented from advancing hand to hand with the foe. Gradually the French slackened their fire, their great guns were one by one withdrawn from the heights, and a dropping, irregular musketry at intervals sustained the fight, which, ere sunset, ceased altogether; and thus ended "The Battle of the Coa!"

CHAPTER VI

THE NIGHT MARCH

Scarcely had the night fallen when our retreat commenced. Tired and weary as our brave fellows felt, but little repose was allowed them; their bivouac fires were blazing brightly, and they had just thrown themselves in groups around them, when the word to fall in was passed from troop to troop, and from battalion to battalion, – no trumpet, no bugle called them to their ranks. It was necessary that all should be done noiselessly and speedily; while, therefore, the wounded were marched to the front, and the heavy artillery with them, a brigade of light four pounders and two squadrons of cavalry held the heights above the bridge, and the infantry, forming into three columns, began their march.

My wound, forgotten in the heat and excitement of the conflict, was now becoming excessively painful, and I gladly availed myself of a place in a wagon, where, stretched upon some fresh straw, with no other covering save the starry sky, I soon fell sound asleep, and neither the heavy jolting of the rough conveyance, nor the deep and rutty road, were able to disturb my slumbers. Still through my sleep I heard the sounds around me, the heavy tramp of infantry, the clash of the moving squadrons, and the dull roll of artillery; and ever and anon the half-stifled cry of pain, mingling with the reckless carol of some drinking-song, all flitted through my dreams, lending to my thoughts of home and friends a memory of glorious war.

All the vicissitudes of a soldier's life passed then in review before me, elicited in some measure by the things about. The pomp and grandeur, the misery and meanness, the triumph, the defeat, the moment of victory, and the hour of death were there, and in that vivid dream I lived a life long.

I awoke at length, the cold and chilling air which follows midnight blew around me, and my wounded arm felt as though it were frozen. I tried to cover myself beneath the straw, but in vain; and as my limbs trembled and my teeth chattered, I thought again of home, where, at that moment, the poorest menial of my uncle's house was better lodged than I; and strange to say, something of pride mingled with the thought, and in my lonely heart a feeling of elation cheered me.

These reflections were interrupted by the sound of a voice near me, which I at once knew to be O'Shaughnessy's; he was on foot, and speaking evidently in some excitement.

"I tell you, Maurice, some confounded blunder there must be; sure, he was left in the cottage near the bridge, and no one ever saw him after."

"The French took it from the Rifles before we crossed the river. By Jove! I'll wager my chance of promotion against a pint of sherry, he'll turn up somewhere in the morning; those Galway chaps have as many lives as a cat."

"See, now, Maurice, I wouldn't for a full colonelcy anything would happen to him; I like the boy."

"So do I myself; but I tell you there's no danger of him. Did you ask Sparks anything?"

"Ask Sparks! God help you! Sparks would go off in a fit at the sight of me. No, no, poor creature! it's little use it would be my speaking to him."

"Why so, Doctor!" cried I, from my straw couch.

"May I never, if it's not him! Charley, my son, I'm glad you're safe. 'Faith, I thought you were on your way to Verdun by this time."

"Sure, I told you he'd find his way here – But, O'Mealey, dear, you're mighty could, – a rigor, as old M'Lauchlan would call it."

"E'en sae, Maister Quill," said a broad Scotch accent behind him; "and I canna see ony objection to giein' things their right names."

“The top of the morning to you,” said Quill, familiarly patting him on the back; “how goes it, old Brimstone?”

The conversation might not have taken a very amicable turn had M'Lauchlan heard the latter part of this speech; but, as happily he was engaged unpacking a small canteen which he had placed in the wagon, it passed unnoticed.

“You'll nae dislike a toothfu' of something warm, Major,” said he, presenting a glass to O'Shaughnessy; “and if ye'll permit me, Mr. O'Mealey, to help you – ”

“A thousand thanks, Doctor; but I fear a broken arm – ”

“There's naething in the whiskey to prevent the proper formation of callus.”

“By the rock of Cashel, it never made any one callous,” said O'Shaughnessy, mistaking the import of the phrase.

“Ye are nae drinking frae the flask?” said the doctor, turning in some agitation towards Quill.

“Devil a bit, my darling. I've a little horn convaniency here, that holds half-a-pint, nice measure.”

I don't imagine that our worthy friend participated in Quill's admiration of the “convaniency,” for he added, in a dry tone: —

“Ye may as weel tak your liquor frae a glass, like a Christian, as stick your nose in a coo's horn.”

“By my conscience, you're no small judge of spirits, wherever you learned it,” said the major; “it's like Islay malt!”

“I was aye reckoned a gude ane,” said the doctor, “and my mither's brither Caimbogie had na his like in the north country. Ye may be heerd tell what he aince said to the Duchess of Argyle, when she sent for him to taste her claret.”

“Never heard of it,” quoth Quill; “let's have it by all means. I'd like to hear what the duchess said to him.”

“It was na what the duchess said to him, but what he said to the duchess, ye ken. The way of it was this: My uncle Caimbogie was aye up at the castle, for besides his knowledge of liquor, there was nae his match for deer-stalking, or spearing a salmon, in those parts. He was a great, rough carle, it's true; but ane ye'd rather crack wi' than fight wi'.

“Weel, ae day they had a grand dinner at the duke's, and there were plenty o' great southern lords and braw leddies in velvets and satin; and vara muckle surprised they were at my uncle, when he came in wi' his tartan kilt, in full Highland dress, as the head of a clan ought to do. Caimbogie, however, pe'd nae attention to them; but he eat his dinner, and drank his wine, and talked away about fallow and red deer, and at last the duchess, for she was aye fond o' him, addressed him frae the head o' the table: —

“‘Cambogie,’ quoth she, ‘I'd like to hae your opinion about that wine. It's some the duke has just received, and we should like to hear what you think of it.’

“‘It's nae sae bad, my leddy,’ said my uncle; for ye see he was a man of few words, and never flattered onybody.

“‘Then you don't approve much of it?’ said the duchess.

“‘I've drank better, and I've drank waur,’ quo' he.

“‘I'm sorry you don't like it, Caimbogie,’ said the duchess, ‘for it can never be popular now, – we have such a dependence upon your taste.’

“‘I cauna say ower muckle for my *taste*, my leddy, but ae thing I *will* say, – I've a most damnable *smell!*’

“I hear that never since the auld walls stood was there ever the like o' the laughing that followed; the puir duke himsel' was carried away, and nearly had a fit, and a' the grand lords and leddies a'most died of it. But see here, the earle has nae left a drap o' whiskey in the flask.”

“The last glass I drained to your respectable uncle's health,” said Quill, with a most professional gravity. “Now, Charlie, make a little room for me in the straw.”

The doctor soon mounted beside me, and giving me a share of his ample cloak, considerably ameliorated my situation.

“So you knew Sparks, Doctor?” said I, with a strong curiosity to hear something of his early acquaintance.

“That I did: I knew him when he was an ensign in the 10th Foot; and, to say the truth, he is not much changed since that time, – the same lively look of a sick cod-fish about his gray eyes; the same disorderly wave of his yellow hair; the same whining voice, and that confounded apothecary’s laugh.”

“Come, come, Doctor, Sparks is a good fellow at heart; I won’t have him abused. I never knew he had been in the infantry; I should think it must have been another of the same name.”

“Not at all; there’s only one like him in the service, and that’s himself. Confound it, man, I’d know his skin upon a bush; he was only three weeks in the Tenth, and, indeed, your humble servant has the whole merit of his leaving it so soon.”

“Do let us hear how that happened.”

“Simply thus: The jolly Tenth were some four years ago the pleasantest corps in the army; from the lieutenant-colonel down to the last joined sub., all were out-and-outers, – real gay fellows. The mess was, in fact, like a pleasant club, and if you did not suit it, the best thing you could do was to sell out or exchange into a slower regiment; and, indeed, this very wholesome truth was not very long in reaching your ears some way or other, and a man that could remain after being given this hint, was likely to go afterwards without one.”

Just as Dr. Quill reached this part of his story, an orderly dragoon galloped furiously past, and the next moment an aide-de-camp rode by, calling as he passed us, —

“Close up, there! Close up! Get forward, my lads! get forward!”

It was evident, from the stir and bustle about, that some movement was being made; and soon after, a dropping, irregular fire from the rear showed that our cavalry were engaged with the enemy. The affair was scarcely of five minutes’ duration, and our march resumed all its former regularity immediately after.

I now turned to the doctor to resume his story, but he was gone; at what moment he left I could not say, but O’Shaughnessy was also absent, nor did I again meet with them for a considerable time after.

Towards daybreak we halted at Bonares, when, my wound demanding rest and attention, I was billeted in the village, and consigned to all the miseries of a sick bed.

CHAPTER VII

THE JOURNEY

With that disastrous day my campaigning was destined, for some time at least, to conclude. My wound, which grew from hour to hour more threatening, at length began to menace the loss of the arm, and by the recommendation of the regimental surgeons, I was ordered back to Lisbon.

Mike, by this time perfectly restored, prepared everything for my departure, and on the third day after the battle of the Coa, I began my journey with downcast spirits and depressed heart. The poor fellow was, however, a kind and affectionate nurse, and unlike many others, his cares were not limited to the mere bodily wants of his patient, – he sustained, as well as he was able, my drooping resolution, rallied my spirits, and cheered my courage. With the very little Portuguese he possessed, he contrived to make every imaginable species of bargain; always managed a good billet; kept every one in good humor, and rarely left his quarters in the morning without a most affective leave-taking, and reiterated promises to renew his visit.

Our journeys were usually short ones, and already two days had elapsed, when, towards nightfall, we entered the little hamlet of Jaffra. During the entire of that day, the pain of my wounded limb had been excruciating; the fatigue of the road and the heat had brought back violent inflammation, and when at last the little village came in sight, my reason was fast yielding to the torturing agonies of my wound. But the transports with which I greeted my resting-place were soon destined to a change; for as we drew near, not a light was to be seen, not a sound to be heard, not even a dog barked as the heavy mule-cart rattled over the uneven road. No trace of any living thing was there. The little hamlet lay sleeping in the pale moonlight, its streets deserted, and its homes tenantless; our own footsteps alone echoed along the dreary causeway. Here and there, as we advanced farther, we found some relics of broken furniture and house-gear; most of the doors lay open, but nothing remained within save bare walls; the embers still smoked in many places upon the hearth, and showed us that the flight of the inhabitants had been recent. Yet everything convinced us that the French had not been there; there was no trace of the reckless violence and wanton cruelty which marked their footsteps everywhere.

All proved that the desertion had been voluntary; perhaps in compliance with an order of our commander-in-chief, who frequently desired any intended line of march of the enemy to be left thus a desert. As we sauntered slowly on from street to street, half hoping that some one human being yet remained behind, and casting our eyes from side to side in search of quarters for the night, Mike suddenly came running up, saying, —

“I have it, sir; I’ve found it out. There’s people living down that small street there; I saw a light this minute as I passed.”

I turned immediately, and accompanied by the mule-driver, followed Mike across a little open square into a small and narrow street, at the end of which a light was seen faintly twinkling. We hurried on and in a few minutes reached a high wall of solid masonry, from a niche of which we now discovered, to our utter disappointment, the light proceeded. It was a small lamp placed before a little waxen image of the Virgin, and was probably the last act of piety of some poor villager ere he left his home and hearth forever. There it burned, brightly and tranquilly, throwing its mellow ray upon the cold, deserted stones.

Whatever impatience I might have given way to in a moment of chagrin was soon repressed, as I saw my two followers, uncovering their heads in silent reverence, kneel down before the little shrine. There was something at once touching and solemn in this simultaneous feeling of homage

from the hearts of those removed in country, language, and in blood. They bent meekly down, their heads bowed upon their bosoms, while with muttering voices each offered up his prayer. All sense of their disappointment, all memory of their forlorn state, seemed to have yielded to more powerful and absorbing thoughts, as they opened their hearts in prayer.

My eyes were still fixed upon them when suddenly Mike, whose devotion seemed of the briefest, sprang to his legs, and with a spirit of levity but little in accordance with his late proceedings, commenced a series of kicking, rapping, and knocking at a small oak postern sufficient to have aroused a whole convent from their cells. "House there! Good people within!" – bang, bang, bang; but the echoes alone responded to his call, and the sounds died away at length in the distant streets, leaving all as silent and dreary as before.

Our Portuguese friend, who by this time had finished his orisons, now began a vigorous attack upon the small door, and with the assistance of Mike, armed with a fragment of granite about the size of a man's head, at length separated the frame from the hinges, and sent the whole mass prostrate before us.

The moon was just rising as we entered the little park, where gravelled walks, neatly kept and well-trimmed, bespoke recent care and attention; following a handsome alley of lime-trees, we reached a little *jet d'eau*, whose sparkling fountain shone diamond-like in the moonbeams, and escaping from the edge of a vast shell, ran murmuring amidst mossy stones and water-lilies that, however naturally they seemed thrown around, bespoke also the hand of taste in their position. On turning from the spot, we came directly in front of an old but handsome chateau, before which stretched a terrace of considerable extent. Its balustraded parapet lined with orange-trees, now in full blossom, scented the still air with delicious odor; marble statues peeped here and there amidst the foliage, while a rich acacia, loaded with flowers, covered the walls of the building, and hung in vast masses of variegated blossom across the tall windows.

As leaning on Mike's arm I slowly ascended the steps of the terrace, I was more than ever struck with the silence and death-like stillness around; except the gentle splash of the fountain, all was at rest; the very plants seemed to sleep in the yellow moonlight, and not a trace of any living thing was there.

The massive door lay open as we entered the spacious hall flagged with marble and surrounded with armorial bearings. We advanced farther and came to a broad and handsome stair, which led us to a long gallery, from which a suit of rooms opened, looking towards the front part of the building. Wherever we went, the furniture appeared perfectly untouched; nothing was removed; the very chairs were grouped around the windows and the tables; books, as if suddenly dropped from their readers' hands, were scattered upon the sofas and the ottomans; and in one small apartment, whose blue satin walls and damask drapery bespoke a boudoir, a rich mantilla of black velvet and a silk glove were thrown upon a chair. It was clear the desertion had been most recent, and everything indicated that no time had been given to the fugitives to prepare for flight. What a sad picture of war was there! To think of those whose home was endeared to them by all the refinements of cultivated life and all the associations of years of happiness sent out upon the wide world wanderers and houseless, while their hearth, sacred by every tie that binds us to our kindred, was to be desecrated by the ruthless and savage hands of a ruffian soldiery. I thought of them, – perhaps at that very hour their thoughts were clinging round the old walls, remembering each well-beloved spot, while they took their lonely path through mountain and through valley, – and felt ashamed and abashed at my own intrusion there. While thus my revery ran on, I had not perceived that Mike, whose views were very practical upon all occasions, had lighted a most cheerful fire upon the hearth, and disposing a large sofa before it, had carefully closed the curtains; and was, in fact, making himself and his master as much at home as though he had spent his life there.

"Isn't it a beautiful place, Mither Charles? And this little room, doesn't it remind you of the blue bed-room in O'Malley Castle, barrin' the elegant view out upon the Shannon, and the mountain of Scariff?"

Nothing short of Mike's patriotism could forgive such a comparison; but, however, I did not contradict him as he ran on: —

“Faith, I knew well there was luck in store for us this evening; and ye see the handful of prayers I threw away outside wasn't lost. José's making the beasts comfortable in the stable, and I'm thinking we'll none of us complain of our quarters. But you're not eating your supper; and the beautiful hare-pie that I stole this morning, won't you taste it? Well, a glass of Malaga? Not a glass of Malaga? Oh, mother of Moses! what's this for?”

Unfortunately, the fever produced by the long and toilsome journey had gained considerably on me, and except copious libations of cold water, I could touch nothing; my arm, too, was much more painful than before. Mike soon perceived that rest and quietness were most important to me at the moment, and having with difficulty been prevailed upon to swallow a few hurried mouthfuls, the poor fellow disposed cushions around me in every imaginable form for comfort; and then, placing my wounded limb in its easiest position, he extinguished the lamp, and sat silently down beside the hearth, without speaking another word.

Fatigue and exhaustion, more powerful than pain, soon produced their effects upon me, and I fell asleep; but it was no refreshing slumber which visited my heavy eyelids; the slow fever of suffering had been hour by hour increasing, and my dreams presented nothing but scenes of agony and torture. Now I thought that, unhorsed and wounded, I was trampled beneath the clanging hoofs of charging cavalry; now I felt the sharp steel piercing my flesh, and heard the loud cry of a victorious enemy; then, methought, I was stretched upon a litter, covered by gore and mangled by a grape-shot. I thought I saw my brother officers approach and look sadly upon me, while one, whose face I could not remember, muttered: “I should not have known him.” The dreadful hospital of Talavera, and all its scenes of agony, came up before me, and I thought that I lay waiting my turn for amputation. This last impression, more horrible to me than all the rest, made me spring from my couch, and I awoke. The cold drops of perspiration stood upon my brow, my mouth was parched and open, and my temples throbbed so that I could count their beatings; for some seconds I could not throw off the frightful illusion I labored under, and it was only by degrees I recovered consciousness and remembered where I was. Before me, and on one side of the bright wood-fire, sat Mike, who, apparently deep in thought, gazed fixedly at the blaze. The start I gave on awaking had not attracted his attention, and I could see, as the flickering glare fell upon his features, that he was pale and ghastly, while his eyes were riveted upon the fire; his lips moved rapidly, as if in prayer, and his locked hands were pressed firmly upon his bosom; his voice, at first inaudible, I could gradually distinguish, and at length heard the following muttered sentences: —

“Oh, mother of mercy! So far from his home and his people, and so young to die in a strange land – There it is again.” Here he appeared listening to some sounds from without. “Oh, wirra, wirra, I know it well! – the winding-sheet, the winding-sheet! There it is; my own eyes saw it!” The tears coursed fast upon his pale cheeks, and his voice grew almost inaudible, as rocking to and fro, for some time he seemed in a very stupor of grief; when at last, in a faint, subdued tone, he broke into one of those sad and plaintive airs of his country, which only need the moment of depression to make them wring the very heart in agony.

His song was that to which Moore has appended the beautiful lines, “Come rest on this bosom.” The following imperfect translation may serve to convey some impression of the words, which in Mike's version were Irish: —

“The day was declining,
The dark night drew near,
And the old lord grew sadder
And paler with fear:
'Come listen, my daughter,

Come nearer, oh, near!
Is't the wind or the water
That sighs in my ear?

“Not the wind nor the water
Now stirred the night air,
But a warning far sadder, – .
The Banshee was there!
Now rising, now swelling,
On the night wind it bore
One cadence, still telling,
'I want thee, Rossmore!’

“And then fast came his breath,
And more fixed grew his eye;
And the shadow of death
Told his hour was nigh.
Ere the dawn of that morning
The struggle was o'er,
For when thrice came the warning
A corpse was Rossmore!”

The plaintive air to which these words were sung fell heavily upon my heart, and it needed but the low and nervous condition I was in to make me feel their application to myself. But so it is; the very superstition your reason rejects and your sense spurns, has, from old association, from habit, and from mere nationality too, a hold upon your hopes and fears that demands more firmness and courage than a sick-bed possesses to combat with success; and I now listened with an eager ear to mark if the Banshee cried, rather than sought to fortify myself by any recurrence to my own convictions. Meanwhile Mike's attitude became one of listening attention. Not a finger moved; he scarce seemed even to breathe; the state of suspense I suffered from was maddening; and at last, unable to bear it longer, I was about to speak, when suddenly, from the floor beneath us, one long-sustained note swelled upon the air and died away again, and immediately after, to the cheerful sounds of a guitar, we heard the husky voice of our Portuguese guide indulging himself in a love-ditty.

Ashamed of myself for my fears, I kept silent; but Mike, who felt only one sensation, – that of unmixed satisfaction at his mistake, – rubbed his hands pleasantly, filled up his glass, drank it, and refilled; while with an accent of reassured courage, he briefly remarked, —

“Well, Mr. José, if that be singing, upon my conscience I wonder what crying is like!”

I could not forbear a laugh at the criticism; and in a moment, the poor fellow, who up to that moment believed me sleeping, was beside me. I saw from his manner that he dreaded lest I had been listening to his melancholy song, and had overheard any of his gloomy forebodings; and as he cheered my spirits and spoke encouragingly, I could remark that he made more than usual endeavors to appear light-hearted and at ease. Determined, however, not to let him escape so easily, I questioned him about his belief in ghosts and spirits, at which he endeavored, as he ever did when the subject was an unpleasing one, to avoid the discussion; but rather perceiving that I indulged in no irreverent disrespect of these matters, he grew gradually more open, treating the affair with that strange mixture of credulity and mockery which formed his estimate of most things, – now seeming to suppose that any palpable rejection of them might entail sad consequences in future, now half ashamed to go the whole length in his credulity.

“And so, Mike, you never saw a ghost yourself? – that you acknowledge?”

“No, sir, I never saw a real ghost; but sure there’s many a thing I never saw; but Mrs. Moore, the housekeeper, seen two. And your grandfather that’s gone – the Lord be good to him! – used to walk once a year in Lurra Abbey; and sure you know the story about Tim Clinchy that was seen every Saturday night coming out of the cellar with a candle and a mug of wine and a pipe in his mouth, till Mr. Barry laid him. It cost his honor your uncle ten pounds in Masses to make him easy; not to speak of a new lock and two bolts on the cellar door.”

“I have heard all about that; but as you never yourself saw any of these things – ”

“But sure my father did, and that’s the same any day. My father seen the greatest ghost that ever was seen in the county Cork, and spent the evening with him, that’s more.”

“Spent the evening with him! – what do you mean?”

“Just that, devil a more nor less. If your honor wasn’t so weak, and the story wasn’t a trying one, I’d like to tell it to you.”

“Out with it by all means, Mike; I am not disposed to sleep; and now that we are upon these matters, my curiosity is strongly excited by your worthy father’s experience.”

Thus encouraged, having trimmed the fire and reseated himself beside the blaze, Mike began; but as a ghost is no every-day personage in our history, I must give him a chapter to himself.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GHOST

“Well, I believe your honor heard me tell long ago how my father left the army, and the way that he took to another line of life that was more to his liking. And so it was, he was happy as the day was long; he drove a hearse for Mr. Callaghan of Cork for many years, and a pleasant place it was; for ye see, my father was a ‘cute man, and knew something of the world; and though he was a droll devil, and could sing a funny song when he was among the boys, no sooner had he the big black cloak on him and the weepers, and he seated on the high box with the six long-tailed blacks before him, you’d really think it was his own mother was inside, he looked so melancholy and miserable. The sexton and gravedigger was nothing to my father; and he had a look about his eye – to be sure there was a reason for it – that you’d think he was up all night crying; though it’s little indulgence he took that way.

“Well, of all Mr. Callaghan’s men, there was none so great a favorite as my father. The neighbors were all fond of him.

“A kind crayture, every inch of him!’ the women would say. ‘Did ye see his face at Mrs. Delany’s funeral?’

“‘True for you,’ another would remark; ‘he mistook the road with grief, and stopped at a shebeen house instead of Kilmurry church.’

“I need say no more, only one thing, – that it was principally among the farmers and the country people my father was liked so much. The great people and the quality – ax your pardon; but sure isn’t it true, Mister Charles? – they don’t fret so much after their fathers and brothers, and they care little who’s driving them, whether it was a decent, respectable man like my father, or a chap with a grin on him like a rat-trap. And so it happened that my father used to travel half the county; going here and there wherever there was trade stirring; and faix, a man didn’t think himself rightly buried if my father wasn’t there; for ye see, he knew all about it: he could tell to a quart of spirits what would be wanting for a wake; he knew all the good criers for miles round; and I’ve heard it was a beautiful sight to see him standing on a hill, arranging the procession as they walked into the churchyard, and giving the word like a captain, —

“‘Come on, the stiff; now the friends of the stiff; now the pop’lace.’

“That’s what he used to say, and troth he was always repeating it, when he was a little gone in drink, – for that’s the time his spirits would rise, and he’d think he was burying half Munster.

“And sure it was a real pleasure and a pride to be buried in them times; for av it was only a small farmer with a potato garden, my father would come down with the black cloak on him, and three yards of crape behind his hat, and set all the children crying and yelling for half a mile round; and then the way he’d walk before them with a spade on his shoulder, and sticking it down in the ground, clap his hat on the top of it, to make it look like a chief mourner. It was a beautiful sight!”

“But Mike, if you indulge much longer in this flattering recollection of your father, I’m afraid we shall lose sight of the ghost entirely.”

“No fear in life, your honor; I’m coming to him now. Well, it was this way it happened: In the winter of the great frost, about forty-two or forty-three years ago, the ould priest of Tullonghmurray took ill and died. He was sixty years priest of the parish, and mightily beloved by all the people, and good reason for it; a pleasanter man, and a more social crayture never lived, – ‘twas himself was the life of the whole country-side. A wedding nor a christening wasn’t lucky av he wasn’t there, sitting at the top of the table, with may be his arm round the bride herself, or the baby on his lap, a smoking jug of punch before him, and as much kindness in his eye as would make the fortunes of twenty

hypocrites if they had it among them. And then he was so good to the poor; the Priory was always so full of ould men and ould women sitting around the big fire in the kitchen that the cook could hardly get near it. There they were, eating their meals and burning their shins till they were speckled like a trout's back, and grumblin' all the time; but Father Dwyer liked them, and he would have them.

“Where have they to go,’ he’d say, ‘av it wasn’t to me? Give Molly Kinshela a lock of that bacon. Tim, it’s a could morning; will ye have a taste of the “dew?””

“Ah, that’s the way he’d spake to them; but sure goodness is no warrant for living, any more than devilment, and so he got could in his feet at a station, and he rode home in the heavy snow without his big coat, – for he gave it away to a blind man on the road; in three days he was dead.

“I see you’re getting impatient, so I’ll not stop to say what grief was in the parish when it was known; but troth, there never was seen the like before, – not a crayture would lift a spade for two days, and there was more whiskey sold in that time than at the whole spring fair. Well, on the third day the funeral set out, and never was the equal of it in them parts: first, there was my father, – he came special from Cork with the six horses all in new black, and plumes like little poplar-trees, – then came Father Dwyer, followed by the two coadjutors in beautiful surplices, walking bare-headed, with the little boys of the Priory school, two-and-two.”

“Well, Mike, I’m sure it was very fine; but for Heaven’s sake, spare me all these descriptions, and get on to the ghost!”

“Faith, yer honor’s in a great hurry for the ghost, – may be ye won’t like him when ye have him; but I’ll go faster, if ye please. Well, Father Dwyer, ye see, was born at Aghan-lish, of an ould family, and he left it in his will that he was to be buried in the family vault; and as Aghan-lish was eighteen miles up the mountains, it was getting late when they drew near. By that time the great procession was all broke up and gone home. The coadjutors stopped to dine at the ‘Blue Bellows’ at the cross-roads; the little boys took to pelting snowballs; there was a fight or two on the way besides, – and in fact, except an ould deaf fellow that my father took to mind the horses, he was quite alone. Not that he minded that same; for when the crowd was gone, my father began to sing a droll song, and told the deaf chap that it was a lamentation. At last they came in sight of Aghan-lish. It was a lonesome, melancholy-looking place with nothing near it except two or three ould fir-trees and a small slated house with one window, where the sexton lived, and even that was shut up and a padlock on the door. Well, my father was not over much pleased at the look of matters; but as he was never hard put to what to do, he managed to get the coffin into the vestry, and then when he had unharnessed the horses, he sent the deaf fellow with them down to the village to tell the priest that the corpse was there, and to come up early in the morning and perform Mass. The next thing to do was to make himself comfortable for the night; and then he made a roaring fire on the ould hearth, – for there was plenty of bog-fir there, – closed the windows with the black cloaks, and wrapping two round himself, he sat down to cook a little supper he brought with him in case of need.

“Well, you may think it was melancholy enough to pass the night up there alone with a corpse, in an ould ruined church in the middle of the mountains, the wind howling about on every side, and the snowdrift beating against the walls; but as the fire burned brightly, and the little plate of rashers and eggs smoked temptingly before him, my father mixed a jug of the strongest punch, and sat down as happy as a king. As long as he was eating away he had no time to be thinking of anything else; but when all was done, and he looked about him, he began to feel very low and melancholy in his heart. There was the great black coffin on three chairs in one corner; and then the mourning cloaks that he had stuck up against the windows moved backward and forward like living things; and outside, the wild cry of the plover as he flew past, and the night-owl sitting in a nook of the old church. ‘I wish it was morning, anyhow,’ said my father, ‘for this is a lonesome place to be in; and faix, he’ll be a cunning fellow that catches me passing the night this way again.’ Now there was one thing distressed him most of all, – my father used always to make fun of the ghosts and sperits the neighbors would tell of, pretending there was no such thing; and now the thought came to him, ‘May

be they'll revenge themselves on me to-night when they have me up here alone;' and with that he made another jug stronger than the first, and tried to remember a few prayers in case of need, but somehow his mind was not too clear, and he said afterwards he was always mixing up ould songs and toasts with the prayers, and when he thought he had just got hold of a beautiful psalm, it would turn out to be 'Tatter Jack Walsh' or 'Limping James' or something like that. The storm, meanwhile, was rising every moment, and parts of the old abbey were falling as the wind shook the ruin; and my father's spirits, notwithstanding the punch, wore lower than ever.

"'I made it too weak,' said he, as he set to work on a new jorum; and troth, this time that was not the fault of it, for the first sup nearly choked him.

"'Ah,' said he, now, 'I knew what it was; this is like the thing; and Mr. Free, you are beginning to feel easy and comfortable. Pass the jar. Your very good health and song. I'm a little hoarse, it's true, but if the company will excuse –'

"And then he began knocking on the table with his knuckles, as if there was a room full of people asking him to sing. In short, my father was drunk as a fiddler; the last brew finished him; and he began roaring away all kinds of droll songs, and telling all manner of stories as if he was at a great party.

"While he was capering this way about the room, he knocked down his hat, and with it a pack of cards he put into it before leaving home, for he was mighty fond of a game.

"'Will ye take a hand, Mr. Free?' said he, as he gathered them up and sat down beside the fire.

"'I'm convanient,' said he, and began dealing out as if there was a partner fornenst him.

"When my father used to get this far in the story, he became very confused. He says that once or twice he mistook the liquor, and took a pull at the bottle of poteen instead of the punch; and the last thing he remembers was asking poor Father Dwyer if he would draw near to the fire, and not be lying there near the door.

"With that he slipped down on the ground and fell fast asleep. How long he lay that way he could never tell. When he awoke and looked up, his hair nearly stood on an end with fright. What do you think he seen fornenst him, sitting at the other side of the fire, but Father Dwyer himself. There he was, divil a lie in it, wrapped up in one of the mourning cloaks, trying to warm his hands at the fire. "'*Salve hoc nomine patri!*' said my father, crossing himself, 'av it's your ghost, God presarve me!'

"'Good-evening t'ye, Mr. Free,' said the ghost; 'and av I might be bould, what's in the jug?' – for ye see, my father had it under his arm fast, and never let it go when he was asleep.

"'Pater noster qui es in, – poteen, sir,' said my father; for the ghost didn't look pleased at his talking Latin.

"'Ye might have the politeness to ax if one had a mouth on him, then,' says the ghost.

"'Sure, I didn't think the likes of you would taste sperits.'

"'Try me,' said the ghost; and with that he filled out a glass, and tossed it off like a Christian.

"'Beamish!' says the ghost, smacking his lips.

"'The same,' says my father; 'and sure what's happened you has not spoiled your taste.'

"'If you'd mix a little hot,' says the ghost, 'I'm thinking it would be better, – the night is mighty sevaré.'

"'Anything that your reverance pleases,' says my father, as he began to blow up a good fire to boil the water.

"'And what news is stirring?' says the ghost.

"'Devil a word, your reverance, – your own funeral was the only thing doing last week. Times is bad; except the measles, there's nothing in our parts.'

"'And we're quite dead hereabouts, too,' says the ghost.

"'There's some of us so, anyhow, says my father, with a sly look. 'Taste that, your reverance.'

"'Pleasant and refreshing,' says the ghost; 'and now, Mr. Free, what do you say to a little "spoilt five," or "beggar my neighbor"?'"

“What will we play for?’ says my father, for a thought just struck him, – ‘may be it’s some trick of the Devil to catch my soul.’

“A pint of Beamish,’ says the ghost.

“Done!’ says my father; ‘cut for deal. The ace of clubs, – you have it.’

“Now the whole time the ghost was dealing the cards, my father never took his eyes off of him, for he wasn’t quite aisy in his mind at all; but when he saw him turn up the trump, and take a strong drink afterwards, he got more at ease, and began the game.

“How long they played it was never rightly known; but one thing is sure, they drank a cruel deal of sperits. Three quart bottles my father brought with him were all finished, and by that time his brain was so confused with the liquor, and all he lost, – for somehow he never won a game, – that he was getting very quarrelsome.

“You have your own luck to it,’ says he, at last.

“True for you; and besides, we play a great deal where I come from.’

“I’ve heard so,’ says my father. ‘I lead the knave, sir; spades! Bad cess to it, lost again!’

“Now it was really very distressing; for by this time, though they only began for a pint of Beamish, my father went on betting till he lost the hearse and all the six horses, mourning cloaks, plumes, and everything.

“Are you tired, Mr. Free? May be you’d like to stop?”

“Stop! faith it’s a nice time to stop; of course not.’

“Well, what will ye play for now?”

“The way he said these words brought a trembling all over my father, and his blood curdled in his heart. ‘Oh, murther!’ says he to himself, ‘it’s my sowl he’s wanting all the time.’

“I’ve mighty little left,’ says my father, looking at him keenly, while he kept shuffling the cards quick as lightning.

“Mighty little; no matter, we’ll give you plenty of time to pay, – and if you can’t do it, it shall never trouble you as long as you live.’

“Oh, you murthering devil!’ says my father, flying at him with a spade that he had behind his chair, ‘I’ve found you out.’

“With one blow he knocked him down, and now a terrible fight begun, for the ghost was very strong, too; but my father’s blood was up, and he’d have faced the Devil himself then. They rolled over each other several times, the broken bottles cutting them to pieces, and the chairs and tables crashing under them. At last the ghost took the bottle that lay on the hearth, and levelled my father to the ground with one blow. Down he fell, and the bottle and the whiskey were both dashed into the fire. That was the end of it, for the ghost disappeared that moment in a blue flame that nearly set fire to my father as he lay on the floor.

“Och, it was a cruel sight to see him next morning, with his cheek cut open and his hands all bloody, lying there by himself, – all the broken glass and the cards all round him, – the coffin, too, was knocked down off the chair, may be the ghost had trouble getting into it. However that was, the funeral was put off for a day, for my father couldn’t speak; and as for the sexton, it was a queer thing, but when they came to call him in the morning, he had two black eyes, and a gash over his ear, and he never knew how he got them. It was easy enough to know the ghost did it; but my father kept the secret, and never told it to any man, woman, or child in them parts.”

CHAPTER IX

LISBON

I have little power to trace the events which occupied the succeeding three weeks of my history. The lingering fever which attended my wound detained me during that time at the château; and when at last I did leave for Lisbon, the winter was already beginning, and it was upon a cold raw evening that I once more took possession of my old quarters at the Quay de Soderi.

My eagerness and anxiety to learn something of the campaign was ever uppermost, and no sooner had I reached my destination than I despatched Mike to the quartermaster's office to pick up some news, and hear which of my friends and brother officers were then at Lisbon. I was sitting in a state of nervous impatience watching for his return, when at length I heard footsteps approaching my room, and the next moment Mike's voice, saying, "The ould room, sir, where he was before." The door suddenly opened, and my friend Power stood before me.

"Charley, my boy!" – "Fred, my fine fellow!" was all either could say for some minutes. Upon my part, the recollection of his bold and manly bearing in my behalf choked all utterance; while upon his, my haggard cheek and worn look produced an effect so sudden and unexpected that he became speechless.

In a few minutes, however, we both rallied, and opened our store of mutual remembrances since we parted. My career I found he was perfectly acquainted with, and his consisted of nothing but one unceasing round of gayety and pleasure. Lisbon had been delightful during the summer, – parties to Cintra, excursions through the surrounding country, were of daily occurrence; and as my friend was a favorite everywhere, his life was one of continued amusement.

"Do you know, Charley, had it been any other man than yourself, I should not have spared him; for I have fallen head over ears in love with your little dark-eyed Portuguese."

"Ah, Donna Inez, you mean?"

"Yes, it is she I mean, and you need not affect such an air of uncommon *nonchalance*. She's the loveliest girl in Lisbon, and with fortune to pay off all the mortgages in Connemara."

"Oh, faith! I admire her amazingly; but as I never flattered myself upon any preference – "

"Come, come, Charley, no concealment, my old fellow; every one knows the thing's settled. Your old friend, Sir George Dashwood, told me yesterday."

"Yesterday! Why, is he here, at Lisbon?"

"To be sure he is; didn't I tell you that before? Confound it, what a head I have! Why, man, he's come out as deputy adjutant-general; but for him I should not have got renewed leave."

"And Miss Dashwood, is she here?"

"Yes, she came with him. By Jove, how handsome she is, – quite a different style of thing from our dark friend, but, to my thinking, even handsomer. Hammersley seems of my opinion, too."

"How! Is Hammersley at Lisbon?"

"On the staff here. But, confound it, what makes you so red, you have no ill-feeling towards him now. I know he speaks most warmly of you; no later than last night, at Sir George's – "

What Power was about to add I know not, for I sprang from my chair with a sudden start, and walked to the window, to conceal my agitation from him.

"And so," said I, at length regaining my composure in some measure, "Sir George also spoke of my name in connection with the senhora?"

"To be sure he did. All Lisbon does. What can you mean? But I see, my dear boy; you know you are not of the strongest, and we've been talking far too long. Come now, Charley, I'll say good-

night. I'll be with you at breakfast to-morrow, and tell you all the gossip; meanwhile promise me to get quietly to bed, and so good-night."

Such was the conflicting state of feeling I suffered from that I made no effort to detain Power. I longed to be once more alone, to think, calmly if I could, over the position I stood in, and to resolve upon my plans for the future.

My love for Lucy Dashwood had been long rather a devotion than a hope. My earliest dawn of manly ambition was associated with the first hour I met her. She it was who first touched my boyish heart, and suggested a sense of chivalrous ardor within me; and even though lost to me forever, I could still regard her as the mainspring of my actions, and dwell upon my passion as the thing that hallowed every enterprise of my life.

In a word, my love, however little it might reach her heart, was everything to mine. It was the worship of the devotee to his protecting saint. It was the faith that made me rise above misfortune and mishap, and led me onward; and in this way I could have borne anything, everything, rather than the imputation of fickleness.

Lucy might not – nay, I felt she did not – love me. It was possible that some other was preferred before me; but to doubt my own affection, to suspect my own truth, was to destroy all the charm of my existence, and to extinguish within me forever the enthusiasm that made me a hero to my own heart.

It may seem but poor philosophy; but alas, how many of our happiest, how many of our brightest thoughts here are but delusions like this! The dayspring of youth gilds the tops of the distant mountains before us, and many a weary day through life, when clouds and storms are thickening around us, we live upon the mere memory of the past. Some fast-flitting prospect of a bright future, some passing glimpse of a sunlit valley, tinges all our after-years.

It is true that he will suffer fewer disappointments, he will incur fewer of the mishaps of the world, who indulges in no fancies such as these; but equally true is it that he will taste none of that exuberant happiness which is that man's portion who weaves out a story of his life, and who, in connecting the promise of early years with the performance of later, will seek to fulfil a fate and destiny.

Weaving such fancies, I fell sound asleep, nor woke before the stir and bustle of the great city aroused me. Power, I found, had been twice at my quarters that morning, but fearing to disturb me, had merely left a few lines to say that, as he should be engaged on service during the day, we could not meet before the evening. There were certain preliminaries requisite regarding my leave which demanded my appearing before a board of medical officers, and I immediately set about dressing; resolving that, as soon as they were completed, I should, if permitted, retire to one of the small cottages on the opposite bank of the Tagus, there to remain until my restored health allowed me to rejoin my regiment.

I dreaded meeting the Dashwoods. I anticipated with a heavy heart how effectually one passing interview would destroy all my day-dreams of happiness, and I preferred anything to the sad conviction of hopelessness such a meeting must lead to.

While I thus balanced with myself how to proceed, a gentle step came to the door, and as it opened slowly, a servant in a dark livery entered.

"Mr. O'Malley, sir?"

"Yes," said I, wondering to whom my arrival could be thus early known.

"Sir George Dashwood requests you will step over to him as soon as you go out," continued the man; "he is so engaged that he cannot leave home, but is most desirous to see you."

"It is not far from here?"

"No, sir; scarcely five minutes' walk."

"Well, then, if you will show me the way, I'll follow you."

I cast one passing glance at myself to see that all was right about my costume, and sallied forth.

In the middle of the Black Horse Square, at the door of a large, stone-fronted building, a group of military men were assembled, chatting and laughing away together, – some reading the lately-arrived English papers; others were lounging upon the stone parapet, carelessly puffing their cigars. None of the faces were known to me; so threading my way through the crowd, I reached the steps. Just as I did so, a half-muttered whisper met my ear: —

“Who did you say?”

“O'Malley, the young Irishman who behaved so gallantly at the Douro.”

The blood rushed hotly to my cheek, my heart bounded with exultation; my step, infirm and tottering but a moment before, became fixed and steady, and I felt a thrill of proud enthusiasm playing through my veins. How little did the speaker of those few and random words know what courage he had given to a drooping heart, what renewed energy to a breaking spirit! The voice of praise, too, coming from those to whom we had thought ourselves unknown, has a magic about it that must be felt to be understood. So it happened that in a few seconds a revolution had taken place in all my thoughts and feelings, and I, who had left my quarters dispirited and depressed, now walked confidently and proudly forward.

“Mr. O'Malley, sir,” said the servant to the officer waiting, as we entered the antechamber.

“Ah, Mr. O'Malley,” said the aide-de-camp, in his blandest accent, “I hope you're better. Sir George is most anxious to see you; he is at present engaged with the staff – ”

A bell rang at that moment, and cut short the sentence; he flew to the door of the inner room, and returning in an instant, said, —

“Will you follow me? This way, if you please.”

The room was crowded with general officers and aides-de-camp, so that for a second or two I could not distinguish the parties; but no sooner was my name announced, than Sir George Dashwood, forcing his way through, rushed forward to meet me.

“O'Malley, my brave fellow, delighted to shake your hand again! How much grown you are, – twice the man I knew you; and the arm, too, is it getting on well?”

Scarcely giving me a moment to reply, and still holding my hand tightly in his grasp, he introduced me on every side.

“My young Irish friend, Sir Edward, the man of the Douro. My Lord, allow me to present Lieutenant O'Malley, of the Fourteenth.”

“A very dashing thing, that of yours, sir, at Ciudad Rodrigo.”

“A very senseless one, I fear, my Lord.”

“No, no, I don't agree with you at all; even when no great results follow, the *morale* of an army benefits by acts of daring.”

A running fire of kind and civil speeches poured in on me from all quarters, and amidst all that crowd of bronzed and war-worn veterans, I felt myself the lion of the moment. Crawford, it appeared, had spoken most handsomely of my name, and I was thus made known to many of those whose own reputations were then extending over Europe.

In this happy trance of excited pleasure I passed the morning. Amidst the military chit-chat of the day around me, treated as an equal by the greatest and the most distinguished, I heard all the confidential opinions upon the campaign and its leaders; and in that most entrancing of all flatteries, – the easy tone of companionship of our elders and betters, – forgot my griefs, and half believed I was destined for great things.

Fearing, at length, that I had prolonged my visit too far, I approached Sir George to take my leave, when, drawing my arm within his, he retired towards one of the windows.

“A word, O'Malley, before you go. I've arranged a little plan for you; mind, I shall insist upon obedience. They'll make some difficulty about your remaining here, so that I have appointed you one of our extra aides-de-camp. That will free you from all trouble, and I shall not be very exacting in my demands upon you. You must, however, commence your duties to-day, and as we dine at seven

precisely, I shall expect you. I am aware of your wish to stay in Lisbon, my boy, and if all I hear be true, congratulate you sincerely; but more of this another time, and so good-by." So saying, he shook my hand once more, warmly; and without well feeling how or why, I found myself in the street.

The last few words Sir George had spoken threw a gloom over all my thoughts. I saw at once that the report Power had alluded to had gained currency at Lisbon. Sir George believed it; doubtless, Lucy, too; and forgetting in an instant all the emulative ardor that so lately stirred my heart, I took my path beside the river, and sauntered slowly along, lost in my reflections.

I had walked for above an hour before paying any attention to the path I followed. Mechanically, as it were, retreating from the noise and tumult-of the city, I wandered towards the country. My thoughts fixed but upon one theme, I had neither ears nor eyes for aught around me; the great difficulty of my present position now appearing to me in this light, – my attachment to Lucy Dashwood, unrequited and unreturned as I felt it, did not permit of my rebutting any report which might have reached her concerning Donna Inez. I had no right, no claim to suppose her sufficiently interested about me to listen to such an explanation, had I even the opportunity to make it. One thing was thus clear to me, – all my hopes had ended in that quarter; and as this conclusion sank into my mind, a species of dogged resolution to brave my fortune crept upon me, which only waited the first moment of my meeting her to overthrow and destroy forever.

Meanwhile I walked on, – now rapidly, as some momentary rush of passionate excitement, now slowly, as some depressing and gloomy notion succeeded; when suddenly my path was arrested by a long file of bullock cars which blocked up the way. Some chance squabble had arisen among the drivers, and to avoid the crowd and collision, I turned into a gateway which opened beside me, and soon found myself in a lawn handsomely planted and adorned with flowering shrubs and ornamental trees.

In the half-dreamy state my musings had brought me to, I struggled to recollect why the aspect of the place did not seem altogether new. My thoughts were, however, far away, – now blending some memory of my distant home with scenes of battle and bloodshed, or resting upon my first interview with her whose chance word, carelessly and lightly spoken, had written the story of my life. From this revery I was rudely awakened by a rustling noise in the trees behind me, and before I could turn my head, the two fore-paws of a large stag-hound were planted upon my shoulders, while the open mouth and panting tongue were close beside my face. My day-dream was dispelled quick as lightning; it was Juan, himself, the favorite dog of the senhora, who gave me this rude welcome, and who now, by a thousand wild gestures and bounding caresses, seemed to do the honors of his house. There was something so like home in these joyful greetings that I yielded myself at once his prisoner, and followed, or rather was accompanied by him towards the villa.

Of course, sooner or later, I should have called upon my kind friends; then why not now, when chance has already brought me so near? Besides, if I held to my resolution, which I meant to do, – of retiring to some quiet and sequestered cottage till my health was restored, – the opportunity might not readily present itself again. This line of argument perfectly satisfied my reason; while a strong feeling of something like curiosity piqued me to proceed, and before many minutes elapsed, I reached the house. The door, as usual, lay wide open; and the ample hall, furnished like a sitting-room, had its customary litter of books, music, and flowers scattered upon the tables. My friend Juan, however, suffered me not to linger here, but rushing furiously at a door before me, began a vigorous attack for admittance.

As I knew this to be the drawing-room, I opened the door and walked in, but no one was to be seen; a half-open book lay upon an ottoman, and a fan, which I recognized as an old acquaintance, was beside it, but the owner was absent.

I sat down, resolved to wait patiently for her coming, without any announcement of my being there. I was not sorry, indeed, to have some moments to collect my thoughts, and restore my erring faculties to something like order.

As I looked about the room, it seemed as if I had been there but yesterday. The folding-doors lay open to the garden, just as I had seen them last; and save that the flowers seemed fewer, and those which remained of a darker and more sombre tint, all seemed unchanged. There lay the guitar to whose thrilling chords my heart had bounded; there, the drawing over which I had bent in admiring pleasure, suggesting some tints of light or shadow, as the fairy fingers traced them; every chair was known to me, and I greeted them as things I cared for.

While thus I scanned each object around me, I was struck by a little china vase which, unlike its other brethren, contained a bouquet of dead and faded flowers; the blood rushed to my cheek; I started up; it was one I had myself presented to her the day before we parted. It was in that same vase I placed it; the very table, too, stood in the same position beside that narrow window. What a rush of thoughts came pouring on me! And oh! – shall I confess it? – how deeply did such a mute testimony of remembrance speak to my heart, at the moment that I felt myself unloved and uncared for by another! I walked hurriedly up and down, a maze of conflicting resolves combating in my mind, while one thought ever recurred: “Would that I had not come there!” and yet after all it may mean nothing; some piece of passing coquetry which she will be the very first to laugh at. I remembered how she spoke of poor Howard; what folly to take it otherwise! “Be it so, then,” said I, half aloud; “and now for my part of the game;” and with this I took from my pocket the light-blue scarf she had given me the morning we parted, and throwing it over my shoulder, prepared to perform my part in what I had fully persuaded myself to be a comedy. The time, however, passed on, and she came not; a thousand high-flown Portuguese phrases had time to be conned over again and again by me, and I had abundant leisure to enact my coming part; but still the curtain did not rise. As the day was wearing, I resolved at last to write a few lines, expressive of my regret at not meeting her, and promising myself an early opportunity of paying my respects under more fortunate circumstances. I sat down accordingly, and drawing the paper towards me, began in a mixture of French and Portuguese, as it happened, to indite my billet.

“Senhora Inez – ” no – “Ma chère Mademoiselle Inez – ” confound it, that’s too intimate; well, here goes: “Monsieur O’Malley presente ses respects – ” that will never do; and then, after twenty other abortive attempts, I began thoughtlessly sketching heads upon the paper, and scribbling with wonderful facility in fifty different ways: “Ma charmante amie – Ma plus chère Inez,” etc., and in this most useful and profitable occupation did I pass another half-hour.

How long I should have persisted in such an employment it is difficult to say, had not an incident intervened which suddenly but most effectually put an end to it. As the circumstance is one which, however little striking in itself, had the greatest and most lasting influence upon my future career, I shall, perhaps, be excused in devoting another chapter to its recital.

CHAPTER X

A PLEASANT PREDICAMENT

As I sat vainly endeavoring to fix upon some suitable and appropriate epithet by which to commence my note, my back was turned towards the door of the garden; and so occupied was I in my meditations, that even had any one entered at the time, in all probability I should not have perceived it. At length, however, I was aroused from my study by a burst of laughter, whose girlish joyousness was not quite new to me. I knew it well; it was the senhora herself; and the next moment I heard her voice.

"I tell you, I'm quite certain I saw his face in the mirror as I passed. Oh, how delightful! and you'll be charmed with him; so, mind, you must not steal him from me; I shall never forgive you if you do; and look, only look! he has got the blue scarf I gave him when he marched to the Douro."

While I perceived that I was myself seen, I could see nothing of the speaker, and wishing to hear something further, appeared more than ever occupied in the writing before me.

What her companion replied I could not, however, catch, but only guess at its import by the senhora's answer. "*Fi done!*— I really am very fond of him; but, never fear, I shall be as stately as a queen. You shall see how meekly he will kiss my hand, and with what unbending reserve I'll receive him."

"Indeed!" thought I; "mayhap, I'll mar your plot a little; but let us listen."

Again her friend spoke, but too low to be heard.

"It is so provoking," continued Inez; "I never can remember names, and his was something too absurd; but never mind, I shall make him a grandee of Portugal. Well, but come along, I long to present him to you."

Here a gentle struggle seemed to ensue; for I heard the senhora coaxingly entreat her, while her companion steadily resisted.

"I know very well you think I shall be so silly, and perhaps wrong; eh, is it not so? but you are quite mistaken. You'll be surprised at my cold and dignified manner. I shall draw myself proudly up, thus, and curtsying deeply, say, 'Monsieur, j'ai l'honneur de vous saluer.'"

A laugh twice as mirthful as before interrupted her account of herself, while I could hear the tones of her friend evidently in expostulation.

"Well, then, to be sure, you are provoking, but you really promise to follow me. Be it so; then give me that moss-rose. How you have fluttered me; now for it!"

So saying, I heard her foot upon the gravel, and the next instant upon the marble step of the door. There is something in expectation that sets the heart beating, and mine throbbed against my side. I waited, however, till she entered, before lifting my head, and then springing suddenly up, with one bound clasped her in my arms, and pressing my lips upon her roseate cheek, said, —

"*Mar charmante amie!*" To disengage herself from me, and to spring suddenly back was her first effort; to burst into an immoderate fit of laughing, her second; her cheek was, however, covered with a deep blush, and I already repented that my malice had gone so far.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle," said I, in affected innocence, "if I have so far forgotten myself as to assume a habit of my own country to a stranger."

A half-angry toss of the head was her only reply, and turning towards the garden, she called to her friend: —

"Come here, dearest, and instruct my ignorance upon your national customs; but first let me present to you, — never know his name, — the Chevalier de — What is it?"

The glass door opened as she spoke; a tall and graceful figure entered, and turning suddenly round, showed me the features of Lucy Dashwood. We both stood opposite each other, each mute with amazement. *My* feelings let me not attempt to convey; shame, for the first moment stronger than aught else, sent the blood rushing to my face and temples, and the next I was cold and pale as death. As for her, I cannot guess at what passed in her mind. She curtsied deeply to me, and with a half-smile of scarce recognition passed by me, and walked towards a window.

“*Comme vous êtes amiable!*” said the lively Portuguese, who comprehended little of this dumb show; “here have I been flattering myself what friends you’d be the very moment you meet, and now you’ll not even look at each other.”

What was to be done? The situation was every instant growing more and more embarrassing; nothing but downright effrontery could get through with it now; and never did a man’s heart more fail him than did mine at this conjuncture. I made the’ effort, however, and stammered out certain unmeaning commonplaces. Inez replied, and I felt myself conversing with the headlong recklessness of one marching to a scaffold, a coward’s fear at his heart, while he essayed to seem careless and indifferent.

Anxious to reach what I esteemed safe ground, I gladly adverted to the campaign; and at last, hurried on by the impulse to cover my embarrassment, was describing some skirmish with a French outpost. Without intending, I had succeeded in exciting the *senhora*’s interest, and she listened with sparkling eye and parted lips to the description of a sweeping charge in which a square was broken, and several prisoners carried off. Warming with the eager avidity of her attention, I grew myself more excited, when just as my narrative reached its climax, Miss Dashwood walked gently towards the bell, rang it, and ordered her carriage. The tone of perfect *nonchalance* of the whole proceeding struck me dumb; I faltered, stammered, hesitated, and was silent. Donna Inez turned from one to the other of us with a look of unfeigned astonishment and I heard her mutter to herself something like a reflection upon “national eccentricities.” Happily, however, her attention was now exclusively turned towards her friend, and while assisting her to shawl, and extorting innumerable promises of an early visit, I got a momentary reprieve; the carriage drew up also, and as the gravel flew right and left beneath the horses’ feet, the very noise and bustle relieved me. “*Adios,*” then said Inez, as she kissed her for the last time, while she motioned to me to escort her to her carriage. I advanced, stopped, made another step forward, and again grew irresolute; but Miss Dashwood speedily terminated the difficulty; for making me a formal curtsy, she declined my scarce-proffered attention, and left the room.

As she did so, I perceived that on passing the table, her eyes fell upon the paper I had been scribbling over so long, and I thought that for an instant an expression of ineffable scorn seemed to pass across her features, save which – and perhaps even in this I was mistaken – her manner was perfectly calm, easy, and indifferent.

Scarce had the carriage rolled from the door, when the *senhora*, throwing herself upon her chair, clapped her hands in childish ecstasy, while she fell into a fit of laughing that I thought would never have an end. “Such a scene!” cried she; “I would not have lost it for the world; what cordiality! what *empressement* to form acquaintance! I shall never forget it, Monsieur le Chevalier; your national customs seem to run sadly in extremes. One would have thought you deadly enemies; and poor me, after a thousand delightful plans about you both!”

As she ran on thus, scarce able to control her mirth at each sentence, I walked the room with impatient strides, now, resolving to hasten after the carriage, stop it, explain in a few words how all had happened, and then fly from her forever; then the remembrance of her cold, impassive look crossed me, and I thought that one bold leap into the Tagus might be the shortest and easiest solution to all my miseries. Perfect abasement, thorough self-contempt had broken all my courage, and I could have cried like a child. What I said, or how I comforted myself after, I know not; but my first consciousness came to me as I felt myself running at the top of my speed far upon the road towards Lisbon.

CHAPTER XI

THE DINNER

It may easily be imagined that I had little inclination to keep my promise of dining that day with Sir George Dashwood. However, there was nothing else for it; the die was cast, – my prospects as regarded Lucy were ruined forever. We were not, we never could be anything to each other; and as for me, the sooner I braved my altered fortunes the better; and after all, why should I call them altered. She evidently never had cared for me; and even supposing that my fervent declaration of attachment had interested her, the apparent duplicity and falseness of my late conduct could only fall the more heavily upon me.

I endeavored to philosophize myself into calmness and indifference. One by one I exhausted every argument for my defence, which, however ingeniously put forward, brought no comfort to my own conscience. I pleaded the unerring devotion of my heart, the uprightness of my motives, and when called on for the proofs, – alas! except the blue scarf I wore in memory of another, and my absurd conduct at the villa, I had none. From the current gossip of Lisbon, down to my own disgraceful folly, all, all was against me.

Honesty of intention, rectitude of purpose, may be, doubtless they are, admirable supports to a rightly constituted mind; but even then they must come supported by such claims to probability as make the injured man feel he has not lost the sympathy of all his fellows. Now, I had none of these, had even my temperament, broken by sickness and harassed by unlucky conjectures, permitted my appreciating them.

I endeavored to call my wounded pride to my aid, and thought over the glance of haughty disdain she gave me as she passed on to her carriage; but even this turned against me, and a humiliating sense of my own degraded position sank deeply into my heart. “This impression at least,” thought I, “must be effaced. I cannot permit her to believe – ”

“His Excellency is waiting dinner, sir,” said a lackey, introducing a finely powdered head gently within the door. I looked at my watch, it was eight o'clock; so snatching my sabre, and shocked at my delay, I hastily followed the servant down-stairs, and thus at once cut short my deliberations.

The man must be but little observant or deeply sunk in his own reveries, who, arriving half-an-hour too late for dinner, fails to detect in the faces of the assembled and expectant guests a very palpable expression of discontent and displeasure. It is truly a moment of awkwardness, and one in which few are found to manage with success; the blushing, hesitating, blundering apology of the absent man, is scarcely better than the ill-affected surprise of the more practised offender. The bashfulness of the one is as distasteful as the cool impertinence of the other; both are so thoroughly out of place, for we are thinking of neither; our thoughts are wandering to cold soups and rechaufféd pâtés, and we neither care for nor estimate the cause, but satisfy our spleen by cursing the offender.

Happily for me I was clad in a triple insensibility to such feelings, and with an air of most perfect unconstraint and composure walked into a drawing-room where about twenty persons were busily discussing what peculiar amiability in my character could compensate for my present conduct.

“At last, O'Malley, at last!” said Sir George. “Why, my dear boy, how very late you are!”

I muttered something about a long walk, – distance from Lisbon, etc.

“Ah! that was it. I was right, you see!” said an old lady in a spangled turban, as she whispered something to her friend beside her, who appeared excessively shocked at the information conveyed; while a fat, round-faced little general, after eying me steadily through his glass, expressed a *sotto voce* wish that I was upon *his* staff. I felt my cheek reddening at the moment, and stared around me like

one whose trials were becoming downright insufferable, when happily dinner was announced, and terminated my embarrassment.

As the party filed past, I perceived that Miss Dashwood was not among them; and with a heart relieved for the moment by the circumstance, and inventing a hundred conjectures to account for it, I followed with the aides-de-camp and the staff to the dinner-room.

The temperament is very Irish, I believe, which renders a man so elastic that from the extreme of depression to the very climax of high spirits, there is but one spring. To this I myself plead guilty, and thus, scarcely was I freed from the embarrassment which a meeting with Lucy Dashwood must have caused, when my heart bounded with lightness.

When the ladies withdrew, the events of the campaign became the subject of conversation, and upon these, very much to my astonishment, I found myself consulted as an authority. The Douro, from some fortunate circumstance, had given me a reputation I never dreamed of, and I heard my opinions quoted upon topics of which my standing as an officer, and my rank in the service, could not imply a very extended observation. Power was absent on duty; and happily for my supremacy, the company consisted entirely of generals in the commissariat or new arrivals from England, all of whom knew still less than myself.

What will not iced champagne and flattery do? Singly, they are strong impulses; combined, their power is irresistible. I now heard for the first time that our great leader had been elevated to the peerage by the title of Lord Wellington, and I sincerely believe – however now I may smile at the confession – that, at the moment, I felt more elation at the circumstance than he did. The glorious sensation of being in any way, no matter how remotely, linked with the career of those whose path is a high one, and whose destinies are cast for great events, thrilled through me; and in all the warmth of my admiration and pride for our great captain, a secret pleasure stirred within me as I whispered to myself, “And I, too, am a soldier!”

I fear me that very little flattery is sufficient to turn the head of a young man of eighteen; and if I yielded to the “pleasant incense,” let my apology be that I was not used to it; and lastly, let me avow, if I did get tipsy, I liked the liquor. And why not? It is the only tippie I know of that leaves no headache the next morning to punish you for the glories of the past night. It may, like all other strong potations, it is true, induce you to make a fool of yourself when under its influence; but like the nitrous-oxide gas, its effects are passing, and as the pleasure is an ecstasy for the time, and your constitution none the worse when it is over, I really see no harm in it.

Then the benefits are manifest; for while he who gives becomes never the poorer for his benevolence, the receiver is made rich indeed. It matters little that some dear, kind friend is ready with his bitter draught to remedy what he is pleased to call its unwholesome sweetness; you betake yourself with only the more pleasure to the “blessed elixir,” whose fascinations neither the poverty of your pocket, nor the penury of your brain, can withstand, and by the magic of whose spell you are great and gifted. “*Vive la bagatelle!*” saith the Frenchman. “Long live flattery!” say I, come from what quarter it will, – the only wealth of the poor man, the only reward of the unknown one; the arm that supports us in failure; the hand that crowns us in success; the comforter in our affliction; the gay companion in our hours of pleasure; the lullaby of the infant; the staff of old age; the secret treasure we lock up in our own hearts, and which ever grows greater as we count it over. Let me not be told that the coin is fictitious, and the gold not genuine; its clink is as musical to the ear as though it bore the last impression of the mint, and I’m not the man to cast an aspersion upon its value.

This little digression, however seemingly out of place, may serve to illustrate what it might be difficult to convey in other words, – namely, that if Charles O'Malley became, in his own estimation, a very considerable personage that day at dinner, the fault lay not entirely with himself, but with his friends, who told him he was such. In fact, my good reader, I was the lion of the party, the man who saved Laborde, who charged through a brigade of guns, who performed feats which newspapers quoted, though he never heard of them himself. At no time is a man so successful in society as

when his reputation heralds him; and it needs but little conversational eloquence to talk well, if you have but a willing and ready auditory. Of mine, I could certainly not complain; and as, drinking deeply, I poured forth a whole tide of campaigning recital, I saw the old colonels of recruiting districts exchanging looks of wonder and admiration with officers of the ordnance; while Sir George himself, evidently pleased at my *début*, went back to an early period of our acquaintance, and related the rescue of his daughter in Galway.

In an instant the whole current of my thoughts was changed. My first meeting with Lucy, my boyhood's dream of ambition, my plighted faith, my thought of our last parting in Dublin, when, in a moment of excited madness, I told my tale of love. I remembered her downcast look, as her cheek now flushing, now growing pale, she trembled while I spoke. I thought of her, as in the crash of battle her image flashed across my brain, and made me feel a rush of chivalrous enthusiasm to win her heart by "doughty deeds."

I forgot all around and about me. My head reeled, the wine, the excitement, my long previous illness, all pressed upon me; and as my temples throbbed loudly and painfully, a chaotic rush of discordant, ill-connected ideas flitted across my mind. There seemed some stir and confusion in the room, but why or wherefore I could not think, nor could I recall my scattered senses, till Sir George Dashwood's voice roused me once again to consciousness.

"We are going to have some coffee, O'Malley. Miss Dashwood expects us in the drawing-room. You have not seen her yet?"

I know not my reply; but he continued: —

"She has some letters for you, I think."

I muttered something, and suffered him to pass on; no sooner had he done so, however, than I turned towards the door, and rushed into the street. The cold night air suddenly recalled me to myself, and I stood for a moment endeavoring to collect myself; as I did so, a servant stopped, and saluting me, presented me with a letter. For a second, a cold chill came over me; I knew not what fear beset me. The letter, I at last remembered, must be that one alluded to by Sir George, so I took it in silence, and walked on.

CHAPTER XII

THE LETTER

As I hurried to my quarters, I made a hundred guesses from whom the letter could have come; a kind of presentiment told me that it bore, in some measure, upon the present crisis of my life, and I burned with anxiety to read it.

No sooner had I reached the light, than all my hopes on this head vanished; the envelope bore the well-known name of my old college chum, Frank Webber, and none could, at the moment, have more completely dispelled all chance of interesting me. I threw it from me with disappointment, and sat moodily down to brood over my fate.

At length, however, and almost without knowing it, I drew the lamp towards me, and broke the seal. The reader being already acquainted with my amiable friend, there is the less indiscretion in communicating the contents, which ran thus: —

TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, No. 2,
October 5, 1810.

My Dear O'Malley, — Nothing short of your death and burial, with or without military honors, can possibly excuse your very disgraceful neglect of your old friends here. Nesbitt has never heard of you, neither has Smith. Ottley swears never to have seen your handwriting, save on the back of a protested bill. You have totally forgotten *me*, and the dean informs me that you have never condescended a single line to him; which latter inquiry on my part nearly cost me a rustication.

A hundred conjectures to account for your silence — a new feature in you since you were here — are afloat. Some assert that your soldiering has turned your head, and that you are above corresponding with civilians. Your friends, however, who know you better and value your worth, think otherwise; and having seen a paragraph about a certain O'Malley being tried by court-martial for stealing a goose, and maltreating the woman that owned it, ascribe your not writing to other motives. Do, in any case, relieve our minds; say, is it yourself, or only a relative that's mentioned?

Herbert came over from London with a long story about your doing wonderful things, — capturing cannon and general officers by scores, — but devil a word of it is extant; and if you have really committed these acts, they have “misused the king's press damnably,” for neither in the “Times” nor the “Post” are you heard of.

Answer this point, and say also if you have got promotion; for what precise sign you are algebraically expressed by at this writing, may serve Fitzgerald for a fellowship question. As for us, we are jogging along, *semper eadem*, — that is, worse and worse. Dear Cecil Cavendish, our gifted friend, slight of limb and soft of voice, has been rusticated for immersing four bricklayers in that green receptacle of stagnant water and duckweed, yeleped the “Haha.”

Roper, equally unlucky, has taken to reading for honors, and obtained a medal, I fancy, — at least his friends shy him, and it must be something of that kind. Belson — poor Belson (fortunately for him he was born in the nineteenth, not the sixteenth century, or he'd be most likely ornamenting a pile of fagots) ventured upon some stray excursions into the Hebrew verbs, — the professor himself never having transgressed beyond the declensions, and the consequence is, he is in disgrace among the seniors. And as for me, a heavy charge hangs over my devoted head even while I

write. The senior lecturer, it appears, has been for some time instituting some very singular researches into the original state of our goodly college at its founding. Plans and specifications showing its extent and magnificence have been continually before the board for the last month; and in such repute have been a smashed door-sill or an old arch, that freshmen have now abandoned conic sections for crowbars, and instead of the “Principia” have taken up the pickaxe. You know, my dear fellow, with what enthusiasm I enter into any scheme for the aggrandizement of our Alma Mater, so I need not tell you how ardently I adventured into the career now opened to me. My time was completely devoted to the matter; neither means nor health did I spare, and in my search for antiquarian lore, I have actually undermined the old wall of the fellows’ garden, and am each morning in expectation of hearing that the big bell near the commons-hall has descended from its lofty and most noisy eminence, and is snugly reposing in the mud. Meanwhile accident put me in possession of a most singular and remarkable discovery. Our chambers – I call them ours for old association sake – are, you may remember, in the Old Square. Well, I have been fortunate enough, within the very precincts of my own dwelling, to contribute a very wonderful fact to the history of the University; alone, unassisted, unaided, I labored at my discovery. Few can estimate the pleasure I felt, the fame and reputation I anticipated. I drew up a little memoir for the board, most respectfully and civilly worded, having for title the following: —

ACCOUNT

Of a remarkable Subterranean Passage lately discovered in the
Old Building of Trinity College, Dublin;
With Observations upon its Extent, Antiquity, and Probable Use.

By F. WEBBER, Senior Freshman.

My dear O’Malley, I’ll not dwell upon the pride I felt in my new character of antiquarian; it is enough to state, that my very remarkable tract was well considered and received, and a commission appointed to investigate the discovery, consisting of the vice-provost, the senior lecturer, old Woodhouse, the sub-dean, and a few more.

On Tuesday last they came accordingly in full academic costume.

I, being habited most accurately in the like manner, conducted them with all form into my bed-room, where a large screen concealed from view the entrance to the tunnel alluded to. Assuming a very John Kembleish attitude, I struck this down with one hand, pointing with the other to the wall, as I exclaimed, “There! look there!”

I need only quote Barret’s exclamation to enlighten you upon my discovery as, drawing in his breath with a strong effort, he burst out: —

“May the Devil admire me, but it’s a rat-hole!”

I fear, Charley, he’s right, and what’s more, that the board will think so, for this moment a very warm discussion is going on among that amiable and learned body whether I shall any longer remain an ornament to the University. In fact, the terror with which they fled from my chambers, overturning each other in the passage, seemed to imply that they thought me mad, and I do believe my voice, look, and attitude would not have disgraced a blue cotton dressing-gown and a cell in “Swift’s.” Be this as it may, few men have done more for college than I have. The sun never stood still for Joshua with more resolution than I have rested in my career of freshman; and if I have contributed little to the fame, I have done much for the funds of the University; and when they come to compute the various sums I have paid in,

for fines, penalties, and what they call properly “impositions,” if they don’t place a portrait of me in the examination hall, between Archbishop Ussher and Flood, then do I say there is no gratitude in mankind; not to mention the impulse I have given to the various artisans whose business it is to repair lamps, windows, chimneys, iron railings, and watchmen, all of which I have devoted myself to with an enthusiasm for political economy well known, and registered in the College Street police-office.

After all, Charley, I miss you greatly. Your second in a ballad is not to be replaced; besides, Carlisle Bridge has got low; medical students and young attorneys affect minstrelsy, and actually frequent the haunts sacred to our muse.

Dublin is, upon the whole, I think, worse; though one scarcely ever gets tired laughing at the small celebrities —

Master Frank gets here indiscreet, so I shall skip.

And so the Dashwoods are going too; this will make mine a pitiable condition, for I really did begin to feel tender in that quarter. You may have heard that she refused me; this, however, is not correct, though I have little doubt it might have been, — had I asked her.

Hammersley has, you know, got his dismissal. I wonder how the poor fellow took it when Power gave him back his letters and his picture. How *you* are to be treated remains to be seen; in any case, you certainly stand first favorite.

I laid down the letter at this passage, unable to read farther. Here, then, was the solution of the whole chaos of mystery; here the full explanation of what had puzzled my aching brain for many a night long. These were the very letters I had myself delivered into Hammersley’s hands; this the picture he had trodden to dust beneath his heel the morning of our meeting. I now felt the reason of his taunting allusion to my “success,” his cutting sarcasm, his intemperate passion. A flood of light poured at once across all the dark passages of my history; and Lucy, too, — dare I think of her! A rapid thought shot through my brain. What if she had really cared for me! What if for me she had rejected another’s love! What if, trusting to my faith, my pledged and sworn faith, she had given me her heart! Oh, the bitter agony of that thought! To think that all my hopes were shipwrecked with the very land in sight.

I sprang to my feet with some sudden impulse, but as I did so the blood rushed madly to my face and temples, which beat violently; a parched and swollen feeling came about my throat; I endeavored to open my collar and undo my stock, but my disabled arm prevented me. I tried to call my servant, but my utterance was thick and my words would not come; a frightful suspicion crossed me that my reason was tottering. I made towards the door; but as I did so, the objects around me became confused and mingled, my limbs trembled, and I fell heavily upon the floor. A pang of dreadful pain shot through me as I fell; my arm was rebroken. After this I knew no more; all the accumulated excitement of the evening bore down with one fell swoop upon my brain. Ere day broke, I was delirious.

I have a vague and indistinct remembrance of hurried and anxious faces around my bed, of whispered words and sorrowful looks; but my own thoughts careered over the bold hills of the far west as I trod them in my boyhood, free and high of heart, or recurred to the din and crash of the battle-field, with the mad bounding of the war-horse, and the loud clang of the trumpet. Perhaps the acute pain of my swollen and suffering arm gave the character to my mental aberration; for I have more than once observed among the wounded in battle, that even when torn and mangled by grape from a howitzer, their ravings have partaken of a high feature of enthusiasm, — shouts of triumph and exclamations of pleasure, even songs have I heard, but never once the low muttering of despair or the half-stifled cry of sorrow and affliction.

Such were the few gleams of consciousness which visited me; and even to such as these I soon became insensible.

Few like to chronicle, fewer still to read, the sad history of a sick-bed. Of mine, I know but little. The throbbing pulses of the erring brain, the wild fancies of lunacy, take no note of time. There is no past nor future; a dreadful present, full of its hurried and confused impressions, is all that the mind beholds; and even when some gleams of returning reason flash upon the mad confusion of the brain, they come like sunbeams through a cloud, dimmed, darkened, and perverted.

It is the restless activity of the mind in fever that constitutes its most painful anguish; the fast-flitting thoughts that rush ever onwards, crowding sensation on sensation, an endless train of exciting images without purpose or repose; or even worse, the straining effort to pursue some vague and shadowy conception which evades us ever as we follow, but which mingles with all around and about us, haunting us at midnight as in the noontime. Of this nature was a vision which came constantly before me, till at length, by its very recurrence, it assumed a kind of real and palpable existence; and as I watched it, my heart thrilled with the high ardor of enthusiasm and delight, or sunk into the dark abyss of sorrow and despair. "The dawning of morning, the daylight sinking," brought no other image to my aching sight; and of this alone, of all the impressions of the period, has my mind retained any consciousness.

Methought I stood within an old and venerable cathedral, where the dim yellow light fell with a rich but solemn glow upon the fretted capitals, or the grotesque tracings of the oaken carvings, lighting up the fading gildings of the stately monuments, and tinting the varied hues of time-worn banners. The mellow notes of a deep organ filled the air, and seemed to attune the sense to all the awe and reverence of the place, where the very footfall, magnified by its many echoes, seemed half a profanation. I stood before an altar, beside me a young and lovely girl, whose bright brown tresses waved in loose masses upon a neck of snowy whiteness; her hand, cold and pale, rested within my own; we knelt together, not in prayer, but a feeling of deep reverence stole over my heart, as she repeated some few half-uttered words after me; I knew that she was mine. Oh, the ecstasy of that moment, as, springing to my feet, I darted forward to press her to my heart! When, suddenly, an arm was interposed between us, while a low but solemn voice rang in my ears, "Stir not; for thou art false and traitorous, thy vow a perjury, and thy heart a lie!" Slowly and silently the fair form of my loved Lucy – for it was her – receded from my sight. One look, one last look of sorrow – it was scarce reproach – fell upon me, and I sank back upon the cold pavement, broken-hearted and forsaken.

This dream came with daybreak, and with the calm repose of evening; the still hours of the waking night brought no other image to my eyes, and when its sad influence had spread a gloom and desolation over my wounded heart, a secret hope crept over me, that again the bright moment of happiness would return, and once more beside that ancient altar I'd kneel beside my bride, and call her mine.

For the rest, my memory retains but little; the kind looks which came around my bedside brought but a brief pleasure, for in their affectionate beaming I could read the gloomy prestige of my fate. The hurried but cautious step, the whispered sentences, the averted gaze of those who sorrowed for me, sunk far deeper into my heart than my friends then thought of. Little do they think, who minister to the sick or dying, how each passing word, each flitting glance is noted, and how the pale and stilly figure which lies all but lifeless before them counts over the hours he has to live by the smiles or tears around him!

Hours, days, weeks rolled over, and still my fate hung in the balance; and while in the wild enthusiasm of my erring faculties, I wandered far in spirit from my bed of suffering and pain, some well-remembered voice beside me would strike upon my ear, bringing me back, as if by magic, to all the realities of life, and investing my almost unconscious state with all the hopes and fears about me.

One by one, at length, these fancies fled from me, and to the delirium of fever succeeded the sad and helpless consciousness of illness, far, far more depressing; for as the conviction of sense came back, the sorrowful aspect of a dreary future came with it.

CHAPTER XIII

THE VILLA

The gentle twilight of an autumnal evening, calm, serene, and mellow, was falling as I opened my eyes to consciousness of life and being, and looked around me. I lay in a large and handsomely-furnished apartment, in which the hand of taste was as evident in all the decorations as the unsparing employment of wealth; the silk draperies of my bed, the inlaid tables, the ormolu ornaments which glittered upon the chimney, were one by one so many puzzles to my erring senses, and I opened and shut my eyes again and again, and essayed by every means in my power to ascertain if they were not the visionary creations of a fevered mind. I stretched out my hands to feel the objects; and even while holding the freshly-plucked flowers in my grasp I could scarce persuade myself that they were real. A thrill of pain at this instant recalled me to other thoughts, and I turned my eyes upon my wounded arm, which, swollen and stiffened, lay motionless beside me. Gradually, my memory came back, and to my weak faculties some passages of my former life were presented, not collectedly it is true, nor in any order, but scattered, isolated scenes. While such thoughts flew past, my ever-rising question to myself was, "Where am I now?" The vague feeling which illness leaves upon the mind, whispered to me of kind looks and soft voices; and I had a dreamy consciousness about me of being watched and cared for, but wherefore, or by whom, I knew not.

From a partly open door which led into a garden, a mild and balmy air fanned my temples and soothed my heated brow; and as the light curtain waved to and fro with the breeze, the odor of the rose and the orange-tree filled the apartment.

There is something in the feeling of weakness which succeeds to long illness of the most delicious and refined enjoyment. The spirit emerging as it were from the thralldom of its grosser prison, rises high and triumphant above the meaner thoughts and more petty ambitions of daily life. Purer feelings, more ennobling hopes succeed; and dreams of our childhood, mingling with our promises for the future, make up an ideal existence in which the low passions and cares of ordinary life enter not or are forgotten. 'Tis then we learn to hold converse with ourselves; 'tis then we ask how has our manhood performed the promises of its youth, or have our ripened prospects borne out the pledges of our boyhood? 'Tis then, in the calm justice of our lonely hearts, we learn how our failures are but another name for our faults, and that what we looked on as the vicissitudes of fortune are but the fruits of our own vices. Alas, how short-lived are such intervals! Like the fitful sunshine in the wintry sky, they throw one bright and joyous tint over the dark landscape: for a moment the valley and the mountain-top are bathed in a ruddy glow; the leafless tree and the dark moss seem to feel a touch of spring; but the next instant it is past; the lowering clouds and dark shadows intervene, and the cold blast, the moaning wind, and the dreary waste are once more before us.

I endeavored to recall the latest events of my career, but in vain; the real and the visionary were inextricably mingled, and the scenes of my campaigns were blended with hopes and fears and doubts which had no existence save in my dreams. My curiosity to know where I was grew now my strongest feeling, and I raised myself with one arm to look around me. In the room all was still and silent, but nothing seemed to intimate what I sought for. As I looked, however, the wind blew back the curtain which half-concealed the sash-door, and disclosed to me the figure of a man seated at a table; his back was towards me, but his broad sombrero hat and brown mantle bespoke his nation; the light blue curl of smoke which wreathed gently upwards, and the ample display of long-necked, straw-wrapped flasks, also attested that he was enjoying himself with true Peninsular gusto, having probably partaken of a long siesta.

It was a perfect picture in its way of the indolent luxury of the South, – the rich and perfumed flowers, half-closing to the night air, but sighing forth a perfumed *buonas noches* as they betook themselves to rest; the slender shadows of the tall shrubs, stretching motionless across the walks; the very attitude of the figure himself was in keeping as supported by easy chairs he lounged at full length, raising his head ever and anon as if to watch the wreath of eddying smoke as it rose upwards from his cigar and melted away in the distance.

“Yes”, thought I, as I looked for some time, “such is the very type of his nation. Surrounded by every luxury of climate, blessed with all that earth can offer of its best and fairest, and yet only using such gifts as mere sensual gratifications.” Starting with this theme, I wove a whole story for the unknown personage whom, in my wandering fancy, I began by creating a grandee of Portugal, invested with rank honors, and riches; but who, effeminated by the habits and usages of his country, had become the mere idle voluptuary, living a life of easy and inglorious indolence. My further musings were interrupted at this moment for the individual to whom I had been so complimentary in my reverie, slowly arose from his recumbent position, flung his loose mantle carelessly across his left shoulder, and pushing open the sash-door, entered my chamber. Directing his steps to a large mirror, he stood for some minutes contemplating himself with what, from his attitude, I judged to be no small satisfaction. Though his back was still towards me, and the dim twilight of the room too uncertain to see much, yet I could perceive that he was evidently admiring himself in the glass. Of this fact I had soon the most complete proof; for as I looked, he slowly raised his broad-leafed Spanish hat with an air of most imposing pretension, and bowed reverently to himself.

“*Come sta vostra senoria?*” said he.

The whole gesture and style of this proceeding struck me as so ridiculous, that in spite of all my efforts I could scarcely repress a laugh. He turned quickly round and approached the bed. The deep shadow of the sombrero darkened the upper part of his features, but I could distinguish a pair of fierce-looking mustaches beneath, which curled upwards towards his eyes, while a stiff point beard stuck straight from his chin. Fearing lest my rude interruption had been overheard, I was framing some polite speech in Portuguese, when he opened the dialogue by asking in that language how I did.

I replied, and was about to ask some questions relative to where, and under whose protection I then was, when my grave-looking friend, giving a pirouette upon one leg, sent his hat flying into the air, and cried out in a voice that not even my memory could fail to recognize, —

“By the rock of Cashel he’s cured! – he’s cured! – the fever’s over! Oh, Master Charles, dear! oh, Master, darling, and you ain’t mad, after all?”

“Mad! no, faith! but I shrewdly suspect you must be.”

“Oh, devil a taste! But spake to me, honey; spake to me, acushla!”

“Where am I? Whose house is this? What do you mean by that disguise, that beard – ”

“Whisht, I’ll tell you all, av you have patience? But are you cured? Tell me that first. Sure they was going to cut the arm off you, till you got out of bed, and with your pistols, sent them flying, one out of the window and the other down-stairs; and I bate the little chap with the saw myself till he couldn’t know himself in the glass.”

While Mike ran on at this rate, I never took my eyes from him, and it was all my poor faculties were equal to, to convince myself that the whole scene was not some vision of a wandering intellect. Gradually, however, the well-known features recalled me to myself, and as my doubts gave way at length, I laughed long and heartily at the masquerade absurdity of his appearance.

Mike, meanwhile, whose face expressed no small mistrust at the sincerity of my mirth, having uncloaked himself, proceeded to lay aside his beard and mustaches, saying, as he did so, —

“There now, darling; there now, Master, dear, – don’t be grinning that way, – I’ll not be a Portigee any more, av you’ll be quiet and listen to reason.”

“But, Mike, where am I? Answer me that one question.”

“You’re at home, dear; where else would you be?”

“At home?” said I, with a start, as my eye ranged over the various articles of luxury and elegance around, so unlike the more simple and unpretending features of my uncle’s house, – “at home?”

“Ay, just so; sure, isn’t it the same thing. It’s ould Don Emanuel that owns it; and won’t it be your own when you’re married to that lovely crayture herself?”

I started up, and placing my hand upon my throbbing temples, asked myself if I were really awake, or if some flight of fancy had not carried me away beyond the bounds of reason and sense. “Go on, go on!” said I, at length, in a hollow voice, anxious to gather from his words something like a clew to this mystery. “How did this happen?”

“Av ye mean how you came here, faith, it was just this way. After you got the fever, and beat the doctors, devil a one would go near you but myself and the major.”

“The major, – Major Monsoon?”

“No, Major Power himself. Well, he told your friends up here how it was going very hard with you, and that you were like to die; and the same evening they sent down a beautiful litter, as like a hearse as two peas, for you, and brought you up here in state, – devil a thing was wanting but a few people to raise the cry to make it as fine a funeral as ever I seen. And sure, I set up a whillilew myself in the Black Horse Square, and the devils only laughed at me.

“Well, you see they put you into a beautiful, elegant bed, and the young lady herself sat down beside you, betune times fanning you with a big fan, and then drying her eyes, for she was weeping like a waterfall. ‘Don Miguel,’ says she to me, – for ye see, I put your cloak on by mistake when I was leaving the quarters, – ‘Don Miguel, questa hidalgo é vostro amigo?’

“‘My most particular friend,’ says I; ‘God spare him many years to be so.’

“‘Then take up your quarters here,’ says she, ‘and don’t leave him; we’ll do everything in our power to make you comfortable.’

“‘I’m not particular,’ says I; ‘the run of the house – ’

“‘Then this is the Villa Nuova?’” said I, with a faint sigh.

“The same,” replied Mike; “and a sweet place it is for eating and drinking, – for wine in buckets full, av ye axed for it, for dancing and singing every evening, with as pretty craytures as ever I set eyes upon. Upon my conscience, it’s as good as Galway; and good manners it is they have. What’s more, none of your liberties or familiarities with strangers; but it’s Don Miguel, devil a less. ‘Don Miguel, av it’s plazing to you to take a drop of Xeres before your meat?’ or, ‘Would you have a shaugh of a pipe or cigar when you’re done?’ That’s the way of it.”

“And Sir George Dashwood,” said I, “has he been here? Has he inquired for me?”

“Every day either himself or one of the staff comes galloping up at luncheon time to ask after you; and then they have a bit of tender discourse with the senhora herself. Oh, devil a bit need ye fear them, she’s true blue; and it isn’t the major’s fault, – upon my conscience it isn’t, – for he does be coming the blarney over her in beautiful style.”

“Does Miss Dashwood ever visit here?” said I, with a voice faltering and uncertain enough to have awakened suspicion in a more practised observer.

“Never once; and that’s what I call unnatural behavior, after you saving her life; and if she wasn’t – ”

“Be silent, I say.”

“Well, well, there, I won’t say any more; and sure it’s time for me to be putting on my beard again. I’m going to the Casino with Catrina, and sure it’s with real ladies I might be going av it wasn’t for Major Power, that told them I wasn’t a officer; but it’s all right again. I gave them a great history of the Frees from the time of Cuilla na Toole, that was one of the family and a cousin of Moses, I believe; and they behave well to one that comes from an ould stock.”

“Don Miguel! Don Miguel!” said a voice from the garden.

“I’m coming, my angel! I’m coming, my turtle-dove!” said Mike, arranging his mustaches and beard with amazing dexterity. “Ah, but it would do your heart good av you could take a peep at us

about twelve o'clock, dancing 'Dirty James' for a bolero, and just see Miss Catrina, the lady's maid, doing 'cover the buckle' as neat as Nature. There now, there's the lemonade near your hand, and I'll leave you the lamp, and you may go asleep as soon as you please, for Miss Inez won't come in to-night to play the guitar, for the doctor said it might do you harm now."

So saying, and before I could summon presence of mind to ask another question, Don Miguel wrapped himself in the broad folds of his Spanish cloak, and strode from the room with the air of an hidalgo.

I slept but little that night; the full tide of memory, rushing in upon me, brought back the hour of my return to Lisbon and the wreck of all my hopes, which from the narrative of my servant I now perceived to be complete. I dare not venture upon recording how many plans suggested themselves to my troubled spirit, and were in turn rejected. To meet Lucy Dashwood; to make a full and candid declaration; to acknowledge that flirtation alone with Donna Inez (a mere passing, boyish flirtation) had given the coloring to my innocent passion, and that in heart and soul I was hers, and hers only, – this was my first resolve; but alas! if I had not courage to sustain a common interview, to meet her in the careless crowd of a drawing-room, what could I do under circumstances like these? Besides, the matter would be cut very short by her coolly declaring that she had neither right nor inclination to listen to such a declaration. The recollection of her look as she passed me to her carriage came flashing across my brain and decided this point. No, no! I'll not encounter that; however appearances for the moment had been against me, she should not have treated me thus coldly and disdainfully. It was quite clear she had never cared for me, – wounded pride had been her only feeling; and so as I reasoned I ended by satisfying myself that in that quarter all was at end forever.

Now then for dilemma number two, I thought. The senhora, my first impulse was one of anything but gratitude to her by whose kind, tender care my hours of pain and suffering had been soothed and alleviated. But for her, I should have been spared all my present embarrassment, all my shipwrecked fortunes; but for her I should now be the aide-de-camp residing in Sir George Dashwood's own house, meeting with Lucy every hour of the day, dining beside her, riding out with her, pressing my suit by every means and with every advantage of my position; but for her and her dark eyes – and, by-the-bye, what eyes they are! how full of brilliancy, yet how teeming with an expression of soft and melting sweetness; and her mouth, too, how perfectly chiselled those full lips, – how different from the cold, unbending firmness of Miss Dashwood's! Not but I have seen Lucy smile too, and what a sweet smile! How it lighted up her fair cheek, and made her blue eyes darken and deepen till they looked like heaven's own vault. Yes, there is more poetry in a blue eye. But still Inez is a very lovely girl, and her foot never was surpassed. She is a coquette, too, about that foot and ankle, – I rather like a woman to be so. What a sensation she would make in England; how she would be the rage! And then I thought of home and Galway, and the astonishment of some, the admiration of others, as I presented her as my wife, – the congratulations of my friends, the wonder of the men, the tempered envy of the women. Methought I saw my uncle, as he pressed her in his arms, say, "Yes, Charley, this is a prize worth campaigning for."

The stray sounds of a guitar which came from the garden broke in upon my musings at this moment. It seemed as if a finger was straying heedlessly across the strings. I started up, and to my surprise perceived it was Inez. Before I had time to collect myself, a gentle tap at the window aroused me; it opened softly, while from an unseen hand a bouquet of fresh flowers was thrown upon my bed. Before I could collect myself to speak, the sash closed again and I was alone.

CHAPTER XIV

THE VISIT

Mike's performances at the masquerade had doubtless been of the most distinguished character, and demanded a compensating period of repose, for he did not make his appearance the entire morning. Towards noon, however, the door from the garden gently opened, and I heard a step upon the stone terrace, and something which sounded to my ears like the clank of a sabre. I lifted my head, and saw Fred Power beside me.

I shall spare my readers the recital of my friend, which, however, more full and explanatory of past events, contained in reality little more than Mickey Free had already told me. In fine, he informed me that our army, by a succession of retreating movements, had deserted the northern provinces, and now occupied the intrenched lines of Torres Vedras. That Massena, with a powerful force, was still in march, reinforcements daily pouring in upon him, and every expectation pointing to the probability that he would attempt to storm our position.

"The wise-heads," remarked Power, "talk of our speedy embarkation, the sanguine and the hot-brained rave of a great victory and the retreat of Massena; but I was up at headquarters last week with despatches, and saw Lord Wellington myself."

"Well, what did you make out? Did he drop any hint of his own views?"

"Faith, I can't say he did. He asked me some questions about the troops just landed; he spoke a little of the commissary department, damned the blankets, said that green forage was bad food for the artillery horses, sent me an English paper to read about the O. P. riots, and said the harriers would throw off about six o'clock, and that he hoped to see me at dinner."

I could not restrain a laugh at Power's catalogue of his lordship's topics. "So," said I, "he at least does not take any gloomy views of our present situation."

"Who can tell what he thinks? He's ready to fight if fighting will do anything, and to retreat, if that be better. But that he'll sleep an hour less, or drink a glass of claret more – come what will of it – I'll believe from no man living.

"We've lost one gallant thing in any case, Charley," resumed Power. "Busaco was, I'm told, a glorious day, and our people were in the heat of it. So that, if we do leave the Peninsula now, that will be a confounded chagrin. Not for you, my poor fellow, for you could not stir; but I was so cursed foolish to take the staff appointment, – thus one folly ever entails another."

There was a tone of bitterness in which these words were uttered that left no doubt upon my mind some *arrière pensée* remained lurking behind them. My eyes met his; he bit his lip, and coloring deeply, rose from the chair, and walked towards the window.

The chance allusion of my man Mike flashed upon me at the moment, and I dared not trust myself to break silence. I now thought I could trace in my friend's manner less of that gay and careless buoyancy which ever marked him. There was a tone, it seemed, of more grave and sombre character, and even when he jested, the smile his features bore was not his usual frank and happy one, and speedily gave way to an expression I had never before remarked. Our silence which had now lasted for some minutes was becoming embarrassing; that strange consciousness that, to a certain extent, we were reading each other's thoughts, made us both cautious of breaking it; and when at length, turning abruptly round, he asked, "When I hoped to be up and about again?" I felt my heart relieved from I knew not well what load of doubt and difficulty that oppressed it. We chatted on for some little time longer, the news of Lisbon, and the daily gossip finishing our topics.

“Plenty of gayety, Charley, dinners and balls to no end! so get well, my boy, and make the most of it.”

“Yes,” I replied, “I’ll do my best; but be assured the first use I’ll make of health will be to join the regiment. I am heartily ashamed of myself for all I have lost already, – though not altogether my fault.”

“And will you really join at once?” said Power, with a look of eager anxiety I could not possibly account for.

“Of course I will; what have I, what can I have to detain me here?”

What reply he was about to make at this moment I know not, but the door opened, and Mike announced Sir George Dashwood.

“Gently, my worthy man, not so loud, if you please?” said the mild voice of the general, as he stepped noiselessly across the room, evidently shocked at the indiscreet tone of my follower. “Ah, Power, you here! and our poor friend, how is he?”

“Able to answer for himself at last, Sir George,” said I, grasping his proffered hand.

“My poor lad! you’ve had a long bout of it; but you’ve saved your arm, and that’s well worth the lost time. Well, I’ve come to bring you good news; there’s been a very sharp cavalry affair, and our fellows have been the conquerors.”

“There again, Power, – listen to that! We are losing everything!”

“Not so, not so, my boy,” said Sir George, smiling blandly, but archly. “There are conquests to be won here, as well as there; and in your present state, I rather think you better fitted for such as these.”

Power’s brow grew clouded; he essayed a smile, but it failed, and he rose and hurried towards the window.

As for me, my confusion must have led to a very erroneous impression of my real feelings, and I perceived Sir George anxious to turn the channel of the conversation.

“You see but little of your host, O’Malley,” he resumed; “he is ever from home; but I believe nothing could be kinder than his arrangements for you. You are aware that he kidnapped you from us? I had sent Forbes over to bring you to us; your room was prepared, everything in readiness, when he met your man Mike, setting forth upon a mule, who told him you had just taken your departure for the villa. We both had our claim upon you and, I believe, pretty much on the same score. By-the-bye, you have not seen Lucy since your arrival. I never knew it till yesterday, when I asked if she did not find you altered.”

I blundered out some absurd reply, blushed, corrected myself, and got confused. Sir George attributing this, doubtless, to my weak state, rose soon after, and taking Power along with him, remarked as he left the room, —

“We are too much for him yet, I see that; so we’ll leave him quiet some time longer.”

Thanking him in my heart for his true appreciation of my state, I sank back upon my pillow to think over all I had heard and seen.

“Well, Mister Charles,” said Mike as he came forward with a smile, “I suppose you heard the news? The Fourteenth bate the French down at Merca there, and took seventy prisoners; but sure it’s little good it’ll do, after all.”

“And why not, Mike?”

“Musha! isn’t Boney coming himself? He’s bringing all the Roossians down with him, and going to destroy us entirely.”

“Not at all, man; you mistake. He’s nothing to do with Russia, and has quite enough on his hands at this moment.”

“God grant it was truth you were talking! But, you see, I read it myself in the papers (or Sergeant Haggarty did, which is the same thing) that he’s coming with the Cusacks.”

“With who? – with what?”

“With the Cusacks.”

“What the devil do you mean? Who are they?”

“Oh, Tower of Ivory! did you never hear of the Cusacks, with the red beards and the red breeches and long poles with pike-heads on them, that does all the devilment on horseback, – spiking and spitting the people like larks?”

“The Cossacks, is it, you mean? The Cossacks?”

“Ay, just so, the Cusacks. They’re from Clare Island, and thereabouts; and there’s more of them in Meath. They’re my mother’s people, and was always real devils for fighting.”

I burst out into an immoderate fit of laughing at Mike’s etymology, which thus converted Hetman Platoff into a Galway man.

“Oh, murder! isn’t it cruel to hear you laugh that way! There now, alanna! be asy, and I’ll tell you more news. We’ve the house to ourselves to-day. The ould gentleman’s down at Behlem, and the daughter’s in Lisbon, making great preparations for a grand ball they’re to give when you are quite well.”

“I hope I shall be with the army in a few days, Mike; and certainly, if I’m able to move about, I’ll not remain longer in Lisbon.”

“Arrah, don’t say so, now! When was you ever so comfortable? Upon my conscience, it’s more like Paradise than anything else. If ye see the dinner we sit down to every day; and as for drink, – if it wasn’t that I sleep on a ground-floor, I’d seldom see a blanket!”

“Well, certainly, Mike, I agree with you, these are hard things to tear ourselves away from.”

“Aren’t they now, sir? And then Miss Catherine, I’m taching her Irish!”

“Teaching her Irish! for Heaven’s sake, what use can she make of Irish?”

“Ah, the crayture, she doesn’t know better; and as she was always bothering me to learn her English, I promised one day to do it; but ye see, somehow, I never was very proficient in strange tongues; so I thought to myself Irish will do as well. So, you perceive, we’re taking a course of Irish literature, as Mr. Lynch says in Athlone; and, upon my conscience, she’s an apt scholar.”

“Good-morning to you, Katey,” says Mr. Power to her the other day, as he passed through the hall. ‘Good-morning, my dear; I hear you speak English perfectly now?’

“*Honia mon diaoul,*’ says she, making a curtsy.

“Be the powers, I thought he’d die with the laughing.

“Well, my dear, I hope you don’t mean it, – do you know what you’re saying?”

“Honor bright, Major!” says I, – ‘honor bright!’ and I gave him a wink at the same time.

“Oh, that’s it!” said he, ‘is it!’ and so he went off holding his hands to his sides with the bare laughing; and your honor knows it wasn’t a blessing she wished him, for all that.”

CHAPTER XV

THE CONFESSION

“What a strange position this of mine!” thought I, a few mornings after the events detailed in the last chapter. “How very fascinating in some respects, how full of all the charm of romance, and how confoundly difficult to see one’s way through!”

To understand my cogitation right, *figurez-vous*, my dear reader, a large and splendidly furnished drawing-room, from one end of which an orangery in full blossom opens; from the other is seen a delicious little boudoir, where books, bronzes, pictures and statues, in all the artistique disorder of a lady’s sanctum, are bathed in a deep purple light from a stained glass window of the seventeenth century.

On a small table beside the wood fire, whose mellow light is flirting with the sunbeams upon the carpet, stands an antique silver breakfast-service, which none but the hand of Benvenuto could have chiselled; beside it sits a girl, young and beautiful; her dark eyes, beaming beneath their long lashes, are fixed with an expression of watchful interest upon a pale and sickly youth, who, lounging upon a sofa opposite, is carelessly turning over the leaves of a new journal, or gazing steadfastly on the fretted gothic of the ceiling, while his thoughts are travelling many a mile away. The lady being the Senhora Inez; the nonchalant invalid, your unworthy acquaintance, Charles O’Malley.

What a very strange position to be sure.

“Then you are not equal to this ball to-night?” said she, after a pause of some minutes.

I turned as she spoke; her words had struck audibly upon my ear, but, lost in my reverie, I could but repeat my own fixed thought, – how strange to be so situated!

“You are really very tiresome, Signor; I assure you, you are. I have been giving you a most elegant description of the Casino *fête*, and the beautiful costume of our Lisbon belles, but I can get nothing from you but this muttered something, which may be very shocking for aught I know. I’m sure your friend, Major Power, would be much more attentive to me; that is,” added she, archly, “if Miss Dashwood were not present.”

“What! why! You don’t mean that there is anything there – that Tower is paying attention to – ”

“*Madre divina*, how that seems to interest you, and how red you are! If it were not that you never met her before, and that your acquaintance did not seem to make rapid progress, then I should say you are in love with her yourself.”

I had to laugh at this, but felt my face flushing more. “And so,” said I, affecting a careless and indifferent tone, “the gay Fred Power is smitten at last!”

“Was it so very difficult a thing to accomplish?” said she, slyly.

“He seems to say so, at least. And the lady, how does she appear to receive his attentions?”

“Oh, I should say with evident pleasure and satisfaction, as all girls do the advances of men they don’t care for, nor intend to care for.”

“Indeed,” said I, slowly, “indeed, Senhora?” looking into her eyes as I spoke, as if to read if the lesson were destined for my benefit.

“There, don’t stare so! – every one knows that.”

“So you don’t think, then, that Lucy, – I mean Miss Dashwood – Why are you laughing so?”

“How can I help it; your calling her Lucy is so good, I wish she heard it; she’s the very proudest girl I ever knew.”

“But to come back; you really think she does not care for him?”

“Not more than for you; and I may be pardoned for the simile, having seen your meeting. But let me give you the news of our own *fête*. Saturday is the day fixed; and you must be quite well, – I insist upon it. Miss Dashwood has promised to come, – no small concession; for after all she has never once been here since the day you frightened her. I can’t help laughing at my blunder, – the two people I had promised myself should fall desperately in love with each other, and who will scarcely meet.”

“But I trusted,” said I, pettishly, “that you were not disposed to resign your own interest in me?”

“Neither was I,” said she, with an easy smile, “except that I have so many admirers. I might even spare to my friends; though after all I should be sorry to lose you, I like you.”

“Yes,” said I half bitterly, “as girls do those they never intend to care for; is it not so?”

“Perhaps, yes, and perhaps – But is it going to rain? How provoking! and I have ordered my horse. Well, Signor Carlos, I leave you to your delightful newspaper, and all the magnificent descriptions of battles and sieges and skirmishes of which you seem doomed to pine without ceasing. There, don’t kiss my hand twice; that’s not right.”

“Well, let me begin again – ”

“I shall not breakfast with you any more. But tell me, am I to order a costume for you in Lisbon; or will you arrange all that yourself? You must come to the *fête*, you know.”

“If you would be so very kind.”

“I will, then, be so very kind; and once more, *adios*.” So saying, and with a slight motion of her hand, she smiled a good-by, and left me.

“What a lovely girl!” thought I, as I rose and walked to the window, muttering to myself Othello’s line, and —

“When I love thee not, chaos is come again.”

In fact, it was the perfect expression of my feeling; the only solution to all the difficulties surrounding me, being to fall desperately, irretrievably in love with the fair *senhora*, which, all things considered, was not a very desperate resource for a gentleman in trouble. As I thought over the hopelessness of one attachment, I turned calmly to consider all the favorable points of the other. She was truly beautiful, attractive in every sense; her manner most fascinating, and her disposition, so far as I could pronounce, perfectly amiable. I felt already something more than interest about her; how very easy would be the transition to a stronger feeling! There was an *éclat*, too, about being her accepted lover that had its charm. She was the belle *par excellence* of Lisbon; and then a sense of pique crossed my mind as I reflected what would Lucy say of him whom she had slighted and insulted, when he became the husband of the beautiful millionaire *Senhora Inez*?

As my meditations had reached thus far, the door opened stealthily, and Catherine appeared, her finger upon her lips, and her gesture indicating caution. She carried on her arm a mass of drapery covered by a large mantle, which throwing off as she entered, she displayed before me a rich blue domino with silver embroidery. It was large and loose in its folds, so as thoroughly to conceal the figure of any wearer. This she held up before me for an instant without speaking; when at length, seeing my curiosity fully excited, she said, —

“This is the *senhora*’s domino. I should be ruined if she knew I showed it; but I promised – that is, I told – ”

“Yes, yes, I understand,” relieving her embarrassment about the source of her civilities; “go on.”

“Well, there are several others like it, but with this small difference, instead of a carnation, which all the others have embroidered upon the cuff, I have made it a rose, – you perceive? La *Senhora* knows nothing of this, – none save yourself knows it. I’m sure I may trust you with the secret.”

“Fear not in the least, Catherine; you have rendered me a great service. Let me look at it once more; ah, there’s no difficulty in detecting it. And you are certain she is unaware of it?”

“Perfectly so; she has several other costumes, but in this one I know she intends some surprise, so be upon your guard.”

With these words, carefully once more concealing the rich dress beneath the mantle, she withdrew; while I strolled forth to wonder what mystery might lie beneath this scheme, and speculate how far I myself was included in the plot she spoke of.

For the few days which succeeded, I passed my time much alone. The senhora was but seldom at home; and I remarked that Power rarely came to see me. A strange feeling of half-coolness had latterly grown between us, and instead of the open confidence we formerly indulged in when together, we appeared now rather to chat over things of mere every-day interest than of our own immediate plans and prospects. There was a kind of pre-occupation, too, in his manner that struck me; his mind seemed ever straying from the topics he talked of to something remote, and altogether, he was no longer the frank and reckless dragoon I had ever known him. What could be the meaning of this change? Had he found out by any accident that I was to blame in my conduct towards Lucy; had any erroneous impression of my interview with her reached his ears? This was most improbable; besides, there was nothing in that to draw down his censure or condemnation, however represented; and was it that he was himself in love with her, that, devoted heart and soul to Lucy, he regarded me as a successful rival, preferred before him! Oh, how could I have so long blinded myself to the fact! This was the true solution of the whole difficulty. I had more than once suspected this to be so; now all the circumstances of proof poured in upon me. I called to mind his agitated manner the night of my arrival in Lisbon, his thousand questions concerning the reasons of my furlough; and then, lately, the look of unfeigned pleasure with which he heard me resolve to join my regiment the moment I was sufficiently recovered. I remembered also how assiduously he pressed his intimacy with the senhora, Lucy's dearest friend here; his continual visits at the villa; those long walks in the garden, where his very look betokened some confidential mission of the heart. Yes, there was no doubt of it, he loved Lucy Dashwood! Alas, there seemed to be no end to the complication of my misfortunes; one by one I appeared fated to lose whatever had a hold upon my affections, and to stand alone, unloved and uncared for in the world. My thoughts turned towards the senhora, but I could not deceive myself into any hope there. My own feelings were untouched, and hers I felt to be equally so. Young as I was, there was no mistaking the easy smile of coquetry, the merry laugh of flattered vanity, for a deeper and holier feeling. And then I did not wish it otherwise. One only had taught me to feel how ennobling, how elevating in all its impulses can be a deep-rooted passion for a young and beautiful girl! From her eyes alone had I caught the inspiration that made me pant for glory and distinction. I could not transfer the allegiance of my heart, since it had taught that very heart to beat high and proudly. Lucy, lost to me forever as she must be, was still more than any other woman ever could be; all the past clung to her memory, all the prestige of the future must point to it also.

And Power, why had he not trusted, why had he not confided in me? Was this like my old and tried friend? Alas! I was forgetting that in his eye I was the favored rival, and not the despised, rejected suitor.

"It is past now," thought I, as I rose and walked into the garden; "the dream that made life a fairy tale is dispelled; the cold reality of the world is before me, and my path lies a lonely and solitary one." My first resolution was to see Power, and relieve his mind of any uneasiness as regarded my pretensions; they existed no longer. As for me, I was no obstacle to his happiness; it was, then, but fair and honorable that I should tell him so; this done, I should leave Lisbon at once. The cavalry had for the most part been ordered to the rear; still there was always something going forward at the outposts.

The idea of active service, the excitement of a campaigning life, cheered me, and I advanced along the dark alley of the garden with a lighter and a freer heart. My resolves were not destined to meet delay; as I turned the angle of a walk, Power was before me. He was leaning against a tree, his hands crossed upon his bosom, his head bowed forward, and his whole air and attitude betokening deep reflection.

He started as I came up, and seemed almost to change color.

“Well, Charley,” said he, after a moment’s pause, “you look better this morning. How goes the arm?”

“The arm is ready for service again, and its owner most anxious for it. Do you know, Fred, I’m thoroughly weary of this life.”

“They’re little better, however, at the lines. The French are in position, but never adventure a movement; and except some few affairs at the pickets, there is really nothing to do.”

“No matter, remaining here can never serve one’s interests, and besides, I have accomplished what I came for – ”

I was about to add, “the restoration of my health,” when he suddenly interrupted me, eyeing me fixedly as he spoke.

“Indeed! indeed! Is that so?”

“Yes,” said I, half puzzled at the tone and manner of the speech; “I can join now when I please; meanwhile, Fred, I have been thinking of you. Yes, don’t be surprised, at the very moment we met you were in my thoughts.”

I took his arm as I said this, and led him down the alley.

“We are too old and, I trust, too true friends, Fred, to have secrets from each other, and yet we have been playing this silly game for some weeks past. Now, my dear fellow, I have yours, and it is only fair justice you should have mine, and, faith, I feel you’d have discovered it long since, had your thoughts been as free as I have known them to be. Fred, you are in love; there, don’t wince, man, I know it; but hear me out. You believe me to be so also; nay, more, you think that my chances of success are better, stronger than your own; learn, then, that I have none, – absolutely none. Don’t interrupt me now, for this avowal cuts me deeply; my own heart alone knows what I suffer as I record my wrecked fortunes; but I repeat it, my hopes are at end forever; but, Fred, my boy, I cannot lose my friend too. If I have been the obstacle to your path, I am so no more. Ask me not why; it is enough that I speak in all truth and sincerity. Ere three days I shall leave this, and with it all the hopes that once beamed upon my fortunes, and all the happiness, – nay, not all, my boy, for I feel some thrill at my heart yet, as I think that I have been true to you.”

I know not what more I spoke nor how he replied to me. I felt the warm grasp of his hand, I saw his delighted smile; the words of grateful acknowledgment his lips uttered conveyed but an imperfect meaning to my ear, and I remembered no more.

The courage which sustained me for the moment sank gradually as I meditated over my avowal, and I could scarce help accusing Power of a breach of friendship for exacting a confession which, in reality, I had volunteered to give him. How Lucy herself would think of my conduct was ever occurring to my thoughts, and I felt, as I ruminated upon the conjectures it might give rise to, how much more likely a favorable opinion might now be formed of me, than when such an estimation could have crowned me with delight.

“Yes,” thought I, “she will at last learn to know him who loved her with truth and with devoted affection; and when the blight of all his hopes is accomplished, the fair fame of his fidelity will be proved. The march, the bivouac, the battle-field, are now all to me; and the campaign alone presents a prospect which may fill up the aching void that disappointed and ruined hopes have left behind them.”

How I longed for the loud call of the trumpet, the clash of the steel, the tramp of the war-horse; though the proud distinction of a soldier’s life were less to me in the distance than the mad and whirlwind passion of a charge, and the loud din of the rolling artillery.

It was only some hours after, as I sat alone in my chamber, that all the circumstances of our meeting came back clearly to my memory, and I could not help muttering to myself, —

“It is indeed a hard lot, that to cheer the heart of my friend, I must bear witness to the despair that shed darkness on my own.”

CHAPTER XVI

MY CHARGER

Although I felt my heart relieved of a heavy load by the confession I had made to Power, yet still I shrank from meeting him for some days after; a kind of fear lest he should in any way recur to our conversation continually beset me, and I felt that the courage which bore me up for my first effort would desert me on the next occasion.

My determination to join my regiment was now made up, and I sent forward a resignation of my appointment to Sir George Dashwood's staff, which I had never been in health to fulfil, and commenced with energy all my preparations for a speedy departure.

The reply to my rather formal letter was a most kind note written by himself. He regretted the unhappy cause which had so long separated us, and though wishing, as he expressed it, to have me near him, perfectly approved of my resolution.

“Active service alone, my dear boy, can ever place you in the position you ought to occupy; and I rejoice the more at your decision in this matter, as I feared the truth of certain reports here, which attributed to you other plans than those which a campaign suggests. My mind is now easy on this score, and I pray you forgive me if my congratulations are *mal à propos*.”

After some hints for my future management, and a promise of some letters to his friends at headquarters, he concluded: —

“As this climate does not seem to suit my daughter, I have applied for a change, and am in daily hope of obtaining it. Before going, however, I must beg your acceptance of the charger which my groom will deliver to your servant with this. I was so struck with his figure and action that I purchased him before leaving England without well knowing why or wherefore. Pray let him see some service under your auspices, which he is most unlikely to do under mine. He has plenty of bone to be a weight carrier, and they tell me also that he has speed enough for anything.”

Mike's voice in the lawn beneath interrupted my reading farther, and on looking out, I perceived him and Sir George Dashwood's servant standing beside a large and striking-looking horse, which they were both examining with all the critical accuracy of adepts.

“Arrah, isn't he a darling, a real beauty, every inch of him?”

“That 'ere splint don't signify nothing; he aren't the worse of it,” said the English groom.

“Of coorse it doesn't,” replied Mike. “What a fore-hand, and the legs, clean as a whip!”

“There's the best of him, though,” interrupted the other, patting the strong hind-quarters with his hand. “There's the stuff to push him along through heavy ground and carry him over timber.”

“Or a stone wall,” said Mike, thinking of Galway.

My own impatience to survey my present had now brought me into the conclave, and before many minutes were over I had him saddled, and was cantering around the lawn with a spirit and energy I had not felt for months long. Some small fences lay before me, and over these he carried me with all the ease and freedom of a trained hunter. My courage mounted with the excitement, and I looked eagerly around for some more bold and dashing leap.

“You may take him over the avenue gate,” said the English groom, divining with a jockey's readiness what I looked for; “he'll do it, never fear him.”

Strange as my equipment was, with an undress jacket flying loosely open, and a bare head, away I went. The gate which the groom spoke of was a strongly-barred one of oak timber, nearly five feet high, – its difficulty as a leap only consisted in the winding approach, and the fact that it opened upon a hard road beyond it.

In a second or two a kind of half fear came across me. My long illness had unnerved me, and my limbs felt weak and yielding; but as I pressed into the canter, that secret sympathy between the horse and his rider shot suddenly through me, I pressed my spurs to his flanks, and dashed him at it.

Unaccustomed to such treatment, the noble animal bounded madly forward. With two tremendous plunges he sprang wildly in the air, and shaking his long mane with passion, stretched out at the gallop.

My own blood boiled now as tempestuously as his; and with a shout of reckless triumph, I rose him at the gate. Just at the instant two figures appeared before it, – the copse had concealed their approach hitherto, – but they stood now as if transfixed. The wild attitude of the horse, the not less wild cry of his rider, had deprived them for a time of all energy; and overcome by the sudden danger, they seemed rooted to the ground. What I said, spoke, begged, or imprecated, Heaven knows – not I. But they stirred not! One moment more and they must lie trampled beneath my horse's hoofs, – he was already on his haunches for the bound, – when, wheeling half aside, I faced him at the wall. It was at least a foot higher and of solid stone masonry, and as I did so I felt that I was perilling my life to save theirs. One vigorous dash of the spur I gave him, as I lifted him to the leap. He bounded beneath it quick as lightning; still, with a spring like a rocket, he rose into the air, cleared the wall, and stood trembling and frightened on the road outside.

“Safe, by Jupiter! and splendidly done, too,” cried a voice near me, that I immediately recognized as Sir George Dashwood's.

“Lucy, my love, look up, – Lucy, my dear, there's no danger now. She has fainted! O'Malley, fetch some water, – fast. Poor fellow, your own nerves seem shaken. Why, you've let your horse go! Come here, for Heaven's sake! Support her for an instant. I'll fetch some water.”

It appeared to me like a dream; I leaned against the pillar of the gate; the cold and death-like features of Lucy Dashwood lay motionless upon my arm; her hand, falling heavily upon my shoulder, touched my cheek. The tramp of my horse, as he galloped onward, was the only sound that broke the silence, as I stood there, gazing steadfastly upon the pale brow and paler cheek, down which a solitary tear was slowly stealing. I knew not how the minutes passed; my memory took no note of time, but at length a gentle tremor thrilled her frame, a slight, scarce-perceptible blush colored her fair face, her lips slightly parted, and heaving a deep sigh, she looked around her. Gradually her eyes turned and met mine. Oh, the bliss unutterable of that moment! It was no longer the look of cold scorn she had given me last; the expression was one of soft and speaking gratitude. She seemed to read my very heart, and know its truth; there was a tone of deep and compassionate interest in the glance; and forgetting all, – everything that had passed, – all save my unaltered, unalterable love, I knelt beside her, and in words burning as my own heart burned, poured out my tale of mingled sorrow and affection with all the eloquence of passion. I vindicated my unshaken faith, – reconciling the conflicting evidences with the proofs I proffered of my attachment. If my moments were measured, I spent them not idly. I called to witness how every action of my soldier's life emanated from her; how her few and chance words had decided the character of my fate; if aught of fame or honor were my portion, to her I owed it. As, hurried onwards by my ardent hopes, I forgot Power and all about him, a step up the gravel walk came rapidly nearer, and I had but time to assume my former attitude beside Lucy as her father came up.

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