Wingfield Lewis

My Lords of Strogue. Volume 1 of 3

Lewis Wingfield

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Содержание

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My Lords of Strogue, Vol. 1 (of 3) / A Chronicle of Ireland, from the Convention to the Union

CHAPTER I.
MIRAGE

'Hurrah! 'tis done-our freedom's won-hurrah for the Volunteers!
By arms we've got the rights we sought through long and wretched years.
Remember still through good and ill how vain were prayers and tears-
How vain were words till flashed the swords of the Irish Volunteers.'

So sang all Dublin in a delirium of triumph on the 9th of November, 1783. From the dawn of day joy-bells had rung jocund peals; rich tapestries and silken folds of green and orange had swayed from every balcony; citizens in military garb, with green cockades, had silently clasped one another's hands as they met in the street. There was no need for speech. One thought engrossed every mind; one common sacrifice of thanksgiving rolled up to heaven. For Ireland had fought her bloodless fight, had shaken off the yoke of England, and was free-at last!

The capital was crowded with armed men and bravely-bedizened dames. Carriages, gay with emblazoned panels, blocked up the narrow thoroughfares, darkened to twilight-pitch by the boughs and garlands that festooned the overhanging eaves. Noddies and whiskies and sedans, bedecked with wreaths and ribbons, jostled one another into the gutter. Troops of horse, splendidly accoutred-officers mounted upon noble hunters-clattered hither and thither, crushing country folk against mire-stained walls and tattered booths, where victuals were dispensed, without so much as a 'By your leave.' Strangers, arrived but now from across Channel, marvelled at the spectacle, as they marked the signs of widespread luxury-the strange mingling of the pomp and circumstance of war with the panoply of peace-the palaces-the gorgeously-attired ladies in semi-martial garb, swinging up and down Dame Street in gilded chairs between the Castle and the Senate House, and back again-dressed, some of them, in broidered uniforms, some in rich satin and brocade. Sure the homely court of Farmer George in London could not compare in splendour, or in female beauty either, with that of his Viceroy here.

A stranger could perceive at once that some important ceremony was afoot, for all along the leading streets long galleries had been erected, decorated each with sumptuous hangings, crowded since daybreak with a living burthen; while every window showed its freight of faces, every row of housetops its sea of heads. From the Castle to Trinity College (where a huge green banner waved) the road was lined with troops in brand-new uniforms of every cut and colour-scarlet edged with black, blue lined with buff, white turned up with red, black piped with grey; while the stately colonnades of the Parliament House over against the College were guarded by the Barristers' Grenadiers, a picked body of stalwart fellows who looked in their tall caps like giants, with muskets slung and bright battle-axes on their shoulders. King William's effigy, emblem of bitter feuds, was in gala attire to-day, as if to suggest that rival creeds were met for once in amity. Newly painted white, the Protestant joss towered above the crowd, draped in an orange cloak, crowned with orange lilies; while his horse was muffled thick with orange scarves and streamers, and wore a huge collar of white ribbons tied about his neck. Placards inscribed with legends in large characters were suspended from the pedestal to remind the cits for what they were rejoicing. 'A Glorious Revolution!' 'A Free Country!' One bigger than the rest swung in the breeze, announcing to the few who as yet knew it not, that 'The Volunteers, having overturned a cadaverous Repeal, will now effectuate a Real Representation of the People!' Yes. That was why Dublin was come out into the streets. The victorious Volunteers had untied the

Irish Ixion from a torture-wheel of centuries, and, encouraged by their first success, were preparing now to pass a stern judgment on a venal parliament.

From the period of her annexation to England in the twelfth century, down to the close of the seventeenth, Ireland had been barbarous and restless; too feeble and disunited to shake off her shackles, too proud and too exasperated to despair, alternating in dreary sequence between wild exertions of delirious strength and the troubled sleep of exhausted fury. But that was over now. The chain was snapped; and the first vengeance of the sons who had freed her was to be poured on the senate who were pensioners of Britain; who had sold their conscience for a price, their honour for a wage. A grand Convention was to be opened this day at the Rotunda, from which special delegates would be despatched to Lords and Commons, demanding in the name of Ireland an account of a neglected stewardship. No wonder that the populace, dazzled by an unexpected triumph, were come out with joy to see the sight. Light-hearted, despite their sorrows, the Irish are only too ready to be jubilant. But there were some looking down from out the windows who shook their heads in doubt. The scene was bright, though the November day was overcast-pretty and picturesque, vastly engaging to the eye. So also is a skull wreathed with flowers, provided that the blossoms are strewn with lavish hand. These croakers were fain to admit that the Volunteers had done wonders. The prestige of victory was theirs. Yet is it a task hedged round with peril-the wholesale upsetting of powers that be. It was not likely that England would tamely give up her prey. She was ready to take advantage of a slip. Ireland had cause to be aware of this; but Ireland thought fit to forget it. A fig for England! she was a turnip-spectre illumined by a rushlight. A new era was dawning. Even the schisms of party-bigotry had yielded for a moment to the common weal. Catholics and Protestants had exchanged the kiss of Judas; and Dublin resigned herself to sottish conviviality.

Hark! The thunder of artillery. The first procession is on its way. It is that of the Viceroy, who, attended by as many peers as he can muster, will solemnly protest against the new-fledged insolence of a domineering soldiery who dare to set their house in order and sweep away the cobwebs. He will make a pompous progress round the promenade of Stephen's Green; thence by the chief streets and quays to King William's statue, where he will gravely descend from his equipage and bow to the Protestant Juggernaut. This awful ceremony over, he will walk on foot to the House of Lords hard-by, and the holiday-makers will be stricken with repentant terror. He has his private suspicions upon this subject though-a secret dread of the mob and of the College lads of Trinity; for rumour whispers that the wild youths will make a raid on him, and they have an ugly way of running-a-muck with bludgeons and heavy stones sewn in their hanging sleeves. So he has taken his precautions by establishing about the statue a bodyguard-a cordon of trusty troops-whose aggressive band has been braying since daybreak 'Protestant Boys,' 'God save the King,' and 'King William over the water.'

But the undergraduates are too much occupied at present in struggling for seats within the Commons to trouble about the English Viceroy. For the heads of the Convention are to arrive in state, and Colonel Grattan, it is said, will appear in person to impeach the Assembly of which he is a member. Their gallery is crammed to suffocation. Peers' sons with gold-braided gowns occupy the bench in front, silver-braided baronets crowd in behind. Peeresses too there are in their own place opposite, like a bevy of macaws. A sprinkling only; for most of the ladies, caring more for show than politics, prefer a window at Daly's club-house next door, where members drop in from time to time by their private passage to gossip a little and taste a dish of tea, while their wives enjoy the humours of the crowd and ogle the patriot soldiers.

What is that? A crack of musketry; a *feu de joie*, which tells that the second procession has started; that my lord of Derry is on his way to the Rotunda. And what a grand Bashaw he is, this Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry, who, more Irish than the Irish, has thrown himself heart and soul into their cause! There is little doubt of his popularity, for yells rend the air as he goes by, and hats are tossed up, and men clamber on his carriage. It is as much as his outriders can do to force aside the throng. A magnificent Bashaw entirely, with a right royal following. A prince of the Church as well

as a grandee; handsome and *débonaire*; robed from top to toe in purple silk, with diamond buttons and gold fringe about the sleeves, and monster tassels depending from each wrist. A troop of light cavalry goes before, followed by a bodyguard of parsons-dashing young sparks in cauliflower wigs. Then some five or six coaches wheeze along. Then comes my lord himself in an open landau, bowing to left and right, kissing his finger-tips to the peeresses at Daly's; and after him more Volunteers on magnificent horses and a complete rookery of clergy. He turns the corner of the House of Lords, and in front of its portico in Westmoreland Street cries a halt, to gaze with satisfaction for a moment on the broad straight vista of what now is Sackville Street, which has opened suddenly before him. As far as eye may reach-away to the Rotunda-are two long lines of gallant horsemen in all the nodding bravery of plumes and pennons-a selected squadron of Volunteers which consists wholly of private gentlemen-the pride and flower of the National Army.

When the cavalcade stops there is a stir among the peeresses, for they cannot see round the corner, and are much disgusted by the fact. A clangour of trumpets wakes the echoes of the corridors. My lords have just finished prayers, and, marvelling at the strange flourish, run in a body to the entrance. The Volunteers present arms, the bishop bows his powdered head, while a smile of triumphant vanity curls the corner of his lip, and he gives the order to proceed. The lords stand shamefaced and uneasy while the people hoot at them, and the bishop's procession-with new shouts and acclamations-crawls slowly on its way.

One of the attendant carriages has detached itself from the line and comes to a stand at Daly's. Its suite divide the mob with blows from their long canes. Two running footmen in amber silk, two pages in hunting-caps and scarlet tunics, twelve mounted liverymen with coronets upon their backs. The coach-door is flung open, and a dissipated person, looking older than his years, emerges thence, and throwing largesse to the crowd, goes languidly upstairs to join the ladies.

It is my Lord Glandore of Strogue and Ennishowen, and the party up at the window to which he nods is his family. That tall refined lady of forty or thereabouts who acknowledges by a cold bow his lordship's careless salute is the Countess of Glandore (mark her well; for we shall see much of her). She has a high nose, thin lips, a querulous expression, and a quantity of built-up hair which shows tawny through its powder. She will remind you of Zucchero's portrait of Queen Bess. There is the same uncompromising mouth and pinched nostril, colourless face and haughty brow. You will wonder whether she is a bad woman or one who has suffered much; whether the wealth amid which she lives has hardened her, or whether troubles kept at bay by pride have darkened the daylight in her eyes. Stay! as your attention is turned to them you will be struck by their haggard weariness. If she is addressed suddenly their pupils dilate with a movement of fear. She sighs too at times-a tired sigh like Lady Macbeth's, as though a weight were laid on her too heavy for those aristocratic shoulders to endure. What is it that frets my lady's spirit? It cannot be my lord's unfaithfulness (though truly he's a sad rake), for this happy pair settled long since to pursue each a solitary road. Neither can it be the carking care of money troubles, such as afflict so many Irish nobles, for all the world knows that my Lord Glandore-the Pirate Earl, as he is called-is immensely wealthy, possessing a hoary old abbey which has dipped its feet in Dublin Bay for ages, and vast estates in Derry and Donegal, away in the far north.

Why the Pirate Earl? Because both his houses are on the sea; because his claret, which is of the best and poured forth like water, is brought in his own yacht from the Isle of Man, without troubling the excise; because the founder of the family-Sir Amorey Crosbie, who dislodged the Danes in 1177-was a pirate by calling; and because the Crosbies of Glandore have dutifully exhibited piratical proclivities ever since. Not that the present earl looks like a sea-faring evil-doer, with his sallow effeminate countenance and coquettish uniform. He is a high-bred, highly-polished, devil-may-care, reckless Irish peer, who, at a moment's notice, would pink his enemy in the street, or beat the watch, or bait a bull, or set a main of cocks a-spurring, or wrong a wench, or break his neck over a stone wall from sheer bravado-after the lively fashion of his order at the period. Before he came into the title

he was known as fighting Crosbie. The tales told of his vagaries would set your humdrum modern hair on end-of how he pistolled his whipper-in because he lost a fox, and then set about preparing an islet of his on the Atlantic for a siege; of how he sent my Lord North a douceur of five thousand pounds as the price of pardon, and reappeared in Dublin as a hero; of how, when the earldom fell to him, he settled down by eloping with Miss Wolfe, or rather by carrying her off *vi et armis*, as was the amiable habit of young bloods. It was a singular Irish custom, since happily exploded, that of winning a bride by force, as the Sabine maidens were won. Yet it obtained in many parts of Ireland by general consent till the middle of the eighteenth century. Abduction clubs existed whose object was the counteracting of unjust freaks of fortune by tying up heiresses to penniless sparks. Some of the young ladies (notably the two celebrated Misses Kennedy) objected to the process, while most of them found in the prospect of it a pleasing excitement. Irish girls have always had a spice of the devil in them. It is not surprising that they should have looked kindly upon men who risked life and liberty for their sweet sakes.

Lord Glandore followed the prevailing fashion, carried off Miss Wolfe to his wild isle in Donegal, and society said it was well done. She was no heiress, but that too was well, for my lord was rich enough for both. The parson of Letterkenny was summoned to the islet to tie the knot (it was unmodish for persons of quality to be married in a church), and a year later the twain returned to the metropolis, with a baby heir and every prospect of future happiness. But somehow there was a gulf between them. Young, rich, worshipped, they were not happy. My lord went back to his old ways-drinking, hunting, fighting, wenching-my lady moped. Six years later another son was born to them, whose advent, strange to say, instead of being a blessing, was a curse, and divided the ill-assorted pair still further. Each shrined a son as special favourite, my lord taking to his bosom the younger, Terence-whilst my lady doted with a hungry love upon the elder, Shane. My lord, out of perversity maybe, swore that Shane was stupid and viciously inclined, unworthy to inherit the honours of Sir Amorey. My lady, spiteful perchance through heartache, devoured her darling with embraces, adored the ground he trod on, kissed in private the baby stockings he had outgrown, the toys he had thrown aside; and seemed to grudge the younger one the very meat which nourished him. This hint given, you can mark how the case stands as my lord enters the upper room at Daly's. Shane, a handsome, delicate youth, far up in his teens, retires nervously behind his mother, whilst Terence, a chubby child of twelve, runs forward with a shout to search his father's pocket for good things. What a pity, you think no doubt, for a family to whom fortune has been so generous to be divided in so singular a manner.

'What!' cries my lord, as, laughing, he tosses the lad into the air. 'More comfits? No, no. They'd ruin thy pretty teeth, to say nothing of thy stomach. Go play with mammy's bayonet. By-and-by thou shalt have sword and pistol of thine own-aye, and a horse to ride-a dozen of them!' And the boy, without fear, obeys the odd behest, for he knows that in his father's presence my lady dares not chide him, albeit she makes no pretence of love. He takes the dainty weapon from its sheath and makes passes at his big brother with it; for my Lady Glandore, like many another patriotic peeress, wears a toy-bayonet at her side, just as she wears the scarlet jacket piped with black of her husband's regiment, the high black stock, and a headdress resembling its helmet.

Let us survey the remaining members of the family. The little girl, who looks unmoved out of great brown eyes at the glancing weapon's sheen, is first cousin to the boys; daughter of my lady's brother, honest Arthur Wolfe, who, leaning against the casement, smiles down upon the crowd. He is, folks say, a lawyer of promise, though not gifted. Rumour even whispers that if Fitzgibbon should become lord chancellor, Mr. Wolfe would succeed to the post of attorney-general. Not by reason of his talents, for Arthur, though plodding and upright, can never hope to hold his own at the Irish Bar by his wits. There are too many resin torches about for his horn lantern to make much show. But then you see he is of gentle blood, and influence is of more practical worth than talent. His sister, who loves him fondly, is Countess of Glandore, which fact may be counted unto him as equivalent to much cleverness. He knows that he is not bright, and is honest enough to revere in others the genius

which is denied to himself. That is the reason why, not heeding my lord's entrance, he bows eagerly to somebody in the street, and bids his little daughter kiss her hand and nod.

My lady, to avoid looking at her husband, follows his eyes and exclaims, with a contraction of her brows:

'Good heavens, Arthur! who in the world's your friend? He looks like a grimy monkey in beggar's rags! Sure you can't know the scarecrow?'

'That is one of the cleverest men in Dublin,' returns her brother. 'He'll make a show some day. Even the arrogant Fitzgibbon, before whose eye the Viceroy quails, is afraid of that dirty little man. That is John Philpot Curran, M.P. for Kilbeggan, who has just taken silk. The staunchest, worthiest, wittiest, ugliest lawyer in all Ireland.'

'Curran!' echoed my lord with curiosity; 'I've heard of him. He dared t'other day to flout Fitzgibbon himself in parliament, and the ceiling didn't crumble. Let's have him up; he may divert us.'

But Curran took no heed of Arthur's beckoning. He knew that his exterior was homely, and moreover liked not the society of lords and ladies. Born of the lower class, he loved them for their sufferings, identified himself with their wrongs, and was wont frequently to say that 'twixt the nobles and the people there was an impassable abyss. Besides, though brave as a lion, he respected his skin somewhat, and knew that my lord was as likely as not to prod him with a rapier-point if he ventured on a sally which was beyond his aristocratic comprehension. Turning, therefore, to a young man who was his companion, he whispered:

'Let us be off, Theobald. The likes of us are too humble for such company,' and was making good his retreat, when he heard the imperious voice shout out:

'Bring him here, I say-some of you-shoeblacks, chairmen, somebody-or by the Hokey ye'll taste of my rascal-thrasher.'

Then, amused at the conceit of being summoned like a lackey, he shrugged his round shoulders, and saying, 'Isn't it wondrous, Theobald, how these spoilt pets of fortune rule us!' turned into Daly's with his comrade, and was ushered up the stairs.

Mr. Wolfe gave a hand to each of the new-comers, and presented them to his sister. 'Mr. Curran's name is sufficient passport to your favour,' he said, in his gentle way. 'This young man is my godson and *protégé*, also at the bar-Theobald Wolfe Tone;' then added in a whisper, 'son of the coach-maker of whom you have heard me speak. A stout-souled young fellow, if a trifle hotheaded and romantic.'

All the peeresses turned from the windows to look at Mr. Curran, whose boldness in asserting popular views was bringing him steadily to the front, while his intimacy with Grattan (the popular hero) caused him to be treated with a respect which his mean aspect hardly warranted. In person he was short, thin, ungraceful. His complexion had the same muddy tinge which distinguished Dean Swift's, and his hair lay in ragged masses of jet black about his square brows, unrestrained by bow or ribbon. His features were coarse and heavy in repose, but when thought illumined his humorous eye there was a sudden gush of mind into his countenance which dilated every fibre with the glow of sacred fire. As a companion he was unrivalled both as wit and *raconteur*, which may account for my lord's sudden whim of civility to the low-born advocate; but there was also a profound undercurrent of melancholy (deeper than that which is common to all Irishmen) which seemed to tell prophetically of those terrible nights and days, as yet on the dim horizon of coming years, when he should wrestle hand to hand with Moloch for the blood of his victims till sweat would pour down his forehead and his soul would faint with despair. By God's mercy the future is a closed book to us; and Curran knew not the agony which lay in wait for him, though even now he was suspicious of the joy that intoxicated Dublin.

'Well, gentlemen,' remarked his lordship, amiably; 'this is a glorious day for Ireland, is it not? Her sons have united. She stands redeemed and disenthralled. The work is nearly finished. Thanks to Mr. Grattan and the Bishop of Derry, we are once more a nation. I vow it is a pretty sight.'

'How long will it last?' asked Curran, with a dubious headshake. 'That gorgeous bishop is a charlatan, I fear. We're only a ladder in his hand, to be kicked over by-and-by. All this is hollow, for in the hubbub the real danger is forgotten.'

'To unwind a wrong knit up through many centuries is no easy matter,' assented Arthur Wolfe.

'It's done with, and there's an end of it,' decided his lordship, who was not good at argument. 'If the parliament submits with grace to the new *régime*, then we shall have all we want.'

'There's the Penal Code still,' returned Curran, shaking his head, while Theobald, his young companion, sighed. 'Four-fifths of the nation remains in slavery. The accursed Penal Code stands yet, with menace at the cradle of the Catholic, with threats at his bridal bed, with triumph beside his coffin. I can hardly expect your lordship to join in my indignation, for you are a member of the Protestant Englishry, and as such look with contempt on such as we. The relation of the victorious minority to the vanquished majority remains as disgracefully the same as ever. It is that of the first William's followers to the Saxon churls, of the cohorts of Cortès to the Indians of Peru. Depend upon it, that till the Catholics are emancipated from their serfdom there can be no real peace for Ireland.'

Theobald, whom his godfather had charged with a tendency to romance, here blurted out with the self-sufficiency of youth, 'United! of course not. How can a work stand which will benefit the few and; not the many? This movement is for a faction, not for a people. Look at that statue there, with the idiots marching round it! It is the accepted symbol of a persecution as vile as any that disgraced the Inquisition! I'd like to drag it down. It's a Juggernaut that has crushed our spirit out. The Volunteers have set us free, have they? Yet no Catholic may carry arms, no Catholic may hold a post more important than that of village rat-catcher; no Catholic may publicly receive the first rudiments of education. If he knows how to read he has picked up his learning under a hedge, in fear and trembling; he's on the level of the beast; yet has he a soul as we have, and is, besides, the original possessor of the soil!'

The young man (pale-faced he was, and slight of build) stopped abruptly and turned red, for my lady's look was fixed on him with undisguised displeasure.

'I beg pardon,' he stammered, 'but I feel strongly-'

'Are you a Roman Catholic?' she asked.

'No,' replied her brother for him, as he patted the scapegrace on the shoulder. 'But he is bitten with a mania to become a champion of the oppressed. He has written burning pamphlets, which, though I cannot quite approve of them, I am bound to confess have merit.'

'That have they!' said Curran, warmly. 'The enthusiasm's there, and the cause is good. But if a man would sleep on roses he had best leave it alone, for anguish will be the certain portion of him who'd fight the Penal Code. Modern patriotism consists too much of eating and drinking and fine clothes to be of real worth.'

'I believe you are too convivially disposed to object to a good dinner!' laughed Lord Glandore. 'There's a power of cant in these patriotic views. As regards us Englishry, the inferiority of our numbers is more than compensated by commanding vigour and organisation. It's a law of nature that a weak vessel should give way before a strong one. History tells us that our ancestors, the English colonists, sturdy to begin with, were compelled by their position to cultivate energy and perseverance, while the aborigines never worked till they felt the pangs of hunger, and were content to lie down in the straw beside their cattle. The Catholics are the helot class. Let them prove themselves worthy of consideration if they can.'

'The Irish Catholics of ability,' returned the neophyte, 'are at Versailles or Ildefonso, driven from here long since.'

'False reasoning, my lord,' said doughty Curran. 'The "Englishry," as you call them, are the servants of England. Their interests are the same, because England pays them well. How can a nation's limbs obey her will if it is weighed to the earth by gyves? First knock off the irons, then bid her stand upon her feet. As the boy says, folks are too fond of prancing round that statue. I don't myself

see a way out of the darkness. Why should it not be given to him, and such as he, to lead us from the labyrinth?'

My lord wished he had not summoned these low persons. Before he could reply the young man said sadly:

'What can a lawyer do but prose?'

And Arthur Wolfe, perceiving a storm brewing, cried out with nervous merriment:

'What! harping on the old string, Theobald? Still pining for a military frock and helmet? Boy, boy! Look at the pageant that is spread before our eyes. The triumph of this day is due to its bloodlessness. This grand array would not disgrace its cloth, I'm sure, in the battle; but happily success has been achieved by moral force alone. Right is might with the Volunteers. May their swords never leave their scabbards!'

'You cannot deny,' persisted the froward youth, 'that yonder battalions would be a grander sight if they really represented the nation without regard to creed-if, for example, every other man among them was a Catholic!'

My lord looked cross, my lady black as thunder, so Wolfe, the peacemaker, struck in again as he twisted his fingers in his little daughter's curls.

'I agree that it is monstrous,' he said, with hesitation, 'that three million men with souls should be plough-horses for conscience' sake. In these days it's a scandal. Sister, you must admit that. Perhaps we are entering on a better time. A reformed parliament, if you can get it, will no doubt emancipate the Catholics. You are a hare-brained lad, my godson; but here is a Catholic little girl who shall thank you. Doreen, my treasure, you may shake hands with Theobald.'

My lord waxed peevish, and drummed his fingers on the shutters and yawned in the face of Curran, for he sniffed in the wind a quarrel which would bore him. If folks would only refrain, he thought, from gabbling about these Catholics, what a comfort it would be. My lady, usually disagreeable, was threatening a scene; for they had got on the one subject which set all the family agog. Her spouse wished heartily that she would retire to the family vault, or be less ill-tempered; for what can be more odious than a snappish better-half?

Religious differences had set the country by the ears ever since the Reformation, turning father against son, kinsman against kinsman; and this especial family was no exception to the rule. Lady Glandore hated the Papists with all the energy of one whose soul is filled with gall, and who lacks a fitting outlet for its bitterness. What must then have been her feelings when, ten years before the opening of this chronicle, her only brother, whom she loved, thought fit to wed a Catholic? It was a weak, faded chit of a thing who lived for a year after her marriage in terror of my lady, gave birth to a daughter and then died. The countess, who had endured her existence under protest, was glad at least that she was well behaved enough to die; some people said indeed that she had frightened Arthur's submissive wife into her untimely grave. Be this as it may, the incubus removed, my lady girded up her loins for the effacing of the blot on the escutcheon. The puling slut was gone-that was a mercy. Why had she not proved barren? There was still a way of setting matters straight. Little Doreen must be washed clean from Papist mummeries, and received into the bosom of THE Church, and the world would forget in course of time how the young lawyer, usually as soft as wax, had flown in the face of his belongings. To her horror and amazement Arthur for once proved adamant-he who had always given way rather than break a lance in the lists-sternly commanding his sister to hold her tongue. His Papist wife, whom he regretted sorely, had exacted a promise on her deathbed that Doreen should be brought up in her mother's faith, and a Papist Doreen should be, he swore, at least till she arrived at an age to settle the question for herself. He would be glad though, he continued, seeing with pain how shocked my lady looked, if in her sisterly affection she would lay prejudice aside and help to rear the child; for the sharpest of men, as all the world knows, is no better than a fool in dealing with babies. And so it befell that the Countess of Glandore, the haughty chatelaine who scoffed at 'mummeries' and worshipped King William as champion of the Faith, nourished a

scorpion in her bosom for Arthur's sake, and permitted the little scarlet lady to consort with her own lads. My lady's hatred of the national creed had a more bitter cause even than class prejudice. She had a private and absorbing reason for it, more feminine than theological. That reason was-a woman, and a rival-a certain Madam Gillin, widow of a small shopkeeper, with whom the rakish earl chose to be too familiar. Vainly she had swallowed her pride to the extent of begging him to respect his wife in public. He had called her names, bidding her mind her distaff; then had carried in mischief the story to his love, who set herself straightway to be revenged upon my lady.

'The stuck-up bit of buckram's a half-caste at the best!' she had exclaimed. 'She forgets that a Cromwellian trooper was her ancestor, whilst I can trace my lineage from a race of kings. The blood of Ollam Fodlah's in my veins. My forefathers were reigning princes before Anno Domini was thought of, and received baptism at the hands of St. Columba before Erin was a land of bondage. It is seldom that one of my faith can bring sorrow on one of hers; and, please the pigs, I'll not miss my opportunity.'

And indeed Madam Gillin showed all a woman's ingenuity in torturing another. She dragged my lord, who was nothing loth, at her kirtle strings, all through Dublin; paraded him everywhere as her own chattel; kept him dangling by her side at ridottos and masquerades, till my lady, whose mainspring was pride, dared not to show her face at Smock Alley or Fishamble Street, or even on the public drive of Stephen's Green, for fear of being insulted by this Popish hussy. She strove to find comfort in her family, as many an outraged woman does, but that was worse than all; for she looked with groaning on her eldest born, whom his father could not endure, then at that rosy, chubby younger one, and loathed him. Truly the life of the Countess of Glandore was as bran in the mouth to her, despite the wealth of my lord, his great position, and his influence. No wonder if there was an expression of settled weariness about those handsome eyes and peevish lines about her jaded mouth.

My lord drummed his white fingers impatiently-the dry-skinned fingers that mark the libertine-because of all things he hated being bored, and knew that religious discussions would bring reproaches anent Gillin. It was with relief that he beheld a gay coach half-filled with flowers, swaying in the crowd below, which contained the graces *en titre* of Dublin, Darkey Kelly, Peg Plunkett, and Maria Llewellyn-over-painted, over-feathered, over-dressed, like a *parterre* of full-blown peonies. Their apparition caused a diversion at the windows. All the peeresses stared stonily through gold-rimmed glasses as the trio passed with the calm impertinence of high-born fine ladies, for it stirreth the curiosity of the most *blasée* Ariadne to mark what manner of female it is who hath robbed her of her Theseus. My lord roared with laughter to see the sorry fashion in which the houris bore the ordeal, vowing 'fore Gad that he must go help them with his countenance; for there is naught so discomfiting to a fair one who is frail as a public display of contempt from one who is not. Out he sallied, therefore, drawing his sword as a hint for the scum to clear a passage; but, ere he could reach the Graces, they were borne away by the stream, and their coach had made way for a noddy, in which sat a comely woman, with bright mouse-like eyes, and a complexion of milk and roses. When the newcomer observed my lord buffeting in her direction, her lips parted in a gratified smile, and she cast a glance of triumph at the club-house; for she knew that at a window there a certain high nose might be discerned, which set her teeth on edge-set in a white scornful face, whose aspect made her blood to boil.

'That woman again!' my lady was heard to murmur, as she abruptly quitted her place. 'The globe's not large enough for her and me. I hate the baggage!'

Mr. Curran, who, if untidy and unkempt, was a man of the world and shrewd withal, tried a little joke by way of clearing the sulphur from the atmosphere; but it fell quite flat, and he looked round with a wistful air of apology as a dog does that has wagged his tail inopportunely.

'Let's be off, Theobald, 'he suggested. 'Whatever can the Volunteers be doing? Why does their return procession tarry? They should be here by this, for 'tis past three. Ah, here's Fitzgibbon, the high and mighty Lucifer, who'd wipe his shoes upon us if he dared. Maybe he brings us news.'

Instinctively everybody made way for Fitzgibbon, the brilliant statesman who already swept all before him. Even his enemies admitted his ability, whilst deploring his flagrant errors. In his fitful nature good and evil were ever struggling for the mastery. Was he destined to achieve perennial fame, or doomed to eternal obloquy? Liberal, hospitable, munificent, he was; but unscrupulous to boot, and arrogant and domineering. A man who must become a prodigious success, or an awful ruin. For him was no middle path. Which was it to be? Opinion was divided; but as at present his star was in the ascendant, his foes were outnumbered by his friends.

This man who aspired to be chancellor, and as such to direct the Privy Council, was dark, of middle height, with a sharp hatchet face and oblique cast of eye. No one could be pleasanter or more flashy than Fitzgibbon if he chose, for he united the manners of a grand seigneur with some culture, and could keep his temper under admirable control. But he preferred always to browbeat rather than conciliate, though he was a master of diplomacy, if such became worth his while. On the present occasion he strode hastily into the room as though Daly's was his private property, and, with a polished obeisance to the peeresses, flourished a perfumed kerchief.

'It's all over for the present,' he cried, with a harsh chuckle. 'The fatuous fools have postponed their grand coup till to-morrow, not perceiving that dissension is already at work among them. Oh, these Irish! They are only fit to burrow in holes and dig roots out of the earth. There is no keeping them in unison for two consecutive minutes. The sooner England swallows them the better, the silly donkeys!'

'I believe your honour is an Irishman?' asked Curran, dryly.

'Bedlamites, one and all, who crave for the impossible. I've no patience with them.' Here Mr. Fitzgibbon helped himself to a pinch from my lady's snuffbox.

'Bedad, ye're right,' sneered Curran. 'We're absurd to pretend to a heart and ventricles all to ourselves. We should be grateful-mere Irish-to be by favour the Great Toe of an empire!'

'England has always betrayed us!' cried out young Tone, the neophyte. 'Knowing we're hungry, she throws poisoned bones to us. The only way to set right our parliament will be to break with England altogether!'

The bold sentiment set all the peeresses tittering. They cackled of freedom, and were bedizened in smart uniforms; yet were there few of these noble ladies whose hearts were really with the new crusade. It was vastly diverting to hear this David attacking the great Goliath. They settled their skirts to see fair play; but Fitzgibbon for once was ungallant.

'Your godson, isn't it, Wolfe?' he remarked carelessly. 'Send for the child's nurse that he may be put to bed.'

He could not sweep Curran aside in this magnificent fashion, so he elected to be unaware of his presence. He disliked the little advocate because he feared him. Yes, the would-be aristocrat was mortally afraid of the plebeian-a privilege which he accorded to few men on earth. The two had risen at the Bar side by side, till the influence which Fitzgibbon could command gave him an advantage which his undoubted talent enabled him to keep. With sure and steady progress he forced himself above his fellows, and won the adulation which accompanies success. It was his crumpled roseleaf that Curran should be keen enough to gauge his real value; that he should despise him as a mountebank, that he should read within his heart that personal ambition was his motive-spring, not love of country. As it happened, Curran was a master of invective, and no niggard of his shafts; so Fitzgibbon tried flattery, and got jeered at for his pains, which produced a hurricane of sarcasm. It was with rage that he accepted at last a fact. If there was one person who could stop his soaring Pegasus in full career, that man was common-looking Curran. So the arrogant candidate for honours marked out his enemy as one who must be watched, and if possible circumvented; and the more he watched the more he detested that odious little creature.

He did not choose therefore to take umbrage at his taunts; but, mindful of the adage that to be anhungered is to be cross, announced that a collation awaited the pleasure of their ladyships. Now

patriotism is one thing, and fine clothes another; but there are times when cold beef will bear the palm from either. So was it on this occasion. The peeresses rose up with unromantic unanimity at the mere mention of cold beef, seizing each the arm of the nearest gentleman; and so Curran and his young friend, being unable to escape, found themselves standing presently before a well-furnished board, hemmed in on either side by a lady of high rank.

The showy Fitzgibbon was master of the situation, for Curran was not a lady's man, and the neophyte in such noble company was sheepish. His harsh voice rose unchallenged in polished periods as he explained between two mouthfuls the mess the Volunteers were making. Curran smiled at his imprudence; for was he not flinging dirt at the popular idol-that glittering national army which had worked such miracles; whose many-coloured uniforms sparkled in every street, on the very backs of the dainty dames who looked up at him surprised?

'No good will come of it,' cried the contemptuous great man, as he waved a silver tankard. 'They are acting illegally; are pausing before they dare to overthrow constitutional authority, as the regicides did before they chopped off Charles's head. A little ham, my lady? No? Do, to please me. Will you, my dear Curran? Just a little skelp? Pray do, for you look as if you'd eat me raw; and that young man too. I vow he is a cannibal. What was I saying? He who vilifies those who are in power is sure of an audience, you know. Positively, this regeneration scheme is laughable, quite laughable!'

'Stop your friend,' said some one to Curran, 'or there'll be swords drawn before the ladies;' to which the other answered, 'Friend! No friend of mine, or indeed of any one except himself, the maniac incendiary! Ask Arthur Wolfe. Perhaps he will interfere.'

But Fitzgibbon was not acting without a purpose. He ate his ham with studied nonchalance, shaking back his ruffles with unrivalled grace; and he at least was sorry when an unexpected circumstance occurred which withdrew the attention of his audience from himself and his insidious talk.

There was a mighty noise without which shook the windows. The undergraduates, hearing that the battle was postponed, poured forth from their gallery in the Commons with the fury of a pent-up river suddenly let loose. They had wasted their time and energies. Their lithe young limbs were cramped. Something must be done to set the blood dancing through their veins again. What did they behold as they dashed out into the street? Peg Plunkett and her companions flirting with soldiers-not Volunteers, but actually English soldiers, members of the Viceroy's bodyguard. It must never be said that Irish Phrynes gave their favours to English soldiers-at such a time too! Fie on them for graceless harlots! Their feathers should be plucked out-they should be ducked-the English Lotharios should be well drubbed-driven back to the Castle with contumely and bloody noses. Hurrah! Pack a stone in the sleeve and have at them, the spalpeens! It was well for the Viceroy that he went home when he did, without strutting, as he proposed to do, once more round Juggernaut; or he would certainly have been assaulted by the mischievous collegians, and a serious riot would have been the consequence. But Darkey Kelly and Maria Llewellyn! Pooh! it served them right, and no one pitied them. At all events, the peeresses (mothers of the lads) said so, as they leisurely returned to the discussion of cold beef and politics. They were too well broken to street brawls to care much about a stampede of college youths. But that Fitzgibbon should presume to attack the national army was too bad, and touched them home. None of them dared admit that English gold was more precious than national freedom. There are secrets that for very shame we would go any lengths rather than divulge. These ladies made believe to be terribly shocked-threatened to assail the adventurous wight like bewitching Amazons; but he knew them too well to be alarmed. If Curran could read him, he could read the peeresses; and neither subject was an edifying one for investigation.

CHAPTER II.
RETROSPECT

The brief career of the Volunteer army stands as a unique example for students of history to marvel at. Urged by a strange series of events, Ireland, like Cinderella, rose up from her dustheap, and was clad by a fairy in gorgeous garments. All at once she flung aside her mop, and demanded to be raised from the three-legged stool in the scullery to the daïs whereon her wicked sister sat. And the wicked sister, being at the time sorely put about through her own misconduct, embraced her drudge with effusion on each cheek, instead of belabouring her with a broom, as had been her pleasant way, vowing that the straw pallet and short commons of a lifetime were all a mistake, and that nought but samite and diamonds of the first water were good enough for the sweet girl. She killed the fatted calf, and drew a fine robe out of lavender, and grinned as many a spiteful woman will whom rage is consuming inwardly, registering at the same time a secret oath to drub the saucy minx when occasion should serve-a not uncommon practice among ladies.

Events followed one another in this wise. France, natural enemy of England, had suffered sore tribulation at the hands of my Lord Chatham, who routed her armies and sunk her ships, and filled his prisons with the flower of her youth. But my Lord Chatham's mighty spirit succumbed to chronic gout; an incompetent minister took his place, whose folly lashed the young colonies of America to rebellion, and France saw with joy such a blow struck across the face of her too prosperous rival as brought her reeling to her knees. This was the moment for reprisals. France breathed again. Quick! she said, a deft scheme of revenge! How shall we find out the weakest point? We will invade Ireland which is defenceless, and so establish a raw in the very flank of our enemy. But Ireland had no idea of tamely submitting to a hostile French occupation. Unhappily for her, she was never completely conquered, and was ever over-fond of nourishing wild hopes of independence-of formal recognition as a nation among nations. To become a slave to France would be no improvement upon her present slavery, and she had already been a subject of conflict for centuries. She cried out therefore to the wicked sister, 'Save me from invasion. Send me men to garrison my fortresses; ships to protect my harbours.' But England turned a deaf ear, being herself in a dire strait; bandaging her own limbs, nursing her own wounds. 'Then,' said Cinderella, 'give me arms at least. I come of a good fighting stock, and will even make shift in the emergency to defend myself.' Here were the horns of a dilemma. Unarmed and undefended, Ireland would of a surety fall an easy prey to France, which would be a serious mishap indeed. On the other hand, deliberately to place a weapon in the grasp of a young sister whom we have wronged and hectored all her life, and who ominously reminds us that though slavery has curbed her spirit she comes of a good fighting stock, is surely rash. Forgiveness of injuries savours too much of heaven for mere daughters of earth, and it is more than probable that, having repulsed the invader, this child of warlike sires will seize the opportunity to smite us under our own fifth rib. However, there was nothing for it but to risk that danger; so England sent over with a good grace a quantity of arms, and secretly vowed to whip the naughty jade on a later day for having been the innocent cause of the difficulty.

That which Britain feared took place. For six hundred years she had persistently been sowing dragons' teeth in the Isle of Saints, and perseveringly watering them with blood; and lo, in a night, they rose up armed men-a threatening host of warriors, who with one voice demanded their just rights, unjustly withheld so long. England bit her lips, and parleyed. She felt herself the laughingstock of Europe, and her humiliation was rendered doubly acute by the dignified bearing of the new-born battalions. They did not bully; they did not revile. They calmly claimed their own, with the least little click of a well-polished firelock, the slightest flutter of a green silk banner. 'To suit your own selfish ends,' they declared, 'you have robbed us of our trade and suborned our legislature. Give us back our

trade; permit us to reform our senate. You have stripped us of our commerce piecemeal. Return it, to the last shred. In the days of the first Tudor, when you were strong and we were weak, a decree of Sir E. Poyning's became law, whereby we were to be ruled henceforth from distant London. The operation of all English statutes was to extend to Ireland; the previous consent of an English Council was necessary to render legal acts passed at home. By the 6th of George III. this was made absolute; the Irish senate was decreed to be a chapel of ease to that of Westminster. When we were weak our gyves were riveted tightly upon our legs. Now our conditions are reversed; yet claim we nothing but our own. Bring forth the anvil and the hammer. Strike off with your own hand these fetters, for we will wear no bonds but those of equal fellowship. Give us a free constitution and free trade, and let bygones be bygones.'

Attentive Europe admired the position of Ireland at this moment. A change was creeping across the world of which this situation was a natural result. A cloud, like a man's hand, had arisen on the horizon of America, which in time was to overshadow the globe. A warlike fever possessed the Irish people. They became imbued with an all-engrossing fervour, an epidemic of patriotism. The important question was, could they keep it up? Irish veterans, who had fought under Washington, returned home invalided, to thrill their audience by the peat fire with tales that sounded like fairy lore of Liberty and Fraternity and Freedom of Conscience; to whisper that their country was a nation, not a shire; that an end must be put to bigotry, that accursed twin-sister of religion; that if the King of England wished to rule the Isle of Saints, he must do so henceforth by right of his Irish, not his English, crown, governing each kingdom by distinct laws according to its case.

High and low were stricken with the new enthusiasm; some generously, some driven by shame to assume a virtue which they had not. Laird, squire, and shopkeeper-all donned the Volunteer uniform. All looked, or affected to look, to the eagle of America as a symbol of a new hope. A race of serfs were transformed into a nation of soldiers. Many really thought themselves sincere who fell away when their own interests became involved.

And this sudden upheaving was at first without danger to the body politic. The French Revolution, with its overturning of social grades, had yet to come. Classes found themselves for a brief space thrown together, between whom usually a great gulf was fixed, and the temporary commingling was, by giving a new direction to the mind, for the mutual benefit of both. The very singularity of such a state of things (in an age before democratic principles began to obtain) showed a seriousness of purpose which caused the ruling spirits of the new military association to carry all before them by the impetus of self-respect. Their mother had suffered bitterly and long; no one denied that. The time was come for her rescue. The task was arduous, but the cause was excellent. It behoved her sons then to raise their minds above the trammels of the earth-to become Sir Galahads-for was not their task to the full as pious as the mystic quest after the Grail? It behoved them, while the holy fervour lasted (alas! man is unstable at the best, and the Irishman more so than most), to set their house thoroughly in order, and the powerless English Cabinet from across the Channel watched the operation with anxiety.

When a wedge is inserted in so unnatural a bundle as this was, it will speedily fall asunder, and that which was a formidable coalition will be reduced to a ridiculous wreck. Who was to insert the wedge? Would time alone do it, or would perfidious aid from London be required? That it should be inserted somehow, was decided *nem. con*. in London.

Alas! in the moment of supreme triumph, whilst the Volunteers caracole so bravely down Sackville Street, we may detect grave symptoms of danger, which argus-eyed England scans with hope, while the Viceroy is laughing in the Castle.

Ireland had during ages been the butt of fortune. A train of English kings had entreated her evilly, and the native bards reviewed the sad story with untiring zeal.

First they sang of Norman thieves-turbulent barons who, troublesome at home, were despatched to get rid of superfluous energy at the expense of Keltic princes. They slurred over the reign of the first

Edward, for with him came a deceptive ray of hope. He threatened to visit the island in person. Had he done so, he would have quelled the Irish thoroughly, as he did the Welsh, and so have nipped their delusive dream of freedom in the bud. The most aristocratic race in the world would have become loyal, for they would have seen the face of their lord, and the face of royalty is as a sun unto them. But they did not become loyal, for they saw their lord's face as little then as they see that of their lady now. Nor he, nor any of the brave Plantagenets ever came to Ireland, for they were pursuing an *ignis fatuus* in France, instead of attending to their own business at home. Henry V. and Edward III. sought fame, which might not be obtained, they thought, by obscure squabbling with saffron-mantled savages in a barbarous dependency.

Events shuffled along in slipshod, careless fashion, till the period when crook-backed Richard met his end at Bosworth. By that time a mixed population held undisputed possession of the island-a bastard race, half Keltic, half Norman. The 'English of the Pale,' or early settlers, had found Irish brides. They wore the saffron mantle and spoke the Keltish tongue. But the first Tudor, who had no sympathy with savages, declared 'this might not be.' He had a spite against them which he was but too glad to gratify, for in the absence of a king they had crowned an ape-or rather an impostor, Simnel. In virtuous indignation, he vowed that it was revolting to see noble knights reduced to the serfs' level; to which the chiefs replied with one accord:

'We are no serfs, but freemen, as ye are yourselves; for Ireland was never conquered, though she did lip-homage.'

The Tudor did not choose to be so bearded. 'Indeed! You were not conquered?' he said, surprised. 'I will send commissioners who shall straightway solve for me this riddle.' And he sent Sir Edward Poynings, who arrived in state, with special instructions to set the chiefs a-quarrelling.

The guileless princes received the commissioner cordially, who diligently sowed dissensions, setting race against race, by declaring (in 1494) that none of English blood might wed a Keltic wife, or hold communion with the Irishry, or even learn their tongue. O'Neil was pitted against Geraldine, Desmond against Tyrone, with double-faced advice; and, his dastardly commission done, Sir Edward bowed himself away with smiles, leaving behind the celebrated act which bears his name, and which was as a red rag between the nations ever after, till it was taken in hand by the Volunteers.

Up to this moment the frequent bickerings which disturbed the fellowship of the two islands were concerning land or race; but with the reign of the eighth Henry, the true demon of discord woke to wave the sword of persecution over the distracted country. The Reformation, which brought so much trouble on the world, was no kinder to the Irish than to other nations. Henry, angry with a people who would not do as they were bid, drove the natives from the holdings which their septs had held for centuries, away to the wild fastness beyond the Shannon. (A sinful scheme, which is often fathered upon Cromwell, who has much besides to answer for.) He ravaged the land with fire and sword, resolved at least that it should have the peace of death if none other was attainable; and these tactics his dutiful child Elizabeth pursued, till her dependency was a waste of blood and ashes. Like her grandfather, she had a private cause for spite. As a nation, the Irish declined to be anything but Catholics; and so, refusing to acknowledge Queen Katherine's divorce, they looked on Anne Boleyn's daughter as a bastard and a usurper. This prompted her to filial piety. Hardly was she seated on the throne at Westminster, than she summoned a parliament in Dublin, and shook her pet prayer-book at the Catholics. The religion of Christ, the meek and lowly, she preached to them in this wise. Every layman who should use any prayer-book but her pet one was to be imprisoned for a year. On each recurring Sunday, every adult of every persuasion was to attend Protestant service, or be heavily mulcted for the benefit of her treasury. Not content with crushing their faith, she let loose a horde of adventurers upon the unhappy Irish. They fought for their fields as well as their religion. One of the characteristics of her reign was a spirit of adventure, which descended in regular gamut from the loftiest heroism to the vilest cupidity. The eagles sought doubloons on the Spanish main; the vultures swept down on Ireland with ravenous beaks. Elizabeth's own deputy wrote thus to her in horror:

'From every corner of the woods did the people come, creeping on their hands, for their legs would not bear them. They looked like anatomies of death; they spake like ghosts; they did eat carrion, happy when they could find them, yea, and one another; in so much that the very carcases they spared not to scrape out of their graves.'

Indeed, Queen Bess left her dependency a reeking slaughter-house, in so abject a misery, that when her successor cleared a whole province to plant it with Scotchmen, the natives made no resistance, but plodded listlessly away. Is it surprising that their descendants should have hated England, and its truckling Anglo-Irish Senate?

In due course followed Charles I., who, with the ingrained perfidy of all the Stuarts, fleeced his Irish subjects, and then cheated them by evading the graces for which they paid their gold. His creature Strafford went too far, and they turned as worms will. There was a grand Protestant massacre in Ulster, an appalling picture of a vengeance such as a brutalised people will wreak on its oppressor; and Cromwell took advantage of this as an excuse for still further grinding down the Catholics. It was a fine opportunity to avenge the sufferings of Protestants in other lands-the affair of Nantes, Bartholomew, and so forth. He made a finished job of it, as he did of most things to which he set his shoulder. It was no felony now to slay an Irishman, whose very name was a reproach. He was well-nigh swept from off the earth. Famine and pestilence reigned together alone. Wolves roamed at will in the dismantled towns. Newly-appointed colonists refused to build the walls of shattered cities, for the stench of the rotting bodies poisoned the breeze.

It remained for Orange William and good Queen Anne (neither of whom could be expected to feel interest in Ireland) to add a finishing touch, and the Penal Code was a *chef d'œuvre*. Under its sweet influence no Catholic could dwell in Ireland save under such conditions as no man who stood erect might bear, and so there commenced an exodus of independent spirits, who flocked into the service of France and Germany, and filled the navies of Holland and of Spain. Thus did British rulers educate their dependency to loving obedience, by teaching its children to revile the name of law. Verily it is no wonder that they loathed the English; that they distrusted British amenities, and looked askance at the half-English upper class.

When the Volunteers determined to regenerate their motherland, there were two great evils with which they had to cope. Two deep plague-spots. It remained to be seen whether they were wise enough and steadfast enough to eradicate the virus. A rotten legislature, an impossible Penal Code. Could Sir Galahad reform so base a parliament? Would the champion dare to free the serfs from thraldom? The first was a Herculean labour, because both Lords and Commons drew much of their revenue from British ministers; the second was even a more Titanic task. Possession is nine points of the law, and the soil was in possession of the small knot of Protestants, who knew that their existence depended on keeping the majority in chains. Like the emigrants of the *Mayflower*, they said: 'Resolved, that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; that the Lord hath given the earth as an heritage unto His saints; and that we are His saints. *Ergo*: the earth is ours, to have and to hold by pillage and persecution, and murder, if need be, just as the chosen people of old seized and held Canaan, the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey.'

Truly the parliament was a plague-spot fit to gangrene a whole body; for it in nowise represented the nation, consisting as it did of three hundred members, seventy-two only of whom were elected by the people. The rest were nominees of large Protestant proprietors who returned members for every squalid hamlet on their estates, and kept their voters in the condition of tame dogs through a constant terror of ejectment. Of three million Catholics not one had a voice in the elections; for by law they existed not at all. Like Milton's devils they occupied no space, while the Protestant angels filled the air with their proportions.

It was said of the Irish gentry of the last century that they possessed the materials of distinguished men with the propensities of obscure ones, which is a picturesque way of admitting that they were incorrigibly idle. To indolence add poverty and a propensity for drink, and you have

a promising hotbed for the growth of every ill. The aristocratic pensioners were, as a rule, lapped in excessive luxury, which could not be kept up without extraneous help; half English by education as well as origin, they naturally leaned for protection towards the English Government.

The gentry, ignorant and sensual, were given to profuse hospitality, regardless of mortgaged acres and embarrassed lands. Dog-boys and horse-boys hung about their gates; keepers and retainers lolled upon their doorsteps, together with a posse of half-mounted poor relations-all of them too genteel to do anything useful-fishing for the speckled trout by day, drinking huge beakers of claret and quarrelling among themselves by night, till in many cases there was little left, after a few years, for the filling of a hundred mouths beyond a nominal rent-roll and the hereditary curse of idleness. Not a squire but was more or less floundering in debt, and (his sense of honour blunted by necessity) only too anxious for a little cash at any price. Government agents were always conveniently turning up ready and willing to purchase mortgages and notes of hand, which were duly stored in the coffers of the Castle as a means of prospective coercion by-and-by.

With such materials for a national 'Lords and Commons,' it is little wonder if a sudden revulsion in favour of patriotism on the part of a body of enthusiasts should threaten to set the country agog. How was the parliament to be purified? That was the rub. Was it to be exhorted to virtue gently, or flogged into improvement? The leaders of the Volunteers had carried their first point with a rush. The parliament was with them, or feigned to be so. But what if the existence of the Parliament should come to be threatened? The sincerity of its professions would be put to a crucial test. Careless lords and impecunious squires babbled of freedom and cackled of free trade, because it was become the fashion and pleased the Volunteers. What cared they for free trade? That was a question which affected the men of Ulster, to whom commerce was as lifeblood, and who indeed were the prime workers in this movement. The dissenting traders of Belfast had demanded a free trade, and British ministers had given way. Therefore Lords and Commons joined in the popular cry, and pretended that it interested them. The position was a paradox. Here was all at once a military supremacy independent of the crown, and ministers in London were compelled to countenance it. It was humiliating; but their comfort lay in this. Would the Volunteer leaders allow zeal to overstep prudence? Probably they would. They might be coaxed by crafty submission to do so. If a collision could only be brought about between a self-elected military despotism and an effete but constitutional senate, there were the materials for such a pretty quarrel as might produce a repetition of the fate of the Kilkenny cats. One would devour the other, and England would gloat over the tails. The British premier made a parade of 'doing something for Ireland' to oblige the Volunteers.

With a flourish of alarums he repealed some obnoxious laws, which graceful conduct was received in Dublin with gratitude, till somebody pointed out that Albion was at her tricks again: whilst seeming gracefully to give way, she was really strengthening her own position by establishing a new precedent on the basis of the Poynings statute, to the effect that such favours were in the gift of England's Parliament-not Ireland's-and might accordingly be withdrawn at any time. The Volunteers were furious, Albion was perfidious; the Irish senate was playing a double game, there was no use in mincing matters in the way of compromise. England must distinctly abdicate all parliamentary dominion; parliament must be remodelled on new lines. In the future the senate must be upright, zealous, independent, incorruptible; English gold must be as dross; an English coronet hold no allurement.

As might be expected, the new cry created a commotion. Patriots there were both in Lords and Commons, who were prepared to sacrifice part of their income for the general good, but they were few. If pensions were withdrawn and mortgages foreclosed and proprietors in prison, what mattered to these last a national liberty? The notion was an insult, and parliament stood at bay. But the ardour of the Volunteers would brook no dallying. Ulster, as usual, took the lead. Sharpwitted, frugal, Scotch, the battalions of the North convened a general assembly. On Feb. 15, 1782, one of the most impressive scenes which Ireland ever witnessed took place at Duncannon, where two hundred

delegated volunteers marched two and two, calm, steadfast, virtuous, determined to pledge themselves before the altar of that sacred place to measures which might save their motherland or kill her. After earnest thought, a manifesto was framed-a dignified declaration of rights and grievances, a solemn statement of the people's will, a protest against English craft and Irish corruption-inviting the armed bodies of other provinces to aid in the process of regeneration.

Can you conceive anything more glorious and touching than the quiet gathering on the promontory of Duncannon? A towering fort frowns down upon the harbour, commanding a spacious basin formed by the waters of three rivers. Imagine the simple country gentlemen, the homely squires, the traders of Belfast, abandoning for a while their vices and their quarrels, to deliberate sword in hand over the grievous shortcomings of their brethren. I see them in the gloaming, with high-collared coats and anxious faces, puzzling their poor brains over a way out of the labyrinth. The lovely land, stretched out on either side in a jagged line of coast, whose slopes had been watered to greenness with blood and tears, must haply be soaked again in the stream of war. For the last time. Once more-only once-a final sanctifying baptism which should leave it clean and sweet for evermore. They penned a temperate document-a dignified manifesto. Could they be single-minded to the end, or would discord fling her apple among them?

So soon as the delegates of the North received the concurrence of the provinces, the senate in Dublin changed its tone, for no immediate succour could be hoped from England. It affected a complete patriotism, and made believe to go all lengths with the Volunteers. Patriots-real and sham-thundered in the House, and were applauded to the echo. It was impossible to tell who was in earnest and who was not. First, said the wily senators, make it clear that we are free, and then by remodelling the Senate we will prove ourselves worthy of the gift you have bestowed. Grattan towered above all others. He spoke as one inspired, and the meshes of the web seemed to shrivel before his breath.

The army patrolled the streets, and review succeeded review in the Phœnix Park; the national artillery lined the quays. Loyalty, Dignity, Forbearance, were grouped round the god of war. All the virtues, posing around Mars, hovered in ether over Dublin. Never was a city so happy or so proud. But the English Viceroy, though outwardly perturbed, was laughing in the Castle while the ignorant people jigged.

'Fools!' he scoffed. 'The meeting at Duncannon, of which you are so vain, was but the thin end of the wedge which we were looking for. You shall be played one against the other-people against parliament and parliament against people-till you break your silly pates. We stoop to conquer, as your own Goldy hath it. A little more and you will be undone. A little, little more!'-and he was right. The Commons, with mortgages before their eyes, wavered and prevaricated. The Volunteers, exasperated, openly denounced the senate. The people, taking fire, vowed they would obey no laws, whether good or bad, which were dictated under the rose by the perfidious one. The statute-book was rent in pieces; anarchy threatened to supervene; England prepared to take possession again. But the Volunteers, sublime at this moment, came once more to the rescue. They chid the weak and reproved the strong; even formed themselves into a night-police for the security of the capital. This hour was that of pride before a fall.

In prosperity they gave way to indiscretion. Enjoying as they did an unnatural existence, for which the only excuse was transcendent virtue, it was the more needful for them to be of one mind as to a chief. But they split on this important point. One party declared for the Earl of Charlemont, an amiable nobleman of whose mediocrity it was said that his mind was without a flower or a weed; another was for my lord of Deny, a bold, unsteady prelate, who, sincere or not, was but too likely to lead his flock into a quagmire.

They wavered, when to hesitate was to be lost. They did worse; they dirtied their own nest in a public place. Each rival chief, in his struggle for supremacy, lost more than half his influence. Tongues wagged to the discredit of all parties. Sir Galahad, feeling that he was in the toils of sirens, made a prodigious effort to escape with dignity. If parliament were not remodelled the fire would end

in smoke. *Coûte qui coûte*, this must be done at once, or England would step in triumphant, and dire would be the vengeance. All hands were quarrelling. Was it already too late? A wild and desperate effort must be made to regain ground, lost by infirmity of purpose. The Volunteers, all prudence cast aside, determined to strike a blow in sledge-hammer fashion. They deliberately decided to send three hundred of their number in open and official manner to Lords and Commons, bidding them reform themselves at once; offering even to teach them how to do it. And so the extraordinary spectacle came to be seen in Dublin, of two governments-one civil, one military-sitting at the same moment in the same city-within sight of each other-each equally resolved to strain every nerve in order that the other might not live.

Sir Galahad blundered woefully! He had concentrated his attention with all his muddled might and main on the lesser instead of the greater plague-spot. 'Free Trade' had been his shibboleth, then a 'Reformed Parliament,' though how it was to be reformed he did not know. It escaped the shortness of his vision that 'Freedom of Conscience' would have been the nobler cry. Had he first freed the three million slaves from the bondage of the half million, the air would have been cleared for the disinfecting of his senate. But no. He was blind and tripped, and England saw the stumble. Well might the Viceroy laugh, while he made believe to tremble, as he thought of the Kilkenny cats.

CHAPTER III.
SHADOWS

As day waned, the Volunteers perceived that they must pass the night as watchmen if they wished the capital to be sufficiently peaceful on the morrow to attend to the parliamentary tournament. What the gownsmen intended for a frolic developed into a riot, thanks to the national love of a row and the complicated feuds which were continually breaking forth. No sooner had the undergraduates pumped upon the Graces and driven the English detachment into Castle Yard than they found themselves hemmed in by their natural enemies, the butchers of Ormond Quay, who owed the college gentlemen a grudge because they invariably took up the cudgels of the Liberty-lads when these sworn foes thought fit to have a brush.

The weavers were every bit as pugnacious as the butchers. Dulness of trade, hot weather, a passing thunder-shower, were excuse sufficient for a breaking of the peace; and then shops were closed and business suspended along the Liffey banks, as bridges were taken and retaken amid showers of stones, till one or other of the belligerents was driven from the field. It was one of the singular contradictions of the time that youths of high degree should always be ready to join the dregs of the city in these outrages; that members of an intensely exclusive class should unite with coal-porters or weavers against butchers, to the risk of life and limb. But so it was, and frightful casualties were the result sometimes; for the butchers were playful with their knives, using them, not to stab their opponents, which they would have considered cowardly, but to hough or cut the tendon of the leg, thus rendering their adversaries lame for life. Sometimes they dragged their captives to the market, and hung them to the meat-hooks by the jaws until their party came to rescue them. Not but what the aristocratic gownsmen were quite capable of holding their own, as had been proved, a few weeks before the commencement of this history, by the result of a conflict on Bloody Bridge, on which occasion a rash detachment of the Ormond Boys was driven straight into the river, where many perished by drowning before they could be extricated. The butchers vowed vengeance for this feat, yet were kept quiet for a while by the attitude of the Volunteers; but now they sprang blithely to arms with marrow-bone and cleaver upon hearing that their foes were on the war-path.

At a moment so big with fate as this was, the Volunteers could permit of no such kicking up of heels. The dignity of the situation would be compromised by vulgar brawling. Peg Plunket and Darkey Kelly were clapped into the Black Dog, dripping wet, to repent on bread and water their having flaunted forth this day. Lord Glandore's regiment was detached to sweep the riff-raff to the Liberties at once, then to coax back in less violent fashion the gownsmen to Alma Mater. A charge of the splendid hunters which the men rode soon sent the factions swirling like dead leaves, after which the armed patriots quietly jog-trotted towards College Green, driving their scapegrace brothers and sons before them with flat of sword and many a merry jest. The affair was so good-humoured that the lads did not look on it as serious. They had been commanded to drop stones and fling shillalaghs into the water, and had been compelled to obey the mandate; but their door-keys remained to them-heavy keys which, slung in kerchiefs, were formidable weapons-and they valiantly decided upon just another sally before being shut up, if only to show how game they were. Upon turning into Dame Street from the quay, behold! another woman, of churlish breeding, showy and pink and plump, sitting in a noddy, conversing with a friend. It was clearly not fair to drench Peg and Darkey and Maria and leave this one to go scot-free! So, with the college war-cry, they made a swoop at her. Half a dozen youth clambered into the carriage, while one leaped on horseback and another seized the reins, and then the cavalcade started at a gallop with a pack of madcaps bellowing after, all vowing she should have a muddy bath. Vainly she shrieked and wrung her pretty hands for mercy. She was no Phryne, she bawled. A respectable married lady, a descendant of Brian Borohme and Ollam Fodlah and ever so

many mighty princes. Ah now! would the darlints let her go! They wouldn't? Then they were wretches who should repent their act, for she had friends-powerful friends among the Englishry-who would avenge the outrage. Her cries only amused her tormentors. The more she bawled the more they yelled and whooped and danced about like demons; the faster on they galloped. So recklessly, that in skirting William's effigy a wheel caught against the pedestal and the noddy was overturned-a wreck. This was great fun. The mischief-makers formed a circle, and whirled singing round their prey. She was in piteous plight from mire and scratches. What rarer sport than this? The wench was sleek and well-to-do; it would be grand to set her floundering in the filthy stream before returning home to college. But she was right. She had a powerful friend-close by too-one whose temper was short, whose sword was sharp; no less a person than the colonel of the regiment that, with quip and quirk, was coaxing them homewards. At the sound of Mrs. Gillin's lamentations, Lord Glandore waved his sword and thundered out 'Desist!' He might as well have argued with the winds. The phosphorescent light of menace which folks dreaded in the eye of a Glandore glimmered forth from his. With a fierce oath he spurred his horse, and, beside himself with passion, plunged blindly with his weapon into the heap of sable gowns.

A luckless youth with gold braid upon his vesture, who was bending down to extricate the lady, received the sword-point in his back, and, screaming, swooned away. A cry of enraged horror burst from all, and, like a swarm of angry bees, the boys fixed, without thought of consequences, on the aggressor. They were of his own class; their blood as hot and blue as his, although so young. What! murder a gownsman for a bit of folly? 'Twas but a frolic, which he had turned to tragedy. A peasant would not have mattered-but one of noble lineage! Vengeance should fall swift and terrible. They dared the soldiery to interfere. A hundred hands dragged the colonel from his horse, which, with a blow, was sent riderless down Sackville Street. His clothes were in tatters in a twinkling. A dozen heavy keys flew through the air with so sure an aim that he staggered and fell prone. One youth picked up the weapon, which yet reeked with his comrade's blood, and broke it on the backbone of his destroyer. In a trice the tragedy was complete. Ere his men could reach him, Lord Glandore lay motionless; and Gillin was rending the air with shrieks which were re-echoed from the club-house.

And now the *mêlée* became general, for some weavers who had lingered in the rear gave the alarm; the Liberty-boys sallied forth again, and the chairmen, hewing their staves in twain, belaboured all impartially, adding to the general disturbance. This was no vulgar riot now, for blood had been twice drawn-that of the privileged class-and gentlemen, fearing for their sons who were only armed with keys, rushed out from club and tavern to form a bulwark round the gownsmen against the rage of the infuriated soldiery. Thus sons and fathers were smiting right and left below, whilst mothers were screaming from the windows; and the peeresses saw more than they came out to see ere swords were sheathed and peace could be restored. They had lingered, many of them, at Daly's till past the tea-hour, to inspect the illuminations before adjourning to the Fishamble Street Masquerade; and crowded in a bevy round the club-house door as the dying earl and his distracted love were borne into the coffee-room; while the collegians retired backwards in compact order, silent but menacing, till the gates of Alma Mater opened and clanged to on them.

The peeresses had bawled as loud as Madam Gillin, and now cried with one voice for pouncet-boxes. The one of their order whom the tragedy chiefly concerned uttered never a word. With dry eye and distended nostril my lady looked on the prostrate figures-the still one of her lord-the picturesquely hysterical form of the hated Gillin-and bit her white lip as the frown, which was become habitual, deepened on her face. Little Doreen looked on in unblinking wonder, till her father clasped his fingers on her eyes to shut out the horrid sight from them. Members entered hurriedly by the private way from the Parliament Houses, and smirked and looked demure, and, feeling that they had no business there, retired on tiptoe. The peeresses felt that a prospective widow is best left alone, and one by one retreated, skimming away like seamews to gabble of the dread event to scandalmongers less blest than they, leaving the two women to face their bereavement and speak to each other for the first

time. Strange to say, these rivals had never had speech together in their lives. Madam Gillin choked her sobs after a while and revived, sitting up stupidly and staring half-stunned, as she picked with mechanical fretfulness at the feathers of her fan. The shock of so sudden a misfortune took her breath away; but, perceiving the haughty eyes of her enemy fixed gloomily upon her, she rallied and strung up her nerves to face the mongrel daughter of the Sassanagh.

My lady-erect and towering in martial frock and helm-pointed with stern finger at the door. Of her own will the real wife would never soil her lips by speaking to this woman; but she, assuming a dogged smile as she rearrayed her garments, tossed her head unheeding, till Arthur Wolfe took her hand and strove to lead her thence. She pushed him back and leaned over the impromptu bed which lacqueys had built up of chairs and tables; for at this moment my lord moved, opened his eyes which sought those of his mistress, and, struggling in the grip of Death, essayed to speak. His wife moved a step nearer to catch his words, but, consistent to the end, he motioned her impatiently away. The face of the countess burned with shame and wrath as she turned to the window, and, clasping her eldest-born to her bosom, pressed a hot cheek against the panes. He could not forbear to humiliate her, even before the club-servants-before vulgar little Curran and the foolish neophyte-before the horrible woman who had usurped her place in his affections. Was it the hussy's mission to insult her always-to cover her with unending mortification? No! Thank goodness. That ordeal was nearly overpast, but she would forget its corroding bitterness never! My lord's sand was ebbing visibly. In an hour at most he must pass the Rubicon. Then the minx should be stripped of borrowed plumes and turned out upon the world, even as Jane Shore was centuries ago. Ignominy should be piled back upon the papist a hundredfold. She knew, or thought she knew, that my lord was too careless to have thought of a last testament. At all events, a legacy from a Protestant to a Catholic was fraught with legal pitfalls. But she started from false premises, as her astonished ears soon told her.

My lord, raising himself upon his elbows, spoke-slowly, with labouring breath; for his life was oozing in scarlet throbs through the sword-gash, and grave-damps were gathering upon his skin.

'Gillin dear!' he gasped, with a diabolical emphasis to disgust his wife. 'I have loved you, for you were always gay and cheerful and forgiving, not glaring and reproachful like that stony figure there! I leave you well provided for. The Little House is yours, with the farm and the land about it; in return for which I lay a duty on you. My lady will not be pleased,' he continued, with a look of hate; 'for she will never be able to drive out of Strogue without passing before your doors. And she must live there-there or at Ennishowen, or by my will she will forfeit certain rights. Lift me up. I can hardly breathe.'

Both Wolfe and Curran made a movement of indignation as the departing sinner exposed his plans. What a fiendish thing, so to shame a wife whose only apparent crime was a coldness of demeanour! Well, well! The Glandores were always mad, and this one more crazy than his forefathers.

My lord marked the movement, and, turning his glazing eyes towards his second son, smiled faintly. 'Not so bad as you think,' he panted. 'I have bequeathed the Little House to your daughter, Gillin, to be held in trust for you, then to be hers absolutely-to pretty Norah, who, at my wish you know, was baptised a Protestant. I will that the two families should live side by side, in order that his mother may do no harm to my second child, whom she abhors. I do not think she would do him active wrong. But we can never tell what a woman will do if goaded. Swear to watch over the boy, Gillin; and if evil befall, point the finger of public opinion at his mother. She will always bow to that, I know. Bring lights. Hold up my little Terence that I may look at him. Lights! It is very dark.'

A candle was brought in a great silver sconce, but my lord had looked his last on earth. Vainly he peered through a gathering film. The child's blonde locks were hidden from his sight; and then, feeling that the portals of one world were shut ere those of the other were ajar, he was seized with a quaking dread like ague. The devil-may-care swagger of the Glandores was gone. He strove with groans to recall a long-forgotten prayer, and the spectators of his death-bed were stricken with awe.

'Gillin,' he murmured, in so strange and hoarse a voice as to make her shudder. 'It is an awful wrong we've done. Why did you let me? Too late now. I cannot set it right, but she-call my lady-why is she not here?'

The tall countess was standing sternly over him, close by, with crossed arms, but he could not see her.

'I am here. What would you?' she said; as white as he, with a growing look of dread.

'That wrong!' he gurgled. 'That dreadful thing. Oh, set it right while you have time; for my sake; for your own, that you may escape this torment. If I might live an hour-O God! but one! We three only know. If I could-'

The wretched man made an effort to rise-a last supreme effort. A spasm seized his throat. He flung his arms into the air and fell back-dead.

Doreen, the brown-eyed girl, cowered against her father and began to cry. The boys, who looked on the work of the White Pilgrim for the first time, clung trembling in an embrace with twitching lips. The two women-so dissimilar in birth and breeding-bound by a strange secret link-scrutinised each other long and steadily across the corpse, as skilful swordsmen do who would gauge a rival's skill. They were about to skirmish now. In the future might one be called upon to run the other through? Who can tell what lurks behind the veil?

The countess winced under the insolent gaze with which Madam Gillin looked her up and down. With a tinge of half-alarmed contempt she broke the silence.

'Arthur,' she said, 'take that chit away. With her mother's craven soul in her, she's like to have a fit. At any rate, save my conscience that. Fear not for me, though they *have* all run off as if I were plague-stricken. Mr. Curran I dare say, or some one, will see me taken care of. You will have details to look to for me. Take the girl hence. No. Leave the boys.'

Arthur Wolfe departed, taking with him Doreen and his godson Tone; and Mr. Curran, nodding to them, withdrew to the antechamber.

The women were alone with their dead. My lady stood frowning at the usurper, who, no whit abashed, laid a hand upon the corpse and said, in solemn accents: 'So help me God-I'll do his bidding. Do not glare at me, woman, or you may drive me to use my nails. I know your secret, for your husband babbled of it as he slept. It is a fearful wrong. Many a time I've urged him to see justice done, no matter at what cost to you and to himself. But he was weak and wicked too. I suppose it is now too late, for you are as bad as he, and vain as well of your murky half-caste blood!'

Madam Gillin drew back a step; for, stung to the quick by the beginning of her speech, my lady made as if to strike her foe with the toy-bayonet; but, reason coming to the rescue, she tossed it on the ground. This last insult was too much. To speak plainly of such shameful things to her very face! The brazen hardened papist hussy! But vulgar Gillin laughed at the fierce impulse with such a jeering crow as startled Mr. Curran in the antechamber.

'Do you want fisticuffs?' she gibed, with a plump white fist on either hip. 'I warrant ye'd get the worst of such a tussle, my fine madam, for all your haughty airs-*you*-who should act as serving-wench to such as I. Nay! Calm yourself. I'm off. This is the first time we've ever spoken-I hope it may be the last, for that will mean that you have behaved properly to your second son. I've no desire to cross your path; you cruel, wicked, heartless woman!'

Lady Glandore, her thin lips curling, took Terence by the hand for all reply, and bade him kneel.

'Swear,' she said in low clear tones, drawing forward the astonished Shane, 'that you will be faithful to your elder brother as a vassal to a suzerain, that you will do him no treason, but act as a junior should with submission to the head of his house.'

The little boy had been crying with all his might ever since they brought in that ghastly heap. Confused and awed by his mother's hard manner he repeated her words, then broke into fresh sobs, whilst Madam Gillin stared and clasped her hands together as she turned to go.

'Sure the woman's cracked,' she muttered. 'What does she mean? The feudal system's passed. No oath can be binding on a child of twelve. Maybe she's not wicked-only mad-as mad as my lord was. Well, God help the child! What's bred in the bone will out! Deary me! There's something quare about all these half-English nobles.'

Mr. Curran waited, according to agreement, lest anything should be required by my lady; and though by no means a lady's man, was not sorry so to do, for the conduct of the countess in her sudden bereavement had been, to say the least of it, extraordinary, and he was curious to observe what would happen next. There was something beneath that haughty calmness which roused his curiosity. Was she regretting the past, conscious only of the sunshine, forgetful now of storms; or was she rejoicing at a release? Holding no clue, conjecture was waste of brain-power.

So Mr. Curran resolved to reserve his judgment, and turned his attention to what was going on without, while the servants stole backwards and forwards, improvising the preparations for a wake.

The proceedings outside were well-nigh as lugubrious as those within. A thick mist and drizzling rain were descending on the town, turning the roads to quagmires, the ornamental draperies to dish-clouts, the wreaths to funereal garlands. The illuminations, concerning which expectation had been so exercised, flickered and guttered dismally. Groups of men in scarlet, their powder in wet mud upon their coats, reeled down the greasy pavement, waking the echoes with a drunken view-halloo or a fragment of the Volunteer hymn. Some were making an exhaustive tour of the boozing-kens; some staggered towards the lottery-rooms in Capel Street, or the Hells of Skinner's Row; some were running-a-muck with unsteady gait, and sword-tip protruded through the scabbard for the behoof of chairmen's calves; while some again, in a glimmer of sobriety, were examining the smirched stockings and spattered breeches which precluded their appearance at Smock Alley. Chairs and coaches flitted by, making for Moira House or the Palace of his Grace of Leinster, for all kept open-house to-night, and Mr. Curran's crab-apple features puckered into a grin as he marked how fearfully faces were upturned to Daly's, where one of the elect was lying stiff and stark. But the grin soon faded into a look of sadness, as, like some seer, he apostrophised his countrymen.

'O people!' he reflected, 'easily gulled and hoodwinked, how long will your triumph last? This is but a grazing of the ark on Ararat-a delusive omen of the subsiding of the waters. Our bark is yet to be tossed, not on a sinking, but on a more angry flood than heretofore. Eat and drink, for to-morrow you die. What was your ancestors' sin that ye should be saddled with a curse for ever? Your land was the Isle of Saints, yet were ye pre-doomed from the beginning; for when the broth of your character was brewed, prudence was left out and discord tossed in instead. And the taskmaster, knowing that in discord lies his strength, plays on your foibles for your undoing. How long may the prodigy of your co-operation last? Alas! It pales already. To-morrow is your supreme trial of strength, and your chiefs are at daggers-drawn. What will be the end? What will be the end?'

He shook himself free from the dismal prospect of his thoughts, for since Madam Gillin bustled out my lady had been very quiet. He peeped through the doorway. No! She had not moved since he looked in an hour ago; but was sitting still with her chin on her two hands-gazing with knitted brows at the body as it lay, its form defined dimly through the sheet that covered it.

Terence, lulled by tears, had fallen asleep long since upon the floor. Shane walked hither and thither, biting his nails furtively; for he was a brave boy who feared not his father dead, though he trembled in his presence whilst alive. Had he dared he would have gone forth into the street to see the gay folks, the lights, and junketing, for he was high up in his teens and longed to be a man. But it would not do to leave the mother whom he loved and dreaded to the protection of Curran-the low lawyer. He was my lord now, and the head of his house, and must protect her who had hitherto protected him. He marvelled, though, in his slow brain, as it wandered round the knotty subject, over the passage of arms betwixt the ladies; their covert menace; the oath the little lad was made to swear. It was all strange-his mother of all the strangest. Protect her, forsooth! The uncompromising mouth and square chin of her ladyship-the steely glitter of her light grey eye-showed independent will

enough for two. Clearly she was intended to protect others, rather than herself to need protection. But her manner was odd, her frown of evil augury. At a moment of soul-stirring woe, such calmness as this of hers could bode no good.

All through the night she sat reviewing her life, while Shane walked in a fidget, and patient Curran waited. She brooded over the past, examined the threatening future, without moving once or uttering a sound. She was deciding in her mind on a future plan of action which should lead her safely through a sea of dangers. Was she as relentless as she looked? Was this an innately wicked nature, set free at last from duress, revolving how best to abuse its liberty; or was it one at bottom good, but prejudiced and narrow, chained down and warped awry, and dulled by circumstance?

CHAPTER IV.
BANISHMENT

Years went by. The volcano burned blithely, and the upper orders danced on it. No court was more like that of a stage potentate than the court of the Irish Viceroy. No ridottos were so gorgeous as those of Dublin; no equipages so sumptuous; no nobles so magnificently reckless. Mr. Handel averred in broken German that he adored the Hibernian capital, and gave birth to his sublime creations for the edification of Dublin belles. The absentees returned home in troops, finding that in their mother's mansion were many fatted calves; and vied with one another, in the matter of Italian stuccoists and Parisian painters, for the display of a genteel taste. But, as the poet hath it, 'things are not always as they seem.' The crust of the volcano grew daily thinner. What a gnashing of teeth would result from its collapse!

The Grand Convention fell a victim to its leaders, and from a mighty engine of the national will shrivelled into an antic posturing. Mr. Grattan (the man of eighty-two *par excellence*) perceived that he was overreached; that perfidious Albion shuffled one by one out of her engagements, that the independence, over which he had crowed like a revolutionary cock, was no more than an illusory phantom. The Renunciation Act was repealable at pleasure, he found, and no renunciation save in name. The horrid Poyning, the objectionable 6th of George III., tossed into limbo with such pomp, might become law again by a mere pen-scratch. Ireland was decked in the frippery of freedom, which, torn off piecemeal, would leave her naked and ashamed. The Volunteers, perceiving that their blaring and strutting had produced nothing real, looked sheepishly at one another and returned to their plain clothes. After all, they were asses in lions' skins; their association a theatrical pageant of national chivalry, which dazzled Europe for an instant till men smelt the sawdust and the orange-peel and recognised in the helmet a dishcover. During all this vapouring and trumpeting, England had held her own, by means of the subservient Lords and the heavily mortgaged Commons. The parliament, too base for shame, smiled unabashed; the Volunteers, conscience-smitten and in despair, broke up and fell to pieces. The Catholics were as much serfs as ever. Derry, whose conscience was troubled with compunctious visitings, went so far as to propose that the Catholics (burning source of trouble in all altercations) should emigrate *en masse* to Rome as a bodyguard for his Holiness; but the latter, dreading an incursion of three million savages, which would have been like an invasion of the Huns, declined with thanks the present, and the laudable scheme was given up.

Far-sighted folks became aware that the pretty tricks of the puppets were due to an English punchinello. The fantoccini did credit to their machinist, who was skilful at pulling of wires. Who was he? Why, Mr. Pitt the younger, who would have his dolls jump as he listed, though they should come to be shattered in the jumping. Mr. Pitt, the British premier, set his wits to work to keep all grades and classes squabbling. At one time, to exasperate the Papists, he gave an extra twist to the penal screw; at another, he untwisted it suddenly to anger the Orangemen. Coercion and relief were two reins in his skilled hands wherewith he sawed the mouth of poor rawboned Rosinante, till the harried animal came down upon its haunches. He established a forty-shilling franchise which gave votes to the poorest, most ignorant, and most dependent peasantry in Europe. This he declared was the divine gift of liberty. Nothing of the sort. It merely placed a fresh tool in the hands of large proprietors who were dying to be bribed and charmed to have something new to sell.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.